NATURE, HISTORY AND THE DIALECTIC OF NEGATIVITY: THE CATEGORY OF NATURE IN MARX'S WRITINGS

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The following dissertation examines Marx's conception of nature, including the relationship between that conception and his social theory, political philosophy, and critique of political economy. It offers an erudite defence of a novel interpretation of Marx's philosophy of nature while interrogating both historical and contemporary readings.

The first portion of the interpretative thesis considers his early philosophical development, especially in relation to Hegel, Feuerbach, and Bauer. It defends the interpretation that, during this phase in his intellectual development, Marx developed his materialist conception of history in conjunction with an historical conception of nature and the human relation to it. Part I demonstrates that this integral connection between philosophy of nature and his vision of human nature is a lasting feature of his thought, one which links his ontology to his anthropology even in his later writings.

The second part of the dissertation examines Marx's middle and late writings, and it analyzes the theory of the metabolism which he elaborated during those periods in his intellectual development. Part II of the dissertation identifies important, but as of yet unacknowledged, points of connection between his theory of the metabolism and his description of precapitalist social life, account of the history of primitive accumulation, analysis of the formation of capitalist relations, demystification of political economy, growing ecological awareness, and philosophical conception of the dialectic of negativity.

The final portion of the paper assumes the form of an anti-critique. It defends the interpretation that, in both the early and late writings, Marx's conception of nature is not susceptible to Frankfurt critiques of instrumental rationality and the ecological domination associated with it. While criticizing the readings offered by Schmidt and Marcuse, the final chapters of the dissertation elaborate a wholly original and deeply insightful interpretation of Marx's conception of the relationship between natural necessity and human freedom.

For some of the very best parts of Nature: Cole, George, and Algonquin Park.

Long may we paddle our canoe together.

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Preface

The historical materialist conception of nature has always attracted critical attention from serious scholars of Marx, beginning almost a century ago with *History and Class Consciousness*. Lukacs' 1923 work challenged the orthodox Plekhanovian interpretation of Marx's philosophy of nature. For the young Lukacs, nature could no longer be treated in the dogmatic way that it had been by Soviet metaphysics. This is because the form of nature and the mode of its appearance are historically-constituted through practice. He had recognized that, for Marx, nature is a 'social category'. In departing from Feuerbach, observed Lukacs, Marx had come to regard the nature with which humans interact as the product of that activity— at bottom, of *labour*.

This new conception of nature that Lukacs alluded to was contained within what Engels later referred to as the 'germ' of the new world outlook outlined in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, which was first published in the mid-1880s alongside his *Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*. However, readers of Marx also found further confirmation of this view in the manuscripts for *The German Ideology*, which only saw the light of day in the 1930s. Only then could Marx's intellectual relation to Feuerbach begin to be fully appreciated. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels broke with his unhistorical conception of nature. Feuerbachian naturalism, they contested, applies exclusively to those virgin portions of nature still untouched by the human hand. But all progress in the development of capitalist industry is progress toward dissolving whatever proof remains of Feuerbach's 'nature'.

The dissemination and reception of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and of the *Grundrisse*, first in Germany in the 1930s and then in the English-speaking world in the 1960s and 1970s, also profoundly altered the topography of secondary literature on Marx's

philosophy of nature. The critique of estranged labour and the philosophical humanism of these posthumously published writings pointed scholars towards what were until then largely neglected dimensions in Marx's thought, not least of all with respect to the category of nature in his writings. 'Western Marxists' and Marxist-Humanists took-up these themes in new and provocative ways. In contrast to Althusser, who tried to drive Hegel back into the night and right out of Marx's philosophy, thinkers such as Fromm and Dunayevskaya emphasized the continuities between the early, middle and late works, including, again, in relation to the question of nature.

The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School also reconsidered the meaning of nature in Marxism during this period. They underwent a critical 'settling of accounts' with Marx and with the part played by nature in the Marxian dialectic, although their interpretative claims about his materialist theory of nature were sometimes deeply mistaken. Adorno and Horkheimer, for instance, extended their critiques of the 'instrumental' reason of capitalist society into criticisms of Marx's conception of nature in a higher social formation. Were his vision of socialism actually realized, they contend that its mastery of the metabolism would merely perpetuate, in a new and classless form, the 'domination' of nature characteristic of capitalist society. Although this anti-ecological reading of Marx was inaccurate, it was nonetheless indicative of the critical turn in all philosophizing about nature which began to take place in 20th century thinking influenced by Marx. Indeed, the critical theorists were right about one thing: the domination of 'nature by man' has, up until now, only coincided with the domination of 'man by man'. Nature could no longer be mastered, nor theorized, as if it were wholly 'external' to human society.

The most important work on Marx's philosophy of nature emerged out of this Frankfurt tradition. Alfred Schmidt's *The Concept of Nature in Marx* is almost universally regarded—and rightly so— as the starting-point for any discussion of the secondary literature on Marx's

philosophy on nature. However, while Schmidt's work has received plenty of uncritical praise, it has been subjected to surprisingly little criticism. Despite its original and substantive contributions to scholarship on the subject, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* is replete with contradictions—all of which are rooted in Schmidt's uncritical relationship to Adorno, who had supervised the dissertation project. Re-reading Adorno's negative dialectic back onto the late writings, he defends the mistaken thesis that there is an unacknowledged ontological break in Marx's philosophy of nature. According to him, Marx's early speculations about the subject-object identity made practicable through the humanization of nature are exchanged, in the writings of the later period, for the inextinguishable non-identity of natural necessity. In the Marxian dialectic, the non-identity of nature 'triumphs', says Schmidt, over the possibilities of praxis and reconciliation.

In more contemporary secondary literature, most of the discussions about Marx's concept of nature are, in my opinion, much less interesting philosophically speaking. These discussions often run down the rabbit-hole of the entropy debate, ignore the intellectual tradition in which Marx's thought was rooted, and overly romanticize his representations of nature as the 'inorganic body' of precapitalist society. However, to their credit, these eco-Marxists emphasize the ecological dimensions of Marx's later theory of the 'metabolism' (*Stoffwechsel*) which we find expressed in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. They accomplished this task more or less in conscious opposition to all previous tendencies in secondary scholarship, which had emphasized the young Marx's humanism-naturalism as the most ecological moment in his intellectual development. Burkett, Foster, and others have also illustrated that Marx's account of primitive accumulation and critique of the metabolic 'rift' was explicitly tied to his practical concerns about soil erosion, desertification, composting, and deforestation— issues which dovetail most with those of contemporary ecology.

When I initially began to research and write about this topic, first for my Major Research Paper and then for this dissertation, the efforts were undertaken with the definite intention of offering a *comprehensive* account and critical analysis of the meaning and relevance of Marx's writings on nature. I have not accomplished that task. Much more could be said about his conception of nature and, had I the time and the space, it would be a worthwhile endeavour to say it. The limits of this dissertation— surely in content, but especially in form— are entirely of my own making. Its shortcomings are precisely the shortcomings of its propounder, who is still very much struggling to work-out his own intellectual development and understanding of Marx to its fullest— and, thus, in no way indicative of any shortcomings in Marx's philosophy of nature itself. However, I hope that this dissertation has captured some of the significance and insightfulness of his conception of the human relation to nature in history.

These failures on my part, if they may be excused in any way, are matched only by the difficulty of the subject matter itself, i.e., what involves, at bottom, the assimilation of the encyclopaedic wealth of Marx's comments on nature. His concept of nature is multi-dimensional. Coming to terms with it requires an interdisciplinary approach. In its various iterations, understanding Marx's thinking about nature requires an understanding of issues found in ancient philosophy from Heraclitus and Anaximander to Aristotle and Epicurus; classical German philosophy from Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel to Bauer, Feuerbach, Stirner, and Hess; the French utopian socialism of Fourier and Saint Simon; the materialism of d'Holbach and Helvetius; as well as the scientific advances and discoveries made by Darwin, Moltmann, and Liebig. Marx's theory of nature also plays into his critique of the concept of value in political economy, especially as advanced by Physiocracy, Utilitarianism, and 'vulgar' forms of economics. It is also given expression in his historical analysis of precapitalist forms of the

metabolism, demystifying account of primitive accumulation, and criticism of the metabolic rift characteristic of capitalism. Lastly, although changes occur in his political philosophy, Marx's conception of communism in the early, middle, and late writings remains predicated upon developing a new relation to nature. Hence, his concept of nature both informs and is informed by his anthropology, political philosophy, and sociology, just as it is an integral aspect of his theory of history and critique of economics.

This multi-dimensional or interdisciplinary character to Marx's concept of nature defies any facile schematizing. Understanding his materialist conception of the human relation to nature in history requires a serious and close reading of a whole variety of relevant texts. With Hegel, the whole affair is actually much simpler to resolve. One need only read the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in order to grasp the role which the Philosophy of Nature plays within the dialectico-speculative system as a whole. This could be supplemented with an appreciation of what he has to say about nature elsewhere—e.g., there are very insightful comments on nature in the lectures on The Philosophy of History, The Philosophy of Religion, and The History of Philosophy. Of course, Marx never wrote a standalone Philosophy of Nature, and, as we know, it was left to Engels to complete the Dialectics of Nature. In this sense, he has no 'philosophy of nature', but that is only because it is integrated into his oeuvre as a whole. Hence, I will often use the phrase 'philosophy of nature' in this dissertation because I believe that a cogent conception of nature underpins his thinking in each of the individual phases of his intellectual development, and across his work when considered as a totality. In order to discover Marx's philosophy of nature, we will have to read Capital in the light of his doctoral dissertation on The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature, we will have to examine the Grundrisse alongside the Critique of the Gotha Programme, the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 alongside The Communist Manifesto, and his correspondence and articles

for *Tribune* alongside his addresses to the IWMA.

Hence, that Marx never composed the *Dialectics of Nature* does not imply that he was disinterested in or indifferent to questions about nature, and, less still, to the human relation to it in time. On the contrary, such questions commanded his attention from some of the earliest to some of the last of his writings. This is why to discover Marx's *Naturphilosophie*, one has to reassemble it piecemeal by considering his work in its totality— including, the changes which take place across the various phases in his intellectual development. In the course of this dissertation, I hope to show that Marx's writings are rich with underappreciated, though by no means undertheorized, insights into the relationship between society and nature— insights which may be of even greater relevance today than they were during his own lifetime. The environmental crises generated by the intensified contradictions of contemporary capitalism compel us to begin to radically rethink and retheorize our relationship to nature along with Marx. This dissertation is a contribution to, and reflection of, the need to rediscover and recover Marx's 'philosophy of nature'.

The following dissertation is divided into three major parts. Part I, entitled 'Bauer, Feuerbach and the Concept of Nature in the Early Marx', deals with the changes which take place in Marx's early conception of nature and the human relation to it in history. It situates those developments within the context of his 'settling of accounts' with Hegel, the Hegelian dialectic, and the Left Hegelians. For this reason, Part I is more of an intellectual biography than the other portions of this dissertation. But its ultimate design is not biographical. It seeks to argue and substantiate that the materialist conception of history which was born out of the critiques of Bauer and Feuerbach was, from the outset of this period of 'self-clarification', integrally connected to a more historical conception of nature.

Part II of the dissertation, 'The Original Unity and Historic Separation from the Inorganic Body of Nature', will turn the reader's attention away from the earlier writings of the 1840s and toward the theory of the metabolism which Marx articulates in the works of the 1850s and 1860s. It focuses on his descriptions of the precapitalist and capitalist forms of this metabolism, as well as his vision of a post-capitalist relationship to nature. Highlighting the points of connection between his representations of precapitalist life, account of primitive accumulation, critique of political economy, analysis of the metabolic rift and political theory, I argue that Marx both criticized the human and ecological damage caused by the diremption from nature specific to the bourgeois economy, but, at the same time, also regarded the phases of primitive and capitalist accumulation as part of a necessary stage of estrangement. In a higher form of society, one made possible by the ruthlessly universalizing tendencies and contradictions of capitalism itself, individuals would *restore* their original communal bond with and 'recognition of nature', except, for the first time, in a form adequate to the most complete development of human nature.

Part III of the dissertation, 'Rationality, Necessity and Work in Socialism: Marx and the Frankfurt School', will consider certain critiques of Marx's philosophy of nature— the most significant of which are those which emerged out the Frankfurt School in the immediate pre-war and post-war periods. The critical theorists who will be examined in Part III should be credited with having critically reappraised the role which nature plays within the dialectic. However, many of their interpretative claims about Marx's own conception of nature are problematic. Their critiques tend to conflate Marx's idea of rationally regulating the interchange with nature with the tradition of 'instrumental' rationality extending from Bacon to Bentham. For this reason, Adorno and Horhkeimer mistakenly charge that his conception of socialism's 'mastery' of the metabolism would merely perpetuate the capitalist 'domination' of nature in a new mode. I will also argue that Schmidt and Marcuse misunderstood the categories of freedom and necessity in

Marx's writings— an issue which is essential to grasping his conception of the productive relation to nature in socialism. They interpret him as arguing that since the time and energy spent in work could never be abolished, but only driven down to a minimum, the remaining portions of necessary labour represent a realm of non-freedom, i.e., an ineliminable form of a nature-given estrangement even in an emancipated society. According to this reading, nature would remain an external and alien object in socialism, just as the social relation to it through work and need would remain instrumental and unfree. Part III of the dissertation assumes the form of an 'anticritique' because it subjects these criticisms to scrutiny in the light of Marx's relevant writings.

Part I

Bauer, Feuerbach & the Concept of Nature in the Early Marx

Introduction

In the 1840s, Marx's thinking underwent such a momentous transformation that he later referred to this period of "self-clarification" as having produced the "guiding" principle for all of his subsequent studies into politics, history, and economics. Part I of this dissertation will cast a new light on the course of this phase in his early intellectual development by reconsidering it within the context of the specific changes that take place in his nature-philosophy. The emphasis is placed upon the writings composed between 1843 and 1846, in which Marx breaks away first from Bauer, and then from Feuerbach. I will suggest that it was in and through those critiques that he first formulated what we now know as the doctrine of historical materialism. Part I will demonstrate that his materialist conception of history was from the outset of this process of selfclarification developed in parallel with, and integrally connected to, a much more historical conception of nature. It is impossible to fully comprehend Marx's early intellectual development, and his critiques of either Bauer or Feuerbach, without at the same time comprehending these changes that take place in his philosophy of nature. On the other hand, it is just as difficult to fully comprehend Marx's radical rethinking of the category of nature during this period without at the same time grasping it as a moment—and, arguably, as the most essential moment—in his break with Bauer, Feuerbach, and the Young Hegelians.

Chapter One of Part I, 'In the Shadow of Hegel: Bauer, Feuerbach and Marx's Early Philosophy of Nature', will situate these developments in Marx's early conception of nature within the context of his 'settling of accounts' with Hegel, the Hegelians, and the Hegelian

dialectic— which is to say, his own "former philosophical conscience." It argues that Marx's retheorization of the concept of nature during this period unfolded across two distinct stages. In the first phase, we find him criticizing Bauer's idealism while uncritically endorsing aspects of Feuerbachian materialism. In the works written between 1843 and 1844, such as *The Holy Family* and *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, he welcomes a 'theoretical revolution' which, in some ways, he has already implicitly left behind. However, the explicit rupture occurs in the second stage, where Marx breaks decisively with the outlook provided by Feuerbachian naturalism. The works composed from between 1845 and 1846, such as the *Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology*, give us indications of these new directions in his thinking about nature.

When Marx initially parted ways with Bauer in his 1843 On the Jewish Question and Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, he did so on the basis of an appropriation of Feuerbach. In those writings and in the writings of 1844, I will argue that he accepts, albeit in a highly modified form, the inner-connection between humanism and naturalism, and, like Feuerbach, conceives of human society as a part of nature. The idea of species-being and principle of sensuousness, also inherited in a modified form from Feuerbach, constitute anthropological and ontological cornerstones in his early conception of communism. But Marx's subsequent reassessment of the significance of philosophical materialism not only compelled him to formulate a critique of it, it also compelled him to reformulate his earlier criticism of Bauer, influenced as it was by Feuerbach. Throughout the course of the first chapter, we will find that he comes to repudiate both Feuerbach's contemplative materialism, ahistorical naturalism and restricted notion of sensuousness, as well as Bauer's hypostatization of self-consciousness, Olympian contempt for the 'muck of substance' and reduction of natural necessity to a 'stick'. In short, Marx opposes to both Feuerbach's abstract unity between society and nature, and Bauer's

abstract antithesis between nature and history, a completely new conception of nature and of the human relation to it in history.

As Marx himself later recognized, this early period of intellectual 'sturm und drang' had a deep and lasting impact upon his political theory, idea of human development in history, and, not least of all I will argue, his philosophy of nature. The critiques of Bauer and Feuerbach brought into focus the outlines of a whole new worldview. Chapter Two of Part I, 'Nature, Need and History: Marx's Historical Conception of Nature', contends that the materialist conception of history which emerged out of this settling of accounts was integrally connected to the development of a much more historical conception of nature. In Bauer's dialectic, the self-consciousness of the critic leaves nature behind with the progress of history, whereas, in Feuerbach's passive materialism, human development remains confined within an abstract naturalism. The idealism of the one excludes nature from history; the materialism of the other excludes history from nature. In the second chapter, I will defend the interpretation that in opposition to both of these views, Marx recognized nature as a fundamental condition of all history, but, at the same time, as something which is also transformed by it.

In Feuerbach's materialism, nature is an unhistorical and homogeneous objectivity, unmediated by the necessary human interaction with it. Marx, by juxtaposition, comes to conceive of the nature with which humans interact as a *social product*. He grasps nature not merely in the *form of the object*, but also as *formed by objective activity*. It is the introduction of the principle of praxis into all philosophizing about nature. Yet, Marx also recognized that by transforming nature and the human relation to it, human beings also transform themselves and their relations with one another. This is why he charged Feuerbach with failing to be a historian insofar as he was a materialist, and a materialist insofar as he was a historian. I will argue that the connection which Marx identified between history and materialism necessitated the development

of a more historical conception of nature. The second chapter will close by suggesting that this historical conception of nature and the human relation to it also had significant implications for Marx's political philosophy and idea of human development. These connections arguably achieve their most speculative form in his vision of the *humanization of nature*, and notion of the *convergence between natural and human history*. Communism, as Marx expresses it during this period, would represent the "completed, essential unity of man with nature"— i.e., the real resolution to all of the hitherto merely philosophically conceived contradictions between freedom and necessity, objectification and affirmation, essence and existence. It would mark the end not only to the antagonism between individuals, but to the antagonism between society and nature.

In the Shadow of Hegel: Bauer, Feuerbach and Marx's Early Philosophy of Nature

Introduction: A Period of Critique and Self-Clarification

Given that a number of early works still remained unpublished at the time of Marx's death, Engels found it necessary in the mid-1880s to set out in print a brief summary of the origins of the political philosophy forever attached to his friend's name. In that pamphlet, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy, he claims that the genealogy of Marxism had to be traced back four decades earlier to its "relation to the Hegelian philosophy" from which it both "proceeded" and "separated" (emphases added). This is because Marx underwent a philosophical moulting process in the mid-1840s, shedding the husks of Left Hegelianism by regrounding its inherited dialectic upon a newfound "materialist basis." The 'materialist conception of history' was the direct outcome of this critical 'settling of accounts' with Hegel, the Hegelian dialectic, and the other Young Hegelians. Looking back upon this crucial phase in his intellectual development over thirty years later in Capital, Marx recounted that many of his earliest writings had therefore "criticised" the more "mystified form" or "mystificatory side of the Hegelian dialectic...when it was still the fashion" in Germany.² This proves to be especially true of the works published and manuscripts written between 1843 and 1846— including, most obviously, On the Jewish Question, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole, The Holy Family, Theses on Feuerbach and The German Ideology. In these works, Marx step-by-step severs his personal, political, and philosophical ties to the Young Hegelian movement and the increasingly parochial

¹ Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 7-8.

² Marx, Karl, 'Postface to the Second Edition', <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Vol. I, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 100, 102-103.

circle of 'Die Freien'. Bauer, Stirner, Ruge, Hess and Feuerbach— none would be spared the stinging satire of his pen.

However, as Marx would later admit in the 'Preface' to the 1859 Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, his "main purpose" during these formative years was not so much "critique," but rather "self-clarification." This is the period in his philosophical development that, as Engels expressed it many years later, would give us the "brilliant germ of the new world outlook." This phase of intense intellectual activity produced what Marx referred to as the "guiding thread" or "guiding principle" for all of his subsequent studies into history, politics, and economics. And, yet, these early attempts to "settle accounts" with his own "former philosophical conscience"— which was that of a Young Hegelian— had also necessarily assumed the "form of a critique of post-Hegelian philosophy" and of the Hegelian dialectic.

For Marx's polemic on the parochial character of Young Hegelianism and 'Die Freien', see Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 44, 63-65: "In Germany, a country where only a trivial historical development is taking place, these mental developments, these glorified and ineffective trivialities, naturally serve as a substitute for the lack of historical development, and they take root and have to be combated. But this fight is of local importance...While the French and English at least stick to the political illusion, which is after all closer to reality, the Germans move in the realm of 'pure spirit', and make religious illusion the driving force of history. The Hegelian philosophy of history is the last consequence...of all this German historiography...This whole conception of history, together with its dissolution and the scruples and qualms resulting from it, is a purely national affair of the German...The purely national character of these questions and solutions is moreover shown by the fact that these theorists believe in all seriousness that chimeras like 'the God-Man', 'Man', etc., have presided over individual epochs of history (Saint Bruno even goes so far as to assert that only 'criticism and critics have made history', [Bruno Bauer in his Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs]) and when they themselves construct historical systems, they skip over all earlier periods in the greatest haste and pass immediately from 'Mongolism' [Max Stirner in Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum] to history 'with meaningful content', that is to say, to the history of the Hallische and Deutsche Jahrbücher and the dissolution of the Hegelian school into a general squabble. They forget all other nations, all real events, and the theatrum mundi is confined to the Leipzig book fair and the mutual quarrels of 'criticism'...These pompous and arrogant hucksters of ideas, who imagine themselves infinitely exalted above all national prejudices, are thus in practice far more national than the beerswilling philistines who dream of a united Germany. They do not recognise the deeds of other nations as historical...[T]hey turn the Rhine-song into a religious hymn and conquer Alsace and Lorraine by robbing French philosophy instead of the French state, by Germanising French ideas instead of French provinces. Herr Venedey is a cosmopolitan compared with the Saints Bruno and Max, who, in the universal dominance of theory, proclaim the

universal dominance of Germany."

⁴ Marx, Karl, 'Preface to A *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Simon H. Lawrence (ed.), (Hackett Publishing: Indianapolis; 1994), 210, 212.

⁵ Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 8.

What emerged out of this critique was a new "conception" of history which he believed stood in absolute antagonism to the "ideological one" presented up until then by such "German philosophy." In other words, the outcome of this period of self-clarification, the materialist conception of history, grew organically out of this settling of accounts with the Hegelians and with his own former philosophical conscience as a Young Hegelian. As Megill summarizes of this period in Marx's intellectual development,

[i]n the 1859 preface Marx asserts that the unnamed manuscript that we know as *The German Ideology...*fulfilled two functions for his thinking...[First, the] settling of accounts with their "former philosophical conscience"...Historical materialism was certainly part of this settling of accounts: it is a set of assertions designed to highlight the general insufficiency of the thinking of the left-Hegelian philosophers from whom Marx and Engels were taking their leave. To this degree historical materialism [also] functioned [in a second sense], in *The German Ideology*, as a weapon in debate, tied up to dismantling Feuerbach's philosophy but aimed also at Bauer and his friends.⁷

Hence, we must start by asking: what are the points of connection, and the points of departure, between Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophy on the one side, and Marx's materialist conception of history on the other? One of the essential aims of this chapter will be to reconsider the relationship between Marx's early philosophy of nature and the work of his contemporaries, Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach. As we will discover in the next chapter, the outcome of this period of critique and self-clarification was not simply the 'materialist conception of history', but, developed alongside and as an integral component of it, Marx's equally 'historical conception of nature'.

Bauer, Feuerbach, Stirner, Ruge, Hess—these are names which are mentioned today incidentally insofar as they lead up to, and are superseded by, the name of 'Marx'. As Hanfi notes of Feuerbach, his "philosophy has been discussed almost exclusively within the context of the

Marx, Karl, 'Preface to A *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Simon H. Lawrence (ed.), (Hackett Publishing: Indianapolis; 1994), 210, 212. Or see, Marx, Karl, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 29, Victor Shnittke and Yuri Sdobnikov (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1987), 275.

Megill, Alan, <u>Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason (Why Marx Rejected Politics and the Market)</u>, (Rowman and Littlefield: Oxford; 2002), 222.

development of historical materialism; it has been read only as a chapter in the book called *Karl Marx*." The general lack of scholarly interest in examining these thinkers in their own right is reflected in the fact that many of their major works and key essays still require translation into English over one hundred and fifty years after their composition. While this neglect is rather troubling, it cannot, of course, be remedied by a dissertation on *Marx*'s concept of nature. Nonetheless, it is appropriate to note here that the failure to appreciate the rich diversity of politically progressive and anti-theological views which made-up the Young Hegelian school has also left historical and contemporary English-language secondary literature *on Marx* impoverished of one of its most essential sources of wealth for understanding his early intellectual development. As Boer argues, the sections in *The German Ideology* on "Bauer and Stirner have languished in the doldrums of Marxist scholarship for far too long" simply because scholars do not read and do not comment upon them. As such, Marx's relation and debt to these thinkers has yet to be acknowledged, except, perhaps, through the repetition of a few vague platitudes found his own polemics against them.9

However, understanding the relation of Marx to the Young Hegelian philosophy from which he both 'proceeded' and 'separated' is actually one of the keys to unlocking that crucial period which he later only vaguely alluded to as one of simultaneous 'critique' and 'self-clarification'. Without situating his early intellectual development squarely within the philosophic context in which it was immersed, we are left not only with a shallow grasp of these supposedly minor 'epigones' in the catalogue of post-Hegelian thinkers leading up to Marx, but, what is more, we are left unable to appreciate the politically progressive and philosophically avant garde intellectual tradition in which Marx himself flourished and to which he himself

⁸ Hanfi, Zawar, 'Introduction', <u>The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach</u>, Zwar Hanfi (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2012), 2.

Boer, Roland, <u>The Criticism of the Earth: Marx, Engels and Theology</u>, (Brill: Boston; 2012), 70.

belonged. Ironically, he and Engels may have actually contributed to this lack of understanding of their own work today precisely because of the polemical form which their critical writings often assumed vis-a-vis these Young Hegelians. As Rosen suggests, their satirical criticisms, selective quotations and sometimes crude caricaturizations of their (philosophically *closest*) rivals "creates the impression that [e.g.,] Bauer's views are empty of content and not worth studying." Writing in 1936, only a few years after the manuscripts for *The German Ideology* were finally published, Hook could tell us with all honesty that because "Feuerbach's general philosophy had to wait almost a century for proper recognition," the "relationship between Marx and Feuerbach has [only] received peripheral mention."

Of course, the situation is admittedly somewhat different with respect to Feuerbach today. The unfinished 'chapter' on Feuerbach from *The German Ideology* is one of the most read and commented upon writings from the early Marx— although, again, the same cannot be said of the rest of *The German Ideology* and of Marx's relation to Bauer, Stirner, Grun and Hess. Yet, while the publication of Marx's early works stimulated some renewed interest in Feuerbach over the course of the second half of the 20th century, Hanfi shows that, far from receiving 'proper recognition' as Hook suggests, most of the "interest it commands is determined not so much by its own independent significance as by its relevance to the question of the specificity of Marx's theory." Because none of these thinkers— including even Feuerbach— receives much recognition apart from being passingly mentioned as philosophical precursors to Marx, and are in fact often only read *through Marx's* assertions about them, this neglect has deprived scholars on Marx of one of the most necessary starting-points for honestly considering his early

Rosen, Zvi, <u>Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx: The Influence of Bruno Bauer upon Marx's Thought</u>, Martinus Nijhoff (trans.), (Hague: 1977).

Hook, Sidney, From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx, (Columbia University Press: New York; 1994), 243, 272.

Hanfi, Zawar, 'Introduction', <u>The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach</u>, Zwar Hanfi (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2012), 1.

philosophical development. As Breckman sees it, to ignore this intellectual milieu is to ignore the critical philosophic background out of which Marxism itself sprung.

The trajectory that carried Marx from teenage Romanticism to Kantian Idealism to Hegelianism was fairly typical of many young German intellectuals in the 1820s and 1830s, yet it must be emphasized that Marx came to Hegelianism when it was already in the process of dissolution. His reception of Hegel was influenced from the outset by critical Hegelians like Gans...By the time Marx set to work earnestly assimilating Hegel's writings, the tension between the closed Hegelian system and the open-ended dialectical method had become a standard theme in the writings of prominent figures like Gans, Karl Ludwig Michelet, and Feuerbach; the controversy over Strauss' Life of Jesus was well under way; the split between left, right, and center Hegelianism had already been described by Strauss; and the defection of the right-wing Hegelians to Positive Philosophy had been duly noted by Strauss and Feuerbach. By 1839, when Marx began work on a dissertation on ancient Greek atomism, Cieszkowski had published his call for a practical realization of philosophy, Feuerbach had written his critique of Positive Philosophy and Hegel's speculative philosophy, and Bruno Bauer, who became Marx's teacher and friend that year, had already begun to shift from orthodox Hegelianism to the philosophy of self-consciousness. A very active figure among the progressive Hegelians in Berlin until his departure in the summer of 1841, Marx would have been aware of all these currents within Hegelianism.¹³

Although a comprehensive consideration of Marx's contemporaries lies beyond the pale of the present study of his concept of nature, Part I of this dissertation nevertheless provokes the *need* for such a consideration. This is because we will discover that to comprehend the early Marx's radical rethinking of the human relation to nature is to grasp it as an essential moment (and, perhaps, as the most essential moment) in his critical break with the Young Hegelians and in his development of the materialist conception of history. For instance, take his critique of Bauer during this period of self-clarification. Marx's critique of Bauer and reconceptualization of the category of nature prove to be impossible to articulate without connecting them together. They were not merely mutually complementary, but inextricably intertwined with one another and with the first formulations of the doctrine of historical materialism. In this chapter, I will defend the interpretative position that Marx's new conception of the relation between nature and history was actually forged *in* and *through* his progressively developed criticism of Bauer

Breckman, Warren, Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2001), 261-262.

between 1843 to 1846. In Bauer's dialectic, self-consciousness leaves natural necessity behind in the process of its own historical becoming, establishing an irreconcilable antithesis between nature and history. Only through the 'death of nature' is nature-as-nature superseded and its 'resurrection' as reason possible. In contrast to this, Marx and Engels arrive at an acceptance of nature (and the human dependence upon it) as the "fundamental condition of all history," indeed, as the very "ground of history" and of all human development. It is this recognition of nature's continued role in the historical dialectic which, in part at least, distinguishes their mid-1840s work from the writings of Bruno Bauer and company.

However, this rethinking of the category of nature, and the corresponding critique of Bauer, worked itself out biphasically— although the reasons for this may have had less to do with Marx's immediate relation to Bauer, and more to do with his changing relationship to Feuerbach. If we restrict our attention to the developments which take place within his philosophy of nature during the first half of the 1840s, then Marx's process of 'self-clarification' can be said to have traversed through at least two distinct stages: at first (between 1843-44), by going through Feuerbachian naturalism, and, later (between 1845-46), by going beyond it. In the first phase, Marx is, in the truest sense of the term, disillusioned by Feuerbach's critique of religious estrangement and of German idealism as a form of theology. For Feuerbach, all theology is reducible to anthropology; God and Hegel's Absolute are just fantastic projections of the species-being of 'Man'. Marx proceeds entirely from this Feuerbachian method of 'inverting' the religiously fetishized subject-predicate relation and already 'upside-down' dialectic in Hegel, recognizing once and for all that nothing exists outside of humanity and nature, and, moreover,

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 47.</u>

Marx, Karl, <u>Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right</u>, Jolin and O'Malley (trans.), (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2009), 131-132: "The critique of religion disillusions man so that he will think, act, and fashion his reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his senses, so that he will revolve about himself as his own true sun."

that humankind is itself just a part of nature. 16

In the second phase, by comparison, Marx criticizes philosophical materialism precisely because it stops short at this criticism of *religious illusions*, never passing over into a confrontation with *real alienation* in politics and economics.¹⁷ Thereafter, as this chapter will show, he repudiates Feuerbach for his abandonment of the Hegelian distinction between essence and existence, as well as his abstract humanism and ahistorical naturalism, contemplative attitude, and occlusion of practice as a constitutive moment of 'sensuousness'. Feuerbach conceives of sensuousness in its immediacy, as sense-certainty, and grasps reality merely in the form of the object; he does not comprehend labour as sensuousness, does not grasp that human activity is itself objective activity. Moreover, whenever he discovers that the harmony which he presupposes between essence and existence is disturbed, he flees from so-called sense-certitude into the *refuge of a higher perception* and into a Kant-like *ideal compensation in the species in general*. He thereby lapses back into 'idealism', and ceases to be a materialist, precisely where materialism is most needed.

This rejection of Feuerbachian materialism not only compelled Marx to once again completely rework the category of nature into his newfound philosophy of praxis, but, in addition to this, it also undermined the efficacy of his earlier critique(s) of Bauer, forcing him to renegotiate its terms of reference within the architecture of the new framework that he had begun to articulate. Hence, although Marx had already disassociated himself from his university mentor in 1843 and 1844 with *On the Jewish Question, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, The Holy Family* and the *Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic*, the following emphasizes the

¹⁶ Ibid., 23-24. Or see Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 180-181.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 254.

importance of the 1845-46 Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique, Theses on Feuerbach, and The German Ideology as constituting the 'final act' in his break with Bauer, the Young Hegelians, and, for the first time, his break with Feuerbach. The manuscripts known today as The German Ideology are particularly significant in the context of this discussion because they are the only textual sources which contain both an extended critique of Feuerbach and, aside from the very short 'Reply', the only explicit rebuttal to Bauer's 1845 article 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs'.

This is relevant, as intimated in the above, because Marx's 1843-44 *kritik* of Bauer had cheerfully "greeted the new conception" introduced into German philosophy by Feuerbachian naturalism. Yet, if the original 'Critique of Critical Criticism' in *The Holy Family* is, at times, essentially Feuerbachian, then the critique consummated in *The German Ideology* marks, along with the *Reply* and *Theses on Feuerbach*, a qualitative rupture with this Feuerbachian outlook. In the 1845-46 manuscripts, Marx and Engels therefore had to reformulate elements of their earlier treatment of Bauer inasmuch as they proved to be incompatible with this newly articulated rejection of philosophical materialism. Again, however, not only has Marx's relation to Feuerbach and Bauer changed in all this, but, as this part of the dissertation will demonstrate in detail, so too has his whole philosophy of nature.

Feuerbach and Marx's 1843-44 Critique of Bauer

In order to substantiate some of these interpretative claims about Marx's early intellectual development, it would be appropriate to begin by acknowledging along with Engels that Feuerbach, arguably more than any other "post-Hegelian" philosopher, remained his intellectual

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 18.

anchor throughout this turbulent "period of storm and stress." When Marx began his work of self-clarification and radical reappraisal of the Hegelian dialectic in 1843, he acknowledged Feuerbach as being the only thinker to have assumed a genuinely critical standpoint vis-a-vis the speculative system. Between 1843-44, Feuerbach was represented as the only philosopher since Hegel to have ushered in a theoretical revolution in German thought. In a series of letters which he wrote to Feuerbach at the time, Marx expressed nothing but "great respect" and profound "love" for his works— works which, "in spite of their small size, are certainly of greater weight than the whole of contemporary German literature put together." 20

Although he would also make a similar claim about materialism more generally,²¹ in one 1844 letter Marx even suggested that Feuerbachian materialism provided (however unintentionally) a "philosophical basis for socialism."²² As Rosen notes, "Feuerbach took a serious view of Marx's evaluation that he was a communist on the basis of Feuerbach's use of the notion of man as the species-being."²³ In fact, Marx's assessment of the political implications of Feuerbach's philosophy had such a pronounced impact upon Feuerbach that, in 1845, he converted to the cause of communism. He openly reaffirmed Marx's earlier claims about his own philosophy, acknowledging that his humanism provided an anthropological underpinning for the socialist conception of 'Man' as a 'generic' species-being.²⁴ Of course, this was the same year that Marx and Engels, partly under pressure from Stirner's anti-Feuerbachian *The Ego and its Own* and partly from Bauer's '*Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs'*, worked-out their own critique of

¹⁹ Ibid., 7-8.

Marx, Karl, 'To Ludwig Feuerbach, In Bruckberg. Paris; August 11, 1844.', Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. III, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 354-357.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. 4, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 130.

Marx, Karl, 'To Ludwig Feuerbach, In Bruckberg. Paris; August 11, 1844.', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. III, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 354-357.

Rosen, Zvi, <u>Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx: The Influence of Bruno Bauer upon Marx's Thought</u>, Martinus Nijhoff (trans.), (Hague: 1977).

Feuerbach, Ludwig, "The Essence Of Christianity" in Relation to "The Ego And Its Own", Frederick M. Gordon (trans.), *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 8, No. 2-3-4, (1976).

Feuerbachian 'Man' and broke decisively with Feuerbach's humanism.

Nonetheless, there is good reason to suspect that Marx's overly charitable comments in the letters from 1843-44 reflected his genuine sentiments at the time, and were not merely a way of ingratiating himself with Feuerbach (whom he was trying to coax into writing an article for *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*). Even in *posthumously* published notebooks that were composed around the same time, Marx compared quite favourably the simple intuitions of these writings on sensuousness with the empty systematizations of abstract idealism, noting the "striking contrast" between the *dead letter* of Bauer's *speculative system* and the "unpretentious simplicity" of Feuerbach's *unsystematized principles* for the *philosophy of the future*. The former, "expiring under the guise of criticism," maintained a "completely uncritical attitude to itself" and, as such, never underwent a "critical settling of accounts" with the "Hegelian dialectic." Neither did Bauer even bother to adopt a "critical" stance vis-a-vis the "Feuerbachian dialectic," refusing to engage with the only thinker who had attempted such a critical re-evaluation of Hegel.

In this respect, Feuerbach was regarded by Marx throughout 1843-44 as the "only one who has a *serious*, *critical* attitude to the Hegelian dialectic and who has made genuine discoveries in this field."²⁵ "Feuerbach's writings," he asserted in other manuscripts written during the same period, are the "only writings since Hegel's *Phänomenologie* and *Logik* to contain a real theoretical revolution."²⁶ These are astonishing claims given that Marx's own writings from the same year were already so far beyond Feuerbach's philosophy that they point to the more explicit break that would soon follow. Nonetheless, he argued at the time that all *genuine* criticism in German philosophy after Hegel descends directly from and "owes its true"

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 171-172.

Marx, Karl, 'Preface', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 64.

foundation to the discoveries of Feuerbach."²⁷ It was therefore *not Marx*, but *Feuerbach*, who Engels later credited with initially "pulveriz[ing] the contradiction" of idealism and "plac[ing] materialism on the throne" once again.²⁸ He was "in fact the true conqueror of the old philosophy," exclaimed Marx at the time, for Feuerbach was the individual who had "in principle [already] overthrown the old dialectic and philosophy."²⁹ As Marx and Engels expressed it in *The Holy Family*

who, then, revealed the mystery of the 'system'? Feuerbach. Who annihilated the dialectics of concepts, the war of the gods that was known to the philosophers alone? Feuerbach....Feuerbach, and only Feuerbach. And he did more. Long ago he did away with the very categories with which 'Criticism' now operates...Once man is recognised as the essence, the basis of all human activity and situations, only 'Criticism' can invent new categories...History does nothing...It is man, real, living man who does all that, who possesses and fights; 'history' 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. If Absolute Criticism, after Feuerbach's brilliant expositions, still dares to reproduce all the old trash in a new form...that fact alone is sufficient to bring the 'mystery' of Criticism to light...After the old antithesis between spiritualism and materialism has been fought out on all sides and overcome once and for all by Feuerbach, 'Criticism' again makes a basic dogma of it in its most loathsome form and gives the victory to the 'Christian-Germanic spirit'.³⁰

Struik contends that statements such as these show that Feuerbach was the most "powerful influence on Marx during the period 1842-45."³¹ Actually, notwithstanding Marx's initially uncritical and overly enthusiastic reception to Feuerbach, we should still be much more conservative in our estimate of his impact upon Marx's thinking during this period of intellectual sturm und drang. To be more precise than Struik, Feuerbach was simply the most significant post-Hegelian philosopher for Marx between 1843-1844. Even if we leave aside the ancients, we know that having already come to Hegel through Kant between 1838 and 1842, Marx underwent

²⁷ Ibid., fn. 3, pp. 236.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 18.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 171-172.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. 4, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 92-94.

Marx, Karl, '[Editor's] Introduction', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 15-18, 20, 41.

a critical rethinking of Hegel's dialectic *through* the mediation of Feuerbachian materialism from the fall of 1843 until the winter of 1844. However, while we should refrain from overemphasizing this Feuerbachian moment in Marx's early intellectual development, we cannot dismiss the decisive mark of philosophical naturalism upon his first tentative critiques of Hegel and Bauer during these few short years.

As he came under the increased influence of philosophical materialism, Marx informed Feuerbach in 1844 that he and Bauer, despite having been "friend[s] of many years standing," were already "rather estranged" for a number of political, philosophical, and personal reasons (e.g., editorial conflicts with members of Die Freien, Bauer's suspension from the university, etc.)— some of which, admittedly, have little or nothing to do with Feuerbachian humanism or naturalism.³² It is also just as true that Marx had already become well acquainted with Feuerbach's work before his break with Bauer, having read the Essence of Christianity no later than July of 1841. Whatever initial influence Feuerbachian philosophy may have had upon Marx's thinking between 1841 and 1842, it was never so decisive as to provoke a rupture with his 'mentor', Bruno Bauer. This is because while the Das Wesen des Christentums likely shaped Marx's early critical view of religion (as Bauer's critique did as well), it was really Feuerbach's subsequent work in the 1842 Preliminary Theses for the Reform of Philosophy and 1843 Principles of the Philosophy of the Future which transformed Marx's early method of critique as a whole. According to both Megill and O'Malley, these later Feuerbachian writings were the ones which facilitated and shaped Marx's first re-reading of Hegel, and which contained the real Feuerbachian revolution that he would allude to in 1844.³³ As Megill suspects, the relation

Marx, Karl, 'To Ludwig Feuerbach, In Bruckberg. Paris; August 11, 1844.', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. III, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 354-357.

[&]quot;Although Marx did read Feuerbach's most famous work, *The Essence of Christianity*, around July 1841...he did not get a theoretical revolution from it. Only in the two essays of 1843, 'Preliminary Theses' and 'Principles of the Philosophy of the Future'," did Marx come to Feuerbach once again—particularly, notes Megill, as

between the "very early Marx" (of 1838-1842) and Feuerbach is somewhat "murky" at best; but "his impact on Marx in 1843-44, less so." McLellan also argues that it can "be shown both that Feuerbach had a very strong influence on Marx during the years of 1843-45 and that this influence was principally that of the 'Thesen' and the 'Grundsatze'."

All of the major works which Marx composed in 1843 and 1844 were stamped in the image of Feuerbach. For instance, Feuerbach's reversal of the subject-predicate inversion, genetic method of critique, criticism of German idealism as a form of religious estrangement, etc., are all clearly appropriated by Marx's 1843 writings— including, more specifically, his critique of Bauer in *On the Jewish Question* and *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Moreover, we

a way of re-reading and critiquing Hegel. Megill, Allan, Karl Marx and the Burden of Reason: Why Marx Rejected Politics and the Market, (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers: Boston; 2002), 23. O'Malley actually explains what Megill leaves unanswered here: why Marx was influenced more by Feuerbach's 1843 works. O'Malley illustrates that Marx could not have completed his 1843 critique of Hegel's political philosophy without Feuerbach's 1843 Theses and Principles. "The missing pages...[and] loss of the cover, on which Marx probably recorded the date of composition [for his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right], has given rise to differences on this matter among commentators. Two early editors, Landshut and Mayer, date the Critique from 1841-42. However, best evidence indicates that it dates from the period March-August 1843...Marx had planned to do a critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right for over a year. He first mentioned the project to his editor-friend, Arnold Ruge, in a letter dated 5 March 1842...But Marx never submitted his essay on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* [to Ruge's journal]; in fact, it appears that the work as originally projected was never written...[H]is failure to write the Critique when originally planned may have been due to his lack of a methodology suitable for a systematic criticism of Hegel's political philosophy; for as it turned out, a key element in the methodology employed by Marx in the Critique was provided by an essay by Feuerbach which first appeared, of all places, in Ruge's Anekdota [in 1843]." Marx, Karl, 'Editor's Introduction', Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Jolin and O'Malley (trans.), (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2009), ix-x.

Megill, Alan, <u>Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason (Why Marx Rejected Politics and the Market)</u>, (Rowman and Littlefield: Oxford; 2002), 18.

³⁵ McLellan, David, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx, (Macmillan Press: London; 1969), 101.

On Marx's appropriation of the genetico-critical method and inversion of subject-predicate, see Hanfi, who argues that Marx's early works display an "enthusiastic reception of Feuerbach's method of inverting the subject-predicate relationship in theology and speculative philosophy," and that "Marx himself applies the Feuerbachian method" in *The Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*. Feuerbach, Ludwig, '[Editor's] Introduction', <u>The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings</u>, Zawar Hanfi (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2012), 42. As O'Malley points out in his 'Introduction' to *The Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, Feuerbach's "'Provisional Theses for the Reform of Philosophy', which first appeared in Ruge's *Anekdota* and thus came into Marx's hands just before he started the *Critique*," is accepted by Marx as a form of "rational criticism," or, a form of criticism which "shows the genesis of the object being criticized." Feuerbach's "inversion of the traditional theological view" unveiled religious mystification and revealed "man to be the true subject and God to be man's projection, an objectification of man's own essential perfections." Feuerbach also illustrated that the "subject-predicate conversion" can be adopted as a "general method of criticizing speculative philosophy" and that, if "one wishes to find the truths hidden in the peculiar, theological framework of Hegel's philosophy all one need to do is systematically convert Hegel's philosophic subjects and predicates... What theology— and in parallel fashion speculative philosophy— regards as

can also see how the interplay between naturalism and humanism in the so-called "Feuerbachian dialectic" is carried over into Marx's 1844 critique of Bauer in *The Holy Family* and into his own understanding of nature, species-being, the humanism of nature, etc., in the manuscripts on *Estranged Labor* and *Private Property and Communism*.³⁷ Lastly, the basic premises of philosophical materialism and of Feuerbach's ontology of nature— namely, that human society is a part of nature— are retained and only developed further in Marx's *Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole*.³⁸

As Engels put it years later in *Ludwig Feuerbach*, it was during the span of these few years that Feuerbachian naturalism entreated all the Young Hegelians to come to terms with the fact that nature "exists independently of all philosophy," and, moreover, that it is the very "foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up."³⁹ As Struik suggests, Marx accepted this (Feuerbachian) method of explaining the emergence of "thought from being, mind from matter, and not the other way around."⁴⁰ After Feuerbach, wrote Engels, only the *comedians* of the old philosophy— mainly, Bauer, Ruge, and Stirner— would

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infinite and transcendent is actually the essence of the finite hypostatized and conceived as an independent subject." Marx, Karl, 'Editor's Introduction', Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Jolin and O'Malley (trans.), (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2009), xxix. Hanfi and O'Malley are quite right that Marx's 1843 and 1844 works appropriate this Feuerbachian method of critique. In his critique of Hegel's political philosophy, for instance, Marx writes that "Hegel makes the predicates independent and then lets them be subsequently and mysteriously converted into their subjects...Hegel makes the predicates, the object, independent, but independent as separated from their real independence, their subject. Subsequently, and because of this, the real subject appears to be the result; whereas one has to start from the real subject and examine its objectification...This is the dualism: Hegel does not consider the universal to be the actual essence of the actual, finite thing, i.e., of the existing determinate thing, nor the real *Ens* to be the true subject of the infinite." Marx, Karl, Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Jolin and O'Malley (trans.), (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2009), 23-24.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company', Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 4, (International Publishers: New York; 1975),130. And see Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 135, 137, 141, 143, 145.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 171-172.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 18.

Marx, Karl, '[Editor's] Introduction', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 40.

refuse to recognize along with him that "[n]othing exists outside nature and man." In *The Holy Family* and *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx's recognition of nature proceeds entirely from this Feuerbachian premise that the human being is herself a part of the being of nature, i.e., a *natural being* dependent upon nature. From this ontological premise, he also seems to arrive at more or less the same essential conclusion as Feuerbach: namely, that humanism is identical to naturalism.

Although, it should also be noted, distinctions already begin to arise in 1844 precisely over the meaning and significance of these 'Feuerbachian' expressions. Later, in 1845-46, these distinctions form the break between philosophical and historical materialism. Yet, even throughout his 'Feuerbachian' phase, and as early as 1843, Marx's enthusiastic reception of philosophical materialism was at least privately tempered by certain (largely unelaborated) "critical reservations." At first, he tells Ruge that these "critical reservations" include the problem which arises from Feuerbach focusing "too much on nature," and too little on "politics." In 1845-46, he will add that Feuerbach actually failed to recognize that nature is itself *political*. Nature in its historically modified form is always a politically-constituted presence, an outcome of class society, i.e., of the given forms of property and modes of

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 18. In several works, Marx ridicules the "antics" of Bauer and/or Ruge, referring to them as the "comedians" or the "Dottore Grazzianos" of post-Feuerbachian philosophy.

See, for example, Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 180-82.

See Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The Holy Family: Or, Critique of Critical Critique</u>, (Foreign Languages Publishing: Moscow; 1956), 130. And see Marx, Karl, 'Estranged Labor', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 109, 112; Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 135, 137,140-141, 145; Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 180-182.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 18.

⁴⁵ Marx to Ruge quoted in Bloch, Ernst, The Principle of Hope, (Blackwell Press: Cambridge; 1986), 258.

production. Nature is itself a social product of human activity in its various forms, forms determined by this or that stage of historical development. But Marx's unspoken "critical reservations" in *The Holy Family* (and arguably still more in the earlier, but only posthumously published, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*) seem to run much deeper than many Marxologists suspect. In any case, if he subsequently rejected Feuerbachian materialism in 1845-46 for its contemplative attitude, abstract concept of nature, and one-sided emphasis upon 'Man' as a sensuous object, then it is already evident that by 1844 (that is, *before* his explicit break with Feuerbach) Marx's standpoint is far more revolutionary, concept of nature more historical, and philosophy of praxis already developed to such a degree that they all point *beyond* Feuerbach.

These 'critical reservations', implicitly present even within Marx's more overtly Feuerbachian works, only happen to be obscured for some readers because of the continued use of terms, concepts, and analogies derived from Feuerbach's writings. Marx and Engels referred to this as the old "philosophical phraseology" which they later rejected, but only because it had allowed the "German theoreticians" to misunderstand the "real trend" that they had already set into motion in *The Holy Family*. However, it should be quite obvious that the way in which Marx had employed these terms inherited partly from Feuerbach—e.g., species-being, humanismnaturalism, alienation, sensuousness, etc.— differs in crucial ways from the use that they find in the latter's writings. For example, as early as 1844, I will argue that Marx's use of 'sensuousness' goes beyond the rather 'restricted' way in which Feuerbach conceived of the principle. Marx also breaks with Feuerbach's conception of alienation because the only estrangement which he really knows is religious estrangement. This part of the dissertation will also illustrate that the conception in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of the unity between the humanization of nature and naturalization of humanity— i.e., the identity of fully-developed humanism-asnaturalism and of fully-developed naturalism-as-humanism— is completely inconsistent with Feuerbach's unhistorical emphasis upon the immediate identity between the natural conditions of existence and the species-essence of 'Man'.

For these reasons, the Feuerbachian influence upon Marx's conception of nature and critique of Bauer seems to have more or less culminated in, and then slowly subsided after, the composition of *The Holy Family*. "How enthusiastically Marx greeted the new conception," and was initially "influenced by it, one may read in *The Holy Family*" wrote Engels. 46 Marx had even described the proposed work (to Feuerbach directly) as an explicit and open defence of philosophical materialism against the "covert polemic" that Bauer had begun to launch in 1843 and 1844. 47 Although he admitted at the time that "Feuerbach's discoveries...still required, for their proof at least, a critical settling of accounts with philosophical dialectic[s]," Marx regarded his own "exposition" in *The Holy Family* as just such a "proof." 48 While he dismissed Bauer's "covert" criticism as *itself* "proof of how difficult it is for Germans to extricate themselves" from the "one-sidedness" of idealism, he also informed Feuerbach that he and Engels wished to "publish a small booklet [*The Holy Family*] attacking this aberration of [this] criticism," adding that it "would be of the greatest value to me if you would let me know in advance your opinion." 49

Bauer's 'Charakteristik' and Marx's Break with Feuerbachian Naturalism

However, in his 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs', an article published in the Wigand'sche Vierteljahrrsschrift in 1845, Bauer quickly parried Marx's 'Critique of Critical

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 18.

⁴⁷ Marx, Karl, 'To Ludwig Feuerbach, In Bruckberg. Paris; August 11, 1844.', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. III, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 354-357.

⁴⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), fn. 7, pp. 238.

Marx, Karl, 'To Ludwig Feuerbach, In Bruckberg. Paris; August 11, 1844.', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. III, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 354-357.

Criticism' in The Holy Family by rebuking it for adhering blindly to the "heresy" of philosophical materialism: that is, for treating "nature" and natural necessity as a "force...in individuals and over individuals."50 In the same year, Stirner joined in by attacking Marx's Feuerbachian humanism in his The Ego and its Own. According to Stirner, Feuerbachian 'Man' and the 'generic species-being' of Marx are just as much theological abstractions as the hypostatized Spirit which they criticize in Hegel.⁵¹ Virtually the whole of *The German Ideology* is little more than a lengthy response to the charges laid by this "Leipzig Council" of "church fathers." Today, it is afforded a foundational status in the early Marx's canon, i.e., as the text in which he breaks most decisively with Young Hegelianism and in which he formulates for the first time the 'materialist conception of history'. There is indeed a great measure of truth and powerful persuasiveness to this interpretation. Yet, when we situate it in its proper philosophic context, the series of manuscripts now known as The German Ideology represent just a series of rebuttals to Bauer and Stirner's criticisms of their earlier work in *The Holy Family*— not in the sense that Marx and Engels uncritically defend every aspect of the latter, but, rather, in the sense that they reformulate their position through continued critique.

Indeed, Marx himself referred to the two-volume octavo manuscripts "on 'the German ideology"— which he and Engels later abandoned to the 'gnawing of the mice' since they had achieved their main purpose of 'self-clarification'— as nothing but a "critique of modern German philosophy as expounded by its representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German socialism as expounded by its various prophets." For instance, the famous chapter on Feuerbach should be regarded as a still fragmentary and unfinished attempt to 'settle accounts'

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 111.</u>

Stirner, Max, <u>The Ego and its Own</u>, Steven T. Byington (trans.), Tucker, Publishishing: New York; 1907), 106-107, 163.

Marx quoted in Carver, Terrell, 'The German Ideology Never Took Place', *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 31, 107-127.

with the so-called Feuerbachian dialectic in light of both Bauer's post-Holy Family criticisms of Feuerbachian naturalism in the Charakteristik, and Stirner's critique of Marx's Feuerbachian humanism in The Ego and its Own— not to mention Marx's own (until then unelaborated) 'critical reservations' about philosophical materialism. In the other portions of The German Ideology (chapters II and III), Marx and Engels move on to directly address Bauer's 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs' and Stirner's Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum in greater detail. In fact, it has been said that the chapter on 'Saint Sancho' is longer than Stirner's collected works! This is all the more puzzling when contrasted with the general lack of interest in English-language secondary literature in determining the relation between Stirner's The Ego and its Own and the writing of The German Ideology. It is also clear that crucial sections from the manuscripts on both Feuerbach and Bauer resonate with the analysis which Marx and Engels very briefly outlined in the 1845 'Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique' (which was also published in the Wigand'sche Vierteljahrrsschrift as a response to Bauer's Charakteristik).

This is why I would suggest that *The German Ideology* be read as little more than a lengthy repudiation of Stirner's *The Ego and its Own*, a defence against Bauer's 1845 counter-critique of *The Holy Family*, and a still 'incomplete' elaboration of Marx's reservations about Feuerbachian materialism. As Carver notes, the first half of the manuscripts known today as *The German Ideology* (i.e., the 'chapters' on Feuerbach and Bauer) arose out of "polemical critiques of Bruno Bauer, a former intellectual associate of Marx's." "Bauer had concerned himself in a recently published article ('Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs') with the political implications of Feuerbach's philosophy, and very briefly with the recently published work by Engels and Marx, *The Holy Family*, which had been critical of him." It was in and through these critiques that what we now know as the 'materialist conception of history' was given expression for the first

⁵³ Ibid., 107-127.

time. In the manuscripts of 1845-46, Marx and Engels themselves explain this context of *The German Ideology* in the following tale.

In the third volume of the Wigand'sche Vierteljahrrsschrift for 1845 [where Bauer published his 'Charakteristik' against Feuerbach] the battle of the Huns...actually takes place...But the battle is not over earthly things. The holy war is being waged not over protective tariffs, the constitution, potato blight, banking affairs and railways, but in the name of the most sacred interests of the spirit, in the name of "substance," "selfconsciousness," "criticism," the "unique" and the "true man." We are attending a council of church fathers. Here, first of all, is Saint Bruno, who is easily recognised by his stick...His head is crowned with a halo of "pure criticism" and full of contempt for this world, he wraps himself up in his "self-consciousness"...Opposite him stands Saint Max, whose services to the Kingdom of God consist in asserting that he has established and proved— on approximately 600 printed pages— his identity, that he is not just anyone, not some "Tom, Dick or Harry," but precisely Saint Max...These two grand masters of the Holy Inquisition summon the heretic Feuerbach, who has to defend himself against the grave charge of gnosticism. The heretic Feuerbach, "thunders" Saint Bruno, is in possession of the hyle, substance, and refuses to hand it over...Selfconsciousness has to wander like a ghost until it has taken back into itself all things which arise from it and flow into it. It has already swallowed this whole world, except for this hyle, substance, which gnostic Feuerbach keeps under lock and key. Saint Marx accuses the gnostic of doubting the dogma revealed by the mouth of Saint Max himself...Beside the hearing of these important indictments, sentence is also pronounced in the case brought by the two saints against Moses Hess and in the case brought by Bauer against the authors of Die heilige Familie. But as these accused have been busying themselves with "worldly affairs" and, therefore, have failed to appear before the Santa Casa, they are sentenced in their absence to eternal banishment from the realm of the spirit for the term of their natural life.⁵⁴

According to Moggach, Bauer, whose thought had taken a decidedly 'Fichtean turn' in the 1845 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs', charged "Feuerbach's [and therefore Marx's] materialism" with reproducing the same problematic "form of immanence" as Spinoza's Substance and Schelling's nature philosophy. 55 Others, such as Breckman, have actually traced this Fichteanism within Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness back to as early as 1841. In any case, Bauer certainly argues in the 1845 Charakteristik that Feuerbach concedes too much ground to nature as 'substance', and never pays the rightful dues owed to self-consciousness as a spiritual subject. This is why Bauer summoned the "heretic Feuerbach" before the "Holy

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 103-105.

Moggach, Douglas, <u>The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer</u>, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2003), 44-45.

Inquisition" of the "Leipzig Council," and charged Marx, Engels, and Hess in absentia. This Spinozist substance or Aristotelian *hyle* without predicates is just a theoretical hobgoblin, but Marx and Engels observe in the above that it really does frighten Bauer's equally ghostly self-consciousness. Just as the empty and indeterminate I=I of Fichte sought to subsume within itself the antinomies raised by the Critical Philosophy of Kant, Marx and Engels suggest that Bauer only wants Feuerbach to relinquish the 'Substance' that he has kept "under lock and key" so that his own abstract idea of self-consciousness can finally consume it. This is why they complain that Bauer's 1845 piece only "characterises" Feuerbach as the "knight of 'substance'" so that his own principle of "self-consciousness' shall stand out in stronger relief." 56

As Bauer himself explains in his typical *either-or* way in the 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs', because Hegel's attempt to overcome the contradictions of the Critical Philosophy of Kant and to synthesize the one-sided idealisms of Fichte and Schelling had failed, philosophy had to once again choose between either (Bauer's) Subject or (Feuerbach's) Substance.

Hegel combined into one Spinoza's substance and Fichte's ego; the unity of both, the combination of these opposing spheres, etc., constitutes the peculiar interest but, at the same time, the weakness of Hegel's philosophy...This contradiction into which the Hegelian system was entangled had to be resolved...Either self-consciousness had to be burned up again in the flames of substance [as in Feuerbach's naturalism]...or it had to be shown that personality is the creator of its own attributes and essence [i.e., as in Bauer's own newfound Fichteanism].⁵⁷

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels argue that Bauer is here merely parodying their own views expressed a year earlier in *The Holy Family*. There, they had already "represented Hegelian philosophy as a union of Spinoza and Fichte" and, at the same time, "emphasised" the

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 106-107.

Bauer's 'Charakteristik' quoted in Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 107.

unresolved "contradiction involved" in this unity.⁵⁸ In Hegel's philosophy, they wrote in *The Holy Family*, "there are *three* elements, *Spinoza's Substance*, *Fichte's Self-Consciousness* and Hegel's necessarily antagonistic *unity* of the two, the *Absolute Spirit*." However, in contrast to Bauer, *The Holy Family* had presented this as a "dispute *within Hegelian* speculation," not a problem for world-history. Marx regards Spinoza's Substance and Fichte's Subject, and Hegel's reconciliation between the two, as a trinity of abstractions. The first is "nature separated from man," the second is "*spirit separated* from nature," and the third is just the "metaphysically disguised *unity* of both" as separated from their real unity.⁵⁹ Thus, "unlike the authors of *Die heilige Familie*," Bauer's treatment in the *Charakteristik* does not regard this

question of the relation of self-consciousness to substance as "a point of controversy within Hegelian speculation," but as a world-historic, even an absolute question. This is

⁵⁸ Ibid., 107.

[&]quot;A few quotations will show that by overcoming Spinozism Criticism ended up in Hegelian idealism, that from "Substance" it arrived at another metaphysical monster, the "Subject"... Bauer's self-consciousness, too, is Substance raised to self-consciousness or self-consciousness as Substance; self-consciousness is transformed from an attribute of man into a self-existing subject. This is the metaphysical-theological caricature of man in his severance from nature. The being of this self-consciousness is therefore not man, but the idea of which selfconsciousness is the real existence...All human qualities are thus transformed in a mysterious way into qualities of imaginary "infinite self-consciousness"...The dispute between Strauss and Bauer over Substance and Self-Consciousness is a dispute within Hegelian speculation. In Hegel there are three elements, Spinoza's Substance, Fichte's Self-Consciousness and Hegel's necessarily antagonistic unity of the two, the Absolute Spirit. The first element is metaphysically disguised nature separated from man; the second is metaphysically disguised spirit separated from nature; the third is the metaphysically disguised unity of both, real man and the real human species. Within the domain of theology, Strauss expounds Hegel from Spinoza's point of view, and Bauer does so from Fichte's point of view, both quite consistently. They both criticised Hegel insofar as with him each of the two elements was falsified by the other, whereas they carried each of these elements to its one-sided and hence consistent development. Both of them therefore go beyond Hegel in their criticism, but both also remain within his speculation and each represents only one side of his system. Feuerbach, who completed and criticised Hegel from Hegel's point of view by resolving the metaphysical Absolute Spirit into "real man on the basis of nature," was the first to complete the criticism of religion by sketching in a grand and masterly manner the basic features of the criticism of Hegel's speculation and hence of all metaphysics. With Herr Bauer it is, admittedly, no longer the Holy Ghost, but nevertheless infinite self-consciousness that dictates the writings of the evangelist...Self-consciousness distinguishes nothing real from itself. The world is, rather, only a metaphysical distinction, a phantom of its ethereal brain and an imaginary product of the latter. Hence self-consciousness does away again with the appearance, which it conceded for a moment, that something exists outside of it, and it recognises in what it has "produced" no real object, i.e., no object which in reality, is distinct from it. By this movement, however, self-consciousness first produces itself as absolute, for, the absolute idealist, in order to be an absolute idealist, must necessarily constantly go through the sophistical process of first transforming the world outside himself into an appearance, a mere fancy of his brain, and afterwards declaring this fantasy to be what it really is, i.e., a mere fantasy, so as finally to be able to proclaim his sole, exclusive existence, which is no longer disturbed even by the semblance of an external world." Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company', Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 4, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 137-140.

the sole form in which he is capable of expressing the conflicts of the present day. He really believes that the triumph of [his own concept of] self-consciousness over [Feuerbach's concept of] substance has a most essential influence not only on European equilibrium but also on the whole further development of the Oregon problem. As to the extent to which the abolition of the Corn Laws in England depends on it, very little has so far transpired...Consequently, on the one hand, instead of real people...he has the mere abstract expression: *self-consciousness*...On the other hand, instead of real nature...*substance*.⁶⁰

The surreptitious substitution of Spinoza's "substance" for "real nature" and of Fichte's "self-consciousness" for "real people," and, along with it, the belief that this philosophic "controversy within Hegelian speculation" has anything to do with the real contradictions and "conflicts of the present"— this is precisely what plagues the whole of Bauer's philosophy according to Marx. Going over the same theme in The Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole, he wrote of how Bauer's writings "still remain wholly within the confines of the Hegelian Logic" for his "expressions do not even show any verbal divergence from the Hegelian approach, but on the contrary repeat it word for word." At most, Bauer's philosophy merely "replaces the substance of 'abstract nature'" advanced by Feuerbach with "the 'self-consciousness' of abstract man" which he himself advances. Marx tells us that this is because Bauer, a "theological critic" for whom it is "quite natural that everything has to be done by philosophy," is completely content if he can merely demonstrate this or that "moment' in Hegel to be lacking in Feuerbach."

Indeed, the essence of Bauer's 1845 response to *The Holy Family* in the *Charakteristik* is that the 'moment' of subjectivity is missing in Feuerbach's (and therefore Marx's) materialism. Philosophical materialism and its conception of nature are confined by the indeterminacy of an

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 108.</u>

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 170-171.

Marx, Karl, <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), fn. 5, pp. 237.

"undifferentiated" substantiality and *false universal*, i.e., it is a "mysteriously" presented dialectic incapable of explaining how it is "taken up or internalised by individual self-consciousness." He writes that "self-consciousness" is instead the "true universal" because it

sublates nature in mediated fashion, in that it ennobles it in its spiritual existence...makes it the bearer of moral determinations; or it sets the law in motion so that nature is drawn out of the crudity of its immediate appearance...[I]n art it elevates the natural determinateness through form to an expression of spirit and its infinity. Compared with this struggle with the properties of nature, with industry and art—what can miracles signify? What comparison can there be? The expression of rash impatience, which wants to see immediately at hand what is only given to labour and exertion....Self-consciousness is the death of nature, but in the sense that in this death itself it first brings about the immanent recognition of nature and its laws. Spirit ennobles, honours, and recognises even that which it negates. If it wanted to negate violently and externally a power whose ideality it is, it would ruin itself, for it would destroy an essential moment of itself. Spirit does not rant, rage, rave, and roar against nature, as it would do in miracles, in this denial of its immanent laws; but it works through the law and brings it to consciousness. Through this certainly difficult labour it attains a new representation, a form which it does not have in its natural immediacy. In short, the death of nature in self-consciousness is its transfigured resurrection, but not the maltreatment, derision and slandering of nature which it must experience in miracles.64

This is a deeply insightful passage from a thinker who, if we accepted every aspect of Marx's polemic against him, would be left unread. What this means, and Bauer is surely in the right here, is that "Feuerbach's naturalism remains alien to history" for it cannot conceive of how 'substance' is related to the subjective side of the famous Hegelian syllogism. In other words, the Feuerbachian emphasis upon "natural immediacy," or upon the passive and immediate unity between naturalism and humanism, excludes the active transformation of this relationship between humanity and nature in history. It ignores what Bauer refers to here as the "difficult labour" of the "art and industry" which has historically reshaped nature into a "representation" of itself. And the "crudity" of nature's "immediate appearance" is, after all, not something with which self-consciousness can remain satisfied.

To be sure, there are definite parallels between Bauer's 1845 critique of, and Marx's 1846

Moggach, Douglas, <u>The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer</u>, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2003), 44-45.

Quoted from Bauer's *Charakteristik* in ibid., 176.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 141.

break with, Feuerbachian materialism. As Megill notes, Marx retained elements of Bauer's philosophical worldview even after his criticism of it.⁶⁶ It is *labour*, *industry*, and *art*, insists Bauer, which continually transforms nature and stamps it in the image of human civilization. In his own subsequent critique of Feuerbach, Marx would make very much the same point by contrasting the "pasture lands and swamps" during the time of the Campagna with the Augustan "vineyards and villas" that once dominated the landscape, and with the factories of 19th century Manchester. Nowhere in all this, he concluded, can we find anything resembling Feuerbach's static conception of external nature.⁶⁷ And when Bauer suggests that the Hegelian/Fichtean 'moment' of subjectivity is absent from the Feuerbachian dialectic, Marx actually concedes the point elsewhere. In the *Theses on Feuerbach*, he identifies the central "defect" of philosophical materialism as its exclusion of the historically "active side," the "subjective" side, developed until then (albeit only "abstractly" according to Marx) by idealism from Hegel to Bauer. 68 Bauer is certainly on to something, then, when he claims that nature is "sublate[d]" by the mediating powers of human industry and human ingenuity, i.e., that labour works through the laws of nature and ennobles them by realizing its own ends. Following Bauer, Marx even referred to this possibility of mastering necessity and humanizing nature as the 'resurrection' of nature (an allusion to the final passage from Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*).⁶⁹ Marx, just as much as Bauer then, rejected Feuerbach's treatment of the heteronomy of natural necessity as an insuperable

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Indianapolis; 1994), 99.

Megill, Alan, <u>Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason (Why Marx Rejected Politics and the Market)</u>, (Rowman and Littlefield: Oxford; 2002), 116.

⁶⁷ Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach</u> and the <u>Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 46.

68 Marx, Karl, 'Theses on Feuerbach', Selected Writings, Simon H. Lawrence (ed.), (Hackett Publishing:

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 141, 146. See also Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 'The Philosophy of Nature', <u>Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline and Critical Writings</u>, Miller and Taubenak (trans.), (Continuum: New York; 1990), 283.

"force" that could not be humanized.⁷⁰

As Struik observes, from at least 1845 onward, Marx begins to object to Feuerbach's "abstract humanism" and "unhistorical anthropology" because it disconnects nature and humanity from "specific social conditions [which are] historically determined." Marx's problem with Feuerbachian materialism, as Struik elaborates it, is that the human is only conceived of as a "species-being in nature and not in a social setting." The species-essence of Feuerbachian Man is 'at home' with itself only in the purely natural conditions of existence, and not as a product of history. For this reason, both Bauer and Marx reject Feuerbach's anti-Hegelian emphasis upon the immediate identity between essence and existence. Instead, they recognized a more actively mediated relation that is only realized in and through human history. For instance, both Bauer and Marx take exception in 1845-46 to the following passage from Feuerbach's *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*:

That which is my essence is my being. The being of the fish is its being in water, and from this you cannot separate its essence. Only in human life does it happen, but even here only in abnormal and unfortunate cases, that being is separated from essence; only here does it happen that a man's essence is not where his being is...But all beings, excepting cases contrary to nature, are glad to be where and what they are; this means their essence is not separated from their beings and their beings is not separated from their essence.⁷³

Forgetting the Aristotelian principle that the true 'nature' of a thing is to be found only in its final form of development, Feuerbach would have us barter away the oak tree for the acorn as an exchange of equivalents. Feuerbachianism reveals itself here as a shallow sort of identity-philosophy, a simple materialistic inversion of the most monochromatic *Naturphilosophie*— a 'Schelling in reverse' indeed. Moreover, he falls into a fetishistic fallacy of sense-certainty which

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the</u> *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 111.

Struik, Dirk, '[Editor's] Introduction', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 40.

⁷² Ibid., 18-19.

Feuerbach, Ludwig, 'Principles of the Philosophy of the Future', <u>The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings</u>, Zawar Hanfi (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2012), 214-215.

naturalizes all socially- and historically-determined phenomena precisely by equating species-being with immediate being, essence with the given form of existence. Admittedly, a particular human being is sometimes "separated" from the universal "essence" of the species, but these are all "unfortunate cases" for Feuerbach, i.e, exceptional cases "contrary to nature." Commenting on this passage, Marx explains that while Feuerbach occasionally "lights on things which contradict" and "disturb" his presupposition about the immediate "harmony of all parts of the sensuous world and especially of man and nature," he subsequently "remove[s] this disturbance" by taking "refuge" in a "higher" perception. This is what it means to say that Feuerbach regards both the *human being*, and the *being of nature* more generally, from an *abstract* or *contemplative* attitude.⁷⁴

This all amounts to an "acceptance and at the same time misunderstanding of existing reality," according to Marx and Engels, because it identifies "existence" with "essence" in such a way that "every exception is expressly conceived as an unhappy chance, an an abnormality which cannot be altered." The practical or political implications of Feuerbach's equation of these Hegelian categories were quite obvious for Marx: viz., if "millions of proletarians feel by no means contented with their living conditions," the "discontented" should suffer "quietly." Geras therefore points to the passage below from *The German Ideology* as an illustration of how Marx's concept of "essential human needs" and of a historically-realized human nature differs fundamentally from Feuerbach's abstract naturalism and ahistorical humanism.

[T]herefore when, for example, he sees instead of healthy men a crowd of scrofulous, overworked and consumptive starvelings, he is compelled to take refuge in the "higher perception" and in the ideal "compensation in the species," and thus to relapse into idealism at the very point where the communist materialist sees the necessity, and at the very same time the condition, of a transformation both of industry and of the social

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 44-45.</u>

⁷⁵ Ibid., 66.

Geras, Norman, Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend, (Verso Books: London; 1994), 70-71.

structure.77

Hence, this lack of "correspond[ence]" between "essence" and "existence" in the case of estranged labour— which, for Marx, was by no means an "exception," "abnormality," or "unhappy chance," but just the systematic working-out of the law of capital itself— this lack of "correspond[ence]" can only be replaced with "harmony" through a social "revolution" which abolishes the actual conditions of alienation and overcomes the contradictions of capitalism. Instead of accepting the need for a definite revolution in the conditions of life, Feuerbach, whenever he encounters contradictions which undermine his presupposition about the harmony between essence and existence, flees from his sense-certainty and takes shelter in a Kant-like 'ideal compensation' in the species-being in general. It is a view which actually reaffirms the specialized division of labour characteristic only of capitalism, and justifies the fragmentation of the individual within modern society.

Here, however, is precisely where the continuities between Bauer and Marx's critiques of Feuerbach also cease. Bauer's rhetoric in the previous passage about the "true universal" as the "labour" of "industry and art"— which, while working through the "immanent laws" of nature, "sublates nature" and "ennobles it"— ultimately stands in direct contradiction to his views on the real process of production and situation of the actual wage-labourer— whom he dismisses altogether as the most extreme expression of the pure "particularity" of class-interests. According to Moggach, Bauer felt that the working-class, being bound to such particularity, would prove absolutely incapable of overcoming the contingent determinations of "natural immediacy." In the 'Charakteristik', he argues that the paltry concerns of the proletarian consciousness (i.e., this

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 47.</u>

⁷⁸ Ibid., 66

Moggach, Douglas, <u>The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer</u>, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2003), 52-54, 167-168.

'consciousness' of nothing but their animal needs) are proof enough that it "confronts only brute nature" in its lower dialectic of mere life, whereas, in the higher dialectic afforded to the critic, we find that genuinely "free self-consciousness belongs only to [the] intellectual creation" that attains spiritual self-certainty and purity through the "death of nature."

This just means, Marx interjects, that the whole of nature for Bauer is "swallowed up in 'self-consciousness'," for, in the "place of the real production" of "life," he "puts the religious production of ideas."81 In an 1844 letter to Feuerbach, Marx insisted that this sort of "criticism" thus regards itself as the only active element in history" and the "whole of humanity [is presented] as a mass, an inert mass, which has value only as the antithesis of intellect."82 Marx and Engels quote Bauer's own words in their 'Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique': Bauer regards the "destruction and creation of criticism" as the "only historical force." The "critic and only the critic has smashed religion in its entirety and the state in its various manifestations."83 Repeating the same point elsewhere the year earlier, Marx wrote that this form of uncritical "criticism, in its spiritual pride," has replaced all "dogmatic antitheses" with a "single dogmatic antithesis:" viz., it has "reduced the whole process of history to the relation between the rest of the world and itself," to the contradiction between its "own cleverness and the stupidity of the world."84 The working "masses" that have really remade nature through industry and labour never attain any "recognition" for it in Bauer's dialectic; instead, they remain forever "stuck in the muck of 'substance'" that the 'Critical Critic' has himself long since superseded and left behind in the

Quoted from Bauer's *Charakteristik*, see ibid., 176.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 63.</u>

Marx, Karl, 'To Ludwig Feuerbach, In Bruckberg. Paris; August 11, 1844.', Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. III, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 354-357.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'A Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. V, (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 15-16.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 171.

prehistory of German philosophy.85

Needless to say, when the Holy Father himself feels the pangs of "hunger," satirized Marx and Engels, even he has to climb down from these "Olympian" heights in order to satisfy that nature-given "need." Even he will find that natural necessity, when unmastered and unsatisfied, operates as a Feuerbachian *force in and over individuals*. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels elaborate that this

personified criticism, criticism as a subject, is precisely that 'critical criticism' against which *Die heilige Familie* was directed. 'Criticism and the critics, as long as they have existed, have guided and made history'. It is clear that they could not do so 'as long as they' did not 'exist', and it is equally clear that 'as long as they have existed' they 'made history' in their own fashion...Hence it seems that Saint Bruno himself came 'into the world, from the world, and to the world' through 'criticism', i.e., by *generatio aequivoca*. All this is, perhaps, merely another interpretation of the following passage from the Book of Genesis: And Adam *knew*, i.e., criticised, Eve his wife; and she conceived.⁸⁷

Between 1843 and 1846, Marx's writings display a distinct concern with trying to bring criticism down from Bauer's "Olympian" heights by returning the dialectic to a truly earthly plane. And, in this endeavour, they were aided by Feuerbach.

"Criticism" is transformed [by Bauer] into a transcendental being. These Berliners do not regard themselves as men who criticise, but as critics who, incidentally, have the misfortune of being men. They therefore acknowledge only one real need, the need of theoretical criticism. People like Proudhon are therefore accused of having made some "practical" "need" their point of departure. This criticism therefore lapses into a sad and supercilious intellectualism. Consciousness or self-consciousness is regarded as the only human quality...This criticism thus regards itself as the only active element in history...Thus Bauer says literally: "The critic should participate neither in the sufferings nor in the joys of society; he should know neither friendship and love, nor hate and envy; he should be enthroned in a solitude, where only the laughter of the Olympian Gods over the topsy-turviness of the world resounds occasionally from his lips"...He only exposes contradictions and, satisfied with this occupation, he departs with a contemptuous "Hm". He declares that criticism does not give anything, it is far too spiritual for that.⁸⁸

Thus, in contrast to Feuerbach, who was later criticized by Marx for prioritizing natural necessity in its abstract independence from human activity, Bauer is criticized here for

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the</u> *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 67.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 111.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 119.

Marx, Karl, 'To Ludwig Feuerbach, In Bruckberg. Paris; August 11, 1844.', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. III, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 354.

prioritizing self-consciousness in its abstraction from nature. If the first culminates in an 'abstract identity' between human and nature, we will read Marx and Engels explain that the latter establishes an equally 'abstract antithesis' between history and nature. But both Bauer and Feuerbach, despite moving in opposite directions philosophically, effectively circled back to the same practical conclusion when it came to the question of working-class emancipation. Bauer's critical criticism highlights "contradictions," but, refusing to "participate" in the struggle to abolish them, returns instead to its "Olympian" heights. Feuerbach's identity between immediate existence and essence treats all political, social, economic, etc., "contradictions" as if they were "inevitable abnormalities" produced by the otherwise consistent laws of nature, and from this antagonism he flees into the refuge of a higher perception. Marx and Engels claim in the below that this "does not essentially differ from the consolation which Saint Max Stirner offers to the discontented," and it "differs just as little from Saint Bruno's."

Feuerbach's acceptance and at the same time misunderstanding of existing reality, which he still shares with our opponents...[is to be found in] the passage in the Philosophie der Zukunft where he develops the view that the existence of a thing or a man is at the same time its or his essence, that the conditions of existence, the mode of life and activity of an animal or human individual are those in which its "essence" feels itself satisfied...The "essence" of the fish is its "being," water— to go no further than this one proposition...But the latter ceases to be the "essence" of the fish and is no longer a suitable medium of existence as soon as the river is made to serve industry, as soon as it is polluted by dyes and other waste products and navigated by steamboats, or as soon as its water is diverted into canals where simple drainage can deprive the fish of its medium of existence. The explanation that all such contradictions are inevitable abnormalities does not essentially differ from the consolation which Saint Max Stirner offers to the discontented...It differs just as little from Saint Bruno's allegation that these unfortunate circumstances are due to the fact that those concerned are stuck in the muck of "substance," have not advanced to "absolute self-consciousness and do not realise that these adverse conditions are spirit of their spirit"... The millions of proletarians and communists, however, think differently and will prove this in time, when they bring their "existence" into harmony with their "essence" in a practical way, by means of a revolution. Feuerbach, therefore, never speaks of the world of man in such cases, but always takes refuge in external nature, and moreover in nature which has not yet been subdued by men.89

In The Concept of Nature in Marx, the stated "aim" of Schmidt's first chapter is to

⁸⁹ Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 66-67.</u>

provide his readers with an "analysis of the real connection [and distinction] between Marxist materialism and [Feuerbach's] philosophical materialism."90 This is because he suspects, not without justice, that the whole "question of Marx's concept of nature necessarily extends outwards to the question of the relationship between the materialist conception of history and philosophical materialism in general."91 This is true. Although it is just as true that the whole question of the relationship between historical and philosophical materialism necessarily returns inward to the question of the relationship between their respective conceptions of nature. More precisely put, the very origins of Marx's "materialist conception of history" can be traced back to this critical confrontation with Feuerbach's unhistorical conception of nature. While the appropriation of Feuerbach's naturalism informed Marx's initial break with Bauer and the Young Hegelians, only with the critique of philosophical materialism does he complete the transition into what we now know as historical materialism. Only through the critique of Feuerbach's abstract naturalism was it possible to develop a truly 'scientific' analysis of history, just as only through the critique of Feuerbach's ahistorical humanism and abstract concept of species-being was it possible to develop a revolutionary political theory and radical philosophy of praxis.

This in no way diminishes the impact of Feuerbach upon Marx's early intellectual development. Rather, Marx only went 'beyond' Feuerbach by moving 'through' Feuerbach. The road to science passed through the 'brook of fire'. 92 Marx overcomes the limitations of

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⁹⁰ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 10.

⁹¹ Ibid., 19.

Marx, Karl, 'Luther as Arbiter between Strauss and Feuerbach', Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (trans.), (Anchor Books: New York; 1967), 95. In an anonymous article in 1844, Feuerbach is presented as the "purgatory of the present. There is no other road to truth and freedom but through the 'brook of fire' [a play on Feuer-bach]." Feuerbach, Ludwig, The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Feuerbach, Zawar Hanfi (trans.), (Verso Books: New York; 2013), 51. Or, according to another translation: "I advise you, speculative theologians and philosophers: free yourselves from the concepts and prepossesions of existing speculative philosophy...[T]here is no other road for you to truth and freedom except that leading through the stream of fire [the Feuer-bach]. Feuerbach is the purgatory of the present times." Marx, Karl, 'Luther as Arbiter between Strauss and Feuerbach', Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H.

Feuerbachian naturalism, and, at the same time, reappropriates the Hegelian dialectic on this transformed basis; but he does so in such a way that he retains crucial insights from this superseded (albeit nonetheless necessary) Feuerbachian moment, or 'intermediary' phase, in his process of self-clarification. Even the text which most explicitly and most fully expresses the distance which has grown between Marx and Feuerbach, *The German Ideology*, retains aspects of Feuerbach's critique of religion and philosophy, his critico-genetic method, and his concept of 'inversion'. If anything, Marx has only completed the 'materialist turn' in German philosophy which Feuerbach initiated before him.

As Carver acknowledges, the short section and fragmentary outline of the critique of Feuerbach in the manuscripts of 1845-46 is for that reason seemingly more interesting than the other portions of *The German Ideology* because it points beyond a "purely negative criticism." As Boer argues, in *The German Ideology* the critique of Feuerbach is "far more favourable" to its intended target than the other major sections of the work, i.e., where Marx and Engels merely "dispense with Bauer and Stirner." Throughout the work, they continue to employ a "central idea from Feuerbach— the inversion." In their critique of philosophical materialism in *The German Ideology*, they acknowledge precisely where they appropriate Feuerbach, regarding him as superior still to Bauer, Stirner, and Ruge, as well as the purely mechanical materialists of the 17th and 18th centuries.

However, while it is true that Feuerbach is not given the same "sustained and unrelenting

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Guddat (trans.), (Anchor Books: New York; 1967), 95. Although the authorship of this anonymous article has been brought into question, and, some even suggested that it may have been written by Feuerbach himself, the sentiments are nonetheless reflective of the thinking of Marx and Engels at the time. Feuerbach was indeed the 'brook of fire' through which the *kritik* of 'Critical Criticism' was originally forged. In *The Holy Family*, Marx and Engels make a very similar play on words as the anonymous author of the 1844 piece: *Feuerbach*, they wrote, is the "concealed cauldron [Engels here makes a pun on "Feuerbach" (literally stream of fire) and 'Feuerkesser' (boiler)] whose fumes inspire the frenzy of Absolute Criticism's victory-intoxicated head." Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company', Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 4, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 92-94.

Carver, Terrell, 'The German Ideology Never Took Place', *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 31, 107-127.

criticism" as Stirner and Bauer, it would be going much too far to conclude, as Boer does, that "Feuerbach receives more praise than criticism" in *The German Ideology*! ⁹⁴ Incidentally, he suggests that because Marx and Engels only praise Feuerbach, and only criticize Stirner and Bauer, scholars frequently reference the short 'chapter' on Feuerbach, but refuse to wade into the long-winded polemics in the subsequent sections, regarding Marx's relation to Bauer and Stirner as unimportant. Boer is absolutely right about how Marx's relation to Bauer and Stirner is usually treated in secondary literature. He is also right that this interpretative tendency is reinforced by the contrast in form between Marx's more even-handed appraisal of Feuerbach and his outright polemical attacks on Bauer or Stirner (which fail to acknowledge his real debt to them, especially to Bauer). However, Boer is mistaken about the absence of a critique of Feuerbach in The German Ideology. Perhaps, he arrives at this conclusion from being focused exclusively upon the process by which Marx and Engels transformed Feuerbach's critique of religion into the 'critique of the earth', applying Feuerbach's *method* of 'inversion' to politics, economics, and history. However, when we actually turn our attention to those specific questions about politics, economics, and history, and to the question of nature in connection with them all—that is, when we turn our attention precisely to Marx's 'critique of the earth'— we find that Feuerbach has already been left behind.

As Engels tells us years later after having "once again ferreted out and looked over the old manuscript of 1845-6," one of the reasons why the section on Feuerbach contains so little in comparison with the much lengthier portions on Stirner and Bauer is because the "section dealing with Feuerbach is not completed." However, Boer's view that Feuerbach receives more praise than criticism is unfortunately reinforced by another passing remark by Engels. According to Engels, not only was the critique of Feuerbach 'incomplete', the manuscript "contains no

⁹⁴ Boer, Roland, The Criticism of the Earth: Marx, Engels and Theology, (Brill: Boston; 2012), 70.

criticism of Feuerbach's doctrine" whatsoever (emphasis added)!⁹⁵ Of course, both Boer and Engels are mistaken. Even a cursory examination of the text shows precisely where he and Marx broke with Feuerbach's philosophical materialism. They went beyond the anthropological abstraction of Feuerbachian 'Man' and beyond the unmediated naturalism with which it corresponded. They broke decisively with Feuerbach's contemplative materialism and unhistorical emphasis upon the immediate identity between essence and existence. As I will argue later, they rejected the 'restricted' and one-sided way in which Feuerbach conceived of 'sensuousness' by ignoring the transformative powers of praxis and of 'sensuous activity'. And they therefore refused to lapse back into the refuge of a higher perception and ideal compensation in the species. In the end, Feuerbach was not a historian insofar as he was a materialist, and he was not a materialist insofar as he was a historian—which is to say, he was not a historical materialist.

Hence, it is not that Feuerbach has undergone no criticism whatsoever (as Boer following Engels suggests). Rather, what has happened in the fragmentary text is just this: viz., that Marx and Engels continue to appropriate Feuerbach in their critiques of Bauer, but, through critique, also move beyond Feuerbach. Marx's uncritical reception of Feuerbach represented an intermediary phase in his overall process of self-clarification. Thereafter, he returns to Hegel from a new standpoint mediated by this superseded Feuerbachian moment. Bloch actually does a very good job summarizing this period of clarification/critique in *The Principle of Hope* by emphasizing the key elements in both Marx's appropriation and rejection of Feuerbach. At the same time, Bloch rightly observes that these elements which, in 1845-46, constitute the breaking point between Marx and Feuerbach, were already present in 1843-44 in an implicit and

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 7-8.

undertheorized form. Even while Marx 'enthusiastically greeted' the new conception ushered into German philosophy by Feuerbach, he entertained many 'critical reservations' which would later boil up to the surface.

> [L]ooking back at it around fifty years later...[Engels argued that] 'we were all momentarily Feuerbachians'. How enthusiastically Marx greeted the new interpretation, and how greatly— despite all critical reservations— he was influenced by it, we can read in 'The Holy Family'...Meanwhile Marx very soon detached himself from this all too vague humanness...The separation from Feuerbach occurred with respect and in the first place as a correction or even as a mere amendment, but the totally different, social viewpoint is clear from the beginning. On 13th March 1843 Marx thus writes to Ruge: 'For me Feuerbach's aphorisms are only incorrect on one point, he refers too much to nature and too little to politics'...The 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts'...contain another significant celebration of Feuerbach, admittedly as a contrast to the woolgathering of Bruno Bauer; they praise above all among Feuerbach's achievements the 'foundation of true materialism and of real science, in that Feuerbach likewise makes the relationship between "man and man" into the fundamental principle of his theory'...But the 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts' are already a lot further beyond Feuerbach than they declare. The relationship between 'man and man' in them does not remain an abstract anthropological one at all, as it does in Feuerbach, instead the critique of human self-alienation (transferred from religion to the state [in Marx's 1843 Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right]) already penetrates to the economic heart of the alienation process...The breakthrough to political economy, i.e. away from Feuerbach's general idea of man, is accomplished in the first work undertaken in collaboration with Engels, in 'The Holy Family', likewise in 1844, [in] the 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts'...[N]othing more of Feuerbachian humanness remains here than its negation in capitalism...Instead of Feuerbachian generic man, with his abstract naturalness which always remains the same, a historically changing ensemble of social relationships now clearly appeared and above all: one that is antagonistic in class terms...Marx was a materialist at the latest from 1843 onwards; 'The Holy Family' gave birth to the materialist interpretation of history in 1844, and with it scientific socialism. And the 'Eleven Theses', produced between 'The Holy Family' of 1844/45 and 'The German Ideology' of 1845/46, thus represent the formulated departure from Feuerbach, together with a highly original entry into a new original inheritance...As is self-evident, the departure here is not a complete break. References to Feuerbach run through large parts of Marx's work, even after the departure of the 'Eleven Theses'. Closest to the abandoned land, if only for chronological reasons, stands 'The German Ideology' which directly followed the theses...'The German Ideology' fundamentally begins with the name of Feuerbach and criticizes, starting out from his critique of religion, the simply inner idealistic 'conquering' of idealism...However, Marx stresses on the other hand that Feuerbach 'is to be greatly preferred to the "pure" materialists in that he realizes that man is also a "sensory object." In fact, the recognition cited above indicates the importance of Feuerbach for the early development of Marxism just as much as the critique of his abstract, ahistorical notion of the human being indicates the un- and indeed anti-Feuerbachian character of fully developed Marxism itself. The recognition states: without man equally being [recognized as] a 'sensory object' [by Feuerbach], it would have been much more difficult [for Marx] to have worked out human activity materialistically as the root of all social things. Feuerbach's anthropological materialism thus marks the facilitated possible transition from mere mechanical to historical materialism.⁹⁶

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Bauer, Feuerbach, and Marx on Sensuousness

In The German Ideology, Marx and Engels abandon aspects of their earlier criticism of Bauer (found in *The Holy Family*) because they now reject the Feuerbachian materialism upon which it was based. The fallacy of philosophical naturalism is that it treats the objectivity of nature as something independent of human activity, and thereby raises natural necessity into an insuperable barrier. This was precisely Bauer's criticism of Feuerbach in the Wigand'sche Vierteljahrrsschrift. However, the activity which Marx and Engels had in mind was the objective activity of real labour, not the empty theorizing of critical criticism. And, in contrast to Bauer, they actually accepted in a qualified manner the Feuerbachian premise that the "force" of nature is something which operates "in individuals and over individuals"— hence, why it must be satisfied by labour, and not, like Feuerbach, idealistically posited in its abstract "independence." But Bauer commits the opposite error. He conceives of self-consciousness in its abstract "independence" from nature and does not regard necessity as a "force" at all. As we have seen, this is why Marx and Engels refute his polemic against the so-called 'particularity' of the working-class. It is not only the wage-worker who is stuck in the 'muck' of the sensuousness of nature; even the Holy Father himself experiences hunger as a force in the pit of his belly.

[A]s though, in our day, every inclination, every impulse, every need did not assert itself as a force "in the individual and *over* the individual," whenever circumstances hinder their satisfaction. If the holy father Bruno experiences hunger, for example, without the means of appeasing it, then even his stomach will become a force "*in* him and *over* him." Feuerbach's mistake is not that he stated this fact but that in idealistic fashion he endowed it with independence instead of regarding it as the product of a definite and *surmountable stage of historical development* [emphasis added].⁹⁷

Instead of recognizing this "priority of external nature" in the 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs', Bauer, in his "hatred" toward the "sensuous world," represented all of the forces of

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998),111.</u>

nature in the simple "shape of a 'stick'." "Sensuousness," mocked Marx and Engels in both the 'Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique' and again in the *The German Ideology*, "do you know, unfortunate one, what sensuousness is [to the Critical Critic]? Sensuousness is— a 'stick'." At least Feuerbach had gone so far as to recognize that the human being is a natural, objective, and sensuous being, dependent, even in the last instance, upon the objects of nature for the satisfaction of its own needs. In this respect, Bauer had merely fallen *behind*, and had by no means gone *beyond*, Feuerbachian naturalism in his 1845 article. In fact, he ultimately reproduced the very same problematic that he identified with philosophical naturalism, except that with him the determinations have undergone a fantastic reversal: if the shortcoming of Feuerbach's philosophical materialism is that it abstracts nature from history, then it is just as true that Bauer's speculative idealism abstracts history from nature, erecting an insoluble 'antithesis' between them.

"Truth," Bauer was right to argue against Feuerbach's notion of sense-certainty, cannot be "encountered in a ready-made object." On this question, Marx and Bauer were in agreement. "This is the point at which Marx's critique of Feuerbach begins," argues Marcuse, because here "Marx upholds Hegel on this point, as against Feuerbach. Hegel had denied that sense-certainty is the final criterion of the truth." As Bauer put it, the highest "recognition of nature" can only be achieved by "sublat[ing] nature in [a] mediated fashion," i.e., by stamping it with a "form

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Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'A Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. V, (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 15-16. See also Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 47-48, 103-105, 111, 113, 115.</u>

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach</u> and the <u>Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 113.

Feuerbach, Ludwig, 'Principles of the Philosophy of the Future', <u>The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings of Ludwig Feuerbach</u>, Zwar Hanfi (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2012), 180-182.

Bauer quoted in Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach</u> and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 112.

Marcuse, Herbert, <u>Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory</u>, Routledge; London; 2000), 259-260.

which it does not have in its natural immediacy." 103 "Man [too] is a product of history, not of nature," Bauer wrote— and again, in principle at least, Marx would surely have agreed. 104 Although Marx followed Feuerbach in regarding the human being as a "natural being," he added to this that the human being is not "merely a natural being," but a "human natural being." Hence, "natural objects as they immediately present themselves" to Feuerbach's 'sensuous certainty' are not necessarily "human objects," not the human "sensuousness" of nature, just as the sense-faculties, as "immediately" given, are not truly "human sense[s]." 105

The sensory qualities and self-love, enjoyment and correctly understood personal interest are the basis of all morality. The natural equality of human intelligences, the unity of progress of reason and progress of industry, the natural goodness of man, and the omnipotence of education, are the main features in this system... Just as Cartesian materialism passes into natural science proper, the other trend of French materialism leads directly to socialism and communism...There is no need for any great penetration to see from the teaching of materialism on the original goodness and equal intellectual endowment of men, the omnipotence of experience, habit and education, and the influence of environment on man, the great significance of industry, the justification of enjoyment, etc., how necessarily materialism is connected with communism and socialism. If man draws all his knowledge, sensation, etc., from the world of the senses and the experience gained in it, then what has to be done is to arrange the empirical world in such a way that man experiences and becomes accustomed to what is truly human in it and that he becomes aware of himself as man. If correctly understood interest is the principle of all morality, man's private interest must be made to coincide with the interest of humanity...If man is shaped by environment, his environment must be made human...[This is] the teaching of materialism as the teaching of real humanism and the logical basis of communism...Helvétius...'Human beings are born neither good nor bad but ready to become one or the other according as a common interest unites or divides them.'- 'If citizens could not achieve their own particular good without achieving the general good, there would be no vicious people except fools'...As, according to Helvétius, it is education, by which he means not only education in the ordinary sense but the totality of the individual's conditions of life, which forms man, if a reform is necessary to abolish the contradiction between particular interests and those of society, so, on the other hand, a transformation of consciousness is necessary to carry out such a reform:.. Holbach. 'Man can only love himself in the objects he loves: he can have affection only for himself in the other beings of his-kind'...'True morality, and true politics as well, is that which seeks to bring men nearer to one another to make them work by united efforts for their common happiness. Any morality which separates our interests from those of our associates, is false, senseless, unnatural'. 106

Quoted from Bauer's *Charakteristik* in Moggach, Douglas, <u>The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer</u>, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2003), 76.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted from Bauer's *Charakteristik* in ibid., 143.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 182.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. 4, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 130.

Despite some of the aforementioned parallels between Bauer's and Marx's critiques of Feuerbach, the point of distinction between them is to be found in the fact that Bauer's "vehement polemic against Feuerbach's sensuousness" does not attempt to expand the "highly restricted way in which Feuerbach recognises sensuousness." Instead, he tries to do away with the sense-world altogether. "Sensuousness" was just a "stick" for Bauer. Yet, just as Feuerbach's immediate "sensuousness" is not "immediately...human sense," neither therefore is Bauer's principle of consciousness immediately "humanely sensuous consciousness. "108 The problem with Feuerbach is not that he conceived of the human as a 'sensuous' and 'objective being', but that he failed to conceive of the transformative power of human activity as 'sensuously objective activity'— a failure, by the way, which applies just as much to Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness. As Marx and Engels put it in The German Ideology, Feuerbach's conception of sensuousness is limited because he "never manages to conceive of the sensuous world as the total living sensuous activity of the individuals composing it." As Marcuse explains of the origins of Feuerbach conception of 'sensuousness':

"sensuousness" is here an ontological category within the definition of man's essence...The concept of sensuousness here taken up by Marx (via Feuerbach and Hegel) goes back to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. There it is said that sensuousness is the human perception through which alone objects are *given* to us...Human perception and sensuousness [thus conceived] is receptive and passive....In Feuerbach...the concept of sensuousness originally tends in the same direction as in Kant...This accepting, passive being with needs, dependent on given things, which finds its expression in man's sensuousness...is the original basis for Feuerbach's attack on Hegel and his idea of man as a purely free, creative consciousness...¹¹⁰

Now, the "same tendency to go back to sensuousness," i.e., to "comprehend man's being defined by needs and his dependence on pre-established objectivity by means of the

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 112-113.</u>

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 111.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 41.

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Foundations of Historical Materialism', <u>The Essential Marcuse</u>, Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss (ed.), (Beacon Press: Boston; 2007), 87.

sensuousness in his own being," is also "discernible in Marx." But, as Marcuse goes on to conclude, while both Marx and Feuerbach were driven (by the same contradictions of German philosophy) to materialism, Marx's conception of 'sensuousness' developed in a completely different direction. He abolishes the 'Kantian' element in Feuerbach's theory, or, rather, *replaces Kant with Hegel*. With Marx, the Feuerbachian "concept of sensuousness" is enriched and totally transformed by the Hegelian theory of "objectification," and it is this which provided the "decisive turn from classical German philosophy to the theory of revolution." In contrast to Feuerbach's contemplative materialism, the *passivity of sense-certitude* has been replaced with the *agency of labour*.

In Feuerbach man's possession of, and relation to, the world remains essentially theoretical...In Marx, to put it briefly, labour replaces this perception...[It is] the concept of labour in its inner connection to the definition of man as a "natural" and "sensuous" (objective) being...[I]t is in labour that the distress and neediness, but also the universality and freedom of man, become real.¹¹²

As Marcuse suggests in another work, Marx thereby returns to Hegel precisely through the critique of Feuerbach's principle of sensuousness.

Hegel's point was that labor brings sense-certainty and nature into the historical process. Because he conceived of human existence in terms of sense, Feuerbach disregarded the material function of labor altogether...Labor transform the natural conditions of human existence into social ones. By omitting the labor process from his philosophy of freedom, therefore, Feuerbach omitted the decisive factor through which nature might become the medium for freedom. His interpretation of man's development as a 'natural' development neglected the historical conditions for liberation.¹¹³

This deepening of the concept of sensuousness was articulated with both clarity and urgency in the first thesis on Feuerbach:

The chief defect of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the *object or perception*...not as sensuous human activity, practice (Praxis), not subjectively. Hence in opposition to materialism the active side was developed by idealism—but only abstractly since idealism naturally does not know actual, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects actually different from thought objects, but he does not comprehend

¹¹¹ Ibid., 87.

¹¹² Ibid., 89.

Marcuse, Herbert, <u>Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory</u>, (Routledge; London; 2000), 271-272.

human activity itself as objective. 114

This reformulation of the theory of sensuousness was not only a decisive moment in Marx's own intellectual development; it also marks a turning-point in the history of philosophy. Suddenly, the "question [of] whether human thinking can reach objective truth," one of the most perennial questions of all philosophy, becomes a "practical question," i.e., it is in "practice" that humankind "must prove the truth." Obviously, the political implications of Marx's rethinking of the concept of sensuousness inherited from Feuerbach are summarized most clearly in the final thesis, where, building upon Cieszkowski and Hess, he envisions philosophy being sublated by praxis. For Marx, the internal connection between the sensuous world and the sensuous activity of individuals can only be "comprehended" as a historical process of "revolutionary practice." By changing their circumstances individuals change themselves, and by changing themselves they change their circumstances. 115

To be sure, Feuerbach had grasped that "man too is an 'object of the senses'," and, in this respect at least, he was superior to Bauer. But he did not grasp the reciprocal connection between the sensuous world of nature and the sensuous activity of individuals dependent upon interacting with it. He conceived of 'Man' *only* as an "object of the senses, not as sensuous activity," not as "objective activity," and thus also failed to recognize that the "whole sensuous world" is continually reshaped by the form-giving fires of labour. This is why the *Theses* asserts that Feuerbach failed to appreciate that human activity (i.e., the *subjective side* theorized until then by Fichte, Hegel, and Bauer) is itself objective, i.e., a real, material force at work in the world. On the one hand, the objectivity of nature is remade through the objective activity of labour, but, on

Marx, Karl, 'Theses on Feuerbach', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Simon H. Lawrence (ed.), (Hackett Publishing: Indianapolis; 1994), 99.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 99.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 45-47.</u>

the other, Marx also recognizes that the human develops her own capacities, confirming her own sensibilities and faculties in the world which she has remade. He understands that the senses are therefore not given by nature in a *human* form; the development of truly *human sense* is the work of world-history.

Just as only music awakens in man the sense of music, and just as the most beautiful music has no sense for the unmusical ear— is no object for it, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers—it can therefore only exist for me insofar as my essential power exists for itself as a subjective capacity; because the meaning of an object for me goes only so far as my sense goes (has only a meaning for a sense corresponding to that object)— for this reason the senses of the social man differ from those of the non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective human sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form— in short, senses capable of human gratification, senses affirming themselves as essential powers of man) either cultivated or brought into being. For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses, the practical senses (will, love, etc.), in a word, human sense, the human nature of the senses, comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of humanised nature. The forming of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present. The sense caught up in crude practical need has only a restricted sense.> For the starving man, it is not the human form of food that exists, but only its abstract existence as food. It could just as well be there in its crudest form, and it would be impossible to say wherein this feeding activity differs from that of animals. The care-burdened, poverty-stricken man has no sense for the finest play; the dealer in minerals sees only the commercial value but not the beauty and the specific character of the mineral: he has no mineralogical sense. Thus, the objectification of the human essence, both in its theoretical and practical aspects, is required to make man's sense human, as well as to create the human sense corresponding to the entire wealth of human and natural substance. 117

In direct contrast to Bauer, Marx *expands* the principle of sensuousness which was articulated by Feuerbach in a defective and 'restricted' way (i.e., in a way which excluded labour, history, etc.). His theory of sensuousness, just like his overall philosophy of nature, has definite historical dimensions to it. However, when the Marx of 1843-44 first imports these concepts from Feuerbach, he seems unaware at times that history is altogether foreign to Feuerbach's naturalism and emphasis upon immediate sense-certainty. It is "apparent" to Marx, but not to Feuerbach, that the "history of *industry*, industry as *objectively* existing, is the *open* book of

See Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 140-141. Or, see Marx, Karl, 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 75.

man's essential powers, the observably present human psychology, which has not been thus far grasped in its connection with man's essential nature but only in an external utilitarian way." For Marx, "History itself is an actual part of natural history, of nature's development into man." The "whole of history is a preparation for 'man' to become the object of sensuous awareness and for the needs of 'man as man' to become sensuous needs." These statements, although formulated before Marx openly broke with Feuerbach, have already overcome the limits of philosophical materialism. This concept of sensuousness developed in The Holy Family and Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts is already so far beyond Feuerbach's ahistorical naturalism that it unwittingly anticipates the break that will soon follow in the Theses and The German Ideology. 119

There, Marx will state with clarity his relation to both Feuerbach and Bauer. He sees their philosophies of nature as equally one-sided standpoints: while Feuerbach clung to the abstract unity between humanity and nature, Bauer defended an antiquated antithesis between nature and history. While they occupied different sides of what is really just this same abstract distinction, Marx attempts to mediate between them in the *Theses on Feuerbach, Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique*, and *The German Ideology*. He tries to articulate a conception of human development which is different from both "idealism" and "materialism" as understood Bauer and Feuerbach, and, yet, is the "unifying truth of both" of these equally one-sided standpoints. ¹²⁰ Not only has his relationship to Feuerbach and critique of Bauer changed in the 1845-46 writings, but, consequently, so too has his whole philosophy of nature. No longer is Feuerbach the "brook of

See Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 140-141. Or, see Marx, Karl, 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 75.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 45-.
 Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 181.

fire" through which science must be forged. No longer is Feuerbach the "purgatory" of Young Hegelianism, or, the path to the critique of Hegel and Bauer. Since Marx and Engels were only *momentarily Feuerbachians*, as their 'enthusiasm' subsided they found themselves compelled to reformulate the earlier critique of Critical Criticism that they had presented in 1844—"influenced" as it was by the immediate impact of the philosophical naturalism that they had by now abandoned. And, it would not be going too far to speculate, Marx and Engels likely felt compelled to reappraise the merits of Feuerbachian naturalism in light of the counter-critique launched against them by Bauer's 1845 *Charakteristk*.

In fact, again, when Marx and Engels responded to Bauer's 1845 piece for the Wigand'sche Vierteljahrsschrift in their 'Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique' and in The German Ideology, they openly conceded for the first time that "Feuerbach's mistake" was really to have idealistically "endowed" the "force" of externalized nature with an insurmountable "independence." At the same time, since Bauer himself had merely committed the opposite error by refusing to recognize the on-going presence of nature in the dialectic as anything more than a "stick," Marx and Engels rejected his reaffirmation of, and reversion to, what is an altogether inadequate and antiquated "antithesis" between "nature and history." Bauer effectively reproduces this old antinomy because his philosophy relegates the "real production of life" to "primeval history, while the [supposedly] truly historical" element— the Critical Critic's Olympian "self-consciousness"— always "appears to be separated from ordinary life." 123

Conclusion

Engels acknowledged that they were "at once" or "momentarily Feuerbachians." Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 18.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 111. 123 Ibid., 62-63.

In the 1840s, Marx's thinking underwent considerable change— a period which he referred to as one of simultaneous critique and self-clarification. This chapter has explored those developments within the context of the changes that took place in his philosophy of nature, and in direct relation to the thought of Bauer and Feuerbach. It defended the interpretative position that Marx's early conception of nature developed biphasically through these critiques. In the first phase, those writings composed between 1843-44, his reappraisal of the role which nature plays within the Hegelian dialectic was carried out through the mediation of Feuerbachian naturalism. He characterizes his initial critique of Bauer in *The Holy Family* as a *defence* of philosophical materialism. In the second phase, by contrast, Marx breaks with Feuerbach's contemplative materialism, but, at the same time, also reformulates the earlier critique of Bauer on the basis of this new worldview.

In this first chapter, we discovered just how 'enthusiastically' he initially greeted the 'theoretical revolution' ushered in by Feuerbach. Marx regarded the 'fiery brook' as the cauldron in which the new science of society and philosophy of the future would be forged. After Feuerbach, only the 'comedians' of the old philosophy would refuse to come to terms with the fact that 'nothing exists outside of nature' and that humankind is itself a part of nature. When he first set out to criticize his mentor, Bruno Bauer, in the 1843 On the Jewish Question and Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx therefore did so on the basis provided by Feuerbach's genetic method of critique and concept of inversion, as elaborated in the 1842 Preliminary Theses for the Reform of Philosophy and 1843 Principles of the Philosophy of the Future. I argued that these were the Feuerbachian writings which Marx must have had in mind when he refers to philosophical materialism as the only theoretical revolution since Hegel's Logic, and when he claims that Feuerbach is the only thinker to have taken-up a genuinely critical attitude toward the Hegelian dialectic.

In the works of 1844, Marx only furthered his earlier criticism of Bauer through the continued appropriation of Feuerbachian terms— even if the significance which he ascribes to these terms is already far removed from the meaning which Feuerbach attached to them. He continues to conceive of human society as a part of nature, confirming, as he sees it, the inner connection between humanism and naturalism in Feuerbach's philosophy of nature and conception of species-being. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* and *The Holy Family*, he even treats Feuerbachian humanism and naturalism as providing a set of ontological and anthropological principles for his own political theory and conception of communism. However, although he remained formally committed to the philosophical revolution sparked by Feuerbach, we have seen that Marx also privately entertained certain 'critical reservations' which foreshadowed the rupture that would soon follow. Indeed, I have argued that, in 1844, Marx had already implicitly transcended the limits of philosophical materialism even though, at times, he seems entirely unaware of it.

Having examined his relationship to Bauer and Feuerbach in the writings of 1843-44, and having registered its impact upon his concept of nature and settling of accounts with the Hegelian dialectic, this chapter went on to examine the break with Feuerbach which occurs in the works of 1845-46. If the 1843-44 critiques of Bauer in *On the Jewish Question, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, and *The Holy Family* remain indebted to Feuerbachian humanism and naturalism, even though already implicitly beyond them, then the 1845-46 critiques of Bauer in the *Reply to Bruno Bauer's Anti-Critique* and *The German Ideology* are explicitly anti-Feuerbachian— i.e., they contain the same elements which we also find in the *Theses on Feuerbach*. In addition to harbouring his own 'critical reservations', I have suggested that Bauer's 1845 response to *The Holy Family* in the *Charaketistik Ludwig Feuerbachs* acted as a catalyst, provoking Marx into a reconsideration of Feuerbachian naturalism. At the same time,

this period of reappraisal also forced him to reformulate his earlier critique of Bauer, carried-out as it was within the context of his uncritically enthusiastic reception of Feuerbach.

In the *Charakteristik*, Bauer offered a rebuttal of Feuerbach's static conception of nature. He argued that nature is elevated and ennobled by art, mediated and mastered by labour, industry, and human ingenuity. To be sure, there are certain parallels between Bauer's critique in the *Charakteristik* and Marx's subsequent break with Feuerbach. But, to paraphrase Marx, the only labour which Bauer knows is mental labour, i.e., philosophy. For him, the actual wage-labourers who really transform nature on a daily basis are stuck in the same muck of 'substance' as Feuerbach's naturalism. Instead, Bauer conceives of the consciousness of the critical critic as the universal and active element of all history. In the end, Marx will tell us that Bauer's critique of Feuerbach's concept of sensuousness in the *Charakteristik* in no way goes beyond Feuerbachian naturalism, but, rather, remains fixed within the old abstract antithesis between history and nature. Marx, by contrast, deepened and enriched the concept of sensuousness by introducing the idea of praxis into it. He understood the sensuousness of nature not as an unmediated objectivity, as Feuerbach did, but as something constantly reshaped by objective activity. This, as we will discover in the next chapter, had significant implications for his materialist conception of history.

Nature, Need and History: Marx's Historical Conception of Nature

Introduction: Need and Human Development in History

The critiques of Bauer and Feuerbach examined in the previous chapter were directly related to the first formulations of the doctrine of historical materialism. This chapter argues that the materialist conception of history was developed in parallel with what I, following Engels, characterize as Marx's historical conception of nature. Marx developed this historical conception of nature (and of the human relation to it) in direct opposition to both the abstract identity between humanism and naturalism postulated by Feuerbach, and the abstract antagonism between history and nature in Bauer. As we discovered in the last chapter, in Bauer's dialectic, the sensuousness of nature and force of natural necessity is reduced to a 'stick' by the progress of history. In Feuerbach's contemplative materialism, nature is grasped as a dead objectivity, unmediated by human activity, and his anthropological conception of the human being as a species-being remains entirely confined within this ahistorical abstraction as well. In contrast to both of these views, this chapter emphasizes the importance of Marx's recognition that nature, and the human dependence upon it, is retained as a fundamental condition of history and of all social development, but, as such, also modified in accordance with it.

In juxtaposition to Bauer, this chapter will substantiate that Marx and Engels grounded their materialist conception of history upon 'natural bases'—viz., what they refer to as the 'first premises' or 'real premises' of history. Their new conception of history proceeds from the recognition of the simple, almost physiological, facts of life: humans must satisfy their needs before they can begin to make their own history. They only begin to make their own history when they begin to make their own means of production, thereby altering the nature-given

conditions of human social life. As they satisfy their original needs, new needs emerge over time which require means of satisfaction and forms of activity capable of satisfying them. As such, this conception of history is predicated on the view that by changing the material circumstances which condition their lives, individuals at the same time change themselves— e.g., they cultivate new desires, habits, capacities, as well as relations to one another and to nature.

This underscores what I believe to be the most fundamental connection between Marx's materialist conception of human development in history, and his historical conception of nature and the human relation to it. In the final section of this chapter, Part I of the dissertation concludes with a consideration of the political implications of this internal connection between nature and history for Marx's early conception of socialism. Since humans are shaped by the conditions of their life, the conditions of their life must assume a more human shape. By objectifying himself in nature, by reshaping nature into a more human form, man at the same time realizes his own human nature. Nature, and the socially mediated relation to it in history, is therefore a metric by which Marx measures human development as a whole. In his vision of a higher form of society, human and natural history would terminate in a reconciliation made possible by such praxis— or, what he refers to as the simultaneous humanization of nature and naturalization of humanity. Socialism, as he characterizes it during this period in his intellectual development, is the *completed unity* of society and nature, i.e., completed humanism as naturalism and completed naturalism as humanism.

The Theory of Need, Recognition of Nature and Real Premises of Materialism

In the mid-1840s, Marx set out to "settle accounts" with the Hegelian dialectic and with his own "philosophical conscience." Out of this phase in his early philosophical development emerged the "guiding thread" that would bind together all of his subsequent studies of politics, economics and history. This period of intellectual 'storm and stress' provided him with the vague outlines of a whole new worldview: historical materialism. He had inaugurated this process of "self-clarification" by launching a "critique of post-Hegelian philosophy," which is to say, a critique of Bauer, Feuerbach and Stirner. At the same time, then, Marx was also seeking to clarify to these other thinkers that his new conception of history was at odds with the uncritical and "ideological one" which had until then prevailed within "German philosophy." And integrally connected to that new conception of history was a completely new conception of nature and of the human relation to it. Secondary literature on Marx has acknowledged, but often underemphasized, the extent to which the first formulations of the doctrine of historical materialism rested upon such a radical rethinking of the category of nature. In fact, I would argue that many of the essential elements of the materialist conception of history emerge only as the outcome of Marx's critique of the nature-philosophies of Bauer and Feuerbach.

Instead of taking the "actual germs of life" for the "point of departure" of their historical analyses, these other post-Hegelian thinkers began from the ideological "presuppositions" of the "previous philosophy" that Marx and Engels were themselves in the process of shedding. Since they were initially "dealing with Germans," from whose fantastic "speculation[s]" *real material presuppositions* were entirely absent, it became all the more pressing to begin by illustrating that their materialist conception of history was not similarly "devoid of premises." Marx's conception of history is not at all without its 'presuppositions' then. He and Engels unashamedly disclosed these almost from the very start of their collaboration. Their "view was *not without premises*," they insist, because it "empirically observes the actual material premises" of life in

124 Ibid., 36-37, 42-43.

their forms of social motion and historical fluidity. 125

In the course of the exposition of these "real premises" of historical materialism in *The German Ideology* it becomes clear that Marx's materialist conception of history is internally related to a much more *historical conception of nature*. At first, however, this connection between history and nature is present only in an unmediated form because the "first premise" of *human history* is immediately identical to the "first premise" of *human life*. At the outset of human history, nature is not yet modified by human activity, nor are the forms of activity which will modify it. At this moment in development, the connection between history and nature is therefore wholly natural, and not yet historical. After all, humans first had to "live" before they could even *begin* to "make history." It is upon the "natural basis" of this "first principle" of materialism— i.e., upon the recognition of the necessary physiological connection to nature—that Marx's constructs his whole economic interpretation of history.

The first premise of all human history, of course, is the existence of living human individuals...[W]e must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence, and hence of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be able to live in order to be able "to make history." But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, housing, clothing and various other things.¹²⁷

In his eulogy to his friend, Engels declared that if Darwin disclosed the hidden *law of natural history*, then Marx must be credited with having "discovered the law of development of human history:" namely, by starting from the "simple fact...that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing," etc., in order to *make its own history*.¹²⁸ Engels'

¹²⁵ Ibid., 253-254.

See Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The German Ideology', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 115; or Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 47.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The German Ideology', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 107, 115.

Engels, Friedrich, 'Speech at the Graveside of Marx, <u>The Marx-Engels Reader</u>, Robert C. Tucker (ed.), (W.W. Norton: New York;1972), 603-604.

characterizations of the connections between natural and social history, or, if you like, between Darwin and Marx, oscillate between profound insightfulness and, in the case of this statement, what borders on oversimplification. However, it is elementary that we acknowledge along with Marx and Engels that the "first fact" of all human history— a "simple fact" that has always been 'presupposed' in practice, but never explicitly theorized as such by German philosophy— is just the "physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature." The "first principle" of the materialist "theory of history" is to accept and "observe this fundamental fact [of nature] in its entire significance and all its implications." 130

To be sure, the "implications" of this 'first premise' include its extension outward through every stage of human history. It is a simple physiological fact of life, but, as such, it also applies to human existence in all of its historical and possible social forms. Humans will always have to eat, drink, etc., and, moreover, will always have to labour in order to satisfy those needs. This is the eternal aspect of a natural necessity which can certainly be transformed and humanized, but, of course, never abolished outright by any mode of production. Even when this natural necessity is modified in accordance with the altered needs of the socialized individual, and mastered by the universally-developed productive powers of society, the primacy of this first principle in Marx's materialism remains untouched. However, insofar as we restrict our attention to this 'first premise' not as it appears throughout the course of history, but as it was for the original condition of human life, it applies exclusively to naturally-arisen forms of precapitalist society.

Taken in this strict sense, then, the first point of connection between the categories of nature and history in historical materialism is purely *natural* and, in no way, *historical*. Marx's

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach</u> and the <u>Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 37.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The German Ideology', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 115.

materialist conception of history *proceeds* from the recognition that nature is the "real basis" and starting-point of all human development. As Dolowitz and Johnston emphasize, Marx's "starting-point of human history is Man's struggle with nature to meet his immediate material means of subsistence." It follows as a corollary that the very "first historical act" must have been *completely conditioned* by the "production of the means to satisfy these needs" specifically. The first steps into history were oriented toward the satisfaction of the purely immediate and even animal-like needs of still undeveloped individuals—viz., needs which were not yet products of history, but determinations given by an unmodified natural necessity. *Need itself* has not yet emerged here from what Kant refers to as the 'crudity of nature'.

However, Marx and Engels claim that through a necessary dialectic the "first premise," or the "satisfaction of the first need," inevitably "leads to new needs"—and the satisfaction of these "new needs" belongs, properly speaking, to what they refer to as the "second" premise of historical materialism. The important point here is that the production and satisfaction of these social needs is the outcome of an ongoing process of human development in time.

The different forms of material life are, of course, in every case dependent on the needs which are already developed, and the production, as well as the satisfaction, of these needs is an historical process, which is not to be found in the case of a sheep or a dog...although sheep and dogs in their present form certainly, but in spite of themselves, are products of an historical process [emphasis added].¹³⁴

Some scholars have problematized this transition from natural to social need in *The German Ideology*'s presentation of the "three premises of human existence." Hearn, for instance, claims that Marx and Engels depicted the "movement of humanity" away from a purely "animal" condition "slightly confusingly" insofar as it is unclear whether need determines production, or

Dolowitz, David P., and Johnston, Jim, 'Marxism and Social Class', <u>Marxism and Social Science</u>, Gamble, Marsh and Tant (ed.), (University of Illinois Press: Chicago; 1990), 131-132.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 47.</u>

¹³³ Ibid., 47-48.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 90-91.

production need.¹³⁵ For Marx and Engels, there is certainly a reciprocal relation between need and labour at every stage of development, although the latter is always determinative in the 'last instance'. They are clear that this transition from nature-given to social need— a *second nature*, to borrow Hegel's turn of phrase— is made possible by the "first historical act" of labour.¹³⁶ This is why he tells us that the "satisfaction of the first need, the action of satisfying and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired, leads to new needs," and that this "creation of new needs" is the other side of the "first historical act." In this respect, the first premise clearly forms the basis for Marx's argument that humans only really start to "distinguish themselves from animals" when they set out to first "*produce* their means of subsistence" (instead of finding them ready-made by nature).¹³⁷

Only when humans begin to 'make their own history' in this way do they begin to satisfy needs which fall outside the narrow scope of natural necessity and animal expediency. And herein lies the philosophical significance of Marx's conception of the 'first act of history'. Human history does not begin at this point merely because we satisfy the animal-like demands upon human life, but, rather, because we begin to produce and satisfy new (and, eventually, truly human) needs. As Foster explains, the initial steps into "human history proper" were not taken

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Hearn, Jeff, "Gender: Biology, Nature and Capitalism, <u>The Cambridge Companion to Marx</u>, Terrell Carver (ed.), (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 1999), 222.

Hegel was here criticizing Rousseau's assertion that "man is free by *nature*, but that in *society...*he must limit this natural freedom. That man is free by Nature is quite correct in one sense; viz., that he is so according to the Idea of Humanity; but we imply thereby that he is such only in virtue of his destiny—that he has an undeveloped power to become such... a '*second* nature' as it has been justly called; for the *first* nature of man is his primary merely animal existence...But the view in question imports more than this. When man is spoken of as 'free by Nature', the mode of his existence as well as his destiny is implied...[In Rousseau] a 'state of Nature' is assumed in which mankind at large are in the possession of their natural rights with the unconstrained exercise and enjoyment of their freedom. This assumption is not indeed raised to the dignity of the historical fact; it would indeed be difficult, were the attempt seriously made, to point out any such condition as actually existing, or as having ever occurred. Examples of a savage state of life can be pointed out, but they are marked by brutal passions and deeds of violence; while, however rude and simple their conditions, they involve social arrangements which (to use the common phrase) *restrain* freedom." Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, The Philosophy of History, J. Sibree (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1991), 42.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 47-48.</u>

when we simply satiated the "first need[s]," which he rightly refers to as the (necessary but still insufficient) "natural prerequisites of history." Human history only truly begins when, after having satisfied these original needs, production permitted for the "creation of new needs," i.e., needs which eventually become "far removed from their original natural bases." This leads Foster to conclude that the significance of the "first historical act" is that it thereby lays down the first foundations for the development of a "specifically human relation to nature." Despite the shortcomings of Foster's reading in other respects, he is nonetheless quite right to regard these *real premises* as the first "integral" point of connection between the "materialist conception of nature and history," precisely, as he adds, because they illustrate how "[f]rom such natural prerequisites of history...Marx and Engels proceeded to human history proper."¹³⁸

Recall Marx's critique of Feuerbach's theory of sensuousness. For Marx, sensuousness, as it is immediately given, is not present as *human sense*. Truly human sensibilities are results of the labour of history, and not gifts of nature— e.g., an 'ear for music', an 'eye for beauty', etc. For the same reason, Marx's theory of history also treats *need* as a product of human development in time. For example, the *need* for beauty, love, fine food, for Sophocles, etc.— these are social needs brought about by a cultural process of *Bildung*. Contrary to what is often suggested, he actually envisions a socialist society as one which would not merely satisfy the basic needs of all individuals, but, rather, would make possible for the first time a truly *needy* individual. The "rich" individual is one who "*needs* a totality of human manifestations of life and in whom his own realization exists as inner necessity, as *need*." A *really wealthy* individual, a *genuinely rich person*, is he or she who feels and satisfies the need for a variety of activities, a diversity of

Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's *Grundrisse* and the Ecological Contradiction of Capitalism', <u>Karl Marx's Grundrisse</u>: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later, Marcello Musto (ed.), (Routledge: New York; 2008), 97-98.

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 115.

relations, a whole world of experiences and forms of pleasure. The "greater the extent to which historic needs— needs created by production itself, social needs"— are "posited as *necessary*, the higher the level to which real wealth has become developed." "Regarded *materially*," and this certainly tells us something about Marx's materialism, "wealth consists only in the manifold variety of needs," a "totality of activities, [forms of] intercourse, [and] needs." ¹⁴⁰

The theory of need elaborated in the manuscripts for *The German Ideology* breaks with the conception of need found not only in Feuerbach, but also in Bauer and Stirner. If we recall, Marx had criticized Bauer for failing to grasp that "every inclination, every impulse, every need…assert[s] itself as a force…whenever circumstances hinder their satisfaction." Even if the external necessity of the "sensuous world" can one day be "reduced to a minimum," and leveraged by a "stick as with Saint Bruno," this still "presupposes the action of producing the stick." But for Bauer the actual labour of the wage-worker is stuck within the muck of nature and the pure particularity of immediate need. Bauer rather "acknowledges only one real need, the need of theoretical criticism," as if this were the only thing he hungered for. 143

While Bauer at least recognized the need for criticism, Stirner tried to do away with the 'fixity' of needs altogether. This is because he, like Bauer, regarded need as a form of "heteronomy" in the Kantian sense of the term. It "can occur only to Saint Max and his like not to allow his sex instinct, for instance, to become 'fixed'; it is that already and will cease to be fixed only as the result of castration." It all amounts to a "Christian dialectic," Marx and Engels insist in the below, because it amounts to assuming that "I myself am not nature." In Marx's

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 527.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 111. 142 Ibid., 47.

Marx, Karl, 'To Ludwig Feuerbach, In Bruckberg. Paris; August 11, 1844.', <u>Marx-Engels Collected Works</u>, Vol. III, (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 356.

ontology and anthropology, the individual's relation to nature— be it to her own "natural character" and human nature, or to "what is known as external nature"— is not "foreign" to her as an individual. The "feelings, passions, etc.," of the human being are not merely "anthropological phenomena," but, rather, "truly ontological affirmations of [the] being (of nature)." Human capacities, needs, relations, etc., are also "really affirmed" in the "sensual object" which they transform and/or appropriate. Again, this is why Marx believed that a truly enjoyable existence involved cultivating a diversity of essential talents, satisfying a wide range of developed needs, and interacting on a world-historical scale with other individuals.

[Stirner transforms] this need and its organ...into a master over him, just as earlier he made the means for satisfying a need...into a master over him. Stirner cannot eat without at the same time eating for the sake of his stomach. If the worldly conditions prevent him from satisfying his stomach, then his stomach becomes a fixed desire, and the thought of eating becomes a fixed idea...Sancho's "revolt" against the fixation of desires and thoughts is thus reduced to an impotent moral injunction...Each need, which forms the basis of a "desire," is likewise something "fixed," and try as he might Saint Max cannot abolish this "fixedness" and for example contrive to free himself from the necessity of eating...The only reason why Christianity wanted to free us from the domination of the flesh and "desires as a driving force" was because it regarded our flesh, our desires as something foreign to us; it wanted to free us from determination by nature only because it regarded our own nature as not belonging to us. For if I myself am not nature, if my natural desires, my whole natural character, do not belong to myself— and this is the doctrine of Christianity— then all determination by nature whether due to my own natural character or to what is known as external nature seems to me a determination by something foreign, a fetter, [and] compulsion used against me, heteronomy as opposed to autonomy of the spirit. Stirner accepts this Christian dialectic without examining it. 145

In contrast to Stirner and Bauer, Marx does not conceive of need as a form of heteronomy. Necessity only appears as an alien and external force when it goes unsatisfied and unmastered. Needs represent a fetter upon human development only when they themselves languish uncultivated, or are confined within a narrow range of expressions. In Marx's conception of historical progress, purely natural needs are on the one hand reproduced in a more humanized

Marx, Karl, 'The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 165.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 271-273.

form, and, on the other hand, wholly social needs are produced for the first time. "Hunger is hunger," writes the Marx of the *Grundrisse*, "but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is different from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail and tooth." Yet, again, there are also those essential needs which emerge *only* as the product of civilization: e.g., the need for Shakespeare, the "need" for the "most beautiful play." In opposition to both Bauer and Stirner, Marx's political philosophy envisions a higher social formation as one which both satisfies the given needs, and, at the same time, allows for the greatest possible development of a totality of needs, i.e., a *needy* individual. The essence of Marx's criticism of Stirner is that a free society would not go about "abolishing the fixedness of their desires and needs" altogether, but, instead, only seek to enable the "normal satisfaction of all needs" and facilitate the "development of the totality of desires"— i.e., a community of universally-developed individuals. Moreover, the "latter depends, in turn, on whether we live in circumstances that allow all-around activity and thereby the full development of our potentialities."

Communist organisation has a twofold effect on the desires produced in the individual by present-day relations; some of these desires—namely desires which exist under all social relations, and only change their form and direction under different social relations— are merely altered by the communist social system, for they are given the opportunity to develop normally; but others— namely those originating solely in a particular society, under particular conditions of [production] and intercourse— are totally deprived of their conditions of existence...The fact that one desire of an individual in modern society can be satisfied at the expense of all others...and that this is more or less the case with all individuals in the world today and that thereby the free development of the individual as a whole is made impossible—this fact is expressed by Stirner thus: "the desires become fixed"...Whether a desire becomes fixed or not, i.e., whether it obtains exclusive [power over us]...depends on whether material circumstances...permit the normal satisfaction of this desire and, on the other hand, the development of a totality of desires. The latter depends, in turn, on whether we live in circumstances that allow all-around activity and thereby the full development of our potentialities. On the actual conditions, and the possibility of development they give each individual, depends also whether thoughts become fixed or not- just as, for

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 92.

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 75.

example, the fixed ideas of the German philosophers...[which] are inseparable from the German conditions...[On one hand, since] they attack the material basis on which the hitherto inevitable fixedness of desires and ideas depended, the Communists are the only people through whose historical activity the liquefaction of the fixed desires and ideas is in fact brought about and ceases to be an impotent moral injunction, as it was up to now with all moralists "down to" Stirner...[In another sense, however, the] communists have no intention of abolishing the fixedness of their desires and needs, an intention which Stirner, immersed in his world of fancy, ascribes to them and to all other men; they only strive to achieve an organisation of production and intercourse which will make possible the normal satisfaction of all needs, i.e., a satisfaction which is limited only by the needs themselves.¹⁴⁸

Hence, as Hook explains of such passages against Stirner, the "fixation" which Marx and Engels were really interested in destroying was the fixation imposed upon the development of human capabilities, needs, and relations through the "division of labour and class relationships."149 The endpoint in this process of becoming would be a free association composed of more fully-developed individuals— a society whose members create and appropriate, produce and enjoy, in order to satisfy a whole range of essential needs, desires, etc., and cultivate a wide variety of essential talents, powers, etc. This is why the first premises of materialism are so significant in my opinion. They represent one possible (and admittedly still simplistic and abstract) way of presenting a developmental theory of needs, relations, activities, etc., which will reappear again and again, but in several different forms, throughout many of Marx's major works. Geras, who also thinks that the first premises are integral to Marx's historical understanding of human nature in his works as a whole, argues that the theory that Marx begins to articulate here treats 'need' and the human relation to nature as a gauge with which to measure the historical development of "man's general powers"— and, moreover, that it is this which also serves as the "normative standard" for his conception of a truly "human society." ¹⁵⁰

The account of the first premises of history in The German Ideology highlights another

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 272-273.

Hook, Sidney, From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx, (Columbia University Press: New York; 1994), 135.

¹⁵⁰ Geras, Norman, Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend, (Verso Books: London; 1994), 70.

lasting feature of Marx's materialism. In all of the subsequent phases of his intellectual development, including *Capital* and beyond, his thought retains the recognition that nature is the real ground of all history. The "first historical act" is not buried in some primordial past, i.e., where philosophers like Bauer can find comfort and "imagine themselves safe" from the "crude facts" of natural necessity. In order to "make it clear to the Germans"— who always seek to mystify matters by projecting their views onto some "prehistoric age"— Marx and Engels emphasize that these "moments" of social reproduction, i.e., labour and need, exist not only at the "dawn of history and the first men," but that they "still assert themselves today." These premises belong to the "fundamental condition[s] of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life." In direct opposition to Bauer's philosophy of nature, Marx's materialism retains natural necessity as an essential moment of the dialectic. In his conception of history, the human dependence upon nature is extended, albeit on a totally transformed basis, even into the highest reaches of an emancipated society.

As Pilling notes of Marx's view, labour and need are "universal" elements of human life and, therefore, of human history as a whole. While this may seem like an elementary insight, which the reader might prefer not to belabour, it is important to stress that this "simple fact" (as Engels put it in his eulogy) had profound implications for the subsequent development of Marx's thought. Its "implications are crucial" for how we understand Marx's emancipatory project, materialist conception of history, and his later theory of the metabolism with nature. As Hughes suggests, Marx and Engels are effectively extending materialism's "recognition of the

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 48.</u>

¹⁵² Ibid., 47.

Pilling, Geoffrey, Marx's Capital: Philosophy and Political Economy, (Routledge: New York; 1980), 91.

dependence of human beings on their natural environments" to include it as a "fundamental and ongoing condition of history."¹⁵⁴ As they characterize it, the struggle with nature and need, i.e., the "materialist connection" which binds individuals to one another in every form of society, "affect[s] not only the original and natural organization of men," but also their "entire further development or non-development up to the present."¹⁵⁵

Foster likewise suspects that *The German Ideology*'s exposition of the "real premises" of historical materialism remains "integral to Marx's materialist conception of nature and history...in his work as a whole"— including, namely, the 'metabolic' theory subsequently developed in *Capital*. As Pines explains, what Marx first recognized in *The German Ideology* is that the human interaction with nature was one of the "fundamental and necessary requirements of all societies." This notion, he claims, is reaffirmed later in *Capital* when Marx refers us to the "universal and eternal necessity imposed by Nature." Pilling makes a similar comparison between the passages from *The German Ideology* which address these real premises of materialism as fundamental facts of all history, and the passages in *Capital* which characterize the metabolism with and appropriation of nature as an eternal feature of natural necessity. The later Marx of *Capital* still stresses, "in opposition to idealism" as it were, the "importance of the natural and material foundations" of all historical development.

"Life," Engels asserts in Dialectics of Nature, is an organic "mode of existence," the

Hughes, Johnathan, <u>Ecology and Historical Materialism</u>, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2000), 94-96.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 47-48.</u>

Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's *Grundrisse* and the Ecological Contradiction of Capitalism', <u>Karl Marx's Grundrisse</u>: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later, Marcello Musto (ed.), (Routledge: New York; 2008), 97.

Pines, Christopher L., <u>Ideology and False Consciousness: Marx and his Historical Progenitors</u>, (Statue University of New York Press: New York; 1993), 47-48.

Pilling, Geoffrey, Marx's *Capital*: Philosophy and Political Economy, (Routledge: New York; 1980), 91.

Pines, Christopher L., <u>Ideology and False Consciousness: Marx and his Historical Progenitors</u>, (Statue University of New York Press: New York; 1993), 47-48.

"essential element" being just this "continual metabolic interchange with the natural environment outside" of it. The "cessation of this metabolism" can only ever result in the very *negation* of "Life" itself. In Capital, Marx was as equally unequivocal as Engels. He refers to this 'intercourse' or 'metabolism' (Stoffwechsel) between human existence and the material conditions of nature as an "everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence" (emphasis added). In the wrote in the Economic Manuscripts of 1861-1863 that labour is the "appropriation of the ["use values" of the] natural world for human needs," and that, as such, it must be treated as the "universal condition for the metabolic interaction between nature and man, and as such a natural condition of human life it is independent of, [and] equally common to, all particular social forms of human life. This is essentially the first draft to a passage which reappears in Capital, where he writes that labour is the

appropriation of what exists in nature for the requirements of man. It is the universal condition for the metabolic interaction [Stoffwechsel] between man and nature, the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and it is therefore independent of every form of that existence, or rather common to all forms of society in which human beings live. 164

The political conclusion which Marx draws from this principle of the metabolism is clear. "Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilized man"— something which "he must do so in all forms of society and under all

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Engels, Frederick, <u>Dialectics of Nature</u>, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 196.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 290.

¹⁶² Ibid., 133.

Quoted from Marx, Karl, <u>Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), MECW Vol. 30-33, http://www.marxists.org/ archive/marx/works/1861/economic/ch17.htm>. See Marx, Karl, 'Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 30, Emile Burns and Ben Fowkes (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1988).

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 290.

The Materialist Conception of History and Historical Conception of Nature

These 'real premises' demonstrate that, even in its very first formulations, Marx's new conception of history was closely connected to a completely new conception of nature. Marx and Engels distinguished their materialist conception from the "idealist view of history" precisely because it ignored that nature is the "real ground of history." In Germany, history was therefore "written according to an extraneous standard" because to the philosophers the "real production of life appears as non-historical, while the historical appears as something separated from ordinary life." This was especially the case with Bauer, who, as we discovered, regarded criticism as the "only active element in history." The "whole conception of history" in Germany up until Marx either "totally disregarded" this real relationship between society and nature, or else it reduced it to a "minor matter quite irrelevant to the course of history." In Bauer's philosophy, nature was reduced to a stick, and the human struggle with natural necessity was relegated to the prehistory of society— except for the wage-labourers still stuck within the muck of substance of course. Because the "relation of man to nature is excluded from history," there is in Bauer's idealism an "antithesis of nature and history."

In direct opposition to Bauer's approach, which has to "look for a category in every period," Marx's "conception of history...relies on expounding the real process of production—starting from the material production of life itself...as the basis of all history." As such, "history" cannot be "resolved" into Bauer's "self-consciousness;" rather, "each stage" must be represented as a "sum of productive forces, a historically created relation to nature and of individuals to one

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u> David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 954, 959.

another, which is handed down to each generation from its predecessor." On the one hand, this relation to nature is "modified by the new generation, but on the other also prescribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a definite development, a special character." Every "mode of production" is therefore defined for Marx by the "definite form of activity" through which the appropriation of and "relation to the rest of nature" takes place. This constitutes yet another enduring feature of Marx's materialism. According to this economic way of interpreting history, "all productive force resolves itself" into a historically "given relation to nature."

Hence, Marx's analysis of history "begin[s]" from the purely "natural bases" and physiological facts of human life, and "proceed[s]" to investigate their social "modification" throughout the "course of history" by the "actions of men." Marx's historical conception of nature is, in this way, necessarily connected to the articulation of the first premises of his materialist conception of history. According to this view, any social theory capable of grasping history 'scientifically' must, from the beginning, have already clarified for itself the starting-point of all science: the practical process by which individuals transform their socially-mediated relationship to nature. As Dolowitz and Johnston claim, the real premises of materialism demonstrate not only that Marx regards "Man's struggle with nature to meet his *immediate* material means of subsistence" as the "starting-point of human history," it also illustrates that his "study of historical change...begin[s] with the real, practical activities of Man" (emphasis

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Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 62-63.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 37.

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 540.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The German Ideology', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 107.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 43.</u>

added).¹⁷¹ The analysis of history must "begin" from "real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they *find already existing* and those *produced* by their activity" (emphasis added).¹⁷²

Where speculation ends, namely in actual life, there real, positive science begins as the representation of the practical activity and practical process of the development of men...This view is not devoid of premises. It proceeds from real premises and does not abandon them for a moment. These premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and fixation, but in their real, empirically perceptible process of development under certain conditions. When this active life-process is presented, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists who are themselves still abstract, or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists.¹⁷³

It is this "active life-process" between society and nature which provided Marx and Engels with the material presuppositions for their historical "science" and economic interpretation of history. Historical materialism tries to examine individuals in their social relations with each other and with nature— both those given by nature itself from the outset of human history, and those subsequently created by their own process of social development. The first premises are therefore illustrative of a foundational aspect of the materialist conception of history and of Marx's philosophy of praxis: viz., the notion that humans actively "make history," but that they make it based upon the definite circumstances of their "material life." In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, he repeats this refrain: while individuals "make their own history," they do not make it "just as they please," or *from conditions completely of their own choosing*, but from the conditions inherited and "transmitted from the past." Similar notions are found throughout Marx's works from this period. As he and Engels emphasize in The *German Ideology*, "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances;" or, as

Dolowitz, David P., and Johnston, Jim, 'Marxism and Social Class', <u>Marxism and Social Science</u>, Gamble, Marsh and Tant (ed.), (University of Illinois Press: Chicago; 1990), 131-132.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 36-37.</u>

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The German Ideology', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 112.

Marx, Karl, <u>The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte</u>, (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 15.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the

he had scribbled earlier in the *Theses on Feuerbach*: while individuals are the "products" of their "circumstances," these "circumstances are changed" by individuals.¹⁷⁶

Here we see an integral point of connection between Marx's materialist conception of history, philosophy of nature, and theory of praxis. The radical humanistic implications of the intersections within historical materialism between Marx's philosophy of nature and his concept of praxis are articulated most clearly during his break with Feuerbach in 1845-46. Feuerbach's contemplative materialism excluded the element of practice from all philosophizing about nature, reducing external nature to a lifeless objectivity, i.e., one unmediated by the socially-modified modes of mankind's productive and appropriative relationship to it. Connecting the above passages from The German Ideology, Theses on Feuerbach, and The Eighteenth Brumaire on similar grounds, Tabak contends that this interplay between external determination and selfdetermination, labour and need, education and habit, praxis and nature, etc., is crucial to comprehending Marx's thought throughout all of the phases of his intellectual development. Even later movements in Marx's materialism (i.e., as in *Capital*) "cannot be understood without acknowledging the presence of [this] first premise in his thought."¹⁷⁷ In one of his later essays on the topic, Schmidt also describes these connections between Marx's philosophy of praxis and his historical conception of nature as an enduring legacy of his break with Feuerbachian naturalism.

[T]he concept of 'mediating practice'...[is what determines the] horizon of all human and extra-human reality...The concept of practice, as attained in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, is precisely the most important *theoretically* of Marx's concepts. One must always return to the concept of practice in order to clarify what Marx meant by materialism, and with what justification his materialism can be called dialectical. ¹⁷⁸

For Marx, it is "quite obvious from the start" that there is a "materialist connection of

Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 61-62.

Marx, Karl, 'Theses on Feuerbach', <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>,

⁽International Publishers: New York;1970), 83. Or, see Marx, Karl, 'Theses on Feuerbach', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 99.

Tabak, Mehmet, <u>Dialectic of Human Nature in Marx's Philosophy</u>, (Macmillan: New York; 2012), 38.

For Schmidt on praxis, see Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 10, 15, 27, 63, 122, 193.

men with one another," and that this very "connection" to one another and to nature must be "as old as men themselves." It was Feuerbach's great contribution to German philosophy to have finally recognized this natural basis of human existence and, thereby, restored materialism to its rightful place in philosophy. Yet the *form* which this necessary relation to nature assumes is itself a product of history, not nature. And this is something which Feuerbach's naturalism forgets. It is a relation, Marx insists, which is "determined" by the degree to which "their needs and their mode of production" have been developed through the real material interaction with nature over time. But east of the Rhine, "where history has stopped happening" for all philosophy, the philosophers (including Feuerbach) forget that this "connection [to the earth] is ever taking on new forms, and thus presents a 'history'." Here, once again, we see that Marx's materialist conception of history is directly connected to a much more *historical conception of nature*.

Even Feuerbach, whose philosophy had at least recognized both the sensuousness of nature in general and the sensuousness of the human being in particular, had failed to grasp the unity between man and nature as anything more than an abstract, generic, and naturally-arisen identity. As we learned earlier, when confronted with contradictory instances which disturbed his presupposition about the natural harmony between the human species-essence and its real socionatural existence, Feuerbach fled from sense-certainty into the 'refuge' of a 'higher perception', i.e., to a Kant-like 'ideal compensation' in the species in general. As he himself expressed this Kantian principle, "because no single individual, due to his limitations, is the adequate expression of the Idea, the species, nature seeks to complete the defect of the single existence through the creation of another." Hence, we do not find in Feuerbach a concept of universally-

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach</u> and the <u>Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 49.

Feuerbach quoted in Breckman, Warren, <u>Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self</u>, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge; 2001), 208.

developed individuality; what we find, instead, is an affirmation of the one-dimensional individual produced by the capitalist division of labour as well as a corresponding correction by nature of this "defect" (i.e., through the *generic* development of the species as a whole). For the "practical materialist, i.e., the Communist," however, "it is a question of revolutionising the existing world" and of "changing the things found in existence." When we "occasionally" discover "such views with Feuerbach, they are never more than isolated surmises;" they have "little influence on his general outlook," and are, at most, "but embryos capable of development." and are, at most, "but embryos capable of development."

This means that right where it was most necessary to be a materialist, i.e., with respect to politics, economics, and history, Feuerbach lapsed back into the same religious-attitude that he criticized in Bauer and Stirner. He also conceived of nature as if it were a sort of unmediated objectivity, i.e., as if it were still the prehistorical nature "not yet been subdued" by human civilization. As Hook put it, Marx is criticizing Feuerbach here for having defined the "objectivity" of nature as "independent of any actual or possible human processes." Or, as Schmidt puts it when commenting on the relevant passage from *The German Ideology*,

Marx went beyond Feuerbach in bringing not only sensuous intuition but also the whole of human practice into the process of knowledge as a constitutive moment...Marx, like Feuerbach, wrote of 'the priority of external nature', although with the critical reservation that any such priority could only exist within mediation...In Feuerbach, man the species-being, provided with merely natural qualities, confronts the dead objectivity of nature passively and intuitively rather than actively and practically, in a subjectivity which remains empty. What Feuerbach described as the unity of man and nature related only to the romantically transfigured fact that man arose out of nature...Feuerbach's man does not emerge as an independent productive force but remains bound to pre-human nature...Feuerbach's anthropological accentuation of man as opposed to the rest of nature was always abstract. Nature as a whole was for Feuerbach an unhistorical, homogeneous substratum, while the essence of the Marxist critique was the dissolution of this homogeneity into a dialectic of Subject and Object. Nature was for Marx both an

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 44.

¹⁸² Ibid., 45-47.

Hook, Sidney, From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx, (Columbia University Press: New York; 1994), 236.

element of human practice and the totality of everything that exists. 184

In practice, concludes Marx, the portions of nature with which humans interact are always present as a "historical nature." This is why Engels tells us in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* that the philosophical break with Feuerbach and the development of the "materialist conception of history" was also necessarily connected to the development of a more "historical conception of nature." Or, as he explained in the *Dialectics of Nature*, he and Marx recognized that human "development" could no longer be idealistically "excluded from the temporal history of nature," as it had been in Feuerbach's nature-philosophy. There are no historical dimensions whatsoever to Feuerbach's philosophy of nature and statically conceived naturalism. As Quante argues, Feuerbach simply inverted Hegel's "active-idealist" dialectic in favour of a "passive-sensualist" naturalism. He ignored the "historical dimension" to the relation to nature, i.e., how the human connection to the "material environment" is "mediated by society and history." Instead, he emphasizes a romantically conceived "original condition." 188

This is why Marx and Engels charged him with failing to be a historian insofar as he was a materialist, and a materialist insofar as he was a historian. The abstract-contemplative Feuerbachian emphasis upon the immediacy of nature ignores that nature is itself a *social product*, i.e., something recreated historically through labour and 'revolutionary practice'.

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 26-27.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 45-48.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 29.

¹⁸⁷ Engels, Frederick, <u>Dialectics of Nature</u>, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 315.

Quante, Micheal, 'After Hegel: The Actualization of Philosophy in Practice', <u>Routledge Companion to 19th Century Philosophy</u>, Dean Moyar (ed.), (Routledge: New York; 2010), 218.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 45-47.</u>

Feuerbach went "as far as a theorist possibly can, without ceasing to be a theorist." He "stopped halfway" because the "lower half of him was a materialist, the upper half idealist." Instead of proceeding into a thorough-going materialism, he did not recognize the subjective side, human activity, as itself objective, as a material force in the world.

All of these anti-Feuerbachian aphorisms written in 1845-46 show the point at which Marx's materialist conception of history parts ways with the 'theoretical revolution' that he had enthusiastically greeted only a few years earlier. In contrast to *philosophical materialism*, "history and materialism do not diverge" for *historical materialism*. Marx's materialism only discovers so many *convergences* between nature in its self-production as a process of "natural history," and human history's reproduction of it as a "historical nature." Or, as Engels echoes in the *Dialectics of Nature*, the "whole of nature [with which humans interact] is also now *merged* in [human] history" (emphasis added). In fact, in a fully-developed society, the fixed and abstract distinction between these "two sides" falls away and, in this vanishing-point, humanity and nature, natural and social science, freedom and necessity, essence and existence, etc., would be recognized as "inseparable." In fact, in a fully-developed society of the fixed and nature, natural and social science, freedom and necessity, essence and existence, etc., would be recognized as "inseparable." In fact, in a fully-developed society of the fixed and nature, natural and social science, freedom and necessity, essence and existence, etc., would be recognized as "inseparable." In fact, in a fully-developed society of the fixed and necessity, essence and existence, etc., would be recognized as "inseparable." In fact, in a fully-developed society of the fixed and necessity of the fixed and

Feuerbachian "materialism," Engels stressed in the *Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, remained restricted by its own "one-sidedness" precisely because it was unable to

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 66.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 25, 42.

Marx, Karl, 'Theses on Feuerbach', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 99.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 45-47. Ibid., 45-48.</u>

Engels, Frederick, <u>Dialectics of Nature</u>, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 164.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 34.</u>

develop this more "historical conception of nature." Feuerbach's philosophical materialism was still constrained by the 18th century "mechanical" notion of nature, envisioning it as a series of separate 'things' operating in external relation to one another. This is an "unhistorical view of nature" because "motion" is represented here as something which "turns eternally in a circle and therefore never moves from the spot." It was, of course, "not Feuerbach's fault that this historical conception of nature...remained inaccessible to him," for, his philosophy of nature was merely symptomatic of the generally "wretched [intellectual-scientific] conditions" which prevailed throughout Germany at the time. Peuerbach was not acquainted with the much more scientific notion of nature as a "process," and the latest developments in the natural sciences were outside of the purview of his thinking. Peuerbach

On the other hand, Engels also claims that the historical materialist conception of nature is actually the successor of a long intellectual tradition spanning from Heraclitus to Hegel.²⁰² Engels argues that he and Marx had appealed to, and critically appropriated the insights of, such thinkers in light of the fact that they found the static "conception of Nature" upheld by the mechanical "materialists" (i.e., the "old materialism" of the 18th century) to be entirely "incompatible" with both "dialectics and modern natural science"—namely, again, since it made no room for the comprehension of nature as a "process" or *flux*.²⁰³ In the *Dialectics of Nature*,

Engels, Frederick, <u>Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy</u>, C.P. Dutt (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 1970), 29.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 27.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 29.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 27.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 45-52.

Ibid., 44-45: "Hegel was not simply put aside. On the contrary, one started out from his revolutionary side described in the above, from the dialectical method...[But with Hegel] the dialectic of the concept itself became merely a conscious reflex of the dialectical motion of the real world and the dialectic of Hegel was placed upon its head; or rather, turned off its head, on which it was standing before, and placed upon its feet again. And this materialist dialectic which for years has been our best working tool and our sharpest weapon was, remarkably enough, discovered not only by us, but also independently of us and even of Hegel by a German worker, Joseph

Engels criticizes contemporary scientists and philosophers still stuck within the paradigm of this "old materialism." This antiquated materialism

contrast[s] to the history of mankind, which develops in time...[a] history of nature [as] only an unfolding in space. All change, all development in nature, was denied. Natural science, so revolutionary at the outset, suddenly found itself confronted by an out-and-out conservative nature in which even to-day everything was as it had been at the beginning and in which— to the end of the world or for all eternity— everything would remain as it had been since the beginning. High as the natural science of the first half of the eighteenth century stood above Greek antiquity in knowledge and even in the sifting of its material, it stood just as deeply below Greek antiquity in the theoretical mastery of this material, in the general outlook on nature.²⁰⁴

By dissecting the world into its dead details, this taxidermical Understanding cannot comprehend the cosmos as an organic whole, it cannot provide us with a "general outlook on nature" as a totality of internally-related processes. It sees the 'things' of nature only "in isolation, apart from their connection with the vast whole," and it is only capable of "observing them in repose, not in motion," "in their death, not in their life." This is why the natural science developed since the 18th century, despite all of its practical advancements over ancient philosophy, fell behind it in constructing an adequate ontological conception of the universe.²⁰⁵ *Panta rhei* was the great principle introduced by the Ionians, from whom all genuine philosophy until this day descends according to Engels in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. This was the "primitive, naive, but intrinsically correct conception of the world" discovered by Heraclitus.

When we consider and reflect upon nature at large, or the history of mankind, or our

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Dietzgen. In this way, however, the revolutionary side of Hegelian philosophy was again taken up and at the same time freed from the idealist trammels which in Hegel's hands had prevented its consistent execution. The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made *things*, but as a complex of *processes*...[that] go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away, in which, in spite of all seeming accidents and of all temporary retrogression, a progressive development asserts itself in the end." For Deitzgen's contributions, see Dietzgen, Joseph, Some of the Philosophical Essays on Socialism and Science, Religion, Ethics, Critique-of-Reason and the World-at-Large, M. Beer and T. Rothstein (trans.), (Kerr Company: Chicago; 1917), 252. Dietzgen's sketches out an ontology aimed at the "bridging over of this opposition." We must "connect the mental phenomena with those of the rest of the world" because "physical and psychical phenomena are common varieties of the great world process," a "dialectical" process between 'two' sides which are "as much homogenous in essence as it is varied in the manner it appears."

Engels, Frederick, <u>Dialectics of Nature</u>, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 6-7.

See Engels, Frederick, <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 45-52.

own intellectual activity, at first we see the picture of an endless entanglement of relations and reactions, permutations and combinations, in which nothing remains what, where, and as it was, but everything moves, changes, comes into being and passes away. We see, therefore, at first the picture as a whole, with its individual parts still more or less kept in the background; we observe the movements, transitions, connections, rather than the things that move, combine, and are connected. This primitive, naive, but intrinsically correct conception of the world is that of ancient Greek philosophy, and was first clearly formulated by Heraclitus; everything is and is not, for everything is fluid, is constantly changing, constantly coming into being and passing away...But this conception...does not suffice to explain the details of which this picture is made up...This is, primarily, the task of natural science and historical research; branches of science which the Greeks of classical times, on very good grounds, relegated to a subordinate position...But this method of [the scientific] work [of the Understanding] has also left us as legacy the habit of observing natural objects and processes in isolation, apart from their connection with the vast whole; of observing them in repose, not in motion; as constants, not as essentially variables; in their death, not in their life...At first sight, this mode of thinking seems to us very luminous, because it is that of so-called sound common sense...[But it] sooner or later reaches a limit, beyond which it becomes one-sided, restricted, abstract, lost in insoluble contradictions. In the contemplation of individual things, it forgets the connection between them...It cannot see the woods for the trees...[B]ut as soon as we consider the individual cases in their general connection with the universe as a whole, they run into each other, and they become confounded when we contemplate that universal action and reaction in which causes and effects are eternally changing places, so that what is effect here and now will be cause there and then, and vice versa...Dialectics, on the other hand, comprehends things and their representations, ideas, in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin and ending...Nature is the proof of dialectics, and it must be said for modern science that it has furnished this proof with very rich materials increasingly daily, and thus has shown that, in the last resort, Nature works dialectically and not metaphysically; that she does not move in the eternal oneness of a perpetually recurring circle, but goes through a real historical evolution...An exact representation of the universe, of its evolution, of the development of mankind, and of the reflection of this evolution in the minds of men, can therefore only be obtained by the methods of dialectics with its constant regard to the innumerable actions and reactions of life and death, of progressive or retrogressive changes. And in this spirit, the new German philosophy has worked...This new German philosophy culminated in the Hegelian system. In this system— and herein is its great merit— for the first time the whole world, natural, historical, intellectual, is represented as a process— i.e., as in constant motion, change, transformation, development; and the attempt is made to trace out the internal connection that makes a continuous whole of all this movement and development. From this point of view, the history of mankind no longer appeared as a wild whirl of senseless deeds of violence, all equally condemnable at the judgment seat of mature philosophic reason and which are best forgotten as quickly as possible, but as the process of evolution of man himself. It was now the task of the intellect to follow the gradual march of this process through all its devious ways, and to trace out the inner law running through all its apparently accidental phenomena...That the Hegelian system did not solve the problem it propounded is here immaterial. Its epoch-making merit was that it propounded the problem...The perception of the fundamental contradiction in German idealism led necessarily back to materialism, but— nota bene— not to the simply metaphysical, exclusively mechanical materialism of the 18th century. Old materialism looked upon all previous history as a crude heap of irrationality and violence; modern materialism sees in it the process of evolution of humanity, and aims at discovering the laws thereof...Modern materialism embraces the more recent discoveries of natural science, according to which Nature also has its history in time.²⁰⁶

Feuerbachian naturalism was still constrained by that mechanical materialism which precluded a more developmental view of nature and of the human relation to it. Feuerbach's naturalism treats humans as the passive "products" of their material "circumstances," and, at the same time, "forgets" that these material "circumstances are changed" by humans. Again, Marx's materialism attempts to make-up for this shortcoming in Feuerbach's naturalism by critically reintroducing the concept of self-change, the "active side," πραξις, etc., which was until then developed (but only in an abstract and anti-natural way) by idealism from Kant and Fichte to Hegel and Bauer.²⁰⁷ With this principle of 'revolutionary practice' in mind, Marx contrasted his own materialism with Feuerbach's, who could "not see that the world surrounding him is not something directly given and the same from all eternity," but, rather, a "historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations."208 And far from abandoning these insights altogether, Marx will later return to them again in *Capital* when he maintains that many of the things which, in their "present form," "we are accustomed to consider as products of nature" have actually been previously "mediated" by our own historical "activity," so that the "raw material" and ostensibly natural "object of labour" has "already been filtered through [previously objectified] labour." He also adds that numerous studies into "human history" have recorded how these apparently 'natural' objects have "undergone modification by means of labour," and how so "many generations" have contributed to producing the "gradual transformation" which has brought the blind forces of nature under increased "human control" through the "agency of human labour." ²⁰⁹

Marx, Karl, 'Theses on Feuerbach', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 99.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, 'The German Ideology', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 113-114.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 285-288.

Feuerbach's materialism could never have developed in this sort of direction. His naturalism remained abstract and contemplative, precluding the possibility of any development in nature or in the human relation to it. In contrast to Feuerbach, Lukacs observed that even in his earliest writings Marx represented nature as a *social category*, a *social product* of the necessary human interaction with it.²¹⁰ As Schmidt explains, once the formative fires of labour have reshaped the natural material in accordance with its needs, Marx argued that the "distinction" between the human form and natural content could only be made "*in abstracto*."²¹¹ Even "objects of the *simplest 'sensuous certainty*"— Feuerbach used the example of the "cherry tree" as an object of 'sense-certainty'— are "given" to sense-consciousness "only through *social development*" (emphases added).²¹² His "unhistorical conception of nature" could not even permit him to recognize that the very "cherry tree" before his 'sense-certainty' was a not a *product of nature*, but *of history*— specifically, of European commerce and colonialism. Feuerbach, wrote Marx and Engels, is blind to the fact that the

world surrounding him is not something directly given and the same from all eternity but the product of industry and the state of society in the sense that it is a historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing further its industry and commerce, and modifying the social order according to changed needs. Even the objects of the simplest "sensuous certainty" are given to him only through social development, industry, and commercial relationships. The cherry tree, like almost all fruit trees, was transplanted into our zone by *commerce* only a few centuries ago, as we know, and only *by* this action of a particular society in a particular time has it become "sensuous certainty" for Feuerbach...Feuerbach speaks in particular of the viewpoint of natural science. He mentions secrets disclosed only to the eye of the physicist and chemist. But where would natural science be without industry and commerce? Even this "pure" natural science receives its aim, like its material, only through commerce and industry, through the sensuous activity of men.²¹³

Lukács, Georg, <u>History and Class Consciousness</u>, Rodney Livingstone (trans.), (MIT Press: Cambridge; 1967), 234.

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 31-33.

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The German Ideology', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 113-114. Or, see Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach</u> and the <u>Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 45.

²¹³ Ibid., 45.

Feuerbach's nature is a nature abstracted from human history. He ignores the transformative effect of the human interaction with nature. Feuerbach forgets that, in our practical connection to the planet, portions of nature become transformed into something 'forman'. What Feuerbach conceived of as 'nature' applies only to that unmediated objectivity which stands at the threshold of human history or dawn of civilization. At most, for Marx, this sort of undifferentiated identity between human society and nature applies only to certain precapitalist formations— limited as they were by the undeveloped productive powers of labour, and bound to nature and to their 'natural species connection' to each other as if by an 'umbilical cord'. Only then do individuals appear as products of nature's own history, or, as organic outgrowths of the inorganic body of nature. However, historical development dissolves these precapitalist forms of life and the restricted social relations which tether individuals to this original metabolic unity. All progress in developing the productive forces of capitalist society is progress away from what Feuerbachian grasped as 'nature'.

Feuerbach, therefore, never speaks of the world of man in such cases, but always takes refuge in external nature, and moreover in *nature* which has not yet been subdued by men. But every new invention, every advance made by industry, detaches another piece from this domain, so that the ground which produces examples illustrating such Feuerbachian propositions is steadily shrinking.²¹⁵

Feuerbach's abstraction of a nature "independent" of human activity "no longer exists anywhere" on the earth— except, perhaps, on a few "coral islands of recent origin." The "basis of the whole sensuous world as it now exists" is "unceasing sensuous labour."

[I]n Manchester, for instance, Feuerbach sees only factories and machines, where a hundred years ago only spinning-wheels and weaving-rooms were to be seen, or in the Campagna of Rome he finds only pasture lands and swamps, where in the time of Augustus he would have found nothing but the vineyards and villas of Roman capitalists...So much is this activity, this unceasing sensuous labour and creation, this production, the basis of the whole sensuous world as it now exists, that, were it

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 145.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 66.</u>

interrupted only for a year, Feuerbach would not only find an enormous change in the natural world, but would very soon find that the whole world of men and his own perceptive faculty, nay his own existence, were missing. Of course, in all this the priority of external nature remains unassailed, and all this has no application to the original men produced by generatio aequivoca [spontaneous generation]; but this differentiation has meaning only insofar as man is considered to be distinct from nature. For that matter, nature, the nature that preceded human history, is not by any means the nature in which Feuerbach lives, it is nature which today no longer exists anywhere (except perhaps on a few Australian coral-islands of recent origin)...Certainly Feuerbach has a great advantage over the "pure" materialists in that he realises how man too is an "object of the senses." But apart from the fact that he only conceives him as an "object of the senses, not as sensuous activity," because he still remains in the realm of theory and conceives of men not in their given social connection, not under their existing conditions of life, which have made them what they are, he never arrives at the really existing active men, but stops at the abstraction "man"...As far as Feuerbach is a materialist he does not deal with history, and as far as he considers history he is not a materialist. With him materialism and history diverge completely, a fact which incidentally is already obvious from what has been said.²¹⁶

Marx therefore replaces Feuerbach's emphasis upon the *abstract unity* between humanity and nature with the *real historical unity* produced through industry's practical transformation of the material conditions of production. On the other hand, however, Bauer's *abstract antithesis* between history and nature is replaced by the *real social antagonism* which corresponds only with the alienated form which the human mastery over nature assumes in a capitalist society.

From this it follows that this transformation of history into world history is not indeed a mere abstract act on the part of the "self-consciousness," the world spirit, or of any other metaphysical spectre, but a quite material, empirically verifiable act, an act the proof of which every individual furnishes as he comes and goes, eats, drinks and clothes himself...Incidentally, when we conceive things thus, as they really are and happened, every profound philosophical problem is resolved, as will be seen even more clearly later, quite simply into an empirical fact. For instance, the important question of the relation of man to nature (Bruno goes so far as to speak of "the antitheses in nature and history" (p. 110), as though these were two separate "things" and man did not always have before him an historical nature and a natural history) out of which all the "unfathomably lofty works" on "substance" and "self-consciousness" were born, crumbles of itself when we understand that [Feuerbach's] celebrated "unity of man with nature" has always existed in industry and has existed in varying forms in every epoch according to the lesser or greater development of industry, just like the "struggle" of man with nature [in Bauer], [continues] right up to the development of his productive powers on a corresponding basis.²¹⁷

The Humanization of Nature

As discussed earlier, even at his most Feuerbachian of moments in the writings of 1843-

²¹⁶ Ibid., 45-47.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 61-62.

44, Marx retained "critical reservations" which show precisely where he had already gone beyond the Feuerbachian philosophy which he enthusiastically greeted at the time. In his writings from this period, all of the quintessentially 'Feuerbachian'-sounding expressions about nature begin to take on a modified meaning— e.g., the unassailable "priority of external nature," "essential dependence of man upon nature," "humanism of nature," etc. Feuerbach was certainly right in recognizing what the 'comedians' of the old philosophy failed to: namely, the dependence of society upon nature, and the recognition that human life is itself a part of nature. Marx's materialism accepts that 'external' nature is in that sense ontologically "independent" of human life, while human life, even in the final term of human development in socialism, remains "dependent" upon nature. In contrast to Bauer's pure criticism, Marx recognized that the becoming of "man for man" in history remains at all times "dependent" upon his material connection to 'external' nature.

But, unlike Feuerbach, this materialist connection is represented by him as being determined by the degree to which the productive powers of labour, human need and social relations have been developed. This is why even when he follows Feuerbach by insisting in the *Manuscripts* that there is an "essential dependence of man in nature" and, in *The German Ideology*, that this "priority of external nature" remains "unassailed" by practice, Marx in the same breath departs from the meaning which Feuerbach affords to these expressions. It is *precisely because* of such an unassailable and essential dependence that 'external' nature can no longer be "fixed and isolated" in its "abstract independence" from history in the way that Feuerbach imagines.²¹⁸ The nature with which humans interact cannot be divorced from the

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 144-145. Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 77-78.

reciprocal influence of that interaction back upon nature.

As Schmidt characterizes it, Marx's thought *proceeds* from the naturalism of Feuerbach by supposing that "[n]ature cannot be separated from man," but, at the same time, *departs* from it by criticizing Feuerbach for forgetting that neither can "man and the accomplishments of his spirit" in history be "separated from nature." The sensuous world *as it actually exists* is a *product of world-history*. The work of human industry and ingenuity in history has, step by step, dissolved whatever remains of *Feuerbach*'s 'nature'. As Marx and Engels conclude in their criticism of Feuerbach, both the "history of nature and the history of men are dependent on each other so long as men exist" (emphasis added). This is why Schmidt argues that "Marx, like Feuerbach, wrote of 'the priority of external nature'," but, unlike Feuerbach, he did so with the "critical reservation" in that mind that "any such priority could only exist within mediation." For Feuerbach, this dependence was expressed in an entirely one-sided way. The human, "bound to pre-human nature," confronts the "dead objectivity of nature passively," not "actively." The same time, departs from it is same time,

The Feuerbachian influence upon Marx's early thought *seems* to be at its greatest when we consider the connections between his conception of human nature and his overall philosophy of nature, or, between humanism and naturalism. But these terms take on an entirely different significance in Marx. That the "physical and spiritual life of man is tied up with nature," writes Marx, is just "another way of saying that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature." That Marx's notion of the *human species-essence*, of the 'nature' of the human being, is connected in this way to his understanding of the implicitly *human essence of nature*, underlines

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 31-33.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 34.
 Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 26-27.

Marx, Karl, 'Comments on James Mill', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 63.

that his anthropology is just a special expression of a broader ontology, of a broader philosophy of nature. In this sense, as we read earlier, he gives us the still pseudo-Feuerbachian sounding expression in 1844: viz., the *species-being* (*Gattungswesen*) of the human being, i.e., "man's *feelings*, passions, etc., are not merely anthropological phenomena," but "truly *ontological* affirmations of [the] being (of nature)."223 This "species-being" of man— which is by no means mere sense-certainty for Marx, but rather "conscious life activity"— this "species-being" is in that sense just nature lifted to the level of self-consciousness, a portion of nature raised to the universal awareness of itself. "Nature attains self-consciousness in men," Schmidt agrees, which is to say that human history is for Marx in some sense an essential "part of nature" and "constitutes nature's self-movement" toward a more *human* form.²²⁴ This species-nature of the human being, as Lynne confirms, is just "*nature become conscious of its worth*," and "knowledge of one's self as nature become conscious."²²⁵

As elaborated earlier, however, Marx had criticized Feuerbach precisely for rejecting this Hegelian distinction between essence and existence. Because he has a quite different conception of species-essence, these seemingly Feuerbachian expressions about the essential dependence of society upon nature take on a totally transformed in Marx's writings. In fact, they become cornerstones in a philosophy of praxis which is explicitly *anti*-Feuerbachian, which was developed with Feuerbach as a foil. Marx's use of Feuerbachian categories, e.g., humanism and naturalism, are the bearers of a radically new meaning and they operate within a completely different theoretical context. As Schmidt explains of Marx's critique, because Feuerbach "unreflectively" defined nature as an "unhistorical, homogeneous substratum," falling into the

Marx, Karl, 'The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of</u> 1844, Martin Mulligan (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 165.

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 79.

Lynne Lee, Wendy, On Marx, (Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania: Boston; 2002), 87.

romantic "myth of a 'pure nature" unmediated by human practice, he thereby also "identified the immediate existence of men with their essence."²²⁶ Marx believed that this error led Feuerbach to a passive sensualism which both romanticizes nature and naturalizes social reality.

As such, Feuerbach did not recognize that the question of the identity between humanism and naturalism, between the essence of the species and its socio-natural existence, is a *practical* and *historical question*. For Feuerbach, the dependence of humanity upon nature was expressed in an entirely one-sided way. In contrast to Feuerbach, insists Lynne, "Marx's point" about the *essential dependence* of human society upon nature is two-sided. For Marx, says Lynne, the "essential dependence of man in nature"

[does] not merely [imply] that we are dependent on nature [for subsistence], but that the character of this dependence is dialectical, that is, we are the product of a process of overcoming and assimilating that material world...[We are] the genius to transform the sensuous material world into the image of humanity who understands itself as nature become conscious of its worth.²²⁷

As Marx expresses it in a passage from the manuscript on *Estranged Labor*— which is presumably the passage which Lynne is commenting upon in the above—

[t]he animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of this that he is a species-being. Or it is only because he is a species-being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labor reverses the relationship, so that it is just because man is a conscious being that he makes his life activity, his essential being, a mere means to his existence. In creating a world of objects by his personal activity, in his work upon inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species-being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as his own essential being, or that treats itself as a species-being. Admittedly animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwellings, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc. But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. It produces only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom. An animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature. An animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product. An animal forms only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to

Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971),

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Lynne Lee, Wendy, On Marx, (Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania: Boston; 2002), 3.

produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty. It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. Through this production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created.²²⁸

It is in "practice," in "work," Marx stresses elsewhere in the same manuscript, where we find proof of the "universality which makes the whole of nature his *inorganic* body."²²⁹ As Marcuse argues of this passage, it shows that

[f]ar from being a mere economic activity, labor is the 'existential activity' of man, his 'free, conscious activity'— not [simply] a means for maintaining his life, but developing his 'universal nature'...his faculties, powers, and needs...These terms point back to Feuerbach and to Hegel. Man's very nature lies in his universality. His intellectual and physical faculties can be fulfilled only if all men exist as men, in the developed wealth of their human resources...The emphasis on universality brings nature as well into the self-development of mankind. Man is free if 'nature is his work and his reality', so that he 'recognizes himself in a world he has himself made'.²³⁰

But in Feuerbachian philosophy, by juxtaposition, nature is represented as a purely unmediated objectivity. Neither does the human being arise out of nature as a historical being, since she remains completely submerged within natural history. Thus, as Marcuse argues, when Marx writes of the "essence of man," it is a "quite different matter" than when "Bruno Bauer, Stirner and Feuerbach" do so.²³¹ Into his "definition of man's essential being," Marx "inserts the basic traits of *practical* and *social* existence."²³² This is why Marx tells us in the *Theses on Feuerbach* that human nature is not an abstraction inhering in each isolated individual, but is only realized in and through the total ensemble of social relations.²³³ For Marx, elaborates Marcuse, it is not a

Marx, Karl, 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 62-63.

²²⁹ Ibid., 61-62.

Marcuse, Herbert, <u>Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory</u>, Routledge; London; 2000), 275.

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Foundations of Historical Materialism', <u>The Essential Marcuse</u>, Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss (ed.), (Beacon Press: Boston; 2007), 95-96.

²³² Ibid., 89

Marx, Karl, 'Theses on Feuerbach', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 101.

question about an "abstract human essence" which can therefore be realized just as abstractly through mere philosophy; rather, the whole issue turns completely on the "task" left for "historical praxis."

[The] discovery of the historical character of the human essence does not mean that the history of man's essence can be identified with his factual history...Essence and existence are *separate* in him: his existence is a "means" in the realization of his essence, or— in estrangement— his essence is a means to his mere physical existence. If essence and existence have become thus separated and if the real and free *task* of human praxis is the unification of both as factual realization, then the authentic task...is the *radical abolition* of this facticity...The factual situation of capitalism is characterized not merely by economic or political crisis but by a catastrophe affecting the human essence.²³⁴

In the relationship between these *two* "essential beings"— nature and humanity— there is an "essential dependence of man in nature" because the human being is, by nature, a natural being or part of the system of nature. Yet, while Marx follows Feuerbach in defining 'Man' as a "natural being," we have seen that he added the caveat that the human being is not "merely a natural being," but a "human natural being." His claims about the "dependence" of society upon nature and the insuperable priority of external nature therefore take on a peculiar ontological-anthropological significance not found in the writings of Feuerbach. Lynne is right that, for Marx, this implies not simply that "nature for man" is the natural "existence of man"—as, say, in food—but, what is more, that "man for man" is at the same time the highest expression of the "existence of nature," the self-revealing "human essence of nature." This is why he asserts that the "entire [course of] so-called world history is only the creation of man through human labor," which again, since he is a natural being, also necessarily demands the historical "development of nature for man." The practical transformation of nature has this

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Foundations of Historical Materialism', <u>The Essential Marcuse</u>, Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss (ed.), (Beacon Press: Boston; 2007), 95-96.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 182.

Marx, Karl, 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 78. Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International

"essential connection with man's essential nature" in Marx's writings.²³⁷ Appealing to Hegel (and Bauer), Marx refers to the highest form of this essential connection in socialism as the *completed* unity between essence and existence, the "resurrection of nature."²³⁸

It follows from this internal relationship between human nature and so-called 'external' nature, between completed humanism and completed naturalism, etc., that the highest form of society would be one which has realized most completely this 'human essence of nature' through a process of revolutionary praxis. A truly *human* society, and a correspondingly *human* relation to nature, is one which actualizes to the fullest and freest possible degree the essential powers and needs of each and every individual in relations of mutual recognition with one another. Once this "natural existence of man [has] become his *human* existence and nature become human," then we can truly say with Marx: "society is the completed, essential unity of man with nature."239 Communism, he therefore declared, is this Oedipal "riddle of history" at last resolved: the "resolution" not only to the social antagonism between "man and man," but also, with it, the "resolution" to the "conflict between man and nature."240 Communism completed is, at once, the "humanism of nature" and "naturalism of man" realized, the unity which as "completed naturalism is humanism" and as "completed humanism it is naturalism."241

This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man— the true resolution to the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself as this solution...The *human* essence of nature first exists only for *social* man; for only here does nature exist for him as a *bond* with

Publishers: New York; 2009), 142-145.

Marx, Karl, 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 76.

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 137, 142-145. Marx, Karl, 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 77.

²³⁹ Ibid., 73.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 79.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 72.

man...Only here does nature exist as the foundation of his own human existence. Only here has what is to him his natural existence become his own human existence, and nature become man for him. Thus [socialist] society is the unity of [the] being of man with nature— the true resurrection of nature— the naturalism of man and the human of nature both brought to fulfillment...We see how subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism and materialism, activity and suffering, only lose their antithetical character...we see how the resolution of the theoretical antitheses is only possible in a practical way, by virtue of the practical energy of man...The nature which develops in human history— the genesis of human society— is man's real nature; hence nature as it develops through industry, even though in an estranged form, is true anthropological nature...History is a real part of natural history— of nature developing into man...But since for the socialist man the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the creation of man through human labor, nothing but the emergence of nature for man, so he has the visible, irrefutable truth of birth through himself, of the process of his creation...[M]an has become for man as the being of nature, and nature for man as the being of man has become practical, sensuous, perceptible.²⁴²

In all of these passages, we find that the nature of the human being and the human essence of nature are coterminous expressions for Marx. The realization of completed humanism is naturalism, just as completed naturalism is humanism. "Nature for man" is the foundation for the coming-into-being of "man for man" because the mastery of natural necessity provides the material basis for the real possibility and practicability of human freedom. Hence, history shows that the "reshaping of nature by men" both requires, and results in, a reciprocal "reshaping of men by men". 243 This is yet another lasting feature of Marx's materialism. In *Capital*, for instance, he repeats the same essential point. The human "acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature," because he "realizes" his own "purposes" in those materials. 244 But it was during this early period of self-clarification in the first half of the 1840s that Marx began to recognize for the first time the radically humanistic implications of this connection between his philosophy of nature and his philosophy of praxis. Since "man is shaped by [his] environment," Marx and Engels explained as early as *The Holy Family*, then "his environment must be made human." "[W]hat has to be done is to arrange the

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 135, 137, 141, 143, 145.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 58.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 283.

empirical world in such a way that man experiences and becomes accustomed to what is truly human in it and that he becomes aware of himself as man."²⁴⁵

This is why, during this period in his intellectual development, Marx referred variously to the *humanization of nature* and *naturalization of humanity*, the *human essence of nature* and *natural existence of man, completed humanism as naturalism* and *completed naturalism as humanism*.²⁴⁶ These statements also give expression to the often ignored ethical substance of Marx's materialist conception of history and equally historical conception of nature. Communism, the final form to be given to this process of social development and relation to nature, is *not* the 'end' of human history or 'goal' of human society for Marx. Communism is merely the *necessary form* which such a society would have to assume in order to realize its highest goal— which is nothing else but *human society* itself. In that sense, as he will tell us a decade later, capitalism marks the end of the *prehistory* of humankind and the passage into *truly human history*.

We see how the history of *industry* and the established *objective* existence of industry are the open book of man's essential powers, the exposure to the sense of human psychology. Hitherto this was not conceived in its inseparable connection with man's essential being, but only in an external relation of utility, because, moving in the realm of estrangement, people could only think of man's general mode of being-religion or history in its abstract-general character as politics, art, literature, etc.— as the reality of man's essential powers and man's species-activity. We have before us the objectified essential powers of man in the form of sensuous, alien, useful objects, in the form of estrangement, displayed in ordinary material industry...[N]atural science has invaded and transformed human life all the more practically through the medium of industry; and has prepared human emancipation, although its immediate effect had to be the furthering of the dehumanisation of man. *Industry* is the actual, historical relationship of nature, and therefore of natural science, to man. If, therefore, industry is conceived as the exoteric revelation of man's essential powers, we also gain an understanding of the human essence of nature or the natural essence of man...Communism is the position as the negation of the negation, and is hence the actual phase necessary for the next stage of historical development in the process of human emancipation and rehabilitation. Communism is the necessary pattern and the dynamic principle of the immediate future. but communism as such is not the goal of human development— wh[ose] goal is the structure of human society.²⁴⁷

Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The Holy Family: Or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company', Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 4, (International Publishers: New York; 1975),130.

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 135, 137, 141, 143, 145. Ibid., 142-143, 145.

Conclusion

In contrast to Bauer, who reduced natural necessity, need, and nature to a stick, we have seen in this chapter that Marx recognized nature as a fundamental premise of all history and of all human development. His elaboration of the real premises of materialism acknowledge the human dependence upon nature in ways that Bauer's philosophy of self-consciousness could not. Although they mocked the 'Holy Father' for being unable to feel the pangs of hunger, Marx and Engels ground their whole conception of history on the fact that humans must satisfy the needs of life before they can begin to make history. Thus, they only begin to make their own history by remaking the material conditions which environ their social life. In their exposition of these real premises, Marx and Engels argue that by satisfying their given needs, humans also develop new needs and new ways of satisfying them. As they develop their relations to one another and to nature over time, they therefore develop themselves as individuals.

Hence, in contrast to Feuerbach, for whom history and nature diverge, Marx's materialism presents the human relation to nature as a dynamic, rather than a static, one. He criticizes Feuerbach for not being a materialist when he is a historian, and not being a historian when he is a materialist. That is why this chapter has argued that Marx's materialist conception of history was developed in conjunction with a much more historical conception of nature. He presents the nature with which humans interact as a social product. In opposition to Feuerbachian naturalism, which conceives of nature as a homogeneous objectivity untouched by human activity over time, Marx grasps nature in its historically-modified forms.

In the final section of this chapter, I argued that this connection between Marx's materialist conception of human history and historical conception of the human relation to nature had significant implications for his political theory and vision of an emancipated society. Since

humans are shaped by their relation to nature, nature and the human relation to it must be reshaped into a more human form. Precisely because humankind is dependent upon nature, the coming-into-being of 'man as man' was for Marx dependent upon actualizing the 'human essence of nature'. This confluence between natural and human history is one which he understood as involving the simultaneous humanization of nature and naturalization of humanity. In this higher form of society, the antagonism between existence and essence, objectification and affirmation, freedom and necessity— nature and society— would have to be resolved. Society would, for the first time, have to enter into a human relation to the world of which it is but a part.

Conclusion

Part I of this dissertation has focused primarily upon the writings composed between 1843 and 1846. This period in Marx's early intellectual development, as he himself tells us, was one of both critique and of self-clarification. He underwent a 'settling of accounts' with Hegel, the Hegelian dialectic, and the Left Hegelians— and, indeed, with his own former philosophical self. The result of this intense phase in his early intellectual development was the doctrine of historical materialism— a result which Marx regarded as the 'guiding' thread of his life's work. However, Part I also defended the interpretive position that the development of this 'materialist conception of history' involved, at the same time, the development of a completely new conception of nature. Indeed, we have seen that the first formulations of this new conception of history emerged out of the break with Bauer and with Feuerbach, and, specifically, the break with their conceptions of the relationship between history and nature. The rupture between Bauer's idealism and Marx's materialist conception of history, as well as the rupture between philosophical and historical materialism, took place through Marx's retheorization of the category of nature and the rethinking of the role of nature within the dialectic of negativity.

In formulating this historical conception of nature, 'historical' because it is remade by labour, Marx departed decisively from both Feuerbach's *abstract unity* between man and nature, as well as Bauer's *abstract antithesis* between nature and history. For Bauer, the Olympian self-consciousness of the critic is born through the speculative 'death of nature'. He imaginatively overcomes necessity by reducing the sensuous world of nature to a 'stick'. For Feuerbach, by contrast, there is an immediate identity between humanism and naturalism, and all contradictions find their resolution only in the ideal compensation of the species as a whole. His materialism conceives of nature in a static way which abstracts it from history, and it is just as true that for

him 'Man' as a species-being remains submerged within this unhistorical nature. Marx, however, understood nature in a more historically mediated manner. As it exists today, nature is a social product, and so too, for that matter, is the human nature which has transformed it. Marx's conception of the convergence between natural and human history, or, of the simultaneous humanization of nature and naturalization of human society, takes on an entirely different significance when compared to the connection between humanism and naturalism in Feuerbach. For Marx, the connection between humanism and naturalism is only fully realized when human history properly speaking begins. This coming-into-being of human society through labour, this total social movement, is communism— i.e., the only society in which Marx believed we find the *completed* unity between humanity and nature.

Part II

The Original Unity & Historic Separation From the Inorganic Body of Nature

Introduction

Part I of this dissertation tracked the changes which took place in Marx's conception of nature during the mid-1840s. Part II shifts the emphasis of the presentation to the writings of the late-1850s and 1860s, especially those in which he elaborates his theory of the 'metabolism' (Stoffwechsel). During this phase in his intellectual development, Marx articulated his philosophy of nature in a more historically precise form through his description of precapitalist societies, account of primitive accumulation, and critique of the ecological rift specific to capitalism. In his preparatory work for Capital, he uncovered a fundamental difference between the precapitalist and capitalist modes of this metabolism, and, through an analysis of the contradictions of bourgeois society, foresaw the possibility of a new relation to nature developing within a postcapitalist order. This discovery, and his analysis of it in the Grundrisse and beyond, had a lasting impact upon his thinking about the intersections between nature, history, and human development. It would continue to inform his political theory and conception of socialism, as well as shape his views on precapitalist formations and the history of primitive accumulation, until the very last of his writings. Marx's representations of these precapitalist and capitalist forms of the metabolism, and his vision of a radically new relation to nature in socialism, constitute the themes for Part II of this dissertation.

On account of the limited development given to the productive powers of individuals, Marx argued that all precapitalist societies were based upon an immediate *unity* with the earth. In

contrast to this, he contended that the capitalist mode of production presupposes an unprecedented separation between the original and eternal sources of all wealth— labour and nature. As we will learn in Part II, he located the origins of this antagonism in the historical period which separates the dissolution of feudalism proper from the genesis of capitalist relations in England— a period of 'original accumulation' marked by the often violent 'clearing away' of the labourers from their property in the land. By 'denuding' individuals of their nature-given connections to the soil, this process created the class of 'free' labourers required for the cominginto-being of capitalism. Capitalism's own reproduction process also expands this rift in the metabolism on a constantly increasingly scale, completing the estrangement of labour from nature. Yet, just as the decomposition of feudalism in England laid down all the presuppositions for the emergence of bourgeois society, so too did Marx believe that the dissolution of capital would posit the preconditions required for the creation of a still higher form of social life. Its contradictions push it toward its own inherent barriers, unintentionally providing the groundwork for human emancipation in the future. In his conception of such a free society, the old union with nature would be restored, except in a form actually fit for the full development of individuals.

Chapter One, 'Nature's Workshop', examines Marx's representations of precapitalist life. It begins by exploring the significance of his general characterization of nature as the "nature-given inorganic body" of the commune. All precapitalist communities were founded upon an "original intertwinement" between the worker and this "natural workshop of the soil." Of course, every particular precapitalist society presupposed its own "specific objective unity" with these natural conditions of life and labour. In Marx's representations of the earliest form of the archaic commune, i.e., the 'primitive socialism' which stands at the dawn of human history, communal ownership of the land and collectivized forms of labour are said to prevail. Individuals are, by necessity, linked to one another and to the earth given the undeveloped state of their productive

powers and their restricted forms of intercourse. It is their "natural species connection" to one another, and the "umbilical chord" that still attaches them to the soil, which forms their social bond. However, this clan communism was more or less dissolved everywhere into a multiplicity of forms. These multiple lines of development out of primitive communism, in which the old communal property exists in various states of decomposition and transformation, were categorized by Marx as Slavic, Feudal, etc. In 'Nature's Workshop', I focus primarily on the three main precapitalist formations which he identifies in the *Formen* section of the *Grundrisse*— i.e., Asiatic, Classical and Germanic.

The first chapter ends by defending the interpretative position that Marx grasped these different forms as expressing different degrees in the development of the productive powers and relations of individuals. The decomposition of communal property and communal labour— or, what is the same thing, the emergence of the 'dualism' or 'antithesis' between personal and collective property— provided those precapitalist forms further removed from the original state of the commune with a broader basis for the development of 'individuality'. These precapitalist developments in property and production broke down the "natural fate" of the older commune, replacing its purely "naturally-arisen" relations and conditions with this "historically-modified" presence of the individual. This is why although Marx recognized multiple paths of precapitalist development, which even co-existed alongside one another at the same moments in history, he nonetheless regarded them as marking (relative to one another) "progressive" stages in the historical becoming of human society.

Yet, notwithstanding such developments, all of these different forms were based upon comparatively restricted relations, narrow needs, and limited productive powers. According to Marx, there was no room in any of these societies for the free and full development of individuals precisely because they still had to be cut loose from the 'umbilical cord' of the soil,

and, as Stueart puts it, torn from the bosom of nature upon which they were raised. Chapter Two, 'The Separation between Labour and Nature', examines the significance of Marx's claim that capitalism presupposes such a *separation* of labour from nature. Capitalist relations of production rest upon a class of 'free labourers'— 'free' because liberated from their previous connections to the land, to their own labour, and to the community as a whole. In a capitalist economy, the purely subjective capacity of labour, labour-power, exists in its isolation from the objective means of its actualization— in the first instance, from nature. From this one precondition, satirizes Marx, the bourgeoisie derives its divine or nature-given right to exploit the wealth-creating activities of others. One class of individuals, stripped away from the land and torn from their connection to the means of production through a historical process, now have nothing left to sell but their own labour-power to another class of individuals, i.e., those who now own the means of production and nature itself as their private property.

As far as Marx was concerned, what "really requires explanation" is not the "unity" of humanity and nature in precapitalist society, but the historic processes which produced this unprecedented "separation" between them. This is a question which he believed the economists had mystified by conflating the coming-into-being of capitalism with its being-for-itself, thereby 'naturalizing' the latter as the *aeterno modo* of the human metabolism with nature. For Marx, by contrast, the "natural laws" of capitalist production, which are by no means laws of nature common to every epoch, are founded exclusively upon this artificial product of modern history—this isolation of labour from property. Moreover, since this separation is a *precondition* for the emergence of capital, and not at first a *result* reproduced by it, he traced its origins back into the *prehistory of modern society*, i.e., to a period of primitive accumulation which preceded capitalist accumulation in England. By examining these issues in detail, the second chapter will attempt to draw out the integral connections between Marx's critique of political economy,

account of primitive accumulation, and theory of the metabolism with nature.

Although this separation is a necessary presupposition for capitalism, wage-labour, through its own systematic reproduction, reproduces this divorce in ever-greater proportions. In Chapter Three, 'The Metabolic Rift', we will find that this isolation of labour from nature, while initiated by acts of primitive accumulation, is therefore completed only in the capitalist economy. I will also defend the interpretation that Marx recognized both the sociological and environmental implications of this metabolic 'rift', one which he believed to be irreparable from the limited standpoint of capital. This is arguably where we find him at the most explicitly ecological point in his intellectual development. Deforestation, desertification, salinization, erosion, pollution, the destruction of the nutrient cycle, etc., these, too, according to Marx, are products of the capitalist mode of production. The blind necessity of capitalism, i.e., its "general exploitation" of the human qualities and forces of nature, is absolutely antithetical to a form of production founded upon rationally regulating the necessary interchange with the environment. All progress in capitalism, he writes, is "progress" in the simultaneous "robbing" of the vitality of labour and of the fertility of the soil— those original and ultimate sources of all wealth.

However, because Marx regarded this diremption from nature as part of a necessary phase of estrangement, he also argued that the contradictions of capital produce the preconditions required for the creation of a higher form of social life, i.e., one which has freed itself from these fetters on human development as well as from the estrangement vis-a-vis nature. Capitalism's ruthlessly universalizing tendencies give a great impetus to the development of the productive powers of social labour. It pushes wage-labour passed the "natural paltriness" of precapitalist forms of production, providing the conditions and relations necessary to consciously control our own interaction with nature in the future. This dialectic forms the subject matter for the fourth chapter of Part II, 'The Restoration of Nature and Full Development of the Individual'. I will

demonstrate that Marx adhered to the view that the social revolution would have to overcome the metabolic *rift* characteristic of capitalism, and 'restore' the original communal *union* with the "inorganic body" of nature— except, in a social form adequate for the most complete development of the human being, and fit for the appropriation of her total social bond with others. Having sublated the productive forces of labour developed in an antagonistic manner by capitalism, Marx envisions such a socialist society as being based upon the return to the "recognition of nature" as our "real body," but, as a recognition "equally present" for the first time in our own "practical power" over the intercourse with it.

Nature's Workshop

Introduction: Precapitalist Nature as the Inorganic Body of the Commune

Marx's critique of political economy demystifies the so-called 'natural laws' of capital because it illustrates that they proceed from preconditions which are by no means *natural*, but *historical*. Capitalism is predicated upon a definite *social relationship*: viz., the "encounter" in the marketplace between the owner of the means of labour and the seller of labour-power. This 'free' worker is compelled to sell her own wealth-creating powers, like Esau did "his birthright for a mess of pottage," because of the *presupposed separation* which exists here between labour as a *purely subjective capacity* and the *objective conditions of its realization*. Yet this propertylessness of the wage-labourer is no more the creation of nature than are interest rates, rents, and the categories of classical political economy. Instead, Marx treats the relationship between the capitalist who possesses the materials, instruments, and conditions of production, and the wage-worker who has nothing left to sell but her own productive power, as a *product of history*. It is a historical result resting upon the dissolution of earlier forms of production and of their socially specific relationships to nature.

According to Marx, prior to the emergence of capitalism, the metabolic interchange between society and nature was predicated upon the *immediate unity* of the labourer with the material means necessary for labour's actualization. Precapitalist societies proceeded from, and reproduced anew, this original interconnection between human social life and its nature-given 'body' in the sea, soil, woodlands, mountains, etc. However, far from romanticizing this unity

²⁴⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse</u>: Foundations of the <u>Critique</u> of <u>Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 488-489.

²⁴⁹ See Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 307; Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 382.

²⁵⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 270-271, 273-75.

between precapitalist nature and precapitalist society, Marx was usually quite critical of central aspects of it. Although integral to his developmental conception of human history, this critique has been dismissed or downplayed by contemporary secondary literature aimed at recovering Marx's theory of the 'metabolism' with nature. More often than not, though, Marx characterizes this sort of restricted relation to the earth— whether in France, Russia, India, or Ireland— as one based upon narrowly defined needs, limited social relations, and undeveloped productive powers.

In all of its various forms, precapitalist society was founded upon the relative 'immaturity' of the intellectual and practical powers of the human being. ²⁵¹ There is no possibility whatsoever here for the free and full development of individuals. ²⁵² Universally-developed individuals are for Marx a product of *history*, *not nature*. ²⁵³ In *Capital*, he asserts that these social forms are "conditioned by a low stage of development of the productive powers of labour and correspondingly limited relations between men," hence, "also limited relations between man and nature." ²⁵⁴ As Anderson notes, neither does the *Grundrisse* "idealize" these precapitalist forms because he viewed them as being "confined" to a "restricted level of economic and social development" inconsistent with the full actualization of the essential powers of the human race. ²⁵⁵ Marx did not romanticize the precapitalist "dependence" upon a still unmodified nature because, Schmidt agrees, it "necessarily correspond[ed]" with (quoting the *Grundrisse* now) a "level of development of human productive powers which is limited and must

²⁵¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 173.

²⁵² Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 487.

²⁵³ Ibid., 158.

²⁵⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990). 173.

²⁵⁵ Anderson, Kevin, <u>Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies</u>, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 2010), 161.

in principle be limited."256

In these "pre-bourgeois form[s]," Schmidt elaborates, there was no estranged "division between labour and its natural preconditions," but this also means that individuals were more or less "yoked" to the immediate circumstances of their "natural existence." Man, at the beginning of his history," Fromm concurs, is "blindly bound or chained to nature" for Marx. Precisely because the appropriation of nature appears in the first instance simply as the appropriation of the purely *natural preconditions* of production (e.g., in the sense that nature provides labour with its original instrument, larder, workshop, material, etc.), it follows that the most undeveloped precapitalist communities remained bound to the still unmodified conditions of their own intercourse with nature. Marx represents these forms of social life as being regulated by the cycles of the seasons and tethered to the given limits of the soil from which they sprung.

Of course, the 'iron necessity' and 'natural laws' of capitalist development have their own mechanical rhythm and heightened tempo, quite distinct from this ebb and flow of the natural cycles, but against which the power of prayer and constant sacrifice of human life proves to be just as inefficacious. As stated in the above, Marx argued that all of these economic laws proceed from the precondition that there is already an *established separation* between the simple subjectivity of labour, and the objective means of its realization. These laws presuppose, in short, the *nakedness* of a worker *denuded* of the 'natural workshop' that is the earth.²⁵⁹ Yet, this presupposition is itself a *historic result*, the origins of which therefore *precedes* capitalist development in time and belongs, properly speaking, to what Marx refers as the *prehistory* of

²⁵⁶ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 178-179. ²⁵⁷ Ibid., 81.

²⁵⁸ Fromm, Erich, Marx's Concept of Man, (Ungar Publishing: New York; 1961), 14.

²⁵⁹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 471-472.

modern society.²⁶⁰ Later, in the second chapter of this portion of the dissertation, we will discover not only that the initial formation of capital rests upon the decomposition of this original unity between nature and precapitalist society, but that the dissolution was made possible by an 'original accumulation' which must therefore predate capitalist accumulation. Chapter Three will go on to demonstrate that capital, in its own further development, systematically reproduces and deepens this diremption from nature through the continual expropriation of estranged labour, and, in doing so according to Marx, 'completes' the *metabolic rupture* between human life and the means of life. Before undertaking such an endeavour, however, this chapter considers the significance of Marx's representations of this 'natural unity' characteristic of precapitalist society, unpacking along the way its implications for his overall theory of the metabolism.

The "main point" to keep in mind through all this is that nowhere in Marx's examination of the precapitalist forms of the metabolism did he discover the "dot-like isolation" of the "mere free worker," i.e., one whose capacity to labour appears from the outset separated as a purely subjective potential from the material moments of its actualization. Only in the topsy-turvy world of capital does this *separation* of labour from the objective means of its realization appear as the very *precondition* for production. Instead, Marx claimed to have uncovered, through his study of a variety of historical and contemporary precapitalist societies, only so many forms to the *unity* between the worker and the natural workshop of the soil. This unity, in all of its precapitalist modes, existed *prior to production*. This means that the appropriation of nature appears not so much as a *result* of labour, but "presupposed to labour," i.e., as the "appropriation

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²⁶⁰ Ibid., 471. Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 871.

²⁶¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 485.

²⁶² Ibid., 471.

²⁶³ Ibid., 472, 475, 485.

of the *natural conditions of labour*" (emphasis added). It is nature alone which supplies labour with its original "larder" and "natural workshop," the "original instrument of labour as well as its workshop and repository of raw materials." Here, the "individual relates simply to the objective conditions of labour as being his," i.e., as the "inorganic nature of his subjectivity, in which the latter realizes itself"— although, again, not in such a way that it actually "appear[s] as a *product* of labour," but, instead, only as something pregiven and "already there as *nature*." ²⁶⁴

"Within pre-capitalist forms," reiterates Bologh, the necessary connection between labour and the "objective conditions for realizing" it exists *prior* to the actual activity of production. The "individual does not have to produce" this *connection to nature*; instead, the "individual's subjective existence" from the outset "includes its objective conditions (the land)" *within* or as a *part of* itself. "What is decisive here," says Schmidt, is that "men act in relation to these conditions unreflectingly, as if to an extension of their own bodies." Just as we still presuppose today that our own five senses are faculties endowed by nature (even though they, too, are modified later by practical activity), so too did precapitalist society presuppose an essential connection to the earth as its *inorganic body*. Marx claims that the individual relates to 'external' nature here in the same way that he does "his skin, his sense organs." There is no artificial-social division between the subject and object of the productive process, between this natural form of labour and the natural conditions of production in the soil. Instead, the particular plot of land upon which the community sits is regarded by its members as their own inorganic objectivity, their own social being. In such precapitalist forms of production, the "human being's

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 471, 485.

²⁶⁵ Bologh, Roslyn Wallach, Dialectical Phenomenology, (Routledge: 2010; New York), 80.

²⁶⁶ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 172.

²⁶⁷ The individual's "objective mode of existence in his own ownership of the land, an existence presupposed to his activity," is the very "presupposition of his activity just like his skin, his sense organs, which of course he also reproduces and develops, etc., in the life process, but which are nevertheless presuppositions of this process of his reproduction."Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 485.

relation to his natural conditions of production" is "presupposed along with his own being," and he relates to them as "natural presuppositions of his self, which only form, so to speak, his extended body." ²⁶⁸

The earth is the great workshop, the arsenal which furnishes both means and material of labour, as well as the seat, the *base* of the community. They relate naively to it as the *property of the community*, of the community producing and reproducing itself in living labour. Each individual conducts himself only as a link...The *real appropriation* through the labour process happens under these *presuppositions*, which are not themselves the *product* of labour, but appear as its natural or *divine* presuppositions.²⁶⁹

As Lyotard argues of these sorts of passages from the *Grundrisse*, Marx represents this inorganic body of nature as being "bound up with the organic body" of the individual—but as an undifferentiated identity "given" by nature itself and "not produced" by labour. 270 In fact, at one point in the Grundrisse, Marx goes so far as to suggest that in a certain sense this precapitalist individual "does not relate to his conditions of production," but rather unreflectively lives a "double existence, both subjectively as he himself, and objectively in these natural nonorganic conditions of his existence" (emphasis added).²⁷¹ Schmidt also picks up on the significance of this point, from which he concludes that the implication of this statement is that labour "enters for the first time in a real sense into a 'relationship'" with the "objective condition[s]" of labour only after it has been separated from them, i.e., only with the diremption from nature which marks off the rosy dawn of capitalist history.²⁷² In the strictest sense of the term, then, these precapitalist societies are pre-'dialectical' insofar as there is as of yet no negation of the original and relatively unmediated unity with nature. These social forms have not yet passed through the necessary crucible which will separate them from these, the conditions of their existence, and, as such, for the first time force them into a relationship with them.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 491.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 472.

²⁷⁰ Lyotard, Jean-Francois, <u>Libidinal Economy</u>, (trans.) Iain Hamilton Grant, (Continuum: London; 2004), 129.

²⁷¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 491.

²⁷² Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 82.

Even for the "slave and the serf this was not the case," notes Schmidt of Marx's view, "since they were [appropriated as] merely accidental properties of the material earth."273 "Under slavery and serfdom there is basically no division between labour and its natural prerequisites;" rather, both "moments merge to form an undifferentiated natural basis for the existence of the slaveowner or the feudal lord."274 Schmidt repeats this same point elsewhere in the same text: "Slavery and serfdom know of no separation of labour from its inorganic conditions...The two moments merge to form an undifferentiated, uniform natural basis for the slave-owner or the feudal-lord, who conquer the slave and serf" by appropriating their labour as an "organic accessory of the land."275 If Schmidt's reading is correct, as I believe it is, then surely Lyotard must be mistaken in arguing that Marx's characterizations of precapitalist nature as the inorganic body of the community "preclud[es]" all "relation[s] of domination." This metabolic unity with nature— while it does not necessarily and, Marx speculates, does not originally include such relations of personal domination— in no way excludes the possibility that the "workers themselves, the living labour capacities themselves," "directly" form part of the "objective conditions of production, and are appropriated as such— i.e., are slaves or serfs."277 In other words, far from precluding relations of domination, where such relations do emerge the dominated are actually incorporated into and appropriated as a part of the natural body of the community, i.e., they appear as an *organic outgrowth* of the *inorganic body* of nature. In the case of "[s]lavery, bondage, etc.," Marx insists, the slave or bondsman "appears among the natural conditions of production for a third individual or community."278

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²⁷³ Ibid., 82.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 81.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 175.

²⁷⁶ Lyotard, Jean-François, Libidinal Economy, (trans.) Iain Hamilton Grant, (Continuum: London; 2004), 129-130.

²⁷⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 498.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 495.

For example, defeat in war sometimes "makes the clan conquered by another clan propertyless and throws it among the *inorganic conditions* of the conquerors' reproduction"—that is, it transforms the members of the defeated commune into its slaves (e.g., the Messenian helots).²⁷⁹ "If human beings themselves are conquered along with the land and soil as its organic accessories, then they are equally conquered as one of the conditions of production."²⁸⁰ The servile relations then come to appear naturalized, i.e., as if they sprung from the very soil itself, but slavery and serfdom, as Marx intimates here, were actually results of the historical decomposition of an earlier and more 'primary form' of communal life (i.e., the classlessness of primitive communism). The transition out of this clan communism into hierarchical societies involved "further developments of the form of property resting on the clan system," which, although a "necessary and logical development of property founded on the community and labour in the community," are "always secondary, derived, [and] never [the] original" form of precapitalist life.²⁸¹

Nonetheless, Marx's notion of the precapitalist unity with nature in no way excludes, as Lyotard suggests, the possibility of such relations emerging, i.e., of individuals being themselves reduced to natural factors of production. On the contrary as we have seen, he argues that the slave and the serf are reduced to *natural elements* of the metabolism with the earth, and are appropriated as part of the natural body of the community. As Aristotle explains of so-called 'natural slavery', the slave is regarded as an animate or "living tool" (*empsychon organon*), just

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 493. He repeats this point in the *Contribution*, stating that conquerors sometimes transform the "conquered people into slaves and thus makes slave labor the basis of production." Marx, Karl, 'Introduction to the Critique of

Political Economy', <u>The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 13.

²⁸⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 491.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 493, 496.

as the tool is an *inanimate slave*.²⁸² Just as there can be no 'mutual recognition' between a man and his ox, the master does not recognize the slave as anything but a mere means provided by nature. But far from being *separated* from the metabolic conditions of labour in the land, here the labouring slave is directly appropriated as a "natural instrument" provided by nature's workshop, i.e., just as are beasts of burden.

In relations of slavery and serfdom this separation does not take place; rather, one part of society is treated by the other as itself merely an *inorganic and natural* condition of its own reproduction. The slave stands in no relation whatsoever to the objective conditions of his labour; rather, *labour* itself, both in the form of the slave and in that of the serf, is classified as *an inorganic condition* of production along with other natural beings, such as cattle, as an accessory of the earth.²⁸³

Even where relations of personal domination did not emerge, these communities were usually confined within the agricultural boundaries of the village, and enclosed within the narrow limits afforded by purely "naturally-arisen" relations of kinship. Here, the individual is connected to others as a "natural member" of a particular "natural community." According to Marx's view, they are but "natural component parts" of a social whole organized on the limited basis provided by the natural presence of the family, or, by the family enlarged into a clan. The individual's real appropriation of nature as a precondition of production (which is, at the same time, the clan's own reproduction process) operates entirely within the limits of such consanguinity. The "relation to land and soil, to the earth, as the [communal] property of the labouring individual" appears "instantly mediated" here by "his naturally arisen presence as a member of a tribe." The "first presupposition" for this communal possession of the soil is the clan itself with its "communality of blood, language, [and] customs," i.e., the more or less

²⁸² "[W]hile the slave is as it were a part and detachable tool of the master, the tool being a sort of inanimate slave." Aristotle, 'Eudmenian Ethics', <u>The Complete Works of Aristotle</u>, Vol. 2, Jonathan Barnes (ed.), (Oxford University Press: Oxford; 1994), 1241b17-1241b24.

²⁸³ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 489.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 472.

²⁸⁵ Ibid. 474.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 485.

historically modified "natural predisposition" of the gens or "clan character" of the commune. 287

As Forbes argues, in the earliest and least developed modes of precapitalist life, the "conditions [of production] presuppose subjective and objective connections to others and nature" which assume the "form of clan membership"— and this sort of communality is itself a "natural" precondition for the existence of such societies. Lyotard explains that just as the inorganic body of nature is "given and not produced" in precapitalist society, so too is this physical "belonging to the commune itself also given [by nature] and not produced." Schmidt also suggests that the social unity with nature is present here for Marx as nature— that is to say, the connection to the inorganic body is "found ready to hand in the land, in nature," just as the social connection between individuals is determined by the natural unity of the family. Such "earlier modes of human intervention in nature" were regarded by Marx as "fundamentally modes of nature's 'self-mediation'." Man appears as a mode of nature's organic existence," while on the other side, on the the basis provided by the "pure natural existence' of labour," nature appears as a part of his own inorganic objectivity.

hunters, tillers etc.)." Ibid., 472.

²⁸⁷ Marx notes that the metabolism with the environment is also determined further, on the one hand, by the *natural-economic conditions of labour* particular to the land which the commune happens to occupy, and, on the other, by the *natural-social character of the clan* itself— both of which are also modified by historical development. "In the first form of this landed property, an initial, naturally arisen spontaneous [*naturwüchsiges*] community appears as [the] first presupposition. Family, and the family extended as a clan [*Stamm*], or through intermarriage between families, or combination of clans, since we may assume that *pastoralism*, or more generally a *migratory* form of life, was the first form of the mode of existence, not that the clan settles in a specific site, but that it grazes off what it finds— humankind is not settlement-prone by nature (except possibly in a natural environment so especially fertile that they sit like monkeys on a tree; else roaming like the animals)— then the *clan community*, the natural community, appears not as a *result* of, but as a *presupposition for the communal appropriation* (temporary) *and utilization of the land*. When they finally do settle down, the extent to which this original community is modified will depend on various external, climatic, geographic, physical etc., conditions as well as on their particular natural predisposition— their clan character. This naturally arisen clan community, or, if one will, pastoral society, is the first presupposition— the communality [*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*] of blood, language, customs— for the *appropriation of the objective conditions* of their life, and of their life's reproducing and objectifying activity (activity as herdsmen,

²⁸⁸ Forbes, Ian, Marx and the New Individual:, (Unwin Hayman: London; 1990), 67.

²⁸⁹ Lyotard, Jean-Francois, <u>Libidinal Economy</u>, (trans.) Iain Hamilton Grant, (Continuum: London; 2004), 132.

²⁹⁰ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 178.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 179.

²⁹² Ibid., 176.

meaningfully applied at all" according to Schmidt, is applicable only to Marx's "description of the labour process in its naturally-determined form." A dialectic *of* nature, as opposed to one *between* nature and society, is for Schmidt only "valid for those precapitalist processes" which are not "structurally dissimilar to the processes which the plant or animal organism" undergoes in its interaction with the environment, but out of which *human history* must somehow emerge.²⁹³

In more advanced modes of precapitalist life, these purely 'natural' bonds of blood, clan, etc., are substituted by *historically-developed* relations, i.e., relations which extend beyond the boundaries of the village and the limits of kinship.²⁹⁴ However, in this case, Marx claims, the individual's relationship to his inorganic body in nature remains just as "instantly mediated," except that it is mediated by this "more or less historically developed and modified presence of the individual."²⁹⁵ Or, as Hegel might put it, it is *immediately mediated* by a *mediated immediacy*. This is what Schmidt means when he notes that "Marx repeatedly pointed out that all naturally-given forms are also 'the results of a historical process'."²⁹⁶ As Marx asserts, the individual's *natural* "relation to the earth as property is always mediated through the occupation of the land and soil, peacefully or violently, by the tribe, the commune, in some more or less naturally arisen or already historically developed form."²⁹⁷ Every particular precapitalist form of production is

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²⁹³ Ibid., 175-176.

²⁹⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 485.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 485.

²⁹⁶ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 176.

²⁹⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 485. "The forms of these *natural conditions of production* are double: (1) his existence as a member of the commune; hence the existence of this community, which in its original form is a *clan* system, a more or less modified *clan* system; (2) the relation to *land and soil* mediated by the community, as *its own*, as communal landed property, at the same time *individual possession* for the individual, or in such a way that only the fruits are divided, but the land itself and the labour remain common...[T]he original conditions of production appear as natural presuppositions, *natural conditions of the producer's existence*, just as his living body, even though he reproduces and develops it, is originally not posited by himself, but appears as the *presupposition of his self*; his own (bodily) being is a natural presupposition, which he has not posited. These *natural conditions of existence*, to which he

"aim[ed] at the reproduction of the producer within and together with these, his [socially specific] objective conditions of existence." 298

The "economic aim" of "all these forms," writes Marx, is the "reproduction of the individual within the specific relation to the commune." On the one hand, the individual's relation to the "objective conditions of labour is mediated through his presence as member of the commune," while, on the other, the "real presence of the commune is determined by the specific form of the individual's property in the objective conditions of labour."299 As Bologh notes, the "inner unity" between the "subject and object in these precapitalist forms" expresses itself for Marx in the specific relation of the individual to property in the soil. But the individual's "property relation" is always "mediated" by the naturally-given and/or historically-modified "presence" of his or her specific "membership in a community." According to Marx, this socially-mediated relation of individuals to one another and to nature is, in fact, what *property* "originally means." ³⁰¹ Property always reduces itself to a definite relation of production which corresponds, in turn, with a definite way of relating to others and to nature. "Property," he reiterates in the same section of the Grundrisse, "originally means" nothing but this "relation of the working (producing or selfreproducing) subject to the conditions of his production or reproduction as his own." "In the last analysis," therefore, every form of society, "as well as the property based on it, resolves itself into a specific stage in the development of the productive forces of working subjects—to which

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relates as to his own inorganic body, are [again] themselves [of a] double [character]: (1) of a subjective and (2) of an objective nature. He finds himself a member of a family, clan, tribe, etc.—which then, in a historic process of intermixture and antithesis with others, takes on a different shape; and, as such a member, he relates to a specific nature (say, here, still earth, land, soil) as his own inorganic being, as a condition of his production and reproduction. As a natural member of the community he participates in the communal property, and [may even] ha[ve] a particular part of it as his [individualized] possession...[but] [h]is *property*, i.e., the relation to the natural presuppositions of his production as belonging to him, as *his*, is mediated by his being himself the natural member of a community." Ibid. 489-492.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 495.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 485.

³⁰⁰ Bologh, Roslyn Wallach, <u>Dialectical Phenomenology</u>, (Routledge: 2010; New York), 80.

³⁰¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 491.

correspond their specific relations amongst one another and towards nature."302

The original unity between a particular form of community (clan) and the corresponding property in nature, or relation to the objective conditions of production as a natural being, as an objective being of the individual mediated by the commune— this unity, which appears in one respect as the particular form of property— has its living reality in a specific *mode of production* itself, a mode which appears both as a relation between the individuals, and as their specific active relation to inorganic nature, a specific mode of working (which is always family labour, often communal labour).³⁰³

The Precapitalist Forms of Property in the Land

In this passage, Marx begins to speak to the fact that not all precapitalist societies were "cast from the same die."³⁰⁴ Through a "historic process" of decomposition and development, precapitalist life took on a series of "different shape[s]."³⁰⁵ Precapitalist property in the land came to assume a wide variety of "different forms depending on the conditions of this production."³⁰⁶ In the *Grundrisse*, he wrote more specifically of the "Asiatic, Slavonic, ancient classical, [and] Germanic form[s]," while in the 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* he refers, in "broad outline, [to] the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production."³⁰⁷ In the account of primitive accumulation in *Capital*, he describes not only the essential characteristics of feudal property in Europe, but also the intermediary forms of proprietorship which separate its dissolution from the advent of agricultural capitalism in England.

In the *Formen*, Marx probably writes more about the *precapitalist* connection to nature than he does about the specifically *capitalist* metabolism throughout the whole of the *Grundrisse* and

³⁰² Ibid., 495.

³⁰³ Ibid., 495.

³⁰⁴ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 354, 363.

³⁰⁵ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 490.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 496.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 495. Marx, Karl, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 29, Victor Shnittke and Yuri Sdobnikov (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1987), 275.

Capital combined. If he was more concerned, as he surely must have been, with the critique of capitalist society, then why did he expend so much more effort analyzing these precapitalist relationships to nature in the *Grundrisse*? As Foster suggests, Marx's "analysis of pre-capitalist economic formations" (and, as the next chapter of the dissertation will elaborate, his analysis of the "dissolution of these forms through primitive accumulation") is important for understanding his overall theory of the metabolism because these different types of society were regarded by him as "changing forms of the appropriation of nature through production." They highlight the historical character of the human relation to nature, and Marx's continued emphasis upon comprehending nature as a social category. Moreover, it was precisely by examining the historical character of this relationship in its diversity of precapitalist forms that he was able to isolate the contradictory conditions peculiar to the capitalist intercourse with nature. As Anderson argues, the true aim of the Grundrisse's "focus is not noncapitalist social relations as such, but the uniqueness of modern capitalism." Marx was really "focused on something else, the rise of the modern Western proletariat, a working class that was formally free but largely atomized and stripped of any significant control over its means of production."309 His study of precapitalist formations allowed him to identify the metabolic rift characteristic of wage-labour, and it was this Formen-study in particular which laid the groundwork for his treatment of the question of 'original accumulation' in Capital.

It should also be noted in the context of this discussion that the three main precapitalist forms which Marx describes in the *Grundrisse*— and which the *Formen* labels Asiatic, Classical and Germanic— are in no way treated by him as geographical, and less still as ethnological,

³⁰⁸ Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's *Grundrisse* and the Ecological Contradictions of Capitalism', <u>Karl Marx's Grundrisse</u>: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later, Marcello Musto (ed.), (Routledge: New York; 2008), 94.

³⁰⁹ Anderson, Kevin, Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 2010), 156, 160.

designations. It is important to dispel this notion from the outset of any consideration of these forms. The most controversial category, the Asiatic mode of production, was 'Asiatic' for Marx only because it could still be found preserved throughout parts of Asia at the time. But, as Lichtheim suggests, he and Engels also recognized that this "kind of communal ownership...appears under different historical variants" far removed from Asia, e.g., the pre-Columbian civilizations of South America, the early Celtic clans, etc.³¹⁰ Engels mentions a wide variety of such societies extending from the steppes of Mongolia, through Persia and Hindustan, and into the Arabian peninsula and the Maghreb. In another work, he speaks of this form as having existed everywhere at one time or another from 'India to Ireland'. Beneath its 'semblance' of Absolutism, Marx argued that the Spanish monarchy could be revealed to be just one of the many "Asiatic forms of government." 311 In his discussion of the Asiatic form in the Grundrisse, he develops the view that the "communality of labour" characteristic of this mode of production has been found in "Mexico, Peru especially, among the early Celts, [and] a few clans in India." This form of community is also the "first occurrence of the lordly dominium in the most original sense, e.g., in the Slavonic communes, in the Rumanian etc." and, as such, within it "lies the transition to villeinage." 312

This last statement explains why Marx oscillated between regarding the 'Slavic' form as either 'Asiatic' or 'semi-Asiatic'— until finally treating it, along with the Germanic, Hellenic-Roman, etc., as one of the several "different forms of its dissolution," i.e., the dissolution of primitive common property and communal production.³¹³ The "original form of this property is

³¹⁰ Lichtheim, George, 'Marx and the "Asiatic Mode of Production", <u>Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought</u>, Vol. 6, Bob Jessop and Russel Wheatley (ed.), (Routledge: London; 1999), 47.

³¹¹ Marx on the Spanish Revolution of 1854 quoted in Draper, Hal, <u>Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution: State and Bureaucracy</u>, Vol. I, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 1977), 556.

³¹² Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 473.

³¹³ Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London;

therefore itself *direct common property* (*oriental form*, modified in the Slavonic; developed to the point of antithesis, but still as the secret, if antithetical, foundation in classical and Germanic property)."³¹⁴ In all of these instances, it is clear that the concept of the Asiatic mode of production is neither an ethnological concept nor a geographical label. As Zingarelli argues, the

most complex aspect to revisit is the qualifier 'Asiatic', perhaps because Asia evokes an abstraction linked to certain negative traits, such as despotic, closed and stagnant, to express the singularity of Eastern processes as distinct from those of the West...[However,] criticism based on geographical restriction does not appear justified given that Marx himself in the *Formen* [and elsewhere] did not limit the Asiatic form to certain spaces...[H]e located the phenomenon in the orient because in fact the first states emerge in Egypt, Mesopotamia, China and India...notwithstanding the fact that those relationships can be found in other geographical spaces and historical times.³¹⁵

Hence, the 'Asiatic' form, like the other forms, actually expresses a general mode of precapitalist life (in this case, one based upon homogeneous communal property and even communal forms of labour) which is not confined to certain peoples, places, or periods in history. Although Marx certainly offered definite examples of such societies *in Asia*, e.g., the village-system in northern India, even there he stressed that wherever these forms arise they are determined further by the social relations, local-natural conditions, etc., specific to those societies. As Hart puts it, Marx really presents the Asiatic, Roman, etc., types of property and production as "idealized examples" of precapitalist life, but also cautions that the "historical explanation of particular cases must draw on an ad hoc series of ecological, political, and other variables." As Draper concludes, the precapitalist forms which Marx sketches out in the

^{1990), 171.}

³¹⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 473, 495-498.

³¹⁵ Zingarelli, Andrea, 'Asiatic Mode of Production: Considerations on Ancient Egypt', <u>Studies on Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production</u>, Laura da Graca and Andrea Zingarelli (ed.), (Brill: Leidin), 72.

³¹⁶ Hart, Keith, 'Anthropology', <u>Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics</u>, (ed.) Ben Fine and Alfredo Sadd-Filho, (MPG: Cheshire; 2012), 23. Marx notes that the metabolism with the environment is also determined further, on the one hand, by the *natural-economic conditions of labour* particular to the land which the commune happens to occupy, and, on the other, by the *natural-social character of the clan* itself— both of which are also modified by historical development. "In the first form of this landed property, an initial, naturally arisen spontaneous [naturwüchsiges] community appears as [the] first presupposition. Family, and the family extended as a clan [Stamm], or through intermarriage between families, or combination of clans, since we may assume that pastoralism,

Grundrisse are therefore best understood (as Marx himself understood them) as archetypal forms of property and production, i.e., it is more of a "typological label." This particular label, 'Asiatic', applies everywhere where there is "common property as found in the Orient."³¹⁷

The Original Communality of the Clan

Since the human species is not "settlement prone by nature," the *Grundrisse*'s analysis of these various forms of property actually starts out from the anthropological premise that the "migratory form of life" (e.g., seasonal hunting grounds, early pastoral societies, etc.) is in fact the most "natural community," i.e., the "first form of the mode of existence" common to all human societies. Marx rarely commented upon such migratory modes of social life— although his brief allusions to the Mongol empire in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, as well as his ethnological notes on the indigenous peoples of North America, are noteworthy exceptions. In such migratory forms, there can be no 'property' in, nor even 'possession' of, the soil precisely because the community never "settles on a specific site." Instead, it merely passes through, utilizing this or that patch of earth on a purely "temporary" basis. Of course, these communities still appropriated the use-values of nature as their property, but what they appropriated (e.g., as

or more generally a *migratory* form of life, was the first form of the mode of existence, not that the clan settles in a specific site, but that it grazes off what it finds— humankind is not settlement-prone by nature (except possibly in a natural environment so especially fertile that they sit like monkeys on a tree; else roaming like the animals)— then the *clan community*, the natural community, appears not as a *result* of, but as a *presupposition for the communal appropriation* (temporary) *and utilization of the land*. When they finally do settle down, the extent to which this original community is modified will depend on various external, climatic, geographic, physical etc., conditions as well as on their particular natural predisposition— their clan character. This naturally arisen clan community, or, if one will, pastoral society, is the first presupposition— the communality [Gemeinschaftlichkeit] of blood, language, customs— for the *appropriation of the objective conditions* of their life, and of their life's reproducing and objectifying activity (activity as herdsmen, hunters, tillers etc.)." Ibid., 472.

³¹⁷ "It was Marx who first stated that the mode of production which Europeans had discovered in Asia in modern times had also existed in the prehistory of European society, that the Asiatic mode of production had to be considered a world-wide development, even though it had taken different paths [of development and decomposition] in different regions [and at different times] and had fossilized in one of them...[But that] did not mean that the "Asiatic" mode of production was an Oriental monopoly...[or] limited geographically to Asia." Draper, Hal, <u>Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution: State and Bureaucracy</u>, Vol. I, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 1977), 537-542.

gatherers, graziers, hunters, etc.) was *mobile* and not *fixed* to the land. In another section of the *Formen*, Marx argues that these roving clans did indeed regard the earth as their 'property', but qualifies that they never "stabilized" their relation to it (vis-a-vis other communes) because they merely used it as a "halting place." ³¹⁸

According to this view, then, only the "cultivation of the soil" truly "posits the land as the individual's extended body."³¹⁹ The earliest forms of this stabilized property of the *Stamm* maintained what is sometimes referred to as 'primitive socialism'. This clan communism was 'primitive' because its metabolism with nature was based upon the limited productive capacities and narrowly defined needs of individuals, as well as their completely localized relations with one another. As Marx tells us in some of the very last of his writings, this sort of "primitive type of cooperation"— where work is "carried out communally and the communal product is shared out"— initially arises due to the "weakness of the isolated individual, and not from the socialisation of the means of production."³²⁰ This communality was a necessity imposed by nature itself. But this "labor in common" is for that same reason the "spontaneously developed form" standing "at the threshold of the history of all civilized peoples."³²¹ He repeated this same

Among the nomadic pastoral peoples, the commune is indeed constantly united; the travelling society, the caravan,

³¹⁸ "Property is, it is true, originally mobile, for mankind first seizes hold of the ready-made fruits of the earth, among whom belong e.g. the animals, and for him especially the ones that can be tamed. Nevertheless even this situation— hunting, fishing, herding, gathering fruits from trees etc.— always presupposes appropriation of the earth, whether for a fixed residence, or for roaming, or for animal pasture etc....Among nomadic pastoral tribes— and all pastoral peoples are originally migratory— the earth appears like other natural conditions, in its elemental limitlessness, e.g. in the Asiatic steppes and the high plateau. It is grazed etc., consumed by the herds, from which the pastoral peoples in turn live. They relate to it as their property, although they never stabilize this property. This is the case too with the hunting grounds of the wild Indian tribes in America; the tribe regards a certain region as its hunting domain, and asserts it by force against other tribes, or tries to drive others off the domains they assert.

the horde, and the forms of supremacy and subordination develop out of the conditions of this mode of life. What is in fact *appropriated* and *reproduced* here is not the earth but the herd; but the earth is always used *communally* at each halting place.> The only barrier which the community can encounter in relating to the natural conditions of production— the earth— as to *its own property* (if we jump ahead to the settled peoples) is *another community*, which already claims it as its own inorganic body." Ibid., 491-492.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 493.

³²⁰ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 351, 363, 367.

³²¹ Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London;

point on a number of occasions, as, for instance, when he alluded to "communal labour in its naturally evolved form as we find it among all civilised nations at the dawn of their history."³²² "[R]esearch into history," he concluded elsewhere, has "uncover[ed]" this primitive communism as the "point of departure of all cultured peoples."³²³

The communal appropriation of nature appears here as the precondition of all production, i.e., as the nature-given presupposition for the reproduction of the commune itself. There is no metabolic separation whatsoever between labour and land in this naturally-arisen communism. As Camatte elaborates, Marx and Engels characterized "primitive communism" as being founded upon an "immediate union among the component members and between these members and their natural environment." But there stands a diverse range of intermediary social forms between the decomposition of this nature-made socialism— based as it was upon an unmediated identity with its inorganic body— and the capitalist mode of production— which, through the estranged development of the productive powers of social labour, creates the conditions necessary for a higher recognition of this corpus naturale in the future, communism proper.

The system of production founded on private exchange is, to begin with, the historical dissolution of this naturally arisen communism. However, a whole series of economic systems lies in turn between the modern world, where exchange value dominates production to its whole depth and extent, and the social formations whose foundation is already formed by the dissolution of communal property.³²⁵

An "enormous gulf," Engels reminds us, "separates the present-day proletarian and small peasant from the free member of the old gentile society."³²⁶ Marx reiterated this same point in his

^{1990), 171.}

³²² Marx, Karl, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 29, Victor Shnittke and Yuri Sdobnikov (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1987), 275.

³²³ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 882.

³²⁴ Camatte, Jacques, 'Community and Communism in Russia', David Brown (trams.), first published in French in *Invariance Series* II, n. 4, 1974; in English by Spartacus 1978, https://www.marxists.org/archive/camatte/commrus1.htm.

³²⁵ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 882.

³²⁶ Engels, Frederick, The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State, Evelyn Reed (intro.), (Pathfinder Press:

drafts to the Zasulich-letter, recognizing that between the "death of [this] communal property" and the "birth of capitalist production" lies a "whole series of successive economic revolutions and evolutions." The main precapitalist forms which he analyzes in the *Grundrisse*— Asiatic, Classical, Germanic— are regarded by him as only so many different paths in the dissolution of this original communality of labour and property. All of these intermediary precapitalist forms which separate the decomposition of primitive communism from the advent of capitalist relations rest, to differing degrees and in different ways, upon the withering away of the old communal mode of production and appropriation. As Gandy puts it, Marx recognized that the Asiatic, Roman, Germanic, etc., forms were "several lines of social evolution out of primitive communism." The "common ownership of the land" marked by "primitive communism," which was "universal at the dawn of history," gave way to a variety of different modes of precapitalist life, each with their own horizon of limits. 328

The Agricultural Unity of the Archaic Commune

This is why in the "first form" of "landed property" arising out of the decomposition of clan communism—viz.., that founded atop the so-called "oriental commune"—the "individual

New York; 2009), 63.

³²⁷ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 361.

^{328 &}quot;The self-sufficient communities slept through the ages under the sway of the despot, who taxed and ruled and defended them. This society remained at a low level of economic evolution...Around the Mediterranean another line of evolution from primitive communism produced a higher social system: the ancient mode of production. The ancient mode arouse out of primitive communism with the fusion of several tribes into a town...The city-state is the economic unity of the ancient mode, and the history of Rome reveals the basic pattern of development...Before the invasions [of Rome] German tribes owned land in common. But the conquest caused their primitive communism to explode in a new line of economic evolution. From the German invasions there arose in Western Europe the feudal mode of production. The feudal mode contained the germs of a higher system: capitalism...For Marx primitive communism is the source from which history flows: some modes of production evolved a long way from communism, some not so far, some scarcely at all." Gandy, Daniel Ross, Marx and History: From Primitive Society to the Communist Future, (University of Texas Press: 1979), 114.

is merely the possessor" of land. There still is "no private property in the land and soil."³²⁹ As Lichtheim puts it, this commune "conserved some elements of primitive communism"— namely, communal property and even communal forms of labour.³³⁰ Marx once claimed in a letter to Engels that the "absence of private landed property" is the "common basis" for "all the manifestations of the East"— socially, politically, and metabolically. This is the "real *clef*, even to the eastern heaven."³³¹ Engels, responding to him a few days later, accepted that the

absence of landed property is indeed the key to the whole of the East...[but that this is] largely due to the climate, combined with the nature of the land, more especially the great stretches of desert extending from the Sahara right across Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary to the highest of the Asiatic uplands. Here artificial irrigation is the first prerequisite for agriculture, and this is the responsibility either of the communes, the provinces or the central government. In the East, the government has always consisted of 3 departments only: Finance (pillage at home), War (pillage at home and abroad), and *travaux publics*, provision for reproduction. The British government in India has put a somewhat narrower interpretation on nos. 1 and 2 while completely neglecting no. 3, so that Indian agriculture is going to wrack and ruin. Free competition is proving an absolute fiasco there. The fact that the land was made fertile by artificial means and immediately ceased to be so when the conduits fell into disrepair, explains the otherwise curious circumstance that vast expanses are now wastes which once were magnificently cultivated³³²

Lichtheim argues that the characteristic "features" which Engels enumerates here— e.g., "climatic conditions," "travaux publics," and "Oriental [centralized] government"— would be

³²⁹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 472, 486.

Rosdolsky and others suggest, or, an entirely separate stage of production as Camatte believes, is open to interpretation inasmuch as different texts by Marx and Engels seem to offer ground to both of these standpoints. I am more inclined to agree with Lichtheim that we should interpret Marx as arguing that while the Indian village, early Scottish clans, etc., may have *preserved* certain elements of primitive communism (to differing degrees), we should regard the 'Asiatic' mode of production as a form founded upon the dissolution of this original socialism. There are certain characteristics which, upon closer analysis, would allow us to distinguish highly developed 'Asiatic' societies from primitive communism (e.g., increased surplus labour and centralized forms of expropriation, patriarchy, large-scale public works, and the introduction of class distinctions and relations of personal domination, indebtedness, etc.). See Rosdolsky, Roman, The Making of Marx's 'Capital', Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 273; Camatte, Jacques, 'Community and Communism in Russia', David Brown (trams.), first published in French in *Invariance Series* II, n. 4, 1974, https://www.marxists.org/archive/camatte/commrus1.htm; in English by Spartacus 1978; Lichtheim, George, 'Marx and the "Asiatic Mode of Production", Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought, Vol. 6, Bob Jessop and Russel Wheatley (ed.), (Routledge: London; 1999), 49.

³³¹ Marx, Karl, 'Marx to Engels (June 2, 1853)', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 39, Betty Ross and Peter Ross (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1983), 33-334.

³³² Engels, Frederick, 'Engels to Marx (June 6, 1853)', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 39, Betty Ross and Peter Ross (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1983), 339-340.

"expanded" by Marx (in series of articles on India and in the Grundrisse) into an analysis which highlights the "absence of private ownership in land" in the archaic commune itself.³³³ A week before finalizing one of the articles for the New York Tribune, 'The British Rule in India', Marx wrote back to Engels:

> [t]he stationary nature of this part of Asia, despite all the aimless activity on the political surface, can be completely explained by two mutually supporting circumstances: 1. the public works system of the central government and, 2. alongside this, the entire Empire which, apart from a few large cities, is an agglomeration of villages, each with its own distinct organisation and each forming its own small world...These idyllic republics, of which only the village boundaries are jealously guarded against neighbouring villages, continue to exist in well-nigh perfect form in the North Western parts of India only recently occupied by the English. No more solid basis for Asiatic despotism and stagnation is, I think, conceivable. And however much the English may have Irelandised the country, the breaking up of the archetypal forms was the conditio sine qua non for Europeanisation... Another essential factor was the destruction of the ancient industries, which robbed these villages of their self-supporting character.³³⁴

In the article itself, Marx once again underlines the same essential point: viz., that such primitive communal conditions create a sort self-sustaining circle of agricultural production which insulates the commune from contact and intercourse with the larger world outside of it. It was this primitive unity of the archaic commune with nature which often restricted it from further historical development according to Marx. It was, at bottom, a restricted metabolism which was

³³³ Lichtheim, George, 'Marx and the "Asiatic Mode of Production", Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought, Vol. 6, Bob Jessop and Russel Wheatley (ed.), (Routledge: London; 1999), 41. Indeed, Marx repeats Engels' words in the article: "There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of Government; that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior; that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and, finally, the department of Public Works. Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert, extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India, and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and water-works the basis of Oriental agriculture. As in Egypt and India, inundations are used for fertilizing the soil in Mesopotamia, Persia, &c.; advantage is taken of a high level for feeding irrigative canals. This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water, which, in the Occident, drove private enterprise to voluntary association, as in Flanders and Italy, necessitated, in the Orient where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic Governments, the function of providing public works. This artificial fertilization of the soil, dependent on a Central Government, and immediately decaying with the neglect of irrigation and drainage, explains the otherwise strange fact that we now find whole territories barren and desert that were once brilliantly cultivated, as Palmyra, Petra, the ruins in Yemen, and large provinces of Egypt, Persia, and Hindostan; it also explains how a single war of devastation has been able to depopulate a country for centuries, and to strip it of all its civilization." Marx, Karl, 'The British Rule in India', Dispatches from the New York Tribune: Selected Journalism of Karl Marx, James Ledbetter (ed.), (Penguin Books:London; 2007), 214-215.

³³⁴ Marx, Karl, 'Marx to Engels' (June 14, 1853), Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 39, Betty Ross and Peter Ross (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1983), 346-347.

merely reflected in what he criticized as a dehumanizing worship of nature and fatalistic subservience to natural necessity.

Hindostan is an Italy of Asiatic dimensions...The same rich variety in the products of the soil, and the same dismemberment in the political configuration. Just as Italy has, from time to time, been compressed by the conqueror's sword into different national masses, so do we find Hindostan, when not under the pressure of the Mohammedan, or the Mogul, or the Briton, dissolved into as many independent and conflicting States as it numbered towns, or even villages. Yet, in a social point of view, Hindostan is not the Italy, but the Ireland of the East....These two circumstances...had brought about, since the remotest times, a social system of particular features—the so-called village system, which gave to each of these small unions their independent organization and distinct life...Now, sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious patriarchal and inoffensive social organizations disorganized and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and their individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of civilization, and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village-communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies...We must not forget that this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindostan. We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalizing worship of nature.³³⁵

Contrary to much of contemporary secondary literature, I would contend that the essential features of this standpoint still inform Marx's later views in the *Grundrisse*, *Capital*, *Ethnological Notebooks* and drafts to the Zasulich letter— even if these works also show signs of unique developments all their own. Many of the characteristics which he identifies in the above and in his other articles on India, as well as in his correspondence with Engels on the subject, are noticeable in his later descriptions of precapitalist life: e.g., (i) the primitive unity of manufacturing and agriculture within the archaic commune, and, along with this, the self-enclosed character of the village-system; (ii) communal property, and at times even communal labour, but always as based upon the narrow needs, limited powers, and restricted relations of the

³³⁵ Marx, Karl, 'The British Rule in India', <u>Dispatches from the New York Tribune: Selected Journalism of Karl Marx</u>, James Ledbetter (ed.), (Penguin Books:London; 2007), 212-218.

individual members— hence the mystification of nature as a 'higher power'; (iii) when these smaller communities are brought together into a larger political unity, it is a unity which often expresses itself in the form of an overarching despotism which merely shelters them in their isolation from the outside world. The importance which Marx and Engels sometimes laid upon (iv) the aspect of 'public works', especially of large-scale waterworks, is specifically applicable to this more centralized political form.

Although they deemed artificial irrigation to be a necessity imposed by the climatic conditions of production across parts of Asia, Marx and Engels nonetheless also observed that, wherever political centralization did not occur, the villages themselves carried out the work irrigation on a more limited and local level. However, where it does occur, the public works projects take on colossal proportions. Even though Marx and Engels characterized such precapitalist forms as confining the development of the productive forces of labour within shallow limits, they nonetheless recognized that the aqueducts and irrigation systems of the ancient world (e.g., from China and India to Rome and Egypt) represented a *qualitative* leap in the way in which precapitalist societies appropriated the land upon which they sat. With this, the primordial elements— water and earth— are brought into a socially modified intercourse with one another for the first time. The forces of nature are harnessed to an unprecedented degree, even if these examples of human ingenuity and industriousness were present only in a one-sided manner, or sometimes only possible through the large-scale impressment of unfree labour. 336

It is the necessity of bringing a natural force under the control of society, of economising, of appropriating or subduing it on a large scale by the work of man's hand,

³³⁶ "Marx says on pre-capitalist forms of co-operation: 'The greater the extent to which production still rests on mere manual labour, on use of muscle power etc., in short on physical exertion by individual labours, the more does the increase of the productive force consist in their collaboration on a mass scale.' ('Hence the violent rounding up of the people in Egypt, Etruria, India etc., for forced construction and compulsory public works.')." Volume III of *Capital* quoted in Rosdolsky, Roman, <u>The Making of Marx's 'Capital'</u>, Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 240.

that first plays the decisive part in the history of industry. Examples are the irrigation works in Egypt, Lombardy, Holland, or in India and Persia where irrigation by means of artificial canals, not only supplies the soil with the water indispensable to it, but also carries down to it, in the shape of sediment from the hills, mineral fertilisers. The secret of the flourishing state of industry in Spain and Sicily under the dominion of the Arabs lay in their irrigation works.³³⁷

But this same element which provided the basis for the flourishing of ancient civilization in Egypt, Babylon, India, etc., at the same time contributed to forming what Wittfogel referred to as the "bureaucratic-hydraulic" or "agrobureaucratic" political structure of 'oriental despotism'. According to Wittfogel's Weberian critique, while the *Grundrisse* captures the essential political features of this "hydraulic aspect of Oriental despotism," including the "managerial functions of the despotic state," *Capital* "retrogresses" by focusing exclusively upon the "technical side of large-scale water works" and ignoring their "political setting." This interpretative claim is mistaken inasmuch as passages from the text in question seem to indicate just the opposite. To example, in Volume I, Marx makes similar claims about how the isolation of the villages and fractured political geography of the Indian subcontinent sheltered the archaic commune from the political storms of history (again, especially true of northern India). Even in his drafts to Zasulich, the 'very late' Marx would continue to defend the view that the *isolation* of the (Russian version of the) archaic commune formed the 'solid basis' for (Tsarist) *despotism*.

Wittfogel questions whether the emphasis which Marx ostensibly places upon *waterworks* as *the distinguishing feature* of all 'Asiatic' societies is consistent with his own characterizations of

³³⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 649-650.

³³⁸ Wittfogel, Karl August, <u>Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power</u>, (Yale university Press: 1957; New Haven), 382-383.

³³⁹ See Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 353, 363, 368. See also Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique</u> of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 479.

³⁴⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 479.

³⁴¹ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 353, 363.

non-hydraulic societies (e.g., Russia) as forms of 'Oriental despotism'.

Why does hydraulic society show such persistence? Is it because of its state-managed system of hydraulic agriculture? An upholder of the economic interpretation of history will believe this; indeed Marx himself argued so. But it is significant that Marx and Engels viewed the Tsarist government of post-Mongol Russia as Orientally despotic, although both certainly knew that Russian agriculture was not hydraulic. The difficulty from the standpoint of the economic determinist is manifest; and it is increased when we realize that, beside Tsarist Russia, certain other agrodespotic states fulfilled the vital organizational and acquisitive functions of hydraulic society without maintaining a hydraulic economy proper.³⁴²

Aside from mischaracterizing Marx's economic interpretation of history as a form of technological determinism, and aside from being mistaken with respect to Marx's claims about both Russian and Mongol history, Wittfogel's critique falls apart of its accord. It is simply not true that "Marx himself argued" that the "state-managed system of hydraulic agriculture" provides *the key* sociological explanation for the "persistence" of this form of social life. Large-scale waterworks are not the secret clef to understanding the various manifestations of the Asiatic mode of production. According to Marx, the "Asiatic form necessarily hangs on most tenaciously and for the longest time." Why? He tells us in the next sentence: "This is due to its

³⁴² Wittfogel, Karl August, Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power, (Yale university Press: 1957; New Haven), 160-161. To accept Wittfogel's characterizations of Marx's thoughts on post-Mongol Russia one would have to ignore almost everything which Marx wrote about post-Mongol Russia. Wittfogel is right that Marx "knew that Russian agriculture was not hydraulic," and, yet, nonetheless classified Tsarist Russia as an 'Asiatic', or sometimes as a 'semi-Asiatic' form of production. However, instead of questioning his own interpretation that largescale waterworks are the most essential feature of the 'Asiatic' mode of production, Wittfogel turns this into an inconsistency on Marx's part. Yet, Russia was categories as an 'Asiatic' society not because it reproduced the 'hydraulic' aspects of its metabolism with nature, but precisely because it was based upon the archaic commune (which maintained vestiges of communal property). Rising above these isolated totalities, the political unity of the communes in Russia took on a despotic form. Moreover, Marx also explicitly stated that "post-Mongol Russia" directly inherited many of these features from the "Mongol invasion" which determined the "political fate" of the country for centuries. And, as Marx knew well enough long before Wittfogel, neither was this Mongolian Empire a 'hydraulic' society, but one originating in a still earlier form of the nomadic Stamm. So little were waterworks the basis for Mongol despotism that its empire destroyed all of the ancient aqueducts (qanats) of Persia. "The conquering people may impose its own methods of production upon the conquered (e.g., the English in Ireland in the nineteenth century, party also in India); or, it may allow everything to remain as it was contenting itself with tribute (e.g., the Turks and the Romans); or, the two systems by mutually modifying each other may result in something new, a synthesis (which partly resulted from the Germanic conquests)...The Mongols with their devastations in Russia, e.g., acted in accordance with their system of production, for which sufficient pastures on large uninhabited stretches of country are the main prerequisite"—not large-scale waterworks. See Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 350, 366; Marx, Karl, 'introduction to the Critique of Political Economy', The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 13.

presupposition that the individual does not become independent *vis-à-vis* the commune; that there is a self-sustaining circle of production, [and] unity of agriculture and manufactures" within the commune.³⁴³

The *Grundrisse* reminds us again and again of the *key* to unlocking all of the mysteries of this social form. The firm foundation for this political despotism is not, as Wittfogel suggests, the hydraulic-bureaucracy of the *Asiatic State* (which presupposes precisely what it is meant to explain), but, rather, the form of agricultural production resting on the *oriental commune*. As Zingarelli argues by appealing to Krader's reading, Wittfogel shifts Marx's emphasis from the *social relations* of this commune to the strictly 'hydraulic-bureaucratic' character of the Mandarin State because he wants to stress the "*managerial* control" of the waterworks. He even goes so far as to "convert the categories of despotism" into "economic structures." But the real social source for this despotic political form, and for the corresponding lack of historical development which Marx and Engels attributed to it, must be uncovered *within* the conditions and relations of the archaic commune itself. The Asiatic State is conceived by Marx (if not in the articles on India, then certainly from the *Grundrisse* onward) as an outgrowth of the smaller communes. No State hangs in the 'thin air', as Engels later explained to Tkachov— another 'Don Quixote' who assumed that knight-errantry are compatible with all forms of society.

Communal production in the form of family-, clan-, or village-labour is a "communality of labour" which, Marx argued, can be subsequently *widened* to include the massive public works organized by the 'State' (especially irrigation). The *original communality* of the family is enlarged in such a way that the State comes to assume the traditional office occupied by the patriarch of the clan. This consanguinity and familial unity is extended to include the despot, the

³⁴³ Ibid., 486.

³⁴⁴ Zingarelli, Andrea, 'Asiatic Mode of Production: Considerations on Ancient Egypt', <u>Studies on Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production</u>, Laura da Graca and Andrea Zingarelli (ed.), (Brill: Leidin), 71.

"father" of these "little communities," who exacts his "hereditary" tribute by expropriating the surplus arising from within the villages themselves. The "communal conditions of real appropriation through labour" confront these real producers as the "work of the [usually despotic, often patriarchal] higher unity." Hence, this State, this "higher community" and "despotic regime hovering over the little communes," *appears* as the *exclusive landowner*— although, as Marx reminds us, the communal property of the village continues to "exist in fact as the foundation" for this whole intercourse with nature. It is "not in the least a contradiction" then, if, "as in most Asiatic land-forms, the *comprehensive unity* standing above all these little communities appears as the higher *proprietor* or as the *sole proprietor*."³⁴⁵

However, instead of revealing through critique these hidden innerconnections, Wittfogel's analysis stops short at the surface appearance of things. He treats the Asiatic State as if it hangs in the 'thin air', rather than examining its real foundations in the archaic commune. When these communities assume such a political form, as Lichtheim argues, the "central government" takes on the *semblance* of being the "real landowner." Whenever these communes are brought together into such a despotism, the agricultural conditions for this metabolism with nature (again, e.g., centralization of irrigation and aqueducts) then *appear* as *nature-given* and even *divine* presuppositions, viz., as the *work of this higher unity itself*. But, as Lichtheim notes, this despotic political character, including its "centrally controlled canalisation and other public works," arises from the nature of the smaller

tribal community [which] forms the basis of a unitary system whose unifying function is represented, and ultimately usurped, by the *despot*...The primitive unity of the small tribal community— by now only one among many communities— appears 'realised in the despot, as the father of the many communities', who also appropriates the surplus product...The social organism may be more or less democratic...[but] where the major

³⁴⁵ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 472.

³⁴⁶ Lichtheim, George, 'Marx and the "Asiatic Mode of Production",' <u>Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought</u>, Vol. 6, Bob Jessop and Russel Wheatley (ed.), (Routledge: London; 1999), 41.

economic operations of society come under central control—as in the Asian societies with their extensive waterworks—these socially necessary operations 'appear as the work of the higher unity—the despotic government suspended above the small communities'.³⁴⁷

According to Marx and Engels, then, the 'hydraulic' basis to the metabolism with nature provides just one part of a much larger sociological explanation not merely for despotism, but also for the vegetative or ahistorical character of this form of the commune. Indeed, State-centralized and "extensive irrigation in the East" is *not* the distinguishing feature of this "mode of production and its corresponding form of political organisation," as Sawer following Wittfogel suggests. It is unfortunate that Sawer maintains this line of argument given that she at least recognizes what Wittfogel did not: viz., that others have "discover[ed] a different explanation of the AMP in Marx:" namely, the "*isolation*" created by the communal property of the village.³⁴⁸

Indeed, Marx himself is clear in a number of works that the roots of this political phenomenon must be traced back to the *isolation* of the communes from one another, i.e., their *self-enclosed* microcosm and *localized* social life, which is due to the absence of private property in the soil. In both the *Grundrisse* and in *Capital*, he elaborates that the *real basis* for both the historical stagnation and despotism of the Asiatic mode of production is the self-reproducing form of the *oriental commune*. All the conditions for their self-perpetuation are contained within themselves, in the village's unity of manufacturing with agriculture. The *natural basis* for its historical stagnation is precisely this self-subsisting character founded upon common property and communal labour, which, precisely because it is a tightly-knit circle of dependent agricultural producers, vegetates in isolation from its neighbours. The giant despotisms which can rise atop these little communes merely insulate them further from historical change, e.g., by

³⁴⁷ Lichtheim, George, Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study, (Praeger: 1963; New York), 148.

³⁴⁸ Sawer, Marian, <u>Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production</u>, (Martinus Nijhoff: Hague; 1977), 106.

defending the territory as a whole from outsiders. As Gandy argues, the already "self-sufficient communities slept through the ages under the sway of the despot." Or, as Draper suggests quoting Engels, the "complete isolation of the individual communities from one another" is the "natural basis for *Oriental despotism*." The underlying and "fundamental relationship remains unaffected in forms such as oriental despotism," concludes Schmidt, because the "small, more or less autarchic communities are the components" of an "all-embracing unity." Since the individual is "only a possessor, he is at bottom himself the property, the slave of him in whom the unity of the commune exists."

In the case of the tyrannies which can tower over these small and self-subsisting communes, a "certain quantity of the community's production has found its way to the state as rent in kind." Hence, the real producers *appear* as "hereditary possessors" and are, "legally speaking, without property;" but what *really* occurs, according to Schmidt's more accurate reading of the *Grundrisse*, is that "communal property [within the village] remains the basis of the self-sustaining community." The only difference, he adds, is that a portion of "surplus labour must naturally be put at the disposal" of the "higher community" represented by the divine and real despot. The despotic political (but also, e.g., religious) institutions extract their hereditary tribute from the communes in the form of surplus labour/product, payments in kind, etc. As Zingarelli puts it:

[T]he state appears as the superior or sole proprietor to whom the surplus of the villages is due...and who benefits from the common labour carried out to exalt the despot or the divinity...Thus, according to the *Formen*, the individual is then in fact propertyless or

³⁴⁹ Gandy, Daniel Ross, <u>Marx and History: From Primitive Society to the Communist Future</u>, (University of Texas Press: 1979), 114.

³⁵⁰ Engels, on Social Relations in Russia, quoted in Draper, Hal, <u>Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution: State and Bureaucracy</u>, Vol. I, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 1977), 555.

³⁵¹ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 172. ³⁵² Ibid., 493.

³⁵³ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 477-479.

³⁵⁴ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 172.

property appears to be mediated by means of a grant from the total unity...[However, Marx's] analysis of this economic-social form detects village forms of property tied to the strong local identity and the self-sufficiency of the economy...[to which falls the] requirements of direct labour and the surrender of surplus labour for state institutions...The transformation of these bonds with the communities does not affect their essential features based on agricultural production and manufacturing...The postulates of 1853 [i.e., Marx's articles on colonial India, quoted in the above] are in line....[with his remarks from the *Grundrisse*] alluding to the village system as a feature of Asiatic societies and also to the absence of private property.³⁵⁵

Or, as Draper suggests,

[i]f we are considering the naturally evolved community before the institution of the state separates out, that is, while the Unity is located within the life of the tribal community itself, then there is no problem. The land is the communal property [of the clan-commune]. But a special feature of the Asiatic mode of production...[is that with further development the] communal Unity has [or can] become embodied in "higher" power, one that has risen *above* the local communities...Within the framework of its own little world, the village community may remain relatively unchanged for a long time; and within this framework it is still the owner of the soil *as against the individual*. But there is now a new relationship between it, as a little world, and the larger world outside its sporelike walls. The essential feature of thee new relationship is the appropriation of its surplus product by the state power.³⁵⁶

Thus, this mode of production, even where it takes on a centralized form *as a State*, is founded upon the self-sufficient circle of manufacturing and agriculture which exists within the archaic commune, i.e., one which "contains all the conditions of reproduction and surplus production within itself." That this commune possesses all of the premises of its own self-perpetuation explains its historical tenacity much more than waterworks for Marx. This archaic commune "forms a compact whole producing all it requires." They not only "constantly reproduce themselves in the same form," but they can even appear, disappear, and reappear again— "spring[ing] up again on the same spot and with the same name." If a "new community is founded," it occurs on the "pattern of the old one, on unoccupied land." This archaic commune "serves as a fixed plan and basis for action whenever a new community is started." This "unchangeability" stands in "striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of

³⁵⁵ Zingarelli, Andrea, 'Asiatic Mode of Production: Considerations on Ancient Egypt', <u>Studies on Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production</u>, Laura da Graca and Andrea Zingarelli (ed.), (Brill: Leidin), 74-75.

³⁵⁶ Draper, Hal, <u>Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution: State and Bureaucracy</u>, Vol. I, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 1977), 551.

Asiatic states, and their never-ceasing changes of dynasty." Thus, the "structure of the fundamental economic elements of society remains untouched by the storms which blow up in the cloudy regions of politics." 357

Again, then, it is not so much the 'hydraulic-bureaucratic' features of the State-regulated metabolism which produces this relative historical immutability. According to Marx's view, what explains both the historical resilience and often despotic political character of this social form is the self-enclosed character of the commune's metabolism with the soil— and therefore its complete isolation from, or at least more limited interaction with, its neighbours. It is, at bottom, a result of the "presupposition that the individual does not become independent vis-à-vis the commune." This "self-sustaining circle" and "unity of agriculture and manufactures" restricts the intercourse between the different communes, as well as between the communes and the outside world.³⁵⁸ It is this "self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture," Marx repeats elsewhere in the Formen, which makes the "Asiatic form" susceptible "least of all" to historic modification.³⁵⁹ Schmidt, too, suggests that it is not the specifically hydraulic features of the metabolism, but its communal agricultural character (of which irrigation is just one element), which accounts for the "nature-like" or "unhistorical existence" of this commune. 360 The "law that regulates the division of labour in the community acts with the irresistible authority of a law of nature." It is the "simplicity of the productive organism in these self-sufficing communities" which "supplies the key to the riddle of the unchangeability of Asiatic societies." ³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 477-479.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 486.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 493.

³⁶⁰ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 170-171.

³⁶¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 477-479.

Individuality and the Dissolution of Communal Property

As Anderson explains, the reason why Marx believed this type of precapitalist society exhibited so much "resistance" to historical change is because it "preserved" the vestiges of still "older clan-based communal forms." Its relative self-sufficiency meant that it could maintain and reproduce itself in its isolation from the outside world. Within the local "microcosm" of the village, individuals are hemmed-in by the ties of kinship and limited by the immature state of the forces of production. All social development is encloistered within the narrow horizons of village-life. Each member of the commune "conducts himself only as a link" within this tightly knit social chain, within its 'relations of consanguinity'. Appealing to his earlier notion that the despot appears as the "father" of the tinier communities, and they the "hereditary" possessors of his land, Marx continued to argue as late as his drafts to Zasulich that the historical genealogy of such a community is therefore usually no more complicated than the "structure" of an extended "family tree." The relations of consequence of the community is therefore usually no more complicated than the "structure" of

He insists throughout all of his middle, late, and very late writings on this subject that there is no possibility here for the free and full development of individuals. As Hegel teaches us, there is no scope for *individuality* within the natural unity of the family (*Stamm*), i.e., it behaves in unison as if it were but a single individual.³⁶⁶ The development of the individual, and of the relations and forces of production with which it corresponds, remains fettered by the "tight

³⁶² Anderson, Kevin, <u>Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies</u>, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 2010), 159.

³⁶³ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 353.

³⁶⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 472. Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 366.

³⁶⁶ Hegel, G.W.F., 'Philosophy of Mind', <u>Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences</u>, A.V. Miller (trans.), (Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2003), § 523.

bond[s]" of blood that connect him or her to the others in the community.³⁶⁷ In the archaic commune, the individual "has as little torn himself free from the umbilical cord of his tribe or community as a bee has [freed itself] from his hive."³⁶⁸ Commenting on this statement, Schmidt elaborates that for Marx such precapitalist forms of "cooperation" were based upon the limited foundations provided by the "natural (*naturwüchsig*) division of labour within a tribe or a family."³⁶⁹ Marx repeats this same refrain elsewhere in Volume I of *Capital*. This form of society, even where it has not degenerated outright into "direct relations of dominance and servitude," is "founded" upon the "immaturity of man as an individual"— viz., an individual who has "not yet torn himself loose from the umbilical cord of his natural species-connection with other men." This type of social formation is "conditioned by a low stage of development of the productive powers of labor and correspondingly limited relations between men," and "relations between man and nature."³⁷⁰

The important point to keep in mind here is that all modes of production are regarded in the broad as forms which express different degrees of development, i.e., the development of the productive powers of society and, at bottom, of the capacities and needs of individuals as well as of the relations between them, and between them and nature. They are *forms in the general development of the human being*, i.e., different phases in the "development of individuality."³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 353-354.

³⁶⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 452.

³⁶⁹ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 170.

³⁷⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 173.

³⁷¹ As he and Engels had written earlier in the manuscripts for *The German Ideology*, the historically developed conditions of human existence "appear first as conditions of self-activity, later as fetters upon it, form[ing] in the whole evolution of history a coherent series of forms of intercourse, the coherence of which consists in this: in the place of an earlier form of intercourse, which has become a fetter, a new one is put, corresponding to the more developed productive forces and, hence, to the advanced mode of the self-activity of individuals— a form which in its turn becomes a fetter and is then replaced by another. Since these conditions correspond at every stage to the simultaneous development of the productive forces, their history is at the same time the history of the evolving

These claims underline Marx's fundamentally *social* conception of human nature and of individuality. The human being is, at all points in history, the product of her relations with others. The "essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual," but, in "actuality," the total "ensemble of social relationships" in their evolving state of development.³⁷²

Marx is unequivocal in many of his writings that humans *individuate* themselves only in the midst of society, and only through the course of history. As they act upon and change their relations with one another and with nature, they also change their own nature as individuals. "[A]II history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature."³⁷³ This standpoint reflects his lifelong Aristotelian view that the 'nature' of any given thing is what it is at the *end* of its development— which, as the *Grundrisse* insists, implies in the case of *human nature* that "human beings become individuals only through the process of history."³⁷⁴ Individuals become "aware of themselves" *as individuals*, Forbes summarizes Marx's view, only with the "development of the productive power of labour" through which they modify their "relation to others, to nature, and to the relations of production in which they move."³⁷⁵

The development of the forces of production dissolves these forms, and their dissolution is itself a development of the human productive forces. Labour begins with a certain foundation—naturally arisen, spontaneous, at first—then historic presupposition. Then, however, this foundation or presupposition is itself suspended, or posited as a vanishing presupposition which has become too confining for the unfolding of the progressing human pack.³⁷⁶

productive forces taken over by each new generation, and is, therefore, the history of the development of the forces of the individuals themselves. Since this evolution takes place naturally, i.e. is not subordinated to a general plan of freely combined individuals, it proceeds from various localities, tribes, nations, branches of labour, etc. each of which to start with develops independently of the others and only gradually enters into relation with the others." Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 91.

³⁷² Marx, Karl, 'Theses on Feuerbach', Selected Writings, (Hackett Publishing: 1994; Indianapolis), 100.

³⁷³ Marx, Karl, 'Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon', <u>Marx and Engels:</u> Collected Works, Vol. 6, Jack Cohen et. al. (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 192.

³⁷⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 496..

³⁷⁵ Forbes, Ian, Marx and the New Individual:, (Unwin Hayman: London; 1990), 72.

³⁷⁶ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 497.

Bologh therefore suggests that every "specific property relation" is not only regarded by Marx as "identical with a specific relation within individuals stand, but with types of individuals as well," i.e., their "modes of presence" as individuals.³⁷⁷ As Marx himself explains, property in the "inorganic body" of the earth appears as a "presupposition belonging to his individuality, as a mode of his presence," a modality of his own "being" (Dasein). 378 As such, all of the particular forms of precapitalist life "develop particular modes of production and particular forces of production, subjective, appearing as qualities of individuals, as well as objective." Hence, when the specific "mode of production" upon which a "community rests" is "dissolved" (e.g., by increases in exchange, defeat in war, etc.), we find that the "objective individual, i.e., the individual defined as Roman, Greek, etc." is also "dissolved" along with its conditions and relations.³⁷⁹ In the case of the landed property of the 'oriental' commune, Bologh glosses, the "individual's objective presence" in relation to the land "embodies" the "communal unity" of village life. In the other precapitalist forms yet to be discussed, e.g., the Classical and Germanic commune, the "property relation" will "embody their social relations as citizens of the city or as independent proprietors" isolated by large tracts of forest. 380 As Anderson notes of Marx's Grundrisse, only in the Graeco-Roman world, with the "breakdown of communal society, as well as a certain degree of individuation in both consciousness and social existence, including property forms," was it possible to create a broader foundation for social development.³⁸¹

In *Marx and the New Individual*, Forbes makes a similar point as Bologh and Anderson, tying it specifically to the metabolism with nature. The "nature of individuals" in this specifically

³⁷⁷ Bologh, Roslyn Wallach, Dialectical Phenomenology, (Routledge: 2010; New York), 82.

³⁷⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 492.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 495.

³⁸⁰ Bologh, Roslyn Wallach, <u>Dialectical Phenomenology</u>, (Routledge: 2010; New York), 82.

³⁸¹ Anderson, Kevin, Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 2010), 159.

"pre-capitalist situation" remains all the "less developed" the more it is determined by the whims and "exigencies of an omnipotent nature." In the most "primitive modes of production," the individual remains completely "undeveloped" because there is, as of yet, no "post-foetal" relation to society and nature— not yet "post-foetal," concludes Forbes, because the individual is still attached by the 'navel-string' of her natural bond to both society and nature. Fromm explains that it is essential to

understand Marx's fundamental idea: man makes his own history; he is his own creator. As he put it many years later in *Capital*: "And would not such a history be easier to compile since, as Vico says, human history differs from natural history in this, that we have made the former, but not the latter." Man gives birth to himself in the process of history. The essential factor in this process of self-creation of the human race lies in its relationship to nature. Man, at the beginning of his history, is blindly bound or chained to nature. In the process of evolution he transforms his relationship to nature, and hence himself.³⁸³

As Lichtheim observes of Marx's *Grundrisse*, the human being

individualizes himself through the historical process, which is primarily a process of evolving various forms of communal and private property, i.e., various ways of organizing his social intercourse with nature and the—natural or artificial—preconditions of work. The different forms of this metabolism correspond to different stages of society.³⁸⁴

For Marx, the individual "appears originally as a *species-being* [Gattungswesen], clan being, herd animal— although in no way whatever as a $\zeta \omega v \pi o \lambda \iota \iota \iota \chi v v$." This social connectedness is, at first, merely a natural species-connection to nature and to society— at bottom, one based on relations of consanguinity and tethered to the given limits of the soil. The "human being is in the most literal sense a $\zeta \omega v \pi o \lambda \iota \iota \iota \chi v v$, not merely a gregarious animal," because it "individuate[s] itself only in the midst of society." Thus, contact and intermixture with other communities, increased exchange, the introduction of precursory forms of private

³⁸² Forbes, Ian, Marx and the New Individual:, (Unwin Hayman: London; 1990), 64.

³⁸³ Fromm, Erich, Marx's Concept of Man, (Ungar Publishing: New York; 1961), 14.

³⁸⁴ Lichtheim, George, 'Marx and the "Asiatic Mode of Production", <u>Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought</u>, Vol. 6, Bob Jessop and Russel Wheatley (ed.), (Routledge: London; 1999), 49.

³⁸⁵ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 496.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 83.

property, and, hence, the overall breakdown of more naturally-arisen social relations— again, all this developing in antithesis to the old communal foundation, and, where successful, bringing about its dissolution to some extent— these are, for Marx, the chief means of human *individuation* in precapitalist history. Consequently, in his view, wherever we find *primitive communal* property as the *predominant* form, we find underdeveloped forms of the human personality. The primitive cooperation and "combination of manufacture and agriculture" within the archaic commune leaves the individual "rooted to the spot, ingrown." By contrast, with the development of precursory forms of small-scale private property, what we discover is just the opposite: viz., that the individual begins to cultivate a "relation of freedom" to the natural conditions of production.³⁸⁷ The land starts to appear more and more as the laboratory of her own productive powers, as the objectively unfolding content of her personality as an individual.

City-Life and the Ancient Antithesis between Private and State Property

In the second main type of precapitalist property that Marx describes in the *Formen*, i.e., the ancient-classical form, it is the *city* (and not the countryside) which forms the primary landscape for the regulation of the whole social metabolism with nature. Here, the rural landowners form part of the political fabric and urban life of the *polis* or *res publica*. This community "presupposes as base not the countryside, but the town as an already created seat (centre) of the rural population (owners of land)." The "cultivated field appears here as a *territorium* belonging to the town," whereas in the previous mode the locus point of the intercourse with nature— the village— was itself merely a natural "accessory to the land." In precapitalist forms where the presupposition is strictly communal possession, notes Schmidt, the villagers appear as a "mere

³⁸⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 494.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 474.

appendage of the country;" but, here, the "starting-point is free, petty landownership" and the "fields form part of the territory of the town." ³⁸⁹

After the *city of Rome* had been built and the surrounding countryside cultivated by its citizens, the conditions of the community were different from what they had been before....Not only do the objective conditions change in the act of reproduction, e.g. the village becomes a town, the wilderness a cleared field etc., but the producers change, too, in that they bring out new qualities in themselves, develop themselves in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new language. The older and more traditional the mode of production itself—and this lasts a long time in agriculture; even more in the oriental supplementation of agriculture with manufactures—i.e. the longer the *real process* of appropriation remains constant, the more constant will be the old forms of property and hence the community generally.³⁹⁰

The "city-state," explains Gandy, is designated by Marx as the "economic unit of the ancient mode of production."³⁹¹ It is the "city with its territory [which] is the economic totality," while, at the same time, the city itself also has its own distinct mode of "economic existence" apart from the metabolism with the agricultural land.³⁹² "The whole, here, consists not merely of its parts. It is a kind of independent organism."³⁹³ "With its coming-together in the city," wrote Marx, the "commune possesses an economic existence as such; the city's mere *presence*, as such, distinguishes it from a mere multiplicity of independent houses."³⁹⁴ The individuals, no longer tethered to the soil, have been released to some degree from the umbilical cord of the more naturally-arisen forms of the metabolism and of their naturally-arisen social relations with one another. Again, this signifies what Forbes calls the first stage in the development of a "post-foetal" relation to nature. As Wood describes it, there is here

some sense of the separation of human beings from an unchangeable natural order, and

³⁸⁹ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 173.

³⁹⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 493-494.

³⁹¹ Gandy, Daniel Ross, <u>Marx and History: From Primitive Society to the Communist Future</u>, (University of Texas Press: 1979), 114.

³⁹² Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 483.

³⁹³ Ibid., 483.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 483.

of the social from the natural realm...[of a society which is] to some extent capable of transcending the predetermined and inexorable cycle of natural necessity or divinely ordered destiny...some practical distance from the inexorable cycles of nature, which is most likely to come with urban civilization, a well-developed realm of human experience outside the cycles and necessities of nature.³⁹⁵

This community, as Schmidt paraphrases Marx, is the product of a more "dynamic" history.³⁹⁶ As Marx tells us, this form of precapitalist society is the "product of a more active, historical life" in which individuals (that is, *citizens*) are no longer "mere accidents," and no longer "form purely natural component parts" of the social whole (although within the realm of the *oikos* such relations persist).³⁹⁷

These ancients "may perhaps have excused the slavery of one person as a means to the full human development of another," but they never thought to develop the "slavery" of the wage-labourer as a social basis for transforming some "half-educated parvenus" into an "eminent sausage-maker." The "question" was, rather, which "mode of property creates the best citizens." The homogeneous communal property of the archaic commune, in which individuals are but 'natural accessories' of the social organism, is not congruent with this sense of 'citizenship'. Instead, the land appears here as the inorganic body of his *individuality*, i.e., it is the laboratory of his own independent labour. The individual relates to it as the objective body of his own personality, and also relates to other citizens through the mediation of their personal property.

Do we never find in antiquity an inquiry into which form of landed property etc. is the most productive, creates the greatest wealth? Wealth does not appear as the aim of production...The question is always which mode of property creates the best citizens...Thus the old view, in which the human being appears as the aim of production, regardless of his limited national, religious, political character, seems to be very lofty

³⁹⁵ Wood, Ellen Meiksins, <u>Citizens to Lords: A Social History of Western Political Thought From Antiquity to the</u> Middle Ages, (Verso: London; 2008), 43.

³⁹⁶ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 173.

³⁹⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 474.

³⁹⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 532-533.

when contrasted to the modern world.³⁹⁹

Nevertheless, Marx concludes quite rightly that neither should we romanticize such ancient social organisms. These childish and one-sided forms from antiquity only appear lofty when compared to the complete emptiness of modern life— which, just as much as these bygone societies, represents but a passing phase in the historical development of the human being. Although particular individuals may appear 'great' here (i.e., Aristotle, Pericles, etc.), Marx concludes that there is no room whatsoever for the full and free development of any and all individuals, since "such development stands in contradiction to the original relation."

In comparison to more archaic forms of commune life, this form of precapitalist property, as well as the broader (but nonetheless still restricted and one-sided development of) individuality with which it corresponded, presupposed a completely different relationship to the objective conditions of production. Rather than communal labour and the common ownership of the land, Marx discovers a "double form" of property developing here: viz., "state and private property alongside one another." The individual relates to the soil in part as *private proprietor*, and no longer exclusively as a *communal possessor*. The individual citizen "relates to the others [as] independent proprietors like himself, independent private proprietors— beside whom the previously all-absorbing and all-predominant communal property is itself posited as a particular *ager publicus* alongside the many private landowners." The appropriation of these natural presuppositions of their labour, of *their own property* in the soil, appears more and more as the appropriation of the objective expression of their own personalities as individuals.

³⁹⁹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 487-488.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 487.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 486.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 474-475.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 471.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 476. "The property [*Eigentum*] of the individual is here not, unlike the first [Asiatic] case, itself directly communal property; where it is, the individual has no property as distinct from the commune, but rather is merely its

However, this private property in the soil also assumes a *separate* and *particular* existence. As a result of this "double relation which makes him both an equal citizen, a member of the community, and a *proprietor*" or owner of private property, it is now possible for this individual to "*lose* his property" in the land. Such a loss was unimaginable in the more communal form of property, "except by means of external influences [viz., war], since the individual member of the commune never enters into the relation of freedom towards it." Nonetheless, in antiquity, this "antithetical" relation between public and private property develops in such a way that the "latter is mediated by the former." So, in Rome for example, the "private proprietor of land is such only as a Roman, but as a Roman he is a private proprietor of land" (hence, the more easily expropriated property of the *metic* in antiquity). The *territorium* which belongs to the Romulan *gens* as a whole can then be justifiably broken-up and parcellized into "private property" only because it remains the "domain of a Roman, the part of the *laboratorium* belonging to him," and because this individual is a Roman only insofar as he has this "sovereign right over a part of the Roman earth."

At the same time, in addition to this individualized property, we still find alongside it property in its older communal form (e.g., in the public property of the *ager publicus* in Rome, the State-owned silver mines of Athens, etc.). "Communal property— as state property, *ager*

possessor [Besitzer]. The less it is the case that the individual's property can in fact be realized solely through communal labour— thus e.g., the aqueducts in the Orient— the more the purely naturally arisen, spontaneous character of the clan has been broken by historic movement, migration; the more, further, the clan removes itself from its original seat and occupies alien ground, hence enters into essentially new conditions of labour, and develops the energy of the individual more— its common character appearing, necessarily, more as a negative unity towards the outside— the more, therefore, are the conditions given under which the individual can become a private proprietor of land and soil— of a particular plot— whose particular cultivation falls to him and his family." Ibid., 474.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 494.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 494.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 483.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 476.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 477.

publicus— [is] here separated from private property." Yet, this public property of the State must also be defended, maintained, expanded, etc., through the military service of the citizenry. Due to the breakdown of the older clan relations, and as a result of this antithesis in the property-form, the State takes on, on the one hand, a more *external relation* vis-a-vis its members but, on the other hand, for the same reason must constantly re-assert its *unity* with them and *against* the outside world of barbarism. The State is the "relation of these free and equal private proprietors to one another, their bond against the outside, and is at the same time their safeguard." As Schmidt explains, one of the "prerequisites for the individual ownership of the land" is the "community organized as a state defending this land externally and guaranteeing it internally." But the "more the [Roman] tribe loses its natural qualities [as a *gens*] because of historical development," the more does its *togetherness* appear as a "negative unity" against the outside world. All

The most important point here is that the *dualism* which develops between these forms of property in classical antiquity illustrates once more how the *natural fate* of the more archaic commune (i.e., of the old Homeric or Romulan *gens*) has been "broken by historic movement." As Lichtheim notes, Marx discovered that the "development of private property" in Greece and Rome altered the "original communal" conditions of their clans. He believed that the private property of the independent peasant household had provided a wider scope for the development of individuality. In contrast to contemporary secondary literature which emphasizes the late break in Marx's thinking about precapitalist societies, I would argue that this same theory of human development clearly informs his views through to the *Ethnological Notebooks* and drafts

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 474.

⁴¹¹ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 174.

⁴¹² Lichtheim, George, 'Marx and the "Asiatic Mode of Production", <u>Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought</u>, Vol. 6, Bob Jessop and Russel Wheatley (ed.), (Routledge: London; 1999), 43.

to Zasulich. As he italicized in his notes on Morgan, the "patriarchal family" of the Hellenic period "marks the peculiar epoch in human progress when the individuality of the person began to rise above the gens," whereas, in more archaic modes of social life, the "individuality of persons was lost in the gens." In the drafts to Zasulich, Marx explicitly claims that a similar sort of dualism provided the Russian commune with a "broader foundation" for the development of individuality, i.e., a "broader foundation" which endows it with the potential for a more "vigorous" historical life. Only on this basis, could the Russian commune break through its "isolation" and until then restricted relations of "consanguinity."

For Marx, Lichtheim argues, this development of "private (landed) property"— as distinct from the communal property of the *ager publicus*— signified a "new type of civilisation" and, I would add, a new type of individuality. That the "individual develops into an independent landowner" is a sign that historic development has dissolved the older clan-chieftain relations and Homeric virtues which had once held together the more archaic forms of the Greco-Roman commune. The purely natural bonds of blood, and the restricted relation to nature which they presuppose, have been replaced by the political association of the city. In Athens, for example, the male heads of each of the independent households step beyond the narrow relations of personal dependence which nonetheless still persist within the patriarchy of the *oikos*; i.e., they relate to one another *as citizens*, as members of the *polis*. The family's "residence," as such, is no longer the "economic totality" of social life. 416

In fact, as already noted, the city itself takes on an increasingly separate and independent

⁴¹³ Marx, Karl, <u>The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx</u>, (ed.) Lawrence Krader, (Van Gorcum: Assen; 1974), 119, 150.

⁴¹⁴ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 363.

⁴¹⁵ Lichtheim, George, Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study, (Praeger: 1963; New York), 149.

⁴¹⁶ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 483-484.

existence, both economically and politically in the form of civil society and the body politic. Indeed, even the whole metabolism with nature and the form of agricultural production is altered by this city-life. This form of property and mode of production is based (even though slavery exists) upon independent peasant proprietors. The "presupposition of the survival of the community is the preservation of equality among its free self-sustaining peasants." After Cleisthenes and Solon, the unity of the polis rested upon the maintenance of their economic reforms, as well as the conservation of this relative political equality and autonomy. Here, the commune appears as a "product of history." This historically-arisen social life is recognized by its members as the "presupposition of property in land and soil," of their own "private property as land and soil." This property, i.e., the "relation of the working subject to the natural presuppositions of labour as belonging to him," means that the individuals "relate as proprietors to the natural conditions of labour" as the "real conditions and objective elements of the personality of the individual."

The Germanic Commune and the Lonely Life in the Woods

In the third form of precapitalist society that Marx examines in the *Formen*, the Germanic commune, there was also a certain sort of "dualism" between private and communal property.⁴¹⁸ However, in the classical "antithesis," private property was still mediated by the individual's relation to the community; here, the determinations have been reversed.⁴¹⁹ In contrast to the

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 475-476.

⁴¹⁸ For more on this Germanic "dualism" in comparison to the Russian, see Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 350.

⁴¹⁹ "A[nother] form of the property of working individuals, self-sustaining members of the community, in the natural conditions of their labour, is the *Germanic*. Here the commune member is neither, as such, a co-possessor of the communal property, as in the specifically oriental form (wherever property exists *only* as communal property, there the individual member is as such only *possessor* of a particular part, hereditary or not, since any fraction of the property belongs to no member for himself, but to him only as immediate member of the commune, i.e. as in direct

contradiction found in Greece and Rome, the dualism of the Germanic commune develops in such a manner that the "communal property appears only as the complement to individual property, with the latter as the base." In contrast to the classical form, individualized "landed property here appears neither as a form antithetical to the commune's landed property, nor as mediated by it." Rather, it is the *community itself* which is *mediated* by this *individualized property*. The "commune exists" almost exclusively through the "interrelations among these individual landed proprietors." The appropriation of nature (still presupposed here, as in all other precapitalist forms, as a precondition for production) takes place entirely within this specific context. The individual families relate to the cultivated earth beneath their feet, and to each other, as *independent proprietors*— that is, no longer merely as *possessors* of a homogeneous common property. Instead of the communal appropriation of a communal product, in the latter stages of the Germanic commune's development we find relatively independent families harvesting the fruits of their own household production.

The so-called "ager publicus, the communal or people's land, as distinct from individual property, also occurs among the Germanic tribes." In fact, Engels suggests that this communal property made up the vast bulk of the land even after this 'dualism' had been developed. However, the ager publicus does not manifest itself, as in Rome, Greece, etc., in such a manner

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unity with it, not in distinction to it. This individual is thus only a possessor. What exists is only *communal* property, and only *private possession*. The mode of this possession in relation to the communal property may be historically, locally etc. modified in quite different ways, depending on whether labour itself is performed by the private possessor in isolation, or is in turn determined by the commune or by the unity hovering above the particular commune); nor is the situation such as obtains in the Roman, Greek form (in short, the form of classical antiquity)—in this case, the land is occupied by the commune, Roman land; a part remains to the commune as such as distinct from the commune members, *ager publicus* in its various forms; the other part is divided up and each parcel of land is Roman by virtue of being the private property, the domain of a Roman, the part of the laboratorium belonging to him; but, also, he is a Roman only in so far as he possesses this sovereign right over a part of the Roman earth."

Marx, Karl, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 476-477.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 486.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 484.

⁴²² Ibid., 484.

that it constitutes a "particular economic presence of the state as against the private proprietors." 423

Among the Germanic tribes, the *ager publicus* appears rather merely as a complement to individual property, and figures as property only to the extent that it is defended militarily as the common property of one tribe against a hostile tribe. Individual property does not appear mediated by the commune; rather, the existence of the commune and of communal property appear as mediated by it, i.e., as a relation of the independent subjects to one another. 424

In contrast to the property of the Roman State, this *communal property* exists merely in the woodlands for hunting, rivers for fishing, and grasslands for grazing. As Marx explained in his drafts to the letter to Zasulich, a "dualism" developed within the Germanic *mark* (comparable to some to extent to the Slavic-Russian *obshchina* or *mir*) because "arable land became private property, while the forests, pastures, waste ground, etc., remained communal property."⁴²⁵ The "hunting and grazing lands" were reserved for "communal use," and regarded as the indivisible "common property of the individual proprietors."⁴²⁶ The maintenance of these lands for strictly *communal* purposes was also a *natural presupposition* necessary for the reproduction of the Germanic commune. After all, the "hunting land, grazing land, [and] timber land" could not be "divided" if they were to continue to "serve as means of production in this specific form."⁴²⁷

Although this form of the commune had long since been dissolved, Marx not only claimed

⁴²³ Ibid., 483.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 483-484.

⁴²⁵ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 350\, 366.

⁴²⁶ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 485.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 483. "The chief use of the common mark was in pasturage for the cattle and feeding of pigs on acorns. Besides that, the forest yielded timber and firewood, litter for the animals, berries and mushrooms, while the moor, where it existed, yielded turf. The regulations as to pasture, the use of wood, etc., make up the most part of the many mark records written down at various epochs between the thirteenth and the eighteenth centuries, at the time when the old unwritten law of custom began to be contested. The common woodlands that are still met with here and there, are the remnants of these ancient unpartitioned marks. Another relic, at all events in West and South Germany, is the idea, deeply rooted in the popular consciousness, that the forest should be common property, wherein every one may gather flowers, berries, mushrooms, beechnuts and the like, and generally so long as he does no mischief, act and do as he will. But this also Bismarck remedies, and with his famous berry-legislation brings down the Western Provinces to the level of the old Prussian squirearchy." Engels, Frederick, 'The Mark', Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 83-84.

that its decomposition formed the basis for feudal property, but that one could still find its scattered relics within the interstices of contemporary Europe (e.g., in his own home town of Trier). As Engels explains, the "common woodlands," wherever they still existed in Europe, were but "remnants of these ancient unpartitioned marks." In thinking through how to respond to Zasulich, Marx appealed to the work of Maurer on this subject, who had used classical and medieval sources as a means of reconstructing the history of the Germanic commune. By tracing its development back through the various stages of its dissolution, Marx felt that Maurer was able to reassemble the essential elements of the more original form of the German *mark*. Hence, as important as Maine and Morgan might be for Marx's historical anthropology, we should also acknowledge the role which Mauer played in shaping his thinking during this period. As Anderson notes, Marx had written to Engels in the late 1860s with a degree of measured praise for Maurer's most recent work, precisely because it had "shown not only that communal property was the original Germanic form, as much as in Russia or India, but also that it had

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⁴²⁸ "A few traces of these have survived until our own time, but all through the Middle Ages they served as the basis and as the type of all public institutions and permeated the whole of public life, not only in Germany, but also in the north of France, England, and Scandinavia And yet they have been so completely forgotten, that recently G. L. Maurer has had to re-discover their real significance. Two fundamental facts, that arose spontaneously, govern the primitive history of all, or of almost all, nations: the grouping of the people according to kindred, and common property in the soil. And this was the case with the Germans. As they had brought with them from Asia the method of grouping by tribes and gentes, as they even in the time of the Romans so drew up their battle array that those related to each other always stood shoulder to shoulder, this grouping also governed the partitioning of their new territory east of the Rhine and north of the Danube. Each tribe settled down upon the new possession, not according to whim or accident, but, as Caesar expressly states, according to the gens-relationship between the members of the tribe...The land which was not taken possession of by the village remained at the disposal of the hundred [i.e., a grouping of villages]. What was not assigned to the latter remained for the shire [i.e., an association between the hundreds]. Whatever after that was still to be disposed of—generally a very large tract of land—was the immediate possession of the whole people. Thus in Sweden we find all these different stages of common holding side by side....In Caesar's time a great part at least of the Germans, the Suevi, to wit, who had not yet got any fixed settlement, cultivated their fields in common. From analogy with other peoples we may take it that this was carried on in such a way that the individual gentes, each including a number of nearly related families, cultivated in common the land apportioned to them, which was changed from year to year, and divided the products among the families." Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 350.

⁴²⁹ Engels, Frederick, 'The Mark', <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 77-79.

persisted in parts of rural Germany until their own time."430

However, as a result of both internal and, later, external influences, a distinct dualism started to develop in this Germanic commune (according to Marx's interpretation of Mauer). The decomposition of the older and more communal form of the Germanic clan started to give way to a new metabolic relation to the soil as individualized property. To be sure, it is not present as private property in the bourgeois sense of the term, as something which one can sell away to another. Rather, it initially takes the almost religious form of the inviolability of the home (as opposed to the more communal housing of the nomadic life and of primitive communism). Subsequently, this is expanded into the inviolability of the family's homestead (which already gives us an indication of the extent to which more communal forms of agricultural labour have been dissolved). During the age of Tacitus, the Germanic lands were all still formally communal property (i.e., and were even continually redistributed by the commune on an annual or biennial basis). However, the plots themselves were in practice already being cultivated separately by these more independent households. After the fall of Rome, this sanctity of the homestead becomes instituted so that the customary right of independent households to the fruits of their own labour is codified, and the lands gain a hereditary title in law. In this 'synthesis' between Roman and Germanic property, Marx and Engels found, on one hand, that the tilled fields become appropriated more and more as individual household property, but, on the other, that much of the rest of the land remains the communal property of the local village, or, even of the people as a whole (so that the specifically *State*-form of the Roman ager publicus is effectively abolished).431

⁴³⁰ Anderson, Kevin, <u>Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies</u>, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 2010), 139.

⁴³¹ "[T]his [communality of labour] soon ceased. At all events, Tacitus (150 years after Caesar) only mentions the tilling of the soil by individual families. But the land to be tilled only belonged to these for a year. Every year it was divided up anew and redistributed...[and the] uncultivated land, forest and pasture land, is still a common possession

In Marx's view, the distinct form which this dualism assumed arose out of the specific conditions of the Germanic commune's metabolism with nature. The clan-families, forming tightly knit and self-sustaining circles of peasant proprietors, were but "small dots" isolated from one another by large forests. With the ancients, it was the life of the city which formed the "economic totality." However, the "Germanic barbarians" carried on a "traditional system" of agricultural production in which they became "accustomed to [a] lonely life in the country." The larger unity of this "commune exists" only as the "occasional coming-together" of these self-subsisting atoms, not as a really *being-together* (as in the urban life of antiquity). The *togetherness* of the Teutonic commune was merely presupposed because of a common language, religion, blood lines, etc., or, more practically speaking, the "occasional coming-together" for

for common use...The first piece of ground that passed into the private property of individuals was that on which the house stood. The inviolability of the dwelling, that basis of all personal freedom, was transferred from the caravan of the nomadic train to the log house of the stationary peasant, and gradually was transformed into a complete right of property in the homestead. This had already come about in the time of Tacitus. The free German's homestead must, even in that time, have been excluded from the mark, and thereby inaccessible to its officials, a safe place of refuge for fugitives...For the sacredness of the dwelling was not the effect but the cause of its transformation into private property. Four or five hundred years after Tacitus, according to the same law-books, the cultivated land also was the hereditary, although not the absolute freehold property of individual peasants, who had the right to dispose of it by sale or any other means of transfer. The causes of this transformation, as far as we can trace them, are two-fold. First, from the beginning there were in Germany itself, besides the close villages already described, with their complete ownership in common of the land, other villages where, besides homesteads, their fields also were excluded from the mark, the property of the community, and were parcelled out among the individual peasants as their hereditary property. But this was only the case where the nature of the place, so to say, compelled it: in narrow valleys, and on narrow, flat ridges between marshes, as in Westphalia; later on, in the Odenwald, and in almost all the Alpine valleys. In these places the village consisted, as it does now, of scattered individual dwellings, each surrounded by the fields belonging to it. A periodical re-division of the arable land was in these cases hardly possible, and so what remained within the mark was only the circumjacent untilled land. When, later, the right to dispose of the homestead by transfer to a third person became an important consideration, those who were free owners of their fields found themselves in an advantageous position...But, second, conquest led the Germans on to Roman territory, where, for centuries, the soil had been private property (the unlimited property of Roman law), and where the small number of conquerors could not possibly altogether do away with a form of holding so deeply rooted...But if the German conquerors adopted private ownership in fields and meadows—i.e., gave up at the first division of the land, or soon after, any re-partition...they introduced, on the other hand, everywhere their German mark system, with common holding of woods and pastures, together with the over-lordship of the mark in respect to the partitioned land. This happened not only with the Franks in the north of France and the Anglo-Saxons in England, but also with the Burgundians in Eastern France, the Visigoths in the south of France and Spain, and the Ostrogoths and Langobardians in Italy...All other land, i.e., all that was not house and farmyard, or so much of the mark as had been distributed among individuals, remained, as in early times, common property for common use; forests, pasture lands, heaths, moors, rivers, ponds, lakes, roads and bridges, hunting and fishing grounds." Ibid., 79-83. ⁴³² Marx, Karl, 'Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy', The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New

York; 1998), 13.

some definite purpose such as war, adjudication between the clans, etc.⁴³³ As Anderson suggests of Marx's representations of this precapitalist form in the *Grundrisse*, its social life was "centered in the countryside," with the clans "isolated by great distances in the forest." The larger commune was "not permanent, but rather a periodic coming together." In the "Germanic world," the "totality is the individual residence." Perelman argues that, at least in some instances, Marx's descriptions of such precapitalist societies were not "terribly inaccurate," as, for example, when he tells us here that "each individual household contains an entire economy, forming as it

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⁴³³ "The Germanic commune is not concentrated in the town...The history of classical antiquity is the history of cities, but of cities founded on landed property and on agriculture; Asiatic history is a kind of indifferent unity of town and countryside...[But] the Middle Ages (Germanic period) begins with the land as the seat of history, whose further development then moves forward in the contradiction between town and countryside...With its comingtogether in the [ancient] city, the commune possesses an economic existence as such; the city's mere presence, as such, distinguishes it from a mere multiplicity of independent houses. The whole, here, consists not merely of its parts. It is a kind of independent organism. Among the Germanic tribes, where the individual family chiefs settled in the forests, long distances apart, the commune exists, already from *outward* observation, only in the periodic gathering-together [Vereinigung] of the commune members, although their unity-in-itself is posited in their ancestry, language, common past and history, etc. The commune thus appears as a coming-together [Vereinigung], not as a being-together [Verein]; as a unification made up of independent subjects, landed proprietors, and not as a unity. The commune therefore does not in fact exist as a state or political body, as in classical antiquity...For the commune to come into real existence, the free landed proprietors have to hold a meeting... The economic totality is, at bottom, contained in each individual household, which forms an independent centre of production for itself...In the world of antiquity, the city with its territory is the economic totality; in the Germanic world, the totality is the individual residence, which itself appears as only a small dot on the land belonging to it...In antiquity (Romans as the most classic example, the thing in its purest, most fully developed form), the form of state property in land and that of private property in land [are] antithetical, so that the latter is mediated by the former, or the former itself exists in this double form. The private proprietor of land hence at the same time urban citizen...In the Germanic form, the agriculturist [is] not [a] citizen of a state, i.e., not [the] inhabitant of a city; [the] basis [is] rather the isolated, independent family residence, guaranteed by the bond with other such family residences of the same tribe, and by their occasional coming-together [Zusammnenkommen] to pledge each others' allegiance in war, religion, adjudication, etc. Individual landed property here appears neither as a form antithetical to the commune's landed property, nor as mediated by it, but just the contrary. The commune exists only in the interrelations among these individual landed proprietors as such. Communal property as such appears only as a communal accessory to the individual tribal seats and the land they appropriate. The commune is neither the substance of which the individual appears as a mere accident; nor is it a generality with a being and unity as such [seiende Einheit] either in the mind and in the existence of the city and of its civic needs as distinct from those of the individual, or in its civic land and soil as its particular presence as distinct from the particular economic presence of the commune member; rather, the commune, on the one side, is presupposed in-itself prior to the individual proprietors as a communality of language, blood etc., but it exists as a presence, on the other hand, only in its real assembly for communal purposes; and to the extent that it has a particular economic existence in the hunting and grazing lands for communal use, it is so used by each individual proprietor as such, not as representative of the state (as in Rome)." Marx, Karl, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 483-

⁴³⁴ Anderson, Kevin, <u>Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies</u>, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 2010), 161.

does an independent center of production."435

Unlike the more cosmopolitan conditions of the city-state, social development occurs here within the same sort of strict familial and local-clan limits which we find in the Asiatic mode of production. Nonetheless, the "dualism" or "double form" of property which exists in this iteration of the commune provided the conditions in which a sort of rugged "individuality can develop" and become "autonomized" as Camatte notes. 436 On this basis, Marx claims that the Germanic commune— which, as Lichtheim suggests, was for him the "original cell for the medieval body politic"— became the sole centre of "liberty" throughout the middle ages in Europe. 437

Multilinearity and the Question of Pre-Capitalist 'Progress'

⁴³⁵ Perelman, Michael, <u>The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive</u> Accumulation, (Duke University Press: Durham; 2000),72.

⁴³⁶ Camatte, Jacques, 'Community and Communism in Russia', David Brown (trams.), first published in French in *Invariance Series* II, n. 4, 1974; in English by Spartacus 1978, https://www.marxists.org/archive/camatte/commrus1.htm>.

⁴³⁷ Lichtheim, George, 'Marx and the "Asiatic Mode of Production", <u>Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought</u>, Vol. 6, Bob Jessop and Russel Wheatley (ed.), (Routledge: London; 1999), 48. See also Engels, Frederick, 'The Mark', Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 84-85: "Just as the members of the community originally had equal shares in the soil and equal rights of usage, so they had also an equal share in the legislation, administration and jurisdiction within the mark. At fixed times and, if necessary, more frequently, they met in the open air to discuss the affairs of the mark and to sit in judgment upon breaches of regulations and disputes concerning the mark. It was, only in miniature, the primitive assembly of the German people, which was, originally, nothing other than a great assembly of the mark...In primitive times, the whole public authority in time of peace was exclusively judicial, and rested in the popular assembly of the hundred, the shire, or the whole tribe...Even when the Frankish kings began to transform the self-governing shires into provinces governed by royal delegates, and thus separated the royal shire courts from the common mark tribunals, in both the judicial function remained vested in the people. It was only when the old democratic freedom had been long undermined, when attendance at the popular assemblies and tribunals had become a severe burden upon the impoverished freemen, that Charlemagne, in his shire courts, could introduce judgment by Schöffen, lay assessors, appointed by the king's judge, in the place of judgment by the whole popular assembly. But this did not seriously touch the tribunals of the mark. These, on the contrary, still remained the model even for the feudal tribunals in the Middle Ages. In these, too, the feudal lord only formulated the issues, while the vassals themselves found the verdict. The institutions governing a village during the Middle Ages are but those of an independent village mark, and passed into those of a town as soon as the village was transformed into a town, i. e., was fortified with walls and trenches. All later constitutions of cities have grown out of these original town mark regulations. And, finally, from the assembly of the mark were copied the arrangements of the numberless free associations of medieval times not based upon common holding of the land, and especially those of the free guilds. The rights conferred upon the guild for the exclusive carrying on of a particular trade were dealt with just as if they were rights in a common mark. With the same jealousy, often with precisely the same means in the guilds as in the mark, care was taken that the share of each member in the common benefits and advantages should be equal, or as nearly equal as possible."

In the Contribution, Marx asserts that "new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society." On the basis of this principle of immanent development, he claimed that, in "broad outline," the historical shapes of society that he had undertaken a study of—the "Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production"— represent "epochs marking progress in the economic development of society."438 Schmidt regards these prefatory remarks about precapitalist forms in the Contribution as rather schematic in comparison to the more nuanced and open-ended analysis offered in the Grundrisse. According to him, when the Grundrisse "compared a series of geographically separated varieties of landownership, that is to say the Oriental, South American, Slavic, Germanic, and Classical types," Marx proceeded by "thrusting the question of the temporal succession of these forms entirely into the background." Schmidt suggests that this parallels the basic pattern laid out in Hegel's Philosophy of Nature insofar as it presents these "different form[s] of the pre-capitalist community [as] stand[ing] beside each other," i.e., as a topography of historically "indifferent, unconnected forms of existence." However, instead of Hegel's Naturphilosophie, he argues that the Contribution illustrates that Marx momentarily reverted to presenting these precapitalist forms through the template of the *Philosophy of History*, i.e., by schematically characterizing them as a successive series of stages marking-out the progressive development of the productive powers of social labour.

All statements about nature relate to the particular stage reached in its appropriation by society. Moreover, owing to the changes in the constellations in which men are linked to one another and to nature, a uniform dialectical structure cannot be ascribed to human history in general...although many of Marx's own formulations appear to support this interpretation...The 'coherent series of forms of intercourse' later, in the famous preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, became the necessary

⁴³⁸ Marx, Karl, 'Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*', Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 29, Victor Shnittke and Yuri Sdobnikov (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1987), 263-264.

⁴³⁹ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 167-168.

succession of progressive epochs of the economic social formation, from the Asiatic mode, via the classical and the feudal, and from there to the bourgeois mode of production. It is not difficult to show that here Marx was far too willing to follow the scheme of development set out in Hegel's philosophy of history, and that the real course of history is much more complicated.⁴⁴⁰

To be sure, Marx's analysis is consistent with the thesis of 'multi-linearity' if we take it to mean that different precapitalist societies, at different times and in different places, based upon different relations and different conditions, undergo different forms of development whose stages unfold in different orders of succession. Taken in this strict sense, he does not impose a "uniform dialectical structure" upon the precapitalist forms of the metabolism with nature (emphasis added). Notwithstanding the fact that they mark off, in the broad, phases in the general development of human society, Marx never treated Asiatic, Classical, etc., societies as 'universal' social formations which all peoples must pass through in the same phases of procession. He never entertained such a strict determinism, and, if he had, we would be right to reconsider, question, and abandon it. However, we have seen that the *Grundrisse* actually represented precapitalist societies as undergoing their own unique processes of development, and, as I will go on to elaborate, Marx's account of primitive accumulation in *Capital* recognizes that the dissolution of precapitalist society also took on a variety of historical and contemporary forms in England, on the Continent, and throughout the colonial world.

In contrast to Schmidt, however, others suggest that the cited statement from the *Contribution* merely "lists in order modes of production" which, precisely because they represent divergent paths of historical development, constitute examples of property and production "further and further removed from primitive communism: Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 167-168.

⁴⁴¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 876.

bourgeois."⁴⁴² Anderson, another proponent of the 'multilinearity' thesis, argues that Marx's presentation only "seemed like a unilinear perspective" to some because it regards the 'naturally arisen' socialism of the archaic commune as the "first stage of social development for all societies;" but, he is right to add, it was Marx's view that this original form broke apart into multiple lines of precapitalist development. ⁴⁴³ Primitive communism— the original, primary, and universal form found at the beginning of all human social history— underwent everywhere its own distinct process of dissolution and development. The archaic commune, in its various states of decomposition and modification, were identified by Marx as 'Asiatic', 'Slavic', 'Roman', 'Germanic', 'Feudal', etc., property. This is the meaning behind his claim that the "original form of this property is therefore itself direct common property"— as found still in the "oriental form, modified in the Slavonic; developed to the point of antithesis, but still as the secret, if antithetical, foundation in classical and Germanic property."⁴⁴⁴

These precapitalist forms are presented by Marx as different forms of production, as different modes of the socially-mediated intercourse with nature. However, because he interprets these as "geographically separated" forms of life, rather than as archetypal examples of different forms of property in the soil, Schmidt makes the dubious claim that no particular precapitalist society is represented in the *Grundrisse* as a 'progressive' phase or "higher stage of development" in comparison to others. How Marx's 'Rough Draft' does indeed represent these precapitalist shapes of society as expressing different degrees in the development of the capacities, needs, and relations of human beings. That these precapitalist forms existed

⁴⁴² Gandy, Daniel Ross, <u>Marx and History: From Primitive Society to the Communist Future</u>, (University of Texas Press: 1979), 12.

⁴⁴³ Anderson, Kevin, <u>Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies</u>, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 2010), 161.

⁴⁴⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 473.

⁴⁴⁵ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 167-168.

indifferently alongside one another in different places, but at the same moments in history, by no means implies that the *Grundrisse* brackets the question of whether they mark out "progressive" phases *in relation* to one another.

In Capital, he reiterates that the Teutonic, Slavic, and Hellenic forms of property must be understood as different forms in the dissolution of an older and more archaic commune— to be sure, not one necessarily imported ready-made from Asia itself, but, rather, as the spontaneously developed and naturally-arisen social form standing at the dawn of all human history. He but that they represent multiple paths of development in the history of precapitalist society in no way excludes the fact that they also represent different degrees in the general development of the human being. The modified post-Solonian gens was regarded by the Marx of the Grundrisse as a superior form of social life in comparison to the older Homeric gens from which it emerged. The same was arguably true, as already noted, of Marx's thoughts on Mauer's reconstruction of the history of the German mark— that sole centre of medieval liberty. As such, the "primary form" of the archaic commune, found everywhere at one point or another, underwent everywhere its own distinct processes of dissolution. But, for that same reason wrote Marx as late as 1881, their history "reveals to us a series of different types, marking progressive epochs" (emphasis added). 447

Schmidt reads the *Grundrisse* as if Marx were agnostic on this question of precapitalist 'progress'. On the contrary, though, he explicitly states there (just as he does in *Capital* and in the drafts to Zasulich) that these forms of precapitalist life, and that the social relations with which they correspond, are continually cast aside with the *progressive unfolding of the human*

⁴⁴⁶ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 171. Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 882.

⁴⁴⁷ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 363.

pack. 448 Originally, the human is a social animal only in his or her immediate and natural species-connection with others. This is why he claims that the individual must be counted as among the products of history. The human being is individuated only in the definite context of this or that society, and through a concrete process of historical development. The richest forms of individuality depend completely upon the richness of the individual's relations to others, social relations which are therefore integral to who they are as individuals. The original clan communism and cooperative character of the archaic commune was a necessity imposed by nature, a product of the undeveloped productive powers of people. According to Marx's view of things in the Grundrisse, Contribution, Capital, late anthropological writings, and drafts to Zasulich, those modes of precapitalist social life which had moved away from this primitive socialism through the introduction of small-scale private property (e.g., of the sort which Marx identified with post-Solonian Athens, the yeomanry of precapitalist England, the flourishing period of the German mark, etc.) gave more room to the free development of individuality. Only on the basis of this dualism do individuals start to enter into a 'relation of freedom' to their conditions of life in nature.

In defence of this interpretative position one need go no further than Marx's own depictions of different precapitalist communities. Consider, for example, his representations of common property in British India not simply in the early 1850s, but from the late 1860s through to the 1880s. In the articles for the *Tribune*, just as in the *Grundrisse*, *Capital*, *Ethnological Notebooks*, and drafts to Zasulich, such communal forms are regarded as having confined individual development within definite limits, tethering the members of the village to the soil by the umbilical cord of their naturally-arisen social connections to one another and to nature. This was

⁴⁴⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 497.

true for Marx not just of colonial India (especially, again, its northwestern reaches), but of *all* precapitalist forms (non-European and *European* alike) which preserved elements of the archaic commune: e.g., communal forms of property and the communality of labour; the self-sufficient and localized life brought about by the unity of manufacturing and agriculture in the village-system; the commune's isolation with respect to its neighbours and the outside world.

Compare Marx's representations of this Indian village to the 'broader' individuality which he attributes to the peasant-citizen in post-Solonian Athens in the *Grundrisse* and the *Ethnological Notebooks*; or to that 'golden age' of the independent yeomanry in *Capital*; or, albeit to a lesser degree perhaps, the Russian peasant producers after their emancipation from serfdom in the drafts to Zasulich, letter to Mikhailovsky, and Russian 'Preface' to *The Communist Manifesto*— but, by no means, every precapitalist society either throughout the colonial world of the 19th century, or, for that matter, in the history of Western Europe itself. These various forms, and the greater degree of individuality with which they corresponded according to Marx, all rested upon the development of the *dualism* between the personal appropriation of one's own labour and the older communal heritage (common property) which was itself present in contrasting states of decomposition and modification in the Asiatic, Hellenic, and Germanic forms of landed property.

Understood by Gandy as archetypal forms of property/production (and not geographic or ethnological categories), these multiple lines to the dissolution of primitive communism represent different forms of development *relative* to one another. Moreover, in one particular corner of the globe (indeed, in one particular country in Europe), the historical 'succession' of these forms created the preconditions for capitalism. As Gandy explains, Marx's "conception of history was multilinear" insofar as it acknowledged that

Humanity has not passed through a series of universal social forms. A worldwide system could hardly emerge, for the disruptive elements of [precapitalist] history...have continually thrown whole peoples off their developmental track...Some lines of development led into agelong stagnation. Others progressed rapidly, then ran into a dead end. Some stalled and collapsed...One line spiralled up through higher and higher levels of capitalism, but this took place in a corner of the globe. This corner soon drew the world into capitalism.⁴⁴⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the significance of Marx's characterization of precapitalist nature as the 'inorganic body' of the commune. In the most original form of precapitalist social life, the primitive socialism which marks the outset of the history of all peoples, the metabolism was defined by communal property and collective labour. This, however, he believed to be a necessity imposed by nature, i.e., one due to the undeveloped state of the productive powers of individuals and their localized forms of social intercourse. In all subsequent forms, we find this communality in its various states of decomposition. In the Asiatic mode of production, the communal property of the village-system was preserved to a great degree, and the individual therefore continued to relate to the social organism as a natural component. In contrast to Wittfogel, who argued that this form was distinguished by its State-centralized waterworks, I defended the interpretation that this metabolism was based primarily upon the self-enclosed unity of manufacturing and agricultural production within the archaic commune. For Marx, it is the communal property of the village which provides the 'key' to explaining its rural isolation, underdevelopment, historical tenacity and despotic tendencies.

In the histories of Greece and Rome, the introduction of private property and urban life of their polities broke the "natural fate" and "familial unity" of their older *gens*, allowing for the

⁴⁴⁹ Gandy , Daniel Ross, <u>Marx and History: From Primitive Society to the Communist Future</u>, (University of Texas Press: 1979), 112 .

broader development of individuality. Instead of being reduced to "natural accessories" of the land, Marx represents such household property in the soil as forming part of the personality of the individual. This commune exists through the interrelations of these free peasant producers, and the maintenance of their relative political equality. Communal property still exists here—except it persists in the form of the State-owned *ager publicus*, expanded through colonial expropriation. In contrast to this *antithesis*, the common property of the Germanic commune appears merely as a *complement* to private property. The Teutonic clans, separated by vast swaths of dense forest, freely appropriated the communal property of the woodlands, meadows, moors, etc., as a supplement to their household-familial property. This form of the commune therefore exists merely in the sporadic 'coming-together' of these independent proprietors. As a result of this "dualism," however, Marx characterizes this form as having created the conditions for a higher degree of "liberty" and "relation of freedom" to landed property.

Marx presented the different forms of precapitalist society— nomadic, primitive socialism, Asiatic, Slavic, Classical, Germanic, Feudal, etc.— as archetypal forms of the metabolism with nature, each one based upon different forms of activity, different relations, and different types of individuals. I defended the interpretative position that Marx characterized these not as a topography of 'geographically separated' forms of existence, as Schmidt suggests, but, as Bologh and Forbes substantiate, more or less naturally-arisen and/or historically-modified modes of property corresponding with completely different modes in the individual's 'presence' or 'being' as an individual. Those communities further removed from primitive communism, and which had introduced precursory forms of private property, created a broader foundation for such individuality. As such, although Marx acknowledged several paths of precapitalist development out of primitive communism, he, for the same reason, regarded these as expressing different degrees of development. This was a view which he entertained in the *Contribution* and the

Grundrisse, as well as in *Capital*, the *Ethnological Notebooks*, and the late writings on Russia. Hence, he both avoided the sort of unilinear schematic usually attributed to his theory of history, but, at the same time, also regarded these multiple forms of precapitalist development as marking, relative to one another, progressive phases in the historical becoming of human society.

The Separation of Labour from Nature

Introduction: The Historic Separation Presupposed by Capitalist Production

The capitalist mode of production proceeds from a set of preconditions which distinguishes it from all of the earlier forms examined in the last chapter. According to Marx, its starting-point is formed by a *presupposition* which is by no means *natural*, but only emerges as the *result* of a distinct *historic process*: namely, a process which leaves one class of individuals in possession of the means of production, and another possessing nothing but their own productive powers. What makes the wage-worker a wage-worker is just this: viz., that her own labour-power is from the outset separated from the means of its realization, and that she must therefore sell this wealth-creating capacity to capital. But this "positing of the individual as a [wage] *worker*, in this nakedness, is itself a product of *history*." After all, Marx's survey of precapitalist society has already illustrated that "nature does not produce on one hand owners of money or commodities, and on the other hand men possessing nothing but their own labour-power." Instead, this relationship is the product of the historical destruction of those older forms of social life discussed in the last chapter. In this chapter, I examine the interconnections

⁴⁵⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 471-472.

⁴⁵¹ From the other side of this relation, i.e., from the standpoint of the consciousness of the capitalist, it follows that he can "exploit living labour only in so far as he advances at the same time the conditions for the realization of this labour, i.e., as a means and object of labour, machinery and raw materials...Similarly, he is only a capitalist at all, and can undertake the process of exploiting labour, because he confronts, as proprietor of the conditions of labour, the worker as the mere owner of labour-power. We have already shown in Volume 1 how it is precisely the possession of these means of production by the non-workers that turns the workers into wage-labourers and the non-workers into capitalists." Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 132-133.

⁴⁵² Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 471-472.

⁴⁵³ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 272-73.

between Marx's theory of the metabolism and his historical account of this separation of labour from its unity with nature.

The question of how this "strange phenomenon arise[s]"— viz., where one class of individuals has "nothing to sell except their labouring power, their working arms and brains"— actually "lies beyond the pale" of an economic examination of labour-power as a commodity. 454

For strictly methodological reasons, then, *Capital* temporarily brackets this historical question of the coming-into-being of capitalism. Had Marx done otherwise, and begun chronologically, he would have had to deal with categories and relations which, while *historically first*, are *conceptually* of a *secondary significance* to an analysis of the essential elements of the capitalist mode of production. 455 However, he does occasionally allude to the real historic origins of bourgeois society long before arriving at a more thorough-going explication in the section on 'So-Called Primitive Accumulation' at the end of Volume I. So, for instance, when he deals with 'The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power'— notably, right before entering into the "hidden abode of production"— he briefly hints at the precapitalist social processes which created the *preconditions* for capitalist production in the first place.

As Marx elaborates there, the "mere circulation of money and commodities" does not yet

^{454 &}quot;But before doing so [i.e., speaking to labour-power as a commodity], we might ask, how does this, that we find on the market a? That the one set buys continually in order to make a profit and enrich themselves, while the other set continually sells in order to earn their livelihood? The inquiry into this question would be an inquiry into what the economists call "previous or original accumulation," but which ought to be called original expropriation. We should find that this so-called original accumulation means nothing but a series of historical processes, resulting in a decomposition of the original union existing between the labouring Man and his Instruments of Labour. Such an inquiry, however, lies beyond the pale of my present subject. The separation between the Man of Labour and the Instruments of Labour once established, such a state of things will maintain itself and reproduce itself upon a constantly increasing scale, until a new and fundamental revolution in the mode of production should again overturn it, and restore the original union in a new historical form." Marx, Karl, 'Value, Price and Profit', Speech before the First International Working Men's Association, (June 1865), in Marx, Karl: Value, Price and Profit, (International Publishers: New York; 1969), Eleanor Marx Aveling (ed.),

https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/index.htm.

⁴⁵⁵ The history behind why the "free worker confronts him in the sphere of circulation is a question which does not interest the owner of money, for he finds the labour-market in existence...And for the present it interests us just as little. We confine ourselves to the fact theoretically, as he does practically." Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 272-273.

constitute capitalism, and the owner of money and seller of commodities is not yet a capitalist. This is because capital is a social relation, not a thing. The foundation for the whole bourgeois mode of production is the *encounter* between the owner of the means of production and the "free worker" in the marketplace. But the widespread existence of labour-power as a commodity already presupposes an existing division between producers and the material means of production, a separation in no way common to every historical form of society. The relation between those who own the means of production and those who must sell their productive powers is not the eternal form of the social metabolism with nature. The relation between wagelabour and capital has "no basis in natural history," nor does it even have a "social basis common to all periods of human history." The divorce which exists here between labour and the means of labour only emerges as the "result of past historic development, the product of many revolutions." That Mr. Moneybags now confronts the wage-worker as the personification of an economic category, as the embodiment of a mere capacity, i.e., "labour-power on the market as a commodity," means that capitalism somehow arises out of the destruction of those precapitalist forms of life discussed earlier in the last chapter of the dissertation. The origins to this "new epoch" must therefore be traced back to the "extinction of a whole series of older formations" but this "one historical pre-condition comprises a world's history." 456

This speaks to the *so-called 'extra-economic origins'* of bourgeois society and the *historic dissolution* of pre-bourgeois "natural form[s] of wealth"— a dissolution which, as we will discover, was made possible by acts of primitive accumulation which stripped away these individuals from the soil. In fact, Marx insists in the below that it is not so much the *natural unity* between precapitalist labour and the precapitalist means of life in nature which needs to be explained (although he himself spends so much time explaining it in the very same section of the

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 270-274.

Formen). Instead, what really requires explanation is the historic separation between these two sides— a division which is initiated by primitive accumulation, but only fully realized in the relation between wage-labourer and capitalist.

What Mr. Proudhon calls the extra-economic origin of property, by which he understands just landed property, is the pre-bourgeois relation of the individual to objective conditions of labour, initially to the natural objective conditions of labour for, just as the working subject appears naturally as an individual, as natural being—so does the first objective condition of his labour appear as nature, earth, as his inorganic body; he himself is not only the organic body, but also the subject of this inorganic nature...Proudhon would not only be able to, but would have to, accuse capital and wage labour— as forms of property— of having an extra-economic origin. For the encounter with the objective conditions of labour as separate from him, as capital from the worker's side, and the encounter with the worker as propertyless, as abstract worker from the capitalist's side— the exchange such as takes place between value and living labour, presupposes a historic process, no matter how much capital and labour themselves reproduce this relation and work out its objective scope, as well as its depth— a historic process, which, as we saw, forms the history of the origins of capital and wage labour...It is not the unity of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature, and hence their appropriation of nature, which requires explanation or is the result of a historic process, but rather the separation between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence, a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labour and capital.457

Capitalist relations rest upon this "nakedness" of the worker, "denuded" now of the inorganic body of the soil. This is what Marx refers to as the *propertylessness* of a *free labourer*— 'free' because freed from any means of production of her own. The historical emergence of a 'free' labourer rests upon the total dissolution of the primitive social metabolism with the land, forests, rivers, etc. The extinction of these now bygone forms of productive activity, the destruction of the definite ways of life with which they corresponded, and the decomposition of their socially specific ways of relating to nature— these constitute moments in the genesis or coming-into-being of capital. Capitalism itself therefore marks off a completely

⁴⁵⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse</u>: Foundations of the <u>Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 488-489. Foster reinforces the essential concluding point of this passage, noting that "[j]ust as this metabolic relation constituted the universal condition defining production [in all its precapitalist forms], so the alienation of this metabolism was the most general expression of both human alienation and alienation from nature, which had its highest form in bourgeois society...It was the historical alienation of human beings from nature under capitalist production rather than their unity in production in general that therefore required critical analysis." Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's *Grundrisse* and the Ecological Contradictions of Capitalism', <u>Karl Marx's Grundrisse</u>: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later, Marcello Musto (ed.), (Routledge: New York; 2008), 95.

unprecedented stage in the historical metabolism with nature. This is why even though Marx dedicated a great amount of space in the *Formen* to the examination of the precapitalist forms of the metabolism, he was primarily interested with them only insofar as this historical investigation allowed him to locate the origins of something quite specifically capitalist: viz., the complete diremption from nature characteristic of the wage-labour process. With this *divorce between labour and property* given, labour-power stands on one side as a *mere capacity*, compressed into an abstraction, precisely because it really has been isolated from the objective moments of its realization. As Foster suggests of the connections between Marx's analysis of precapitalist formations, account of primitive accumulation, and theory of the metabolism, Marx's

treatment of pre-capitalist economic formations in the Grundrisse, was meant to lead into the analysis of capitalist development itself, as part of a general historical understanding...[T]he section on pre-capitalist forms ended with the reconsideration of the original, primitive accumulation of capital arising out of these historical precursors, making it clear that the original basis for accumulation and capitalism's simultaneous dissolution of all earlier economic formations was the central issue here...As he wrote in Capital, 'private landownership, and thereby expropriation of the direct producers from the land—private landownership by the one, which implies lack of ownership by others— is the basis of the capitalist mode of production'...The main presupposition of capitalism was the dissolution of all previous connections to the land on the part of the direct producers. It was 'the historic dissolution of...naturally arisen communism' as well as 'a whole series of economic systems' separated from 'the modern world, in which exchange value dominates'...The Grundrisse provided a trenchant analysis of these processes of dissolution. What was primarily at issue was the 'Dissolution of the relation to the earth— land and soil— as natural conditions of production — to which he [the human being] relates as to his own inorganic being'...Living labour, which was originally connected to and in community with the land was now defined by the fact that the earth was the worker's 'not property'. 458

Political Economy's Naturalization of Capital

For the reasons given, in order to explain the *historical genesis* of the capitalist mode of production, Marx claims that we have to examine the *initial accumulation* which *precedes* and *preconditions capitalist accumulation*. This original accumulation separated these working

⁴⁵⁸ Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's *Grundrisse* and the Ecological Contradictions of Capitalism', <u>Karl Marx's Grundrisse</u>: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later, Marcello Musto (ed.), (Routledge: New York; 2008), 97-99.

individuals from their previous intertwinement with the instruments of labour, as well as from their communal and individual property in the land. Scholars have not sufficiently recognized the significance of all of the interconnections between Marx's metabolic theory, account of primitive accumulation, and criticism of political economy. But certainly one of the essential features of his critique is the charge that the economists continually project back onto this question of the historical formation of capitalist relations, those very relations as we find them in their fully-formed state. Political economy therefore conflated the "being" and "becoming" of both capital and capitalist, i.e., confusing the metabolic conditions which the capitalist mode of production reproduces as a result of itself with the metabolic preconditions for such production in the first place. As Schmidt explains of Marx's critique in the Grundrisse and Capital,

the classical bourgeois economists find it much easier to regard capital as the eternal, natural form of human production. In so far as they are aware of its historically limited character, they are inclined to present the conditions of its origin as the conditions of its present-day realization, i.e., they imply that the conditions characteristic of the fully-formed bourgeois economy are the same conditions as those under which the capitalist is not yet able to act as such.⁴⁵⁹

In other words, political economy presupposed precisely what it should have explained. It only explained away the problem of the coming-into-being of capitalist society by reference to the very categories which are themselves a product of its subsequent history. These "Robinsonades" merely transferred the circumstances of the present back onto the simplicity of the past, and, in doing so, only naturalized the relations and conditions peculiar to modern society. "The only reason for engaging in such projection," as Meszaros sees it, "is to harmonize, in the interests of social legitimation, the commodity form of exchange with the established, historically contingent form of property embodied in relations of production." These "legitimatory claims," because "historically false," only work toward "eternalizing" the

⁴⁵⁹ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 180.

particular conditions "attached to the notion of private property." Meszaros concludes elsewhere in the same work that the artificial "external historical necessity" imposed by these conditions are then "self-servingly proclaimed" to be part of an "unalterable natural law," something which only works in the "service of eternalizing the established social order." 461

Of course, the conception of the "Natural Individual" advanced by political economy really "rests on such naturalism" about as much as bankers, clerks, and financial advisers do. Instead, Marx insists that this conception of human nature is the "anticipation of 'civil society'," the anticipation of an atomized society where the isolated "individual appears detached from the natural bonds etc. which in earlier historical periods make him the accessory of a definite and limited human conglomerate." This bourgeois individual, the "product on one side of the dissolution of the feudal forms of society," then "appears as an ideal, whose existence they project into the past" as "history's point of departure." But the "more deeply we go back into history," all the "more does the individual...appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole: in a still quite natural way in the family and in the family expanded into the clan [Stamm]; then later in the various forms of communal society arising out of the antitheses and fusions of the clan." This "point could go entirely unmentioned," Marx concludes, if this nonsense had not been "earnestly pulled back into the centre of the most modern economics by Bastiat, Carey, Proudhon etc." It appears to them as if "capital is a general, eternal relation of nature; that is, if I leave out just the specific quality" which makes capital capital. The economists present the current form given to production as if it were "encased in eternal natural laws independent of history, at which opportunity bourgeois relations are then quietly smuggled in as the inviolable

⁴⁶⁰ Meszaros, Istvan, <u>Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness: The Dialectic of Structure and History</u>, Vol. 2, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 2011), 414.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 330.

natural laws on which society in the abstract is founded."462

Krader is right to suggest that this critique highlights a certain degree of continuity in Marx's thought. From his early repudiation of the naturalism of Feuerbachian 'Man', through the *Grundrisse*'s analysis of precapitalist formations and *Capital*'s critique of political economy, to the anthropology of the *Ethnological Notebook*s, Marx rejects the naturalization of modern relations of production. Instead, he attempts to demystify such appearances by revealing their historical character, including the historical qualities of the human relation to nature.

The eighteenth century had the fiction of man which Marx caricatured, the Robinsonade, or man taken in isolation from society...This man is divorced from all social relations, hence is inconceivable as human. Marx opposed this abstraction of man from society just as he opposed the abstraction of man in his generic being as Feuerbach had proposed it, in the nineteenth century, and the abstraction of man from the primitive condition, which permitted the vacuum to be filled by whatever prejudice is current; he then added to this the opposition to the abstraction of man from society as the alienation of man in society. 463

Again, one of the central features of Marx's critique of political economy is that it attempts to demonstrate through a description of precapitalist societies, historical account of primitive accumulation, and identification of the metabolic separation characteristic only of modern

⁴⁶² Marx, Karl, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 83-87. As Marx tells us in the above, these 18th century illusions about human nature would be irrelevant were it not for the fact that 19th century political economy, e.g., Proudhon, had revitalized them. This aspect of his critique of political economy can actually be traced back a decade earlier to the 1847 The Poverty of Philosophy, where he criticizes Proudhon along the same lines. "Instead of a supposition, an affirmation and a negation, we have now an ordinance that M. Proudhon issues purposely to prove the necessity of competition, its eternity as a category, etc. If we imagine that ordinances are all that is needed to get away from competition, we shall never get away from it...And if we go so far as to propose to abolish competition while retaining wages, we shall be proposing nonsense by royal decree. But nations do not proceed by royal decree. Before framing such ordinances, they must at least have changed from top to bottom the conditions of their industrial and political existence, and consequently their whole manner of being. M. Proudhon will reply, with his imperturbable assurance, that it is the hypothesis of 'a transformation of our nature without historical antecedents', and that he would be right in 'excluding this from the discussion', we know not in virtue of which ordinance. M. Proudhon does not know that all history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature...Since competition was established in France in the eighteenth century as a result of historical needs, this competition must not be destroyed in the nineteenth century because of other historical needs. M. Proudhon, not understanding that the establishment of competition was bound up with the actual development of the men of the eighteenth century, makes of competition a necessity of the human soul, in partibus infidelium." Marx, Karl, 'Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon', Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 6, Jack Cohen et. al. (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 192.

⁴⁶³ Krader, Lawrence, 'Introduction', <u>The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx</u>, (ed.) Lawrence Krader, (Van Gorcum: Assen; 1974), .61.

production, that the *laws of capitalist society apply only to capitalist society*. The 'natural laws' of its metabolism with nature are not eternal 'laws of nature' for Marx. His mode of presentation and method of critique, especially in *Capital*, are phenomenologically oriented toward the 'denaturalization' of political economy's mystification of these relations specific only to capitalism. As Gruffydd-Jones argues,

Marx's critical engagement with the classical political economists highlights a defining feature of his method: the need to distinguish carefully between the transhistorical and historically specific...This capacity to 'denaturalize' the social world by underlining the historically produced and potentially transient or changeable, rather than natural and eternal, features of the present. 464

This is what makes *Capital*, understood as a sort of phenomenological *kritik* of political economy and of capitalist society, both 'scientific' in the Hegelian (and by no means positivist) sense, and, at the same time, an act of political praxis in itself. This is why Dunayevskaya complains that

[s]ome Marxists have treated the phenomenon of alienated labor as if it were a leftover from Marx's Young Hegelian days...The mature Marx, on the other hand, shows *that* to be the very pivot on which turns, not alone the science or literature of political economy, but the productive system itself...There is nothing [of] intellectual [theorizing here]...[but] a very real and very degrading labor process which accomplishes this transformation...Marx's concept of the degraded worker seeking universality, seeking to be a whole man, transformed the science of political economy into the science of human liberation...Marxism is wrongly considered "a new political economy"...Marx transformed it from a science which deals with *things*...into one which analyzes *relations*...[Capitalism itself] makes social relations between men appear as relations between things. But these things belie, instead of manifest, the essence. To separate the essence— the social relations— from the appearance— the exchange of things—required a *new science*. 465

Marx's critique of the crude materialism and fetishism of vulgar economics demonstrates precisely where these forms of thought adhered to the immediate surface appearance of things, and moreover *just as they appear from the bourgeois standpoint*. These ideological forms assume what Husserl had referred to as a 'natural-attitude' vis-a-vis the capitalist mode of

⁴⁶⁴ Gruffydd-Jones, Branwen, 'Method of Political Economy', <u>Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics</u>, (ed.) Ben Fine and Alfredo Sadd-Filho, (MPG: Cheshire; 2012), 223.

⁴⁶⁵ Dunayevskaya, Raya, <u>Marxism and Freedom: From 1776 until Today</u>, (Humanity Books: New York; 2000), 105-106.

production. This is why Paci stresses that the critique of political economy in *Capital* is always "on guard" against the sort of "naturalism" which tends to mystify the "fact of bourgeois society...along with its genesis" and the "possibilities for changing it."⁴⁶⁶ "Marx is against the *naturalization* of social relations;" social relations cannot be "reduced to naturalistic relations." Such an "abstract naturalism" effectively "ignores history and fails to realize that social relations are historical," and, moreover, that the very "categories of economics are founded on [that] real history."⁴⁶⁷

The political economists proceeded from the laws 'natural' to capitalism, but, precisely by conceiving of them as "eternal and natural," could not comprehend their historical status. Needless to say, the economists in the end proved quite incapable of bringing history "into harmony with the general laws of property proclaimed by capitalist society itself." In comparison to this mystifying method, Marx demonstrated that the "correct observation and deduction of these laws" of value, not despite but precisely because of their systematic character, always "point towards a past lying behind this system." His "method indicates the points where historical investigation must enter in," or, the moments where the "bourgeois economy" only "points beyond itself to earlier historical modes of production." Marx's critique therefore attempts to denaturalize these laws by showing, through such an "historical investigation," that this society, like the others before it, is "merely [another] historical form" of the metabolism. 468

This is one of the reasons why he places so much emphasis upon the analysis of precapitalist formations and of primitive accumulation as a way of locating the artificial division specific to the capitalist relationship to nature. As Hudis argues, the *Formen*-study of these "diverse forms

⁴⁶⁶ Paci, Enzo, <u>The Function of the Science and the Meaning of Man</u>, (trans.) Paul Piccone and James Hansen, (Northwestern University Press: Evanston; 1972), 411.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 425.

⁴⁶⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 460-461.

of precapitalist society" allowed Marx to discover that capitalism is "not at all 'natural" as the political economists suspect— a method which would later become integral to the final form given to the critique of political economy in Capital. In both works, Marx shows that these relations correspond with a "historically specific" mode of production, in comparison to which all of the distinctions between precapitalist forms of life are relatively unimportant.⁴⁶⁹ Marx's historical analysis in the Grundrisse served, in two main ways, towards the demystification of the 'naturalized' appearances of modern life. On the one hand, he attempts to illustrate that capitalism came into being through the dissolution of earlier relations, and, on the other, that its own contradictions point to the real possibility of their immanent suspension. Hence, his analysis of the precapitalist past and of the capitalist present was ultimately oriented, Hudis is right to suggest, toward demonstrating the inherent tendencies which create the conditions, relations, capacities and needs necessary for the emergence of a free association of universally developed individuals. Such totally-developed individuals are conceived of as the result of a long process of history, a standpoint which does away with the silly conception of the 18th century individual as the 'normal man' and measure of all human development.

> It is impossible to create a new society from scratch...The 'universally developed individuals' that characterise the stage that follows capitalism are themselves a product of prior stages of historical development...Largely for this reason, the Grundrisse contains a considerable amount of historical analysis of the development of capitalism as well as of precapitalist forms of production...At issue in many of these debates [about the Grundrisse] is why Marx accorded so much attention to precapitalist formations...There is no question that Marx was deeply interested in understanding the manner in which capitalist social relations emerged out of the womb of precapitalist modes of production. At the same time, the Grundrisse indicates that Marx was just as interested in how a historical understanding of the emergence of capitalist commodityproduction could shed light on a future post-capitalist society...The social relations of any given society generally appear 'natural' and 'normal' in the eyes of its participants, especially when they have prevailed for a considerable length of time. This proclivity to naturalise social relations is no less prevalent among philosophers, as he shows in his comments about John Stuart Mill and others in the 'Introduction' to the Grundrisse. One way to challenge this tendency towards naturalisation is through the historical investigation of social formations that preceded capitalism. The peculiar and transitory nature of capitalism is brought into focus by elucidating the marks that distinguish its

⁴⁶⁹ Hudis, Peter, Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism, (Haymarket Books: Chicago; 2003), 119.

relations of production from precapitalist forms...[B]y focusing on communal forms of association, production and distribution that precede capitalism, Marx shows that the isolated individuality and atomisation that characterise modern capitalism are by no means natural or eternal...The historical aberration [is not the "Germanic, Slavic, and 'Asiatic' communal forms," but] is, instead, the concept of free individuality abstracted from the communal conditions that prevails in modern capitalist societies. The very concept of the atomised and independent individual, he argues, arises and can only arise on the basis of developed social and economic relations...As he puts it, 'Man becomes individualized only through the process of history'...[the ultimate social form of which is consistent with] 'the absolute unfolding of man's creative abilities'...[W]ealthunderstood as the unfolding of the richness of the human personality— now becomes an end-in-itself...Contrary to the claim that Marx focused mainly on the present and secondarily on the past, his emphasis on tendencies towards dissolution in his analyses of both the present and past indicate that he was most of all concerned about the future. For Marx, however, the future cannot simply be spelled out on the basis of the individual's imagination: it must be traced out through an analysis of existing social formations.470

At the outset of *Capital*, Marx brackets the historical question of the becoming of capitalist relations (and, still more, any speculation about the possibility of their suspension in the future) because his critique begins by accepting the superficial appearances of modern society. But he also makes it clear through a brief thought-experiment in Chapter One that these naturalized semblances of modern life can be dispelled by even the most cursory examination of social history.⁴⁷¹ In the thought-experiment, he temporarily 'transports' his reader from the 'Robinsonades' which take place on Crusoe's island to Feudal Europe, before finally asking us to imagine the possibility of a still higher formation, i.e., one based upon freely associated and

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 116-117, 119-120, 123.

⁴⁷¹ This manoeuvre in the first chapter of *Capital*, observes Krader, uses as its "example of labor in common" not the "communes of the dawn of civilization," but rather Feudal Europe. In his initial draft of this chapter in the 1859 Contribution, Marx had indeed extended this thought-experiment to include a consideration of more archaic forms of the commune, e.g., the Slavic and Indian forms of communal property. Marx, Karl, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 29, Victor Shnittke and Yuri Sdobnikov (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1987), 275. However, in the 1867 edition to Capital, he moves that discussion into a footnote when he alludes to the primary form of the commune as being anything but a specifically Slavic 'curiosity'. Compare Marx, Karl, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 882; Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 171. As Krader concludes from all this, Marx retained the view (only reinforced later by Morgan and, in a negative way, by Maine) that this primitive communal property could be found everywhere at one time or another, e.g., in India, and, in differing forms of its dissolution, in Russia, Rome, and Germany. Krader, Lawrence, 'Introduction', The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx, (ed.) Lawrence Krader, (Van Gorcum: Assen; 1974), 74. While criticizing the Robinsonades of political economy in the Grundrisse, he therefore found it quite absurd for the economists to always "leap" straight away to a very "specific form of property, e.g., private property." "History rather shows common property (e.g., in India, among the Slavs, the early Celts, etc.) to be the more original form." Marx, Karl, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 87-88.

fully developed individuals. "The only way to overcome the fetishism that attaches itself to products of labour," argues Hudis, "is to step outside of capitalism's confines and examine it from the standpoint of non-capitalist social relations. Marx therefore proceeds to examine value-production from the vantage-point of precapitalist and postcapitalist social relations."

Through these sorts of brief glimpses into the history of the forms which precede capitalist production, and through a more thorough-going analysis of the classic form of primitive accumulation at the end of Volume I, Marx was able to concretize his criticism by showing precisely where the bourgeois consciousness of political economy conflates the coming-into-being with the being of capitalism, i.e., thereby treating this society as if it were an "eternal and *natural* (not historical) form" of the metabolism. As he puts it, political economy advances the "insipid notion" that this historically-arisen social relation between wage-labour and capital is a "spontaneous, natural attribute inherent in individuals and inseparable from their nature (in antithesis to their conscious knowing and willing)." Of course, this "bond is their product," a "historic product" which "belongs to a specific phase of their development." But to the economists, these relations really do appear *fixed* as if they were the *universal-natural* form of social life and the *aeterno modo* of the human relation to nature. Even though these relations have been "created by society, [they] appear as if they were natural conditions, not controllable by individuals."

Marx's emphasis always falls upon the historical character of the capitalist metabolism. It

⁴⁷² Hudis, Peter, Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism, (Haymarket Books: Chicago; 2003), 156.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 162. "[P]roduction has in fact its prerequisite conditions, which form factors of it. These may appear at first to have a natural origin. By the very process of production they are changed from natural to historical, and if they appear during one period as a natural prerequisite of production, they formed at other periods its historical result...Although the latter [a new distribution] appears now as the prerequisite condition of the new period of production, it is in itself but a product of [past history and present] production, not of production belonging to history in general, but of production relating to a definite historical period." Marx, Karl, 'Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy', The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 13.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 156, 164.

was the dissolution of the precapitalist relation to the land which set free the elements necessary for the genesis of bourgeois society. But the period which makes-up this immediate prehistory of capital was presented in a very mysterious way by the political economists. They presented these moments of *original accumulation* as if they unfolded according to the natural laws of capitalism itself. For them, this "whole movement" is regarded in abstraction so that the affair appears to "turn around in a never-ending circle which we can only get out of by assuming a primitive accumulation...which precedes capitalist accumulation."⁴⁷⁵ They themselves conceived of this "original accumulation" not in the sense in which Marx understood it, but in such a way that this non-capitalist appears to accumulate with all of the virtuosity of a capitalist. Again, this is because they presented the becoming of capital as if it were already capitalism in its being-in-and-for-itself. For example, Smith had characterized this previous accumulation through a little "anecdote about the past:" namely, that there were savers and spendthrifts. The former forsook luxuries for industriousness, miserliness, and all of the other Calvinist virtues; the latter wasted away their earnings in no time on vice and comfort, thereby falling into a deserved destitution. ⁴⁷⁶

But precisely because the 'accumulation' in question *precedes* the existence of capitalism—i.e., because it is the "point of departure" and not the "result of the capitalist mode of production"—it follows that this previous phase of accumulation cannot be grasped in this facile way.⁴⁷⁷ In contrast to this mystifying method, Marx's work in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* attempts to *denaturalize* the fetishized reality of modern life by revealing that the 'natural laws'

⁴⁷⁵ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 873.

⁴⁷⁶ Mocking the mythology behind these bourgeois conceptions about the past, Marx parodied Smith on how "long ago there were two sorts of people: one the diligent, intelligent and above all frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their subsistence, and more, in riotous living...Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort finally had nothing to sell but their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority who, despite all their labour, have up to now nothing to sell but themselves, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly, although they have long ceased to work." Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 873-874.

of capital are not everlasting features of the human metabolism with nature, but simply "socially valid" categories and "objective" expressions of this particular mode of production— based, at bottom, on alienated labour. The process of primitive accumulation provided capitalism's

historic presuppositions, which precisely as such historic presuppositions, are past and gone, and hence belong to the history of its formation, but in no way to its contemporary history...The conditions and presuppositions of the becoming, of the arising, of capital presuppose precisely that it is not yet in being but merely in becoming; they therefore disappear as real capital arises, capital which itself, on the basis of its own reality, posits the conditions for its realization. Thus, e.g., while the process in which money...originally becomes capital presupposes on the part of the capitalist an accumulation...undertaken as a not-capitalist...[t]he bourgeois economists who regard capital as an eternal and natural (not historical) form of production then attempt to legitimate it again by formulating the conditions of its becoming as the conditions of its contemporary realization; i.e., presenting the moments in which the capitalist still appropriates as not-capitalist—because he is still becoming—as the very conditions in which he appropriates as capitalist...[This demonstrates] an inability [on the part of the economists] to bring the mode of appropriation of capital as capital into harmony with the general laws of property proclaimed by capitalist society itself.⁴⁷⁸

Marx, in juxtaposition to this procedure, traced the *historical origins* of these *natural laws* right back to precapitalist processes of primitive accumulation and the historical production of a class of 'free labourers'.

[T]o unleash the "eternal laws of Nature" of the capitalist mode of production, [is] to complete the process of separation between the workers and the conditions of labour, to transform, at one pole, the social means of production and subsistence into capital, [and] at the opposite pole, the mass of the population into wage-labourers, into free 'labouring poor', that artificial product of modern history.⁴⁷⁹

Capital is *not a thing*, but a *specific social relation* between individuals (which merely takes on the *appearance* of a relation between things). Hence, "[i]n themselves, money and commodities are no more capital than the means of production and subsistence are. They need to be transformed into capital." As noted at the beginning of this chapter, this only occurs in the peculiar exchange-relation between "two very different kinds of commodity owners." This is why Marx insisted that "money can be piled up in part by way of the sheer exchange of

⁴⁷⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 459-460.

⁴⁷⁹ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 925.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 874.

equivalents; but this forms so insignificant a source [of original accumulation] that it is not worth mentioning historically."⁴⁸¹ As Rosdolsky argues by referring us to a passage from Volume III, monetary wealth in its precapitalist forms (e.g., merchant wealth, usury, etc.) may certainly have worked to dissolve precapitalist relations in a more thorough-going way, but it cannot help much in "explaining the transition from one mode of production to another."⁴⁸² Instead, money merely acted as an *additional solvent* in the process of *dissolution* already initiated by acts of primitive accumulation— acts involving, at bottom, expropriation and displacement.

Insofar as we restrict our attention to the *historic formation* of capitalism, the *original separation* does not appear as the work of mere money, but often as naked force without so much as a pretence of legality and equal exchange. Through clearing, enclosure, and the violation of all the old customary ties (which had until then bound the serf, independent proprietor, tenants, etc., to both the soil and the community), the newly freed labourers are made landless, homeless, propertyless— in short, free of any means of production, and hence *any sufficient means of life*, of their own. Driven into destitution and denuded of their inorganic social body in nature, they now have nothing left to sell but their own skins, the natural powers of their own organic bodies.

[I]n truth the period of the dissolution of the earlier modes of production and modes of the workers relation to the objective conditions of labour is at the same time a period in which monetary wealth on the one side has already developed to a certain extent...It is itself one of the agencies of that dissolution, while at the same time that dissolution is the condition of its transformation into capital. But the mere presence of monetary wealth, and even the achievement of a kind of supremacy on its part, is in no way sufficient for this dissolution into capital to happen. Or else ancient Rome, Byzantium etc., would have ended their history with free labour and capital, or rather begun a new history...The original formation of capital does not happen, as is sometimes imagined, with capital heaping up necessaries of life and instruments of labour and raw materials, in short, the objective conditions of labour which have already been unbound from the soil and animated by human labour....Rather, its original formation is that, through the historic process of the dissolution of the old mode of production, value existing as money-wealth is enabled, on one side, to buy the objective conditions of labour; on the other side, to exchange money for the living labour of the workers who have been set free. All these moments are present; their divorce is itself a historic process, a process of

⁴⁸¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 504.

⁴⁸² Rosdolsky, Roman, <u>The Making of Marx's 'Capital'</u>, Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 275.

dissolution, and it is the latter which enables money to transform itself into capital. Money itself, to the extent that it also plays an active role, does so only in so far as it intervenes in this process as itself a highly energetic solvent, and to that extent assists in the creation of the plucked, object-less free workers...by helping to speed up their separation from them— their propertylessness...What had changed was simply this, that these necessaries were now thrown on to the exchange market...and thus fell into the domain and under the supremacy of money wealth. Likewise with the instruments of labour....[U]nbound from their land and soil, spinner and weaver with their stools and wheels came under the command of money wealth. Capital proper does nothing but bring together the mass of hands and instruments which it finds on hand. It agglomerates them under its command. That is its real stockpiling; the stockpiling of workers, along with their instruments...There can therefore be nothing more ridiculous than to conceive this original formation of capital as if capital had stockpiled and created the objective conditions of production— necessaries, raw materials, instrument— and then offered them to the worker, who was bare of these possessions. Rather, monetary wealth in part helped to strip the labour powers of able-bodied individuals from these conditions; and in part this process of divorce proceeded without it. When the formation of capital had reached a certain level, monetary wealth could place itself as mediator between the objective conditions of life, thus liberated, and the liberated but also homeless and empty-handed labour powers, and buy the latter with the former. But now, as far as the [original] formation of money-wealth itself is concerned, this belongs to the prehistory of the bourgeois economy...a historic process which divorces the objective conditions of labour from the worker and makes them independent of him, [and] it is at the same time the effect of capital and of its process, once arisen, to conquer all of production and to develop and complete the divorce between labour and property, between labour and the objective conditions of labour, everywhere.483

This powerful critique of the superstitions surrounding the history of primitive accumulation emphasizes that it is the *social relation* which emerges out of the divorce between labour and property, not the mere presence of money, exchange, etc., which constitutes the most necessary precondition for the coming-into-being of capitalism. But this passage is also significant because it emphasizes that, at a certain point in this development (viz., *after* the instruments of labour and natural conditions of production have been *stripped away* to some degree from these increasingly *object-less* workers), money could be transformed into capital, *intervening* more and more as the "mediator" between these previously connected elements of the labour process. The only thing that had "changed" was that, the *necessities of life* having been separated from individuals and thrown into the market as commodities, money was able to achieve a kind of unprecedented hegemony over the social metabolism with nature. This just

⁴⁸³ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 506-512.

means that once it 'stands on its own two feet', once it is mature enough to unfold according to its own intrinsic laws, once it reproduces itself as an organic totality, etc., capital will continually renew this original separation, deepening the human diremption from nature.⁴⁸⁴ As Schmidt puts it in *The Concept of Nature in Marx*:

[O]nce it is historically developed, it is related to its prerequisites as to 'the preliminary historical stages of its becoming'. These stages are then 'superseded in its being'. What originally appeared as the foundation for capital's growth now appears 'as posited by capital— not as the precondition of its origin but as the consequence of its own reality'...In the centuries of 'primitive accumulation'...there arose within the womb of feudal society...the capital-relation characteristic of bourgeois society as a historical form of life. This capital-relation rests on the abstract separation of the worker (as a class) from the means of production, the material prerequisites of labour. Once this separation has come into effect, the basis is provided for 'the becoming and, still more, the being of capital as such', since the separation is reproduced 'on a constantly increasing scale', as Marx tried to show. 485

As Perelman notes, this implies that "once the work of primitive accumulation was complete," the "silent compulsion' of the market" could take over. 486 Or, as Wood explains in the below, after the metabolic separation from the soil has been established to some extent, relations of personal dependence can be substituted more and more by impersonal market relations, thereby giving money, when transformed in the hands of the capitalist, its unprecedented power. The direct expropriation of the surplus of peasant producers— which earlier took the form of direct coercion, payments in kind, and other forms of 'extra-economic' exploitation, etc., through a range of political, juridical, and social structures of power— is replaced here by the purely 'economic' and indirect coercion imposed by the artificial natural necessity of exchange-relations.

Marx constructs his argument on the premise that human beings interact with each other, with nature and with the conditions of labour— the material, instruments and products of labour— to achieve their subsistence and self-reproduction, and that these relations take different forms in different modes of production. In particular, development from

⁴⁸⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 874.

⁴⁸⁵ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 179-181.

⁴⁸⁶ Perelman, Michael, <u>The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation</u>, (Duke University Press: Durham; 2000), 102.

one mode of production to another has been a progressive 'separation of free labor from the objective conditions of its realization— from the means and material of labor'... Before capitalism, direct producers had related to the basic condition of labour—the land— as their property, whether the communal property of one or another form of primitive communalism or the free landed property of the independent small producing household. This meant that appropriating classes could extract surplus labour from direct producers only by what Marx calls 'extra-economic' means, the superior force derived from political, military and judicial status— as, for instance, feudal lords extracted labour services or rent from peasants who remained in possession of land. Capitalism would transform not only the relation of direct producers to the conditions of their labour but also the form in which surplus labour is extracted from them. Capitalism completely disrupts the 'natural unity of labor with its material prerequisites'...Wage labourers in capitalism have been completely separated from the conditions of their labour...The separation of the direct producers from the means of production meant the proletarianization of the labour force, the transformation of direct producers into wage labourers and their exploitation not by 'extra-economic' but by purely 'economic' means. 487

Although Steuart, Price, Anderson, etc., had already presented this process of 'clearing' more honestly, Marx was seeking to dispel the commonplace myth about original accumulation which had become the "sacred" creed of economics after Adam Smith. These "bourgeois economists" recited Smith's "nursery tale" as one would repeat a religious rite, with the consequence that such "insipid childishness is every day preached to us in defence of property."

The superstition which surrounds this process of "primitive accumulation plays approximately the same role in political economy as original sin does in theology." In the prelapsarian period which makes-up this mystified prehistory of capitalism, it seems as if the "idyllic reigns from time immemorial," for Smith imagines that the capitalist came into the world as free from sin as Adam himself. 489

Yet, however unconsciously, political economy's "attempts at apologetics" actually demonstrate its own "guilty conscience" and capitalism's 'first sin' to belabour the analogy. 490 This is because what the "economists call 'previous or original accumulation" is instead more

⁴⁸⁷ Wood, Ellen Meiksins, 'Capitalism', <u>Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics</u>, (ed.) Ben Fine and Alfredo Sadd-Filho, (MPG: Cheshire; 2012), 34.

⁴⁸⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 874.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 874.

⁴⁹⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 459-460.

appropriately "called original expropriation." As Harvey explains of *Capital*, what distinguishes Marx's account of primitive accumulation is that in his "version" of the tale,

all the rules of market exchange earlier laid out [and assumed] (in chapter 2) are abandoned. There is no reciprocity, no equality. Yes, the accumulation of money is there, markets of a sort are there, but the real process is something else. It is about the violent dispossession of a whole class of people from control over the means of production, at first through illegal acts, but ultimately, as in the enclosure legislation in Britain, through actions of the state...Smith, along with most other classical political economists preferred to ignore the role of the state in primitive accumulation. There were exceptions. James Steuart, Marx notes, certainly understood that state violence was absolutely central to proletarianization but took the position that it was a necessary evil. 492

Hence, the *real origins* of capital can be traced back through the annals of "actual history" to centuries of "conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder," etc. The thievery and violence is perpetuated on such a large scale that, paraphrasing the words of Steuart, it "tears the children of the earth from the breast on which they were raised."⁴⁹³ This "history, the history of their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire."⁴⁹⁴ In contrast to the commonplace "nursery tale" proffered by much of political economy, this "original accumulation" was "anything but idyllic."⁴⁹⁵

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation. ⁴⁹⁶

Primitive Accumulation and the Emergence of the 'Free' Labourer

The precapitalist formations that Marx examines in the *Grundrisse* represent a variety of

⁴⁹¹ Marx, Karl, 'Value, Price and Profit', Speech before the First International Working Men's Association, (June 1865), in Marx, Karl: Value, Price and Profit, (International Publishers: New York; 1969), Eleanor Marx Aveling (ed.), https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/index.htm.

⁴⁹² Harvey, David, A Companion to Marx's Capital, (Verso: London; 2010), 293.

⁴⁹³ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 875.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 875.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 874.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 915.

ways of relating to property in the soil. Yet, these various forms, despite all their differences, rested in one way or another upon the unity between labour and the nature-given conditions of labour. In comparison to these, we have seen that bourgeois society can only develop upon the basis of a 'free worker'— i.e., an objectless class of individuals compelled to sell their labour-power to another class who now own the means of labour as their private property. Both communal possession of the sort that Marx found in the 'oriental' commune in India, and small-scale individual proprietorship of the sort that preceded capitalism in England, are fundamentally incompatible with the nature of capitalist agriculture.

A presupposition of wage labour, and one of the historic preconditions for capital, is free labour and the exchange of this free labour for money, in order to reproduce and to realize money...Another presupposition is the separation of free labour from the objective conditions of its realization— from the means of labour and the material for labour. Thus, above all release of the worker from the soil as the natural workshop—hence dissolution of small, free landed property as well as of communal landownership resting on the oriental commune. In both forms, the worker relates to the objective conditions of his labour as to his property; this is the natural unity of labour with its material [sachlich] presuppositions...The individual relates to himself as proprietor, as master of the conditions of his reality...He relates to others in the same way...he relates to the others as co-proprietors.⁴⁹⁷

In addition to the communal property of the archaic commune (e.g., destroyed by colonialism on the Indian subcontinent, in Java, etc.) as well as forms of proprietorship founded upon the independent peasant (e.g., the yeomanry destroyed by the classical form of primitive accumulation in England), the coming-into-being of capitalism presupposes further the dissolution of all relations based upon either direct domination or personal dependence of one sort or another. It involves the dissolution not merely of slavery and serfdom (as well as a range of unfree statuses)— in which the individual's labour is appropriated as part of the natural conditions of production and as an accessory to the inorganic body of nature; it also implies the dissolution of the sort of craft relations developed within the medieval guild. A mature capitalist

⁴⁹⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 471.

society will replace all of these different types of precapitalist connections to the community, to the tools of production, and to nature itself with formally free persons who, because they are separated from all of these elements, are now entirely dependent upon accidental, external, and impersonalized exchange-relations completely beyond their conscious control.

[T]he relation of labour to capital, or to the objective conditions of labour as capital, presupposes a process of history which dissolves the various forms in which the worker is a proprietor, or in which the proprietor works. Thus above all (1) Dissolution of the relation to the earth— land and soil— as natural condition of production— to which he relates as to his own inorganic being; the workshop of his forces, and the domain of his will. All forms in which this property appears presuppose a *community*, whose members, although there may be formal distinctions between them, are, as members of it, proprietors...(2) Dissolution of the relations in which he appears as proprietor of the instrument. Just as the above form of landed property presupposes a real community, so does this property of the worker in the instrument presuppose a particular form of the development of manufactures, namely craft, artisan work; bound up with it, the guildcorporation system etc...Here labour itself still half artistic, half end-in-itself, etc., mastery...Labour still as his own, definite self-sufficient development of one-sided abilities, etc....(4) Dissolution likewise at the same time of the relations in which the workers themselves, the living labour capacities themselves, still belong directly among the objective conditions of production, and are appropriated as such—i.e., are slaves or serfs. For capital, the worker is not a condition of production, only work is. If it can make machines do it, or even water, air, so much the better. And it does not appropriate the worker, but his labour— [and] not directly, but mediated through exchange. These are, now, on one side, historic presuppositions needed before the worker can be found as a free worker, as objectless, purely subjective labour capacity confronting the objective conditions of production as his not-property, as alien property, as value for-itself, as capital.498

The range of free, semi-free and unfree statuses across the countryside, e.g., serfs, slaves and small independent landed proprietors; the craft corporations and guild-relations within the town; and the courtiers, attendants, retainers, clergy, and other parasitic relations characteristic of feudalism— all of these were barriers to the development of capital. Marx therefore refers us to several different "processes of dissolution." The older social arrangements, e.g., those based upon relations of personal dependence and payments in kind, were in this way gradually rendered obsolete and increasingly substituted with new 'contractual' relations, i.e., exchange relations founded upon formally free (but objectively dependent) individuals. The emergence of

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 495-498.

such a *free labourer* therefore includes the *negation* of the more "affirmative" forms of the relationship which had until then existed between labour and the objective conditions of labour in the land, instruments of production, etc. In a capitalist society, both the *activity* and *means* of labour can be commodified precisely on the basis of their existing separation from one another. As Burkett explains, the "commodification of [the] necessary conditions of production requires the socio-formal separation of the producers from these conditions," and vice versa. ⁴⁹⁹ These processes of dissolution therefore 'set free' not only the labourer, but, of course, also all of the other elements of production: this "same process [also] freed" the "land and soil, raw material, necessaries of life, instruments of labour," etc., "from their *previous state of attachment* to these individuals now separated from them." ⁵⁰⁰

To be sure, Marx acknowledges that this process meant disrupting not only all forms of

⁴⁹⁹ Burkett, Paul, 'Value, Capital and Nature: Some Ecological Implications of Marx's Critique of Political Economy', Science & Society, Vol. 60, No. 3, Marxism and Ecology (Fall, 1996), 338.

⁵⁰⁰ "On one side, historic processes are presupposed which place a mass of individuals...in the position, if not at first of real free workers, nevertheless of such who are so δυνάμει, whose only real property is their labour capacity and the possibility of exchanging it for values then present; individuals who confront all objective conditions of production as alien property, as their own not-property, but at the same as values, as exchangeable, hence appropriable to a certain degree through living labour. Such historic processes of dissolution are also the dissolution of the bondage which fetter the worker to land and soil and to the lord of land and soil; but which factually presuppose his ownership of the necessaries of life—this is in truth the process of his release from the earth; dissolution of the landed property relations, which constituted him as a yeoman, as a free, working small landowner or tenant (colonus), a free peasant; dissolution of the guild relations which presuppose his ownership of the instrument of labour, and which presuppose labour itself as a craftsmanlike, specific skill, as property (not merely as the source of property); likewise dissolution of the client-relations in the various forms in which not-proprietors appear in the retinue of their lord as co-consumers of the surplus product...It will be seen on closer inspection that all these processes of dissolution mean the dissolution of relations of production in which: use value predominates, production for direct consumption...and hence that, in all these relations, payments in kind and services in kind predominate over payments in money and money-services...It will likewise be found on closer observation that all the dissolved relations were possible only with a definite degree of development of the material (and hence also the intellectual) forces of production. What concerns us here for the moment is this: the process of dissolution, which transforms a mass of individuals...into free labourers δυνάμει— individuals forced solely through their lack of property to labour and to sell their labour...the same process which divorced a mass of individuals from their previous relations to the *objective conditions of labour*, relations which were, in one way or another, affirmative, negated these relations, and thereby transformed these individuals into free workers, this same process freedδυνάμει— these objective conditions of labour— land and soil, raw material, necessaries of life, instruments of labour...from their previous state of attachment to these individuals now separated from them...The same process which placed the mass face to face with the *objective conditions of labour* as free workers also placed these conditions, as *capital*, face to face with the free workers. The historic process was the divorce of elements which up until then were bound together." Marx, Karl, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 502-503.

agriculture in which labour is "bound to the soil," but also in which the agricultural producers themselves are quite often bound to the "lord of the land." Yet, the problem is that this is the aspect of the process which "alone exists for our bourgeois historians." By contrast, he shows that this process of dissolution not only put an end to serfdom and slavery, but also to both the guild-system and forms of small-scale household property. The newly 'freed' individuals are, in contrast to the relatively self-sufficient peasant household or craftsman, absolutely dependent upon impersonal economic interconnections completely beyond their conscious control. Moreover, forms of personal dependence, e.g., even serfdom, "factually presuppose" the individual's "ownership of the necessaries of life." Hence, the withering away of these older relations also 'emancipated' the individual from all of the customary "guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements." The *free labourer* is "free" in the "double sense" that they are freed from their previous connections to both the community and the land, and, as such, free to sell themselves to this or that purchaser of their labour-power. ⁵⁰¹

Marx refers to this process of dissolution in a variety of ways, but all of which express the same content. Primitive accumulation involved the *denuding*, *divorcing*, *separating*, *expropriating*, *clearing away*, etc., from the *land* of the thereafter *free labourer*. Only in this way

⁵⁰¹ "[They] neither form part of the means of production themselves, as would be the case with slaves, serfs, etc., nor do they own the means of production, as would be the case with self-employed peasant proprietors. The free workers are therefore free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own. With the polarization of the commodity-market into these two classes, the fundamental conditions of capitalist production are present. The capital-relation presupposes a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour. As soon as capitalist production stands on its own feet, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a constantly extending scale. The process which creates the capital-relation can be nothing other than the process which divorces the worker from the ownership of the conditions of his own labour...So-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as 'primitive' because it forms the pre-history of capital...The economic structure of capitalist society has grown out of the economic structure of feudal society. The dissolution of the latter set free the elements of the former...[because the] immediate producer, the worker, could dispose of his own person only after he had ceased to be bound to the soil, and ceased to be the slave or serf of another person...[It] appears, on the one hand, as their emancipation from serfdom and from the fetters of the guilds, and it is this aspect of the movement which alone exists for our bourgeois historians. But, on the other hand, these newly freed men became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements." Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 873-875.

were pastures and arable lands thrown into the market as commodities, along, of course, with those who once belonged to them. This stripping away of the *worker* from the *natural workshop* of the soil, this release of the peasant proprietor from the earth upon which he was raised, signified nothing less than an absolute rupture between human life and the metabolic conditions necessary for its own reproduction, a rift between labour and its nature-given inorganic body in the land. This is why Camatte, following Marx, locates the fundamental "discontinuity with nature" (characteristic of capitalist production) in the historical 'clearing away' of the precapitalist peasantry from the soil. ⁵⁰² This process of decomposition cut the agricultural producer loose from of the natural bond which had until then tied him to the soil, severing once and for all the umbilical cord which had bound labour to nature.

On the European continent, the transition from feudal to capitalist production took place later, but was also more abbreviated and direct. When, at the end of Volume I, Marx examines the history of primitive accumulation in its most 'classic form', namely, as it took place in England, he traces it back through a much more protracted process of forcibly (and later 'legally') overturning not so much quintessentially *feudal* relations, but, rather a number of other forms of landed property— including, as I have mentioned, small-scale independent agricultural production, local handicraft, cottage industry, etc.— all of which were nonetheless still stamped by certain feudal features. All of these forms were regarded by Marx either as intermediary forms of property (i.e., the yeomanry, themselves already the products of the original decomposition of feudal ties), or, as was the case with the 'commons', vestiges of still more archaic communal modes (i.e., of the older clan heritage which preceded feudalism).

In England, then, it was not exclusively a question of the transition from feudalism into

⁵⁰² Camatte, Jacques, 'Community and Communism in Russia', David Brown (trams.), first published in French in *Invariance Series* II, n. 4, 1974; in English by Spartacus 1978, https://www.marxists.org/archive/camatte/commrus1.htm>.

capitalism. It was not simply a question of the transition from common to private property (although this also occurs through the enclosure of the commons, church lands, etc.). It is rather primarily, according to Marx, a transition from one form of private property to another, i.e., the petty property of the many is transformed into the great monopolies of the few.⁵⁰³ What made the initial emergence of capitalism possible in England, as opposed to on the continent, was the displacing of the peasant producer from the field, and the corresponding reconstitution of social, political and legal arrangements which had bound these agricultural workers (in their various states of freedom and unfreedom) to the land and/or the lord of the land.⁵⁰⁴ Once those English agricultural lands have become 'sheepwalks' for Moore's man-eaters, the newly freed individuals— torn from the soil, shut out from the commons, and driven away even from their cottages— turn through desperation to begging and brigandry before they ever develop the necessary 'discipline' to submit to wage-labour and that 'silent compulsion' of the laws of a capitalist economy. 505 This is why, according to Marx, the historical genesis of the wage-worker involved not only extra-legal means of expropriation, enclosure, and privatization, but also laws against vagrancy and vagabondage, houses of terror, work relief, etc. Only in this way was the "field" finally "cleared" of its inhabitants and "conquered" for "capitalistic agriculture." It is in

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⁵⁰³ Marx, Karl, 'Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 370-371.

^{504 &}quot;As Marx noted in his chapter on primitive accumulation, what was fundamentally required for the development of capitalism was not the economic process of saving capital for investment, but the creation of a new social context...[in which] the majority of people were forced to commodify their labour-power as a result of their complete separation from any rightful access to the necessary means of production— in the first instance, from the land. Feudal social relations as a rule tied the producer to the soil through the direct domination of social relations of lordship. As a result, where no historical process emerged specifically to dissolve feudal agrarian social relations, the continued evolution of class relations of surplus appropriation tended not only to maintain the peasant upon the soil, but to preserve the normative social regulation of peasant production through both local customary law and higher statutory authority." Comninel, George C., 'English Feudalism and the Origins of Capitalism', The Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 27, No. 4, July 2000, 43-44, http://www.yorku.ca/comninel/courses/ComninelPDF/English feudalism(JPS).pdf.

⁵⁰⁵ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 896, 899, 905.

this strict sense that Marx also suggests that the "economic structure of capitalist society has grown out of the economic structure of feudal society," and that the "dissolution of the latter set free the elements of the former." 506

The relationship between wage-labour and capital appears at the end of all this as a definite result of English history. It is a specific socio-economic relation not found at any other moment in history, let alone is it a universal product of the human metabolism with nature. But Marx also substantiated this point by turning away from the history of the mother-country of capital to its colonies, where the "beautiful illusion" of a 'free contract' between formally equal parties is torn apart and one could witness *on-going acts of previous accumulation*. In the colonies, the "necessary law" of the exchange between labour and capital had to be supplemented by outright force: slavery and indentured labour became the original and "natural basis" for the emergence of capitalism in America, the West Indies, etc. This is because only a fraction of the colonial

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 875. "In England, serfdom had disappeared in practice by the last part of the fourteenth century. The immense majority of the population consisted then, and to a still larger extent in the fifteenth century, of free peasant proprietors, however much the feudal trappings might disguise their absolute ownership...They enjoyed the right to exploit the common land, which gave pasture to their cattle, and furnished them with timber, fire-wood, turf, etc...Communal property...was an old Teutonic institution which lived on under the cover of feudalism...[I]ts forcible usurpation, generally accompanied by the turning of arable into pasture land, begins at the end of the fifteenth century and extends into the sixteenth...The prelude to the revolution that laid the foundation of the capitalist mode of production was played out in the last third of the fifteenth century and the first few decades of the sixteenth. A mass of 'free' and unattached proletarians was hurled onto the labour-market by the dissolution of the bands of feudal retainers, who, as Sir James Steuart correctly remarked, 'everywhere uselessly filled house and castle'...[T]he great feudal lords, in their defiant opposition to the king and Parliament, created an incomparably larger proletariat by forcibly driving the peasantry from the land, to which the latter had the same feudal title as the lords themselves, and by usurpation of the common lands...Transformation of arable land into sheep-walks was therefore its slogan...The eighteenth century, however, did not yet recognize as fully as the nineteenth the identity between the 'wealth of the nation' and the poverty of the people. Hence the very vigorous polemic, in the economic literature of that time, on the 'enclosure of commons'...The stoical peace of mind with which the political economist regards the most shameless violation of the "sacred rights of property" and the grossest acts of violence to persons, as soon as they are necessary to lay the foundations of the capitalistic mode of production, is shown by Sir F. M. Eden, philanthropist and tory, to boot...It was not only land that lay waste, but often also land that was still under cultivation, being cultivated either in common or held under a definite rent paid to the community, that was annexed by the neighbouring landowners under pretext of enclosure...The last great process of expropriation of the agricultural population from the soil is, finally, the so-called 'clearing of estates', i.e. the sweeping of human beings off them...The spoliation of the church's property, the fraudulent alienation of the State domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of reckless terrorism, were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalistic agriculture, made the soil part and parcel of capital, and created for the town industries the necessary supply of a 'free' and outlawed proletariat." Ibid., 877-895.

population formed wage-workers in the proper sense. Given the relative availability of land expropriated from the indigenous populations, the price of labour on the market was often too dear to be of much use. ⁵⁰⁷ Instead, many European immigrants to America, some of them wage-labourers on the other side of the Atlantic, 'reverted' back to being independent proprietors upon their arrival. This also explains the unfortunate case of that "[u]nhappy Mr. Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English relations of production to Swan River!" But poor Mr. Peel accidentally discovered something very important about European capitalism in Australia: viz., that capital no longer exists as capital wherever labour ceases to exist as wage-labour. His story teaches us that capitalism is a definite social relation, not a thing.

Wakefield discovered that, in the colonies, property in money, means of subsistence, machines and other means of production does not yet stamp a man as a capitalist if the essential complement to these things is missing: the wage-labourer, the other man, who is compelled to sell himself of his own free will. He discovered that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things. A Mr. Peel, he complains, took with him from England to the Swan River district of Western Australia means of subsistence and of production to the amount of £ 50, 000. This Mr. Peel even had the foresight to bring besides [this], 3, 000 persons of the [English] working class...Once he arrived at his destination, 'Mr. Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river.' Unhappy Mr. Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English relations of production to Swan River!...So long, therefore, as the worker can accumulate for himself— and this he can do so long as he remains in possession of his means of production— capitalist accumulation and the capitalist mode of production are impossible...How then, in old Europe, was the expropriation of the worker from his conditions of labour brought about?...By a social contract of a quite original kind...[According to the political economists]: the mass of mankind expropriated itself in honour of the 'accumulation of capital.' Now one would think that this instinct of self-denying fanaticism would especially run riot in the colonies, the only places where the men and the conditions exist to turn a social contract from a dream into a reality...Indeed, the drive to self-expropriation for the glory of capital exists so little...that slavery, according to Wakefield himself, is the sole natural basis of colonial wealth...At home, in the mother country, the smug deceitfulness of the political economist can turn this relation of absolute dependence into a free contract between buyer and seller...But in the colonies this beautiful illusion is torn aside. 508

Wakefield's tale about colonial capital is actually illustrative of Marx's argument that, far from being the *aeterno modo* of the human metabolism with nature, the capitalist mode of

⁵⁰⁷ "Where land is very cheap and all men are free," where "everyone can easily obtain a piece of land for himself," there "labour is very dear"— if it can be obtained "at any price." Ibid., 935.
⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 932-936.

production rests upon the historical expropriation of the peasant producer from the land— an 'original' separation by no means common to every form of social life. As Marx jests in the above, given the pretences of political economy one would imagine that their Robinsonades might actually be realized in the colonial world, where a so-called 'state of nature' exists most of all. But *only after* an original separation is complete, and the agricultural labourer has been released from the natural laboratory of the soil, can capitalism appear on the surface of things as if it were an *equal exchange* and *free contract* between the owners of the means of production, and those who have nothing left to sell but their own bodily powers. Only then, on the basis of this separation from the soil, does capital start to work itself out through its own 'natural laws'.

Hence, the 'beautiful illusion' of a naturally-arisen social contract between wage-labourer and capital was torn apart in the colonies precisely because, there, this necessary division between labour and land had not yet been completed. This also underlines, I would add, the *spatial dimensions* and *territoriality* of capitalism as a sort of *geographic project*, i.e., as one which strives to stamp the whole world in its image. It also illustrates the uneven geographies of primitive accumulation during the 19th century. When a nation with a decisively capitalist character extends its dominion over other parts of the globe which have not yet developed the metabolic preconditions for capital, it must reestablish, or rather establish on *new ground*, the artificial divorce between living labour and its material conditions.

Insofar as this metabolic separation did not exist, or did yet exist on a considerable enough scale, colonial 'capital' continued to develop upon the wholly external or "natural basis" provided by indentured and slave labour. As Perelman suggests, Merivale (whose insights Marx appeals to in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*) had shown that the "essential message" of the "Wakefield school" was this: "where workers found alternatives to wage labour, capital would even resort to slavery;" colonial "capital would submit itself to the rules of the marketplace only

after labor had been made to submit to capital" in the colonies.⁵⁰⁹ As Harvey notes, Wakefield's theory of colonialism and Merivale's critique of it were radically re-appropriated by Marx. Merivale's critique allowed Marx to transform Wakefield's theory into a "devastating rebuttal of Adam Smith" and the fantasies surrounding primitive accumulation. Wakefield, a small mind next to a genius such as Smith, nevertheless "recognized" what Smith could not: namely, that the capitalist "cannot be a capitalist" without "free' (in the double sense!) laborers to work." In order to reproduce the capitalist mode of production in the colonies, the capitalists and colonial administrations would have to revert back to the "brutal tactics of the prehistory of capital," no less than the wage-labourers would try to revert back to independent proprietorship.⁵¹⁰ This illustrated Marx's fundamental point that capitalism is preconditioned by the separation of labour from the laboratory of the soil; where there is no such separation, the capitalist will not encounter the wage-labourer in the marketplace.

In his lectures on colonialism, Merivale had commented on a report issued by the Agricultural and Immigration Society of Trinidad, which was in the process of instituting some of Wakefield's recommended reforms.⁵¹¹ In Wakefield's story, Mr. Peel, having brought wage-

⁵⁰⁹ Perelman, Michael, <u>The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation</u>, (Duke University Press: Durham; 2000), 331.

⁵¹⁰ Harvey, David, A Companion to Marx's Capital, (Verso: London; 2010), 301-302.

⁵¹¹ According to Merivale, the report written by the committee "presents a remarkable picture of the condition of things in a tropical colony, possessing a wide extent of fertile and untouched soil, and a very small population, from which the restraints of slavery had just been removed...The effects on the character of the negroes, both in respect of steadiness of labour and moral conduct, of this rapid change in fortunes are amply considered in this pamphlet. It will be remembered, in reading the details, that they rest chiefly on the testimony of planters, and persons connected with planters, whose minds are naturally under some degree of bias...But the effect of this immigration [which had been recommended by the committee] seems, in the opinion of the committee, to have been neutralized by the extreme difficulty of enforcing continuous labour...To counteract this tendency, the committee propose..."provisions for regulating the conditions of the negroes," by which I presume a committee of planters to mean coercive provisions; limitations on the absolute freedom at present enjoyed; something in the nature of the Code Rural of Hayti. Their arguments appear to be, that in densely peopled colonies the labourer, although free, is naturally dependent on the capitalist; in thinly peopled ones, the want of this natural dependence must be supplied by artificial restrictions. It is needless to say how jealously such proposals require to be watched. It is impossible that restrictions imposed on the working classes can make labour palatable...[as they prefer] establishing themselves on the land as small owners; but this, it must be confessed, seems to present the greatest difficulty of all. The committee speak of the "simply but comprehensive principles promulgated by Mr. Wakefield," and recommended the establishment of a

workers from Europe to his lands in Australia, found that, once in the colonial world, they all reverted into independent peasant producers. Newly freed black labour, as Merivale suggests in his analysis of the pro-Wakefield report, merely brought this problem to the surface and developed it in a new form in the West Indies. This is why Jamaican plantation-owners lamented that the slaves, once liberated, refused to work for them. It is clear that Marx's critique of Wakefield was greatly influenced by Merivale's thoughts. For instance, the case-study of Jamaica and Merivale's conception of "uniform industry" is developed further in the *Grundrisse*'s Hegelian notion of the *general industriousness* of the wage-worker, where Marx recites Merivale's critique of Wakefield almost point by point. 513

land and immigration fund...[after which] crown lands should be sold in lots of not less than 320 acres. Squatting, they say, could be easily prevented; but whether this be so or not, it would seem impossible to prevent the re-sale to labourers in small allotments...The planters, in short, would still very naturally prefer labourers who should voluntarily remain in the condition of their subjects; and believe that, without placing them in some intermediate position between slavery and absolute freedom, no steadiness of labour, or economical prosperity, can be secured in colonies possessing a great extent of land...[T]he consequences of negro emancipation have only presented it [viz., this problem] under a new aspect ." Merivale, Herman, Lectures on Colonization and Colonies, (Longman: London; 1861), 313-214.

⁵¹² As Merivale puts it, a "considerable portion of its [Jamaica's] surface has gone out of sugar cultivation, and either has been devoted to other and less productive purposes, or abandoned to the bush. The landed fortunes have all but disappeared...Of course this phenomenon is differently accounted for, according to party views. The doctrine of the West Indian interest is, that Jamaica has ceased to flourish because the free negro will not work. The opposite theorists urge several pleas...[T]hey point to general indebtedness...[and] the inveteracy of the old habits and nations of the times of slavery, which have prevented the landowners from dealing justly with the labourers, from offering sufficient wages, and allowing the use of the soil on liberal terms...But those who are accustomed more to rely on general rather than special causes for the explanation of very general phenomenon, will perhaps be disposed to look a little farther into the case...[F]or the successful raising of exportable produce in new, and especially tropical, countries, abundance of fresh soil is the first requisite, abundance of labour the second. When the old system of production was checked in Jamaica, first by the abolition of the slave trade, and then by emancipation, it possessed neither of these requisites. It had a great extent of virgin soil indeed, but not of virgin soil adapted to cane production. The sugar land was beginning to show signs of exhaustion, or rather of entering into that second stage, in which additional capital and labour are required to maintain production...[On the other hand] extensive mountain pastures and savannas, where men might live and multiply at small cost, was an evil, not a good, in a commercial point of view. It enabled the emancipated labourer to subsist without uniform industry, and only to lend his hand to the planter reluctantly and irregularly." Ibid., 341-342.

⁵¹³ On general wealth as distinct from all precapitalist "natural forms of wealth," see Marx, Karl, Grundrisse:
Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 222-226: "Money is therefore not only an object, but is the object of greed [Bereicherungssucht]. It is essentially auri sacra fames. Greed as such, as a particular form of the drive, i.e. as distinct from the craving for a particular kind of wealth, e.g. for clothes, weapons, jewels, women, wine, etc., is possible only when general wealth, wealth as such, has become individualized in a particular thing, i.e. as soon as money is posited in its third quality. Money is therefore not only the object but also the fountainhead of greed. The mania for possessions is possible without money; but greed itself is the product of a definite social development, not natural, as opposed to historical. Hence

The Times of November 1857 contains an utterly delightful cry of outrage on the part of a West-Indian plantation owner. This advocate analyses with great moral indignation as a plea for the re-introduction of Negro slavery— how the *Quashees* (the free blacks of Jamaica) content themselves with producing only what is strictly necessary for their own consumption, and, alongside this 'use value', regard loafing (indulgence and idleness) as the real luxury good; how they do not care a damn for the sugar and the fixed capital invested in the plantations, but rather observe the planters' impending bankruptcy with an ironic grin of malicious pleasure, and even exploit their acquired Christianity as an embellishment for this mood of malicious glee and indolence. They have ceased to be slaves, but not in order to become wage labourers, but, instead, selfsustaining peasants working for their own consumption. As far as they are concerned, capital does not exist as capital, because autonomous wealth as such can exist only either on the basis of direct forced labour, slavery, or indirect forced labour, wage labour. Wealth confronts direct forced labour not as capital, but rather as relation of domination [Herrschaftsverhältnis]; thus, the relation of domination is the only thing which is reproduced on this basis, for which wealth itself has value only as gratification, not as wealth itself, and which can therefore never create [the] general industriousness [of wage-labour].514

the wailing of the ancients about money as the source of all evil. Monetary greed, or mania for wealth, necessarily brings with it the decline and fall of the ancient communities [Gemeinwesen]. Hence it is the antithesis to them...As material representative of general wealth, as individualized exchange value, money must be the direct object, aim and product of general labour, the labour of all individuals. Labour must directly produce exchange value, i.e. money. It must therefore be wage labour. Greed, as the urge of all, in so far as everyone wants to make money, is only created by general wealth. Only in this way can the general mania for money become the wellspring of general, selfreproducing wealth...When the aim of labour is not a particular product standing in a particular relation to the particular needs of the individual, but money, wealth in its general form, then, firstly the individual's industriousness knows no bounds; it is indifferent to its particularity, and takes on every form which serves the purpose; it is ingenious in the creation of new objects for a social need, etc....The period which proceeds the development of modern industrial society opens with general greed for money on the part of individuals as well as of states. The real development of the sources of wealth takes place as it were behind their backs, as a means of gaining possession of the representatives of wealth. Wherever it does not arise out of circulation—as in Spain—but has to be discovered physically, the nation is impoverished, whereas the nations which have to work in order to get it from the Spaniards develop the sources of wealth and really become rich. This is why the search for and discovery of gold in new continents, countries, plays so great a role in the history of revaluation, because by its means colonization is improvised and made to flourish as if in a hothouse. The hunt for gold in all countries leads to its discovery; to the formation of new states; initially to the spread of commodities, which produce new needs, and draw distant continents into the metabolism of circulation, i.e. exchange. Thus, in this respect, as the general representative of wealth and as individualized exchange value, it was doubly a means for expanding the universality of wealth, and for drawing the dimensions of exchange over the whole world; for creating the true generality [Allgemeinheit] of exchange value in substance and in extension. But it is inherent in the attribute in which it here becomes developed that the illusion about its nature, i.e. the fixed insistence on one of its aspects, in the abstract, and the blindness towards the contradictions contained within it, gives it a really magical significance behind the backs of individuals. In fact, it is because of this self-contradictory and hence illusory aspect, because of this abstraction, that it becomes such an enormous instrument in the real development of the forces of social production...In order to function productively, money in its third role, as we have seen, must be not only the precondition but equally the result of circulation, and, as its precondition, also a moment of it, something posited by it...It is inherent in the simple character of money itself that it can exist as a developed moment of production only where and when wage labour exists; that in this case, far from subverting the social formation, it is rather a condition for its development and a driving-wheel for the development of all forces of production, material and mental. A particular individual may even today come into money by chance, and the possession of this money can undermine him just as it undermined the communities of antiquity. But the dissolution of this individual within modern society is in itself only the enrichment of the productive section of society...It is clear, therefore, that when wage labour is the foundation, money does not have a dissolving effect, but acts productively; whereas the ancient community as such is already in contradiction with wage labour as the general foundation."

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 325-326.

What the case-study of Jamaica demonstrates, just like the tale of Mr. Peel, is that the capitalist "development of the social productivity of labour," of a *general industriousness* in the wage-worker, is "impossible without the expropriation of the workers" from their connection to the earth. he earth. Wherever the metabolic separation is incomplete, 'capital' is not yet regulated by the indirect compulsion of its own ruthlessly universalizing tendencies, but by the direct compulsion afforded by the crack of the whip. This is why Wakefield's recommendations, adopted at one point by Parliament, advocated a three-pronged strategy of stricter regulations on newly freed black labourers, increased working-class immigration to the colonies, and restrictions on the selling of small allotments to those immigrants. Just as protectionism was aimed at "manufacturing capitalists artificially in the mother country," "Wakefield's theory of colonization" was "aimed at manufacturing wage-labourers in the colonies."

It must be kept in mind that the new forces of production and relations of production do not develop out of nothing, nor drop from the sky, nor from the womb of the selfpositing Idea; but from within and in antithesis to the existing development of production and the inherited, traditional relations of property. While in the completed bourgeois system every economic relation presupposes every other in its bourgeois economic form, and everything posited is thus also a presupposition, this is the case with every organic system. This organic system itself, as a totality, has its presuppositions, and its development to its totality consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality. The process of becoming this totality forms a moment of its process, of its development. On the other hand, if within one society the modern relations of production, i.e. capital, are developed to its totality, and this society then seizes hold of a new territory, as e.g. the colonies, then it finds, or rather its representative, the capitalist, finds, that his capital ceases to be capital without wage labour, and that one of the presuppositions of the latter is not only landed property in general, but modern landed property; landed property which, as capitalized rent, is expensive, and which, as such, excludes the direct use of the soil by individuals. Hence Wakefield's theory of colonies, followed in practice by the English government in Australia. Landed property is here artificially made more expensive in order to transform the workers into wage workers, to make capital act as capital, and thus to make the new colony productive; to develop wealth in it, instead of using it, as in America, for the momentary deliverance of the wage labourers. Wakefield's theory is infinitely important for a correct understanding of modern landed property. 517

⁵¹⁵ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 932.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 932.

⁵¹⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 287.

Hence, Marx certainly recognized that primitive accumulation was not something relegated *entirely to the past*. His writings (e.g., the *Grundrisse*, *Capital*, correspondence from the late 1860s, and the drafts to Zasulich) speak to the uneven geographies of primitive accumulation in the 19th century and to the territoriality of the capitalist metabolism as an ongoing a geographic project. Wherever the metabolic separation remains incomplete, colonial capital must strive to reenact the processes which appear, from the perspective of the colonizing country itself, as moments of its own *prehistory*. Thus, Marx identified *on-going acts* of primitive accumulation, especially in the colonies, but also, e.g., internally-driven forms in Russia (although that in no way endorses Harvey's view of 'accumulation by dispossession' *within* capitalist society). The "expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil forms the basis of the capitalist mode of production," whereas, in the colonies, the "separation of the worker from the conditions of labour and from the soil, in which they are rooted, does not yet exist, or only [exists] sporadically, or on too limited a scale."

Indeed, the "essence of a free colony," i.e., as the history of America shows, is that the "bulk of the soil is still public property, and every settler on it can therefore turn part of it into his private property...without preventing later settlers from performing the same operation." This is the "secret both of the prosperity of the colonies," and, at the same time, of their "cancerous affliction" when it comes to their "resistance to the establishment of capital." What Wakefield really "discovered," therefore, was "not something new *about* the colonies, but, *in* the colonies, the truth about capitalist relations in the mother country:" namely, that capital is not a *thing*, but a *social relation*. Second relation which depends completely upon the artificial separation

⁵¹⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 934-935.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 934.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 932.

between labour and the metabolic means of labour in the land. This is the "secret discovered in the New World by the political economy of the Old World:" viz., that the capitalist mode of production rests entirely upon the original "expropriation of the worker" from the earth.⁵²¹

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the interconnections between Marx's account of primitive accumulation, critique of political economy and theory of the metabolism with nature. In his view, capitalism presupposes the separation between labour and its inorganic body. As a presupposition, its origins fall outside of the history of capital itself and belong, properly speaking, to the prehistory of modern society. However, these historical origins were shrouded in the mysteries of political economy. The nursery tales of the economists naturalized the social relations specific to modern society by conflating the coming-into-being with the being of capitalism. They projected the isolated individual of the 18th century back into history, presenting wage-labour as both the aeterno modo of the metabolism with nature and the final term of human development. I defended the interpretation that Marx regarded this social atomism and form of individuality as the product of the most modern social relations, i.e., relations which arise out of the unprecedented separation of individuals from their connections to their own labour, to others, and to nature. The 'natural laws' of capital, which are by no means laws of nature common to every epoch of human history, are artificial products of this denuding of the now 'free' labourer.

Marx substantiated this point not merely by examining the historical genesis of capitalist relations in England, but also by identifying on-going acts of primitive accumulation in Russia, America, India and the colonies more generally. I suggested that he radically appropriated Wakefield's theory of colonialism, and Merivale's critique of it, in order to undermine the

⁵²¹ Ibid., 940.

fanciful ideas about 'original' accumulation dominant since Smith. Wakefield unwittingly discovered in the colonies the truth of the historical formation of capitalist relations in Europe: viz., that it rests upon the expropriation of the labourer from the land. In many of the colonies, where land was plentiful and/or wage-labour scarce, the 'social contract' had to be enforced by violent means. Wherever the separation does not yet exist on a sufficient scale, colonial 'capital' must resort to the methods of accumulation which belonged to its earlier stages of development. It re-enacts the moments of its own prehistory: the first time as tragedy, and the second time as tragedy. Slavery, indentured labour, and artificial restrictions on the selling of small allotments—all these constituted elements in the "natural" foundations of colonial capital. In this chapter, I also argued that Marx's analysis of these on-going acts of primitive accumulation in the colonies highlights his understanding of the geographical dimensions of capitalism as a territorial project. Wherever it settles, colonial capital must reproduce anew the separation necessary for the creation of a class of 'free' labourers who are, δυναμις, wage-workers.

The Metabolic Rift

Introduction

The last chapter examined Marx's account of the dissolution of the precapitalist metabolism. By stripping the agricultural workers away from the natural workshop of the soil, primitive accumulation created the class of 'free' labourers required for the coming-into-being of capital. In this chapter, we learn that not only does this severance from nature constitute the primary presupposition for the capitalist mode of production, but that, with its own further development as an organic system, capital reproduces this separation as a result of itself. It expands this isolation of labour-power from the material means of its actualization, and, in doing so, deepens the estrangement from nature. In wage-labour, the process of objectifying labour appears as only so moments in its own de-realization. It confronts its own objectivity as a reality opposite itself, and, indeed, on a constantly increasing scale through the growing disproportion between living and previously objectified labour. While consulting historical and contemporary secondary literature, as well as Marx's relevant writings from this period, this chapter of the dissertation defends the interpretative position that he was aware of both the sociological and ecological implications of this separation between labour and nature.

In addition to his insights into the dehumanization which accompanies this rupture in the traditional forms of the metabolism, I will demonstrate that Marx was also ahead of his time in recognizing the environmental effects of this divorce. In fact, he saw essential interconnections between the degradation of the worker and the exhaustion of the soil, between the struggle over the length of working-day and over the limits of fertility in the land. These are all products of the blind necessity of capital. They are problems which cannot be resolved within this economic system because its inherent tendencies create them. Hence, according to Marx's view, both the

destruction of agriculture and the exploitation of wage-labour are *irreparable* from the standpoint of capitalist society. These ecological dimensions to his critique of political economy reach their climax in his claim that the 'natural laws' of capital violate the actual laws of nature, undermining the universal-natural conditions required for every historical and possible mode of production.

The Isolation of Labour-Power from its Objectivity

With the dawn of capitalist society, the "original...identity of man and nature" has passed over into its "equally abstract opposite: the radical divorce of labour from its objective natural conditions." Schmidt argues that while Marx may have been interested in precapitalist formations for a variety of other reasons (e.g., anthropological, sociological, historical and political), his "critique of political economy" in *Capital* and in the '*Rohentwurf*' is primarily concerned with them only insofar as they help us to triangulate the social origins of "something typical only of bourgeois society, namely the '*division* between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence itself, a division first posited in its completeness in the relation between wage-labour and capital'."522

Only in the capitalist mode of production does the *realization* of the *subjective capacity of labour* presuppose its *separation* from the *material means of its realization*. This form of "living labour, existing as an *abstraction* [apart] from these moments of its actual reality," presupposes prior to the act of production a "complete denudation, [i.e., the] purely subjective existence of labour, stripped of all objectivity." This is the "denudation" and "nakedness" of the individual worker, *isolated* now from his necessary contact with the "objective, nature-given inorganic

⁵²² Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 82.

⁵²³ Ibid., 295-296.

body of his subjectivity."⁵²⁴ To be sure, Marx himself recognized "labour-power, or labour capacity," as the "aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the *living personality*, of a *human being* [emphasis added]"— rather than, as some have suggested as of late, a completely abstract category and homogeneous economic unit. In fact, far from endorsing the latter view, this is actually one of the many targets of his critical analysis of political economy. It is actually capitalism which has reduced the wage-worker to the personification of this abstract, non-objective capacity.

In a capitalist society, labour-power is reduced to a mere "capacity" which, like all other commodities, means "nothing unless it is sold." The propertyless wage-workers who do not sell away their labour will feel their lack of connection to the means of production as a "cruel nature-imposed necessity." Hence, it is important to keep in mind that when Marx refers to the "capacity for labour," he is not referring to the actual activity of labour "anymore than we speak of digestion when we speak of capacity for digestion. As is well known, the latter process requires something more than a good stomach." In all this, he in no way shies away from the notion that "labour is determined by nature." That "labour is determined by nature" also just means that "in all conditions of society and culture," the individual who, by birth or

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⁵²⁴ Ibid., 295, 473.

^{525 &}quot;The ultimate or minimum limit of the value of labour-power is formed by the value of the commodities which have to be supplied every day to the bearer of labour-power, the man, so that he can renew his life-process...It is an extraordinarily cheap kind of sentimentality which declares that this method of determining the value of labour-power, a method prescribed by the very nature of the case, is brutal, and which laments with Rossi in this matter: 'To conceive capacity for labour (puissance de travail) in abstraction from the workers' means of subsistence during the production process is to conceive a phantom (etre de raison). When we speak of labour, or capacity for labour, we speak at the same time of the worker and his means of subsistence, of the worker and his wages.' When we speak of capacity for labour, we do not speak of labour, anymore than we speak of digestion when we speak of capacity for digestion. As is well known, the latter process requires something more than a good stomach. When we speak of capacity for labour, we do not abstract from the necessary means of subsistence. On the contrary, their value is expressed in its value. If his capacity for labour remains unsold, this is of no advantage to the worker. He will rather feel it to be a cruel nature-imposed necessity that his capacity for labour has required for its production a definite quantity of the means of subsistence, and will continue to require this for its reproduction. Then, like Sismondi, he will discover that 'the capacity for labour...is nothing unless it is sold'." Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 277.

circumstance, right or accident, "possesses no other property than his labour" must give himself over as the "slave of other men who [have] made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour." The political economists had "very good grounds" to obscure this fact of nature by attributing a "supernatural creative power" to labour. But it is "only the 'concept' in Hegel's sense," satirized Marx, which somehow "manages to objectify itself without external material"—which, apart from being a questionable reading of Hegel, is at least a very good gibe at the political economists. S27

Of course, labour will *objectify itself* and, in order to reproduce herself *as a wage-labourer*, the worker will get her crust of 'dry bread'— but only because she receives back (in the form of wages) a portion of her own objectified labour. It is true, then, that this "*separation*" of "labour from the objective moments of its existence" is necessarily and constantly "*suspended*" within the capitalist "production process" itself— and, of course, without such a suspension of the separation between producer and means of production, *production* would be an impossibility. Yet, it is only 'suspended' once labour-power has been *sold away* to the capitalist, just like poor Esau bartered away his birthright to Jacob in exchange for a pot of red lentils. It is the capitalist who, by buying-up the instruments, materials, land, labour-power, etc., *brings together* the now separated elements of the production— and, from this one act, proclaims his or her divinely-ordained or nature-given right to expropriate the *wealth-creating activity* of others.

This notion that the wage-worker is denuded of her inorganic body and means of life in nature can be found in the *Grundrisse*, *Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63*, and *Capital*, but its

⁵²⁶ Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 316.

⁵²⁷ Marx, Karl, 'The Commodity' (English Translation of Chapter One of *Capital* based on first German edition), Albert Dragstedt (trans.), (New Park Publications: London; 1976), 7-40., https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/commodity.htm#n1.

⁵²⁸ Marx quoted in Rosdolsky, Roman, <u>The Making of Marx's 'Capital'</u>, Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 216.

origins can be traced back as early as the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.

The worker can create nothing without *nature*, without the *sensuous external world*. It is the material on which his labor is realized, in which it is active, from which and by means of which it produces. But just as nature provides labor with the means of life in the sense that labor cannot *live* without objects on which to operate, on the other hand, it also provides the means of life in the more restricted sense...[T]he more the worker by his labor appropriates the external world, hence sensuous nature, the more he deprives himself of the means of life in a double manner...[Labour is the] universality which makes all nature his inorganic body—both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity. Nature is man's inorganic body— nature, that is, in so far as it is not itself the human body...That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature...In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labor tears from him his species life, his real objectivity as a member of the species and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken away from him...It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature. 529

Foster likewise argues that this conception of the alienation from the 'inorganic body' of nature, a conception first elaborated in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, was later "carried forward into the *Grundrisse*" where Marx continually refers to precapitalist (and socialist) nature as the 'inorganic body' of "human subjectivity." 530 Yet, we should be reminded here that when the *Grundrisse* refers us to *precapitalist nature* as the 'inorganic body' of *precapitalist society*, the claim is qualified: the immediate presence of this inorganic body is *given by nature*, and is not yet *produced by the 'universality' of labour*. Moreover, Schmidt is right: when Marx returns again to this philosophical conception of nature as "man's *inorganic body*" in the *Grundrisse*, he resituates the *historic origins* of its estrangement within the context of primitive accumulation.

Nature appears in the Paris Manuscripts, with reference to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, as 'the *inorganic body* of man; that is to say nature, excluding the human body itself'. It is his body, 'with which he must remain in continuous interaction in order not to die'...In the *Grundrisse*, as well as the final version of *Capital*, Marx used terms of a somewhat ontological flavour to describe the appropriation of the material world. The earth is described in the *Grundrisse* as the 'laboratory', the 'primitive instrument', and the 'primitive condition of production', and in *Capital* as 'the original larder' and 'the original tool house'. Moreover, the theme of the Paris Manuscripts that nature is the inorganic body of man appears again in the *Grundrisse* in a remarkably more concrete

⁵²⁹ Marx, Karl, 'Estranged Labor', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 109,. 112, 114.

⁵³⁰ Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's *Grundrisse* and the Ecological Contradictions of Capitalism', <u>Karl Marx's Grundrisse</u>: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later, Marcello Musto (ed.), (Routledge: New York; 2008), 96.

form in the course of the analysis of the origin of property...Marx's statement that man is yoked to his natural existence as to his body is not applied here to the labour-process in general, but only to its pre-bourgeois forms...As long as nature is appropriated through agriculture and is therefore absolutely independent of men, men are abstractly identical with nature. They lapse, so to speak, into natural existence...With the emergence of bourgeois conditions of production, this identity changes into its equally abstract opposite: the radical divorce of labour from its objective natural conditions....What the critique of political economy is interested in and wishes to explain is something typical only of bourgeois society, namely the 'division between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence itself, a division first posited in its completeness in the relation between wage-labour and capital'.⁵³¹

Moreover, Marx goes to great lengths to demonstrate that this "[s]eparation of property from labour" is not only the presupposition for, but also the outcome of, capital: i.e., it is the "necessary law of this exchange between capital and labour." Not only is the diremption a precondition for the capitalist mode of production; it is reproduced on a constantly-expanding scale as a result of it. As Burkett characterizes Marx's view, this metabolic "separation is fully realized" not through primitive accumulation, but only in the relation between wage-labour and capital in a mature capitalist society, i.e., where production is completely "unencumbered by the producers' prior social ties to natural conditions." We have already read Marx assert that this "historic process which divorces the objective conditions of labour from the worker," is, with the maturation of bourgeois society itself, also posited as the "effect of capital." In fact, only capitalism will "complete the divorce between labour and property." 1534

This means that the actual process of objectification inevitably confronts the worker as an estranged mode of objectivity. The realization of labour passes over into its opposite, i.e., into its de-realization, in that it creates its own unreality. Precisely because the worker's "subjective power of labour" is now "lacking in objectivity," Schmidt observes that it is already

⁵³¹ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 80-82.

⁵³² Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 295

⁵³³ Burkett, Paul, 'Value, Capital and Nature: Some Ecological Implications of Marx's Critique of Political Economy', Science & Society, Vol. 60, No. 3, Marxism and Ecology (Fall, 1996), 338.

⁵³⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 506-512.

predetermined from the outset that this "power meets its negation 'as a value existing for itself' in the alienated and objective conditions of labour" owned by capital.⁵³⁵ That the capacity for labour now exists in this purely subjective mode implies that when it does come to *realize itself*, when it does *objectify itself*, it will *realize itself as a reality opposed to itself*, as an *objectivity* belonging to an *other* being— in a word, *as capital*. Hence, as Schmidt insists of Marx's analysis, "once this separation has come into effect," capital will reproduce it on an *ever-increasing scale*, deepening the estrangement from nature.⁵³⁶ This is also why Rosdolsky explains that readers should not interpret Marx as arguing that this "process of the divorce of the worker from the means of production" is merely a "historical fact" of primitive accumulation, i.e., one which has been "concluded once and for all" by the prehistory of bourgeois society.⁵³⁷

[The] absolute separation between property and labour, which is inherent in the capital-relation, but only represented a historical precondition of it from the previous standpoint, 'now also appears as the product of labour itself, as objectification, materialisation of its own moments'. Up until now it could be assumed that capital became a power ruling over labour, precisely by means of the 'primitive accumulation' of its owners. However, this illusion disappears as soon as we look at the circuit of surplus capital.⁵³⁸

"Under the capitalist modality of metabolic exchange with nature," writes Mészáros, the actual "objectification of human powers necessarily assumes the form of alienation—subsuming productive activity itself under the power of a reified objectivity, capital." Once we consider the sort of capital that has reproduced itself, i.e., capital which stands on its own legs, we therefore find according to Rosdolsky that the "illusion" of political economy "first disappears:" viz., "that the capitalist [has] exchange[d] anything at all with the worker other than a part of the

⁵³⁵ Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 82.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 181.

⁵³⁷ Rosdolsky, Roman, <u>The Making of Marx's 'Capital'</u>, Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 279. ⁵³⁸ Ibid., 258.

⁵³⁹ Meszaros quoted in Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's *Grundrisse* and the Ecological Contradictions of Capitalism', <u>Karl Marx's *Grundrisse*</u>: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later, Marcello Musto (ed.), (Routledge: New York; 2008), 100-101.

latter's own objectified labour."⁵⁴⁰ A critical analysis of this wage-labour process lifts the veil of its surface appearances, destroying the semblance of an "exchange of equivalents" between these freely contracting parties.⁵⁴¹ What initially appears under capitalist social relations as the condition for "appropriation through labour" and, hence, "seemingly the condition of the worker's property," ultimately "reveals itself through a necessary dialectic as [the] absolute divorce of labour and property," as the very "foundation of the worker's propertylessness."

Production based on exchange value, on whose surface this free and equal exchange of equivalents proceeds, is at its base the exchange of objectified labour as exchange value for living labour as use value, or, to express this in another way, the relating of labour to its objective conditions— and hence to the objectivity created by itself— as alien property: alienation [Entäusserung] of labour...In the various forms in which labour relates to the conditions of production as its own property, the reproduction of the worker is by no means posited through mere labour, for his property relation is not the result but the presupposition of his labour. In landed property this is clear; it must also become clear in the guild system that the particular kind of property which labour creates does not rest on labour alone or on the exchange of labour, but on an objective connection between the worker and a community and conditions which are there before him, which he takes as his basis. These too are products of labour, of the labour of world history; of the labour of the community— of its historic development, which does not proceed from the labour of individuals nor from the exchange of their labours. Therefore, mere labour is also not the presupposition of realization [Verwertung]. A situation in which labour is merely exchanged...presupposes the separation of labour from its original intertwinement with its objective conditions, which is why it appears as mere labour on one side, while on the other side its product, as objectified labour, has an entirely independent existence as value opposite it. The exchange of labour for labourseemingly the condition of the worker's property—rests on the foundation of the worker's propertylessness.542

⁵⁴⁰ Rosdolsky, Roman, The Making of Marx's 'Capital', Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 266. ⁵⁴¹ "[All precapitalist social formations] express a predominance of use value and of production directed towards use value, as well as of a real community which is itself still directly present as a presupposition of production. Production based on exchange value and the community based on the exchange of these exchange values—even though they seem, as we saw in the previous chapter on money, to posit property as the outcome of labour alone, and to posit private property over the product of one's own labour as condition— and labour as general condition of wealth, all presuppose and produce the separation of labour from its objective conditions...This exchange of equivalents proceeds; [yet] it is only the surface layer of a production which rests on the appropriation of alien labour without exchange, but with the semblance of exchange... Thus there is no longer any ground for astonishment that the system of exchange values— exchange of equivalents measured through labour— turns into, or rather reveals as its hidden background, the appropriation of alien labour without exchange, complete separation of labour and property. For the domination of exchange value itself, and of exchange-value-producing production, presupposes alien labour capacity itself as an exchange value—i.e. the separation of living labour capacity from its objective conditions; a relation to them— or to its own objectivity— as alien property; a relation to them, in a word, as capital." Marx, Karl, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 509-510. ⁵⁴² Ibid., 514-515.

Rosdolsky, Schmidt, Mezaros and Burkett are right to argue that this metabolic rupture between labour and nature is not merely a historical fact of primitive accumulation. Marx speaks to how the "alienation" of the human being from the "objective conditions" of her own existence is really an alien "objectivity created by itself," i.e., it is constantly reproduced by her own "objective" powers, her own "objectified labour." This means that, once established, capitalism also continually reproduces and expands the division. This separation, which appears at first merely as an external "starting-point" for the coming-into-being of capital, becomes, at a later stage in its own formation, the "characteristic result of capitalist production," i.e., one which is "constantly renewed and perpetuated." In the marketplace, the propertyless worker entered into an exchange relation with the owner of the means of production in which she exchanged her wealth-creating activity for a wage. When the worker "enters the process [of actual production], his own labour has already been alienated [enifremdet] from him, appropriated by the capitalist, and incorporated with capital, it now, in the course of the process, constantly objectifies itself so that it becomes a product alien to him [fremder Produkt]." Hence, the "worker always leaves the process in the same state as he entered it— a personal source of wealth, but deprived of any means of making that wealth a reality for himself." The "worker himself constantly produces objective wealth, in the form of capital, an alien power that dominates and exploits him; and the capitalist just as constantly produces labour-power, in the form of a subjective source of wealth which is abstract, exists merely in the physical body of the worker, and is separated from its own means of objectification and realization."

Under these "objective conditions," as soon as wage-labour "realizes itself...it simultaneously repulses this realization from itself as an alien reality," i.e., creates and recreates a "reality alienated [entfremdet] from it." It is from such remarks that we come to appreciate that

Dunayevskaya was right to argue against Althusser that, far from abandoning the concept of 'alienation', Marx's later works actually enrich the earlier theory of estrangement. They not only expand that concept into a more thorough-going critique of political economy and of capitalism, while adding historical dimensions which were at most only hinted at in the earlier works, but they also deepen the Hegelian substance of that theory. The "external conditions of his being" are not a being for the wage-worker, but constitute the inorganic body and organs of practice of an "other-being." Labour "posits itself objectively, but it posits this, its objectivity, as its own notbeing." What wage-labour reproduces, above all else therefore, is itself as wage-labour. What it affirms is its own self-negation. The wage-worker constantly reproduces her own alienation from the means, activity, and results of production, her own estranged relation to herself, to others, and to nature. Wage-labour produces nothing but its own absolute impoverishment vis-a-vis the alien world of value which it creates. This "incessant reproduction, this perpetuation of the worker, is the necessary condition for capitalist production."543 It is the "objectification of himself as a power independent of himself, which moreover rules over him, rules over him through his own actions"— it is the reign of dead over living labour.⁵⁴⁴

The Ecological Implications of the Rift in the Metabolism

Marx acknowledges in his middle and late writings that this separation of the eternal elements of the wealth-creating process— labour and nature— has serious sociological *and* ecological implications for both the happiness of human beings and health of the planet. He recognized that there were distinct ecological dimensions to the contradictions of capitalist

⁵⁴³ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 716.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 454.

development. For example, he elaborated the view that these antagonisms disrupt the natural cycles of regeneration by preventing the return of compostable waste back to the land, effectively sapping the long-term fertility of the soil. Taken in this sense, the 'natural' laws of capitalist development are antithetical to the actual laws of nature which determine the reproduction of human life in all types of society. The blind and destructive impulses of this economy undermine preconditions necessary for human life in all of its historical and possible forms, for which nature inevitably seeks its 'revenge'. This irrationality was something which Marx believed to be absolutely *irreparable* from the standpoint of capitalist society, and, as such, he intimates at the 'ecological necessity' of a social revolution.

Interspersing statements from *Capital*, Foster offers his interpolation by arguing that since the "human labour process" is defined by Marx as the "universal condition for the metabolic interaction between man and nature," then it follows that the specifically capitalistic "rift in this metabolism" can mean "nothing less than the undermining" of the "everlasting nature-imposed conditions of human existence." Indeed, Marx explicitly states that this "rift" presupposed and reproduced by the social laws of bourgeois society *violates* the very "metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself." The historically-arisen laws 'natural' only to capitalist society threaten the universal and natural conditions of human existence. As Santilli suggests, since capitalism depends upon the "severing" of individuals from their "universal inorganic body," their "social body" in nature, it simultaneously separates them from their "means of life" in

⁵⁴⁵ Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's Ecology in Historical Perspective', <u>International Socialism Journal</u>, No. 96, Winter 2002, http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj96/ foster.htm>, 109.

⁵⁴⁶ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 949-950. "[Capitalism] provoke[s] an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself. The result of this is a squandering of the vitality of the soil, which is carried by trade far beyond the bounds of a single country (Liebig)...Large-scale industry and industrially pursued large-scale agriculture have the same effect. If they are originally distinguished by the fact that the former lays waste and ruins labour-power and thus the natural power of man, whereas the latter does the same to the natural power of the soil, they link up in the later course of development, since the industrial system applied to agriculture also enervates the workers there, while industry and trade for their part provide agriculture with the means of exhausting the soil."

nature, it "cuts man off from the power to sustain the life of his own organic body."547

As Burkett argues, critics who accuse Marxism of reinforcing the "ideology" of capitalist industrialism by doubling-down on the market's exploitation of the biosphere ignore that such severe "ecological problems" only emerge as the historical result of this metabolic "separation of workers and their communities from the land and other necessary conditions of production." For Marx, "capital's appropriation of [these] natural conditions" is "mediate[d]" through the "system's social separation of workers from these conditions and the alienated form of their unification." These ecological criticisms of Marx also ignore a selection of passages where he intimates at the ways in which, through a necessary dialectic of negativity, this metabolic rift would have to be overcome by a socialist society and its higher recognition of nature. Hence, such critiques fall short of triangulating the "ecological problem" of contemporary capitalism

⁵⁴⁷ Santilli, P., 'Marx on Species-Being and Social Essence', Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought, Vol. 8, (ed.) Bob Jessop and Russell Wheatley, (Routledge: London; 1999), 114. "Labour capacity denuded of the means of labour and the means of life is therefore absolute poverty as such, and the worker, as the mere personification of the labour capacity, has his needs in actuality, whereas the activity of satisfying them is only possessed by him as a nonobjective capacity (a possibility) confined within his own subjectivity. As such, conceptually speaking, he is a pauper, he is the personification and repository of this capacity which exists for itself, in isolation from its objectivity...Labour capacity appears on the one hand as absolute poverty, in that the whole world of material wealth as well as its general form, exchange value, confronts it as alien commodity and alien money, whereas it is itself merely the possibility of labour, available and confined within the living body of the worker, a possibility which is, however, utterly separated from all the objective conditions of its realisation, hence from its own reality, denuded of them, and existing independently over against them. To the extent that all the objective conditions for labour to come to life, for its actual process, for really setting it in motion— all the conditions for its objectification—mediate between the capacity for labour and actual labour, they can all be described as means of labour. In order that labour capacity may as an independent factor come to meet the objectified labour represented by the owners of money and commodities, that it may confront the value personified by the capitalist, it must be denuded of its own means of labour and step forth in its independent shape as the worker who is obliged to offer his labour capacity as such for sale as a commodity. Since actual labour is the appropriation of nature for the satisfaction of human needs, the activity through which the metabolism between man and nature is mediated, to denude labour capacity of the means of labour, the objective conditions for the appropriation of nature through labour, is to denude it, also, of the means of life." Marx, Karl, 'Economic Manuscripts of 1861-63', Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 30, Emile Burns and Ben Fowkes (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1988), 39-40. ⁵⁴⁸ Burkett, Paul, Marxism and Ecological Economics: Toward a Red and Green Political Economy, (Brill: London; 2006), 154-155. "At the heart of Marx's critique of capitalism, as Foster has demonstrated, is the metabolic rift between society and nature produced by the alienation of workers from the conditions of production and the development of these conditions as means of capital accumulation. The combined simplification and degradation of labour and nature...is a primary mechanism of this rift." Ibid., 292. ⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 155.

within the context of the historical "specif[icity] [of] the system's class relations."550

It should be no surprise if we find that an economic system based upon the exploitation of the productive powers of *human beings*, also exploits *nature itself* for the private advantage of one individual over another in this Darwinian social struggle. Indeed, Marx characterized the industrial phase of capitalism as an irresistible "system of general utility," a "system of general exploitation of the natural and human qualities." Moreover, these processes of exploitation in manufacturing and agricultural production "link up later in the course of [capitalist] development." In precapitalist forms, manufacturing was developed within the narrow confines afforded by agriculture. However, in a mature capitalist society, the reverse is true: agriculture becomes just a special branch of industry. I would argue that for Marx this specifically industrial phase of capitalist production marked unto itself a wholly new epoch in the metabolism with nature precisely because of this 'inversion' of the old union between manufacturing and agriculture.

Just as the transformation of the agricultural producer into a wage-worker depletes the energy and degrades the health of the individual, or ruins the "natural power of man," so too does the industrial exploitation of the land destroy the "natural power of the soil." Hence, the "robbing of labour" is necessarily accompanied by the "robbing [of] the soil" according to Marx. In a capitalist society, the vitality of the worker is "squandered" and the fertility of the land "exhausted;" it "enervates the workers" while "exhausting the soil" upon which they stand. It

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 155.

⁵⁵¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 409-410.

⁵⁵² As Marx puts it, "where agriculture is the predominant industry, such as in ancient and feudal societies, even the manufacturing industry and its organization, as well as the forms of property which pertain to it, have more or less the characteristic features of the prevailing system of landownership [and agricultural production]; [society] is then either entirely dependent on agriculture, as in the case of ancient Rome, or, as in the Middle Ages, it intimates in its city relations the forms of organization prevailing in the country." Marx, Karl, 'Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy', The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 21-22.

goes about "undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker."553

This language of 'robbery' reflects the direct influence of both Carey and Liebig upon Marx's ecological thinking from the mid-1840s through to the late-1860s (although, with Carey, the relationship is more complicated). In his work on political economy, a work which Carey personally sent to Marx, he wrote that the "political economists of England have overlooked the fact that man is a mere borrower from the earth, and that when he does not pay his debts, she does as do all other creditors, that is, she expels him from his holding."554 In addition to ruining the "energies of the country," the capitalist goes about "robbing the earth of its capital stock." It is a "spoilation system" in which the "conditions of reproduction" in the soil are undermined. Foster, Burkett, and other contemporary ecological Marxists argue that Marx's theory of the metabolism and concept of the rift was also shaped by the work of Liebig—one of the fathers of organic chemistry and one of the earliest advocates for its application to the 'improvement' of the soil. Indeed, in both the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, Marx favourably cites Liebig's work on the *Stoffwechsel* ('metabolism') with nature in a number of key instances.

When working on *Capital* in the early 1860s, Marx was deeply affected by Liebig's analysis. In 1866, he wrote to Engels that in developing his critique of capitalist ground rent, "I had to plough through the new agricultural chemistry in Germany, in particular

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⁵⁵³ The capitalist mode of production "concentrates the historical motive power of society; on the other hand, it disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil. Thus it destroys at the same time the physical health of the urban worker, and the intellectual life of the rural worker....In modern agriculture, as in urban industry, the increase in the productivity and the mobility of labour is purchased at the cost of laying waste and debilitating labour-power itself. Moreover, all progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is a progress towards ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility. The more a country proceeds from large-scale industry as the background of its development, as in the case of the United States, the more rapid is this process of destruction. Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the techniques and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth— the soil and the worker." Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 637-638. Or see, Marx, Karl, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy', Vol. I, Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 35, Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1996), 506-508.

⁵⁵⁴ Carey quoted in Foster, John Bellamy, <u>Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature</u>, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 2000), 152.

⁵⁵⁵ Carey quoted in ibid., 153.

Liebig and Schijnbein, which is more important for this matter than all the economists put together"...Indeed, "to have developed from the point of view of natural science the negative, i.e., destructive side of modern agriculture," Marx was to note in *Capital*, "is one of Liebig's immortal merits"...Far from having ecological blinders with regard to the exploitation of the earth, Marx, under the influence of Liebig's work of the late 1850s and early 1860s, was to develop a systematic critique of capitalist "exploitation" (in the sense of robbery, i.e., failing to maintain the means of reproduction) of the soil. 556

In the 1840s, Liebig's discovery of the nutrient cycle was regarded by Marx and Engels as a practical refutation of the Malthusian doctrines about population growth outpacing agricultural productivity, including the increased hysteria about the natural limits of the soil. ⁵⁵⁷ Consider, for example, Engels' remarks about how the "productivity of the soil" is multiplied by the powers of socialized labour (e.g., as present in "science"). At the outset of the Potato Famine, he claimed that an "overpopulated" country such as Britain could easily provide for a much larger population precisely because the productivity of labour grows exponentially alongside the increase in population. ⁵⁵⁸ The difficulty lies not in the Malthusian limits to the 'natural' fertility of the soil, but, rather, in the fact that this general development of the human being works itself out within the "context of the antitheses" of capitalism. ⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁶ Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology', *AJS* Volume 105, Number 2 (September 1999), 376.

⁵⁵⁷ Foster, John Bellamy, Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 2000), 152. 558 As Engels remarked later of the Famine: "But if it has already required the labour of thousands of years for us to learn to some extent to calculate the more remote natural consequences of our actions aiming at production, it has been still more difficult in regard to the more remote social consequences of these actions. We mentioned the potato and the resulting spread of scrofula. But what is scrofula in comparison with the effect on the living conditions of the masses of the people in whole countries resulting from the workers being reduced to a potato diet, or in comparison with the famine which overtook Ireland in 1847 in consequence of the potato disease, and which put under the earth a million Irishmen, nourished solely or almost exclusively on potatoes, and forced the emigration overseas of two million more? When the Arabs learned to distil alcohol, it never entered their heads that by so doing they were creating one of the chief weapons for the annihilation of the original inhabitants of the still undiscovered American continent. And when afterwards Columbus discovered America, he did not know that by doing so he was giving new life to slavery, which in Europe had long ago been done away with, and laying the basis for the Negro slave traffic. The men who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries laboured to create the steam engine had no idea that they were preparing the instrument which more than any other was to revolutionise social conditions throughout the world...But even in this sphere, by long and often cruel experience and by collecting and analysing the historical material, we are gradually learning to get a clear view of the indirect, more remote, social effects of our productive activity, and so the possibility is afforded us of mastering and controlling these effects as well." Engels, Frederick, Dialectics of Nature, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 293-295. 559 "The productivity of the soil can be increased *ad infinitum* by the application of capital, labour and science. According to the most able economists and statisticians (cf. Alison's Principles of Population, Vol. I, Chs. 1 and 2),

However, in the 1850s and 1860s, the emphasis of Liebig's work shifted, acknowledging that capitalist industry had used the very scientific knowledge which he had helped develop only for its own short-term gains. It failed to reproduce sustainable conditions of agricultural development— or what Liebig called the metabolic conditions for restitution (in that, like Carey, he believed the elements borrowed from the soil had to be 'returned' to it in the form of compost, nutrients, etc.).⁵⁶⁰ The natural powers of the land were being laid waste in a wanton manner, damaging local ecologies and disrupting the natural rhythms of the soil. In the 1850s, Marx appealed to this later work of Liebig as well, arguing that the industrial transformation of agricultural production under capitalism was ruining the long-term elasticity of the soil in the pursuit of its own short-term ends. Capitalism's "progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time" ultimately "violates the conditions necessary to lasting fertility of the soil"— it amounts to nothing other than the "progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility." As Harriss-White notes, Marx recognized, especially by encountering the later work of Liebig, that capitalist agriculture "could ruin soil as well as improve it" through the "application of chemical fertilizer."561 This is why Foster finds it confounding that ecological critics regard the early Marx as more ecological, when, in fact, he finds that Marx's ecology is most fully developed in Capital under the influence of Liebig's critical period. 562 Appropriating Liebig, he

[&]quot;over-populated" Great Britain can be brought within ten years to produce a corn yield sufficient for a population six times its present size. Capital increases daily; labour power grows with population; and day by day science increasingly makes the forces of nature subject to man." Engels, Frederick, "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy', The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 204, 217

⁵⁶⁰ Foster, John Bellamy, Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 2000), 152. ⁵⁶¹ Harriss-White, Barbara, 'Ecology and the Environment', Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics, Ben Fine and Alfredo Sadd-Filho (ed.), (MPG: Cheshire; 2012), 103.

⁵⁶² "[The] neglected but crucial elements within Marx's social theory offer firm foundations for the development of a strong environmental sociology. In contrast to most treatments of Marx's ecological writings, emphasis will be placed not on his early philosophical works but rather on his later political economy. It is in the latter that Marx provided his systematic treatment of such issues as soil fertility, organic recycling, and sustainability in response to the investigations of the great German chemist Justus von Liebig— and in which we find the larger conceptual framework, emphasizing the metabolic rift between human production and its natural condition...In the 1840s, this

developed the view that that a radical modification of both production and circulation would be necessary in order to remedy the negative effects of this rift, and allow for the 'restitution' of the earth.

As a subset of the larger metabolic rupture between labour and nature, Harriss-White notes that Marx's study of Liebig allowed him to recognize that the rift also disrupts the natural circuit of the "nutrient cycle" by preventing "recycling waste from consumption" from being returned to the soil itself.⁵⁶³ One way in which this manifests itself is through the "antagonistic relationship between town and country."⁵⁶⁴ In addition to the disruption caused by the division between city and countryside, the same phenomenon can be witnessed, on an even larger scale, in global trade. This, again, marks out the influence of Carey upon Marx's work in *Capital*.⁵⁶⁵ Marx recognized that the metabolic circulation of organic refuse was disrupted as a result of the world-historical proportions assumed by the commerce in agricultural goods. Trade trucks the products, and the waste from such products, to distant lands, preventing the metabolic return of compostable refuse to the patch of soil from which it was sprung. In conjunction with the division between city and

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scientific revolution in soil chemistry, together with the rise of a fertilizer industry, promised to generate a faster rate of agricultural improvement—impressing many contemporary observers, including Marx and Engels, who up to the 1860s believed that progress in agriculture might soon outpace the development of industry in general. Still, capital's ability to take advantage of these scientific breakthroughs in soil chemistry was limited by development of the division of labor inherent to the system, specifically the growing antagonism between town and country. By the 1860s, when he wrote Capital, Marx had become convinced of the contradictory and unsustainable nature of capitalist agriculture, due to two historical developments in his time: (1) the widening sense of crisis in agriculture in both Europe and North America associated with the depletion of the natural fertility of the soil, which was in no way alleviated, but rather given added impetus by the breakthroughs in soil science; and (2) a shift in Liebig's own work in the late 1850s and early 1860s toward an ecological critique of capitalist development....Much of this discussion of the metabolic relation between human beings and nature reflected Marx's early, more directly philosophical attempts to account for the complex interdependence between human beings and nature. In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Marx had explained that, 'Man lives from nature, i.e., nature is his body, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature'...But the later introduction of the concept of metabolism gave Marx a more solid-and scientific-way in which to depict the complex, dynamic interchange between human beings and nature, resulting from human labor." Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology', AJS Volume 105, Number 2 (September 1999), 371, 376, 380.

⁵⁶³ Harriss-White, Barbara, 'Ecology and the Environment', <u>Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics</u>, Ben Fine and Alfredo Sadd-Filho (ed.), (MPG: Cheshire; 2012), 104.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 104.

⁵⁶⁵ Foster, John Bellamy, Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 2000), 154.

country, the global dimensions to agricultural trade "disturbs the [metabolic] circulation of matter between man and the soil, i.e., prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing." As Harriss-White argues, Marx emphasizes that the "spatial" dimensions assumed by the "appropriation" of nature in a global capitalist economy bring about an unprecedented "dislocation of metabolic flows." 566

This is why Marx repeatedly notes that the import of guano became so significant for the maintenance of English agriculture— a measure advocated by Liebig in order to assist in the *restoration* of the nutrient cycle. In an interesting passage, he links the struggle over the working-day to this struggle over the soil. These contradictions are both products of the blind necessity of capital. Just as the attempt to extend the working-day ran up against certain natural limits, so too did the attempt to stretch the natural limits of the soil.

If the *Reglement organique* of the Danubian Principalities was a positive expression of the appetite for surplus labour which every paragraph legalized, the English Factory Acts are the negative expression of the same appetite. These laws curb capital's drive towards a limitless draining away of labour-power by forcibly limiting the working day on the authority of the state, but a state ruled by capitalist and landlord. Apart from the daily more threatening advance of the working-class movement, the limiting of factory labour was dictated by the same necessity as forced the manuring of English fields with guano. The same blind desire for profit that in the one case exhausted the soil had in the other case seized hold of the vital force of the nation at its roots. Periodical epidemics speak as clearly on this point as the diminishing military standard of height in France and Germany.⁵⁶⁷

He repeats the same point in another section of the same chapter, connecting again the lengthening of the working-day to the robbing of the fertility of the soil, reminding us that both processes are driven on by the same "blind and measureless drive" of capital.

[It is] self-evident that the worker is nothing other than labour-power for the duration of his whole life, and that therefore all his disposable time is by nature and by right labour-time, to be devoted to the self-valorization of capital. Time for education, for intellectual development, for the fulfilment of social functions, for social intercourse, for the free play of the vital forces of his body and his mind, even the resttime of

⁵⁶⁶ Harriss-White, Barbara, 'Ecology and the Environment', <u>Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics</u>, Ben Fine and Alfredo Sadd-Filho (ed.), (MPG: Cheshire; 2012), 104.

⁵⁶⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 348.

Sunday (and that in a country of Sabbatarians!) — what foolishness! But in its blind and measureless drive, its insatiable appetite for surplus labour, capital oversteps not only the moral but even the merely physical limits of the working day. It usurps the time for growth, development and healthy maintenance of the body. It steals the time required for the consumption of fresh air and sunlight. It haggles over the meal-times, where possible incorporating them into the production process itself, so that food is added to the worker as to a mere means of production, as coal is supplied to the boiler, and grease and oil to the machinery. It reduces the sound sleep needed for the restoration, renewal and refreshment of the vital forces to the exact amount of torpor essential to the revival of an absolutely exhausted organism. It is not the normal maintenance of labourpower which determines the limits of the working day here, but rather the greatest possible daily expenditure of labour-power, no matter how diseased, compulsory and painful it may be, which determines the limits of the workers' period of rest. Capital asks no questions about the length of life of labour-power. What interests it is purely and simply the maximum of labour-power that can be set in motion in a working day. It attains this objective by shortening the life of labour-power, in the same way as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility. 568

Hence, the metabolic separation between labour and the means of labour in nature destroyed the more sustainable foundations of the old precapitalist union between manufacturing and agriculture (on the basis provided by agriculture). In its place, it developed a new union between agriculture and industry (on the artificial basis provided industry). But capitalist agriculture soon discovered that by tearing apart this primitive unity, by throwing the earth, its products, and those who labour upon it into the market as commodities, it had also begun to destroy the universal conditions of this metabolism. The application of chemical fertilizers and importation of guano became an ever-increasing and artificially-imposed natural necessity. Ecological critics of Marx often ignore these rather insightful (especially, for the time) claims about the specifically capitalist roots of this metabolic rift.

Marx and Engels did not restrict their discussions of environmental degradation to the robbing of the soil but also acknowledged other aspects of this problem, including the depletion of coal reserves, the destruction of forests, and so on. As Engels observed in a letter to Marx, 'the working individual is not only a stabaliser of present but also, and to a far greater extent, a squanderer of past, solar heat. As to what we have done in the way of squandering our reserves of energy, our coal, ore, forests, etc., you are better informed than I am'...Marx referred to the 'devastating' effects of 'deforestation'...as a long term result of an exploitative relation to nature (not simply confined to capitalism): 'The development of civilization and industry in general', Marx wrote, 'has always shown itself so active in the destruction of forests that everything that has been done for their conservation and production is completely insignificant in comparison'. ⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 375.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., 381.

Marx's theory of the metabolism is ecological, then, in the sense that it recognizes the irrational character and unsustainable consequences of this capitalist relationship to the environment. Capital destroys the 'original sources' of all wealth, man and nature— a rift which is *irreparable* from its narrow horizons.

Needless to say, the social laws of the capitalist economy, and the separation of labour and nature, would have to be done away with by a higher social formation. Hence, he speculates in the below of how just as the private ownership of one individual by another now appears morally objectionable, so too, from the standpoint of a socialist society, will this private ownership of the earth be absolutely unacceptable. Socialism would have to reunite all of humanity with its inorganic body in nature, reestablishing the affirmative communal connection between the subjective and objective elements of the labour process. From then onward, Marx argued, every generation would be regarded not as the *owners*, but merely as the temporary *stewards* of the earth—viz., as custodians who would safeguard the planet for subsequent generations to enjoy.

[Capitalism] exclude[s] workers engaged in a struggle over wages from the very earth itself as their habitat. One section of society here demands tribute from the other for the Overy right to live on the earth, just as landed property in general involves the right of the proprietors to exploit the earth's surface, the bowels of the earth, the air and thereby the maintenance and development of life...[I]t is only the title a number of people have to property in the earth that enables them to appropriate a part of society's surplus-labour as tribute...From the standpoint of a higher socio-economic formation, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men. Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations, as *boni patres familias*.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁷⁰ Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 911. This, too, exhibits a degree of continuity with ideas first formulated in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. "The domination of the land as an alien power over men is already inherent in feudal landed property. The serf is the adjunct of the land...[Nonetheless,] there still exists the semblance of a more intimate connection between the proprietor and the land...The estate is individualized...It appears as the inorganic body of its lord....It is necessary that this appearance be abolished...dragged completely into the movement of private property

and that it [the land] become a commodity...[But free] [a]ssociation, applied to land, shares the economic advantage of large-scale landed property, and first brings to realization the original tendency inherent in land division, namely, equality. In the same way, association reestablishes, now on a rational basis, no longer mediated by serfdom, lordship and the silly mysticism of property, the intimate ties of man with the earth, since the earth ceases to be an object of huckstering, and through free labor and free enjoyment becomes once more a true personal property of

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen Marx argue that the divorce of labour from nature, although introduced by primitive accumulation, is reproduced on an ever-increasing scale by capitalist accumulation. As Rosdolsky explains, when we consider capitalism as a completed totality and no longer in its process of historical genesis, we find that it deepens and completes this estrangement from nature. What is at first an external starting-point for the coming-into-being of the capitalist economy, its historical presupposition, is, through the operation of its own inherent tendencies, continually renewed and reposited as the inevitable outcome of its systematic laws. The purely subjective capacity to labour, labour-power, is objectified; but the very process of objectification appears as an otherness and alien mode of objectivity, as the creation of the objective body of capital.

Appealing to the work of contemporary eco-Marxists such as Foster and Burkett, as well as relevant insights from primary writings, I attempted to substantiate the view that Marx recognized both the human and environmental costs of this rift in the metabolism with nature. In

man...As for large landed property, its defenders have always, sophistically, identified the economic advantages offered by large-scale agriculture with large-scale landed property, as if it were not precisely as a result of the abolition of property, that this advantage, for one thing, would receive its greatest possible extension, and, for another, only then would be social benefit." Marx, Karl, 'Rent of Land', The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 100-101, 103. These concepts, and the line of development which they show in Marx's ecological thinking from the early to the late works, also found some expression in Engels' early writings. He, like Marx in the above, connects the 'huckstering' of the land to the alienation of the individual. According to Engels, the production process is reducible to "the natural objective side, land; and the human, subjective side, labor, which includes capital and, besides capital, a third factor...the spiritual element of invention, of thought, alongside the physical element of sheer labor. What has the capitalist to do with the spirit of invention?...Land, capital and labor are for him the conditions of wealth...Science is no concern of his. What does it matter to him that he has received its gifts through Berthollet, Davy, Liebig, Watt, Cartwright, etc....[He] practices robbery in monopolizing the land...To make the earth an object of huckstering— the earth which is our one and all, the first condition of our existence— was the last step toward making oneself an object of huckstering. It was and is to this very day an immorality surpassed only by the immorality of self-alienation." Engels, Frederick, 'Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy', The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 207-208, 210.

fact, we have seen that he appropriated the work of Carey and Liebig in his linking of the struggle over the length of the working-day to the capitalist tendency to try to push the soil passed the limits of its fertility. He not only connected this exploitation of the earth to the exploitation of the wage-labourer, but regarded both forms of exploitation as irreparable from the standpoint of bourgeois society. Only in a higher society— one no longer determined by the separation from nature, but by its reunification with it— can humanity heal the ecological damage caused by capital.

The Restoration of Nature and Full Development of the Individual

Introduction

The first chapter of Part II of this dissertation began by considering the significance of Marx's representations of precapitalist society. In all of its various states, precapitalist life was determined by the unity between labour and the natural laboratory of the land. Here, individuals related to the soil, woodlands, etc., as their own inorganic body. However, we have seen that, in Marx's analysis of history, the capitalist economy is to be distinguished from all previous modes in that it presupposes an unprecedented separation between labour, the activity by which humans appropriate the conditions of their life, and nature, the original and eternal bases of life itself. He traced this divorce, this necessary precondition for the coming-into-being of bourgeois society, back into the prehistory of capital— a period of primitive accumulation mystified by the political economists. The second chapter elaborated what I regard as the interconnections between his denaturalizing critique of political economy, theory of the metabolism with nature and historical account of primitive accumulation. This process of expropriation tore individuals from their nature-given means of life in the field, creating the propertyless class of free labourers required for a system based upon the exploitation of wage workers.

In the previous chapter, I moved on to highlight the sociological and ecological dimensions of Marx's critique of this "rift" reproduced on an expanding scale by capital. He believed that this rupture in the metabolism could only be repaired in a form of freely-associated production where individuals are reconnected with the direct conditions of their life and labour. As he characterizes it, the old communal recognition of nature would then be restored— except in a higher form of society consistent also with the full development of human nature. This chapter situates all of these themes within the context of Marx's materialist conception of history and

human development, as well as his political theory and conception of socialism. He understood this entire movement of history as integral to the progressive unfolding of human nature, and, in particular, grasped the rift specific to capitalism as part of a necessary phase of estrangement operating within a larger dialectic of development.

The Dialectic of Self-Referred Negativity

Marx treated this divorce of labour from nature as a necessary stage in a larger process of human development insofar as, in and through this diremption, capital creates the material means for its own suspension— including the real possibility for a reconciliation with nature in the future. In his social ontology, the intrinsic contradictions to this phase of negativity are said to unfold in such a way as to produce, within this mode of estrangement, the subjective and objective preconditions necessary for their own resolution— and capitalism accomplishes this task not despite, but precisely as a result of, its contradictory character. It is all part of a dialectic of self-referred negativity which posits the presuppositions required for the negation of the negation, and for the positive restoration of the communal bond between society and nature in a higher form of production.⁵⁷¹

On one hand, then, Marx's critique took-up the task of demonstrating that the "merely historical form" of the 'natural laws' of capitalist production emerges out of the suspension of "earlier historical modes of production" and, *ipso facto*, their socially specific metabolisms with

⁵⁷¹ "Capital increases daily; labour power grows with population; and day by day science increasingly makes the forces of nature subject to man. This immeasurable productive capacity, handled consciously and in the interest of all, would soon reduce to a minimum the labour falling to the share of mankind. Left to competition, it does the same, but within a context of antitheses...But the economist does not know himself what cause he serves. He does not know that with all his egoistical reasoning he nevertheless forms but a link in the chain of mankind's universal progress. He does not know that by this dissolution of all sectional interests he merely paves the way for the great transformation to which the century is moving—the reconciliation of mankind with nature and with itself." Engels, Frederick, 'Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy', The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 217.

nature.⁵⁷² At the same time, however, he also claimed to have uncovered, through an appreciation of this necessary dialectic and "correct grasp of the present," the essential features of an emerging post-capitalist metabolism. Hence, on the other hand, he asserts that these "signs" of capitalism's "becoming" in history also "point" to the immanent "suspension of the present form of production," offering "foreshadowings of the future" and of a "new state of society" which will transcend capitalism's alienated relationship to nature. In the same way that the dissolution of the precapitalist relation the soil posited all the preconditions necessary for the coming-intobeing of capital, so too does capitalism, by driving toward its own dissolution, bring into being the preconditions for a still higher form of the intercourse with nature.⁵⁷³ As Hudis explains of the *Grundrisse*, Marx's historical investigation into precapitalist forms allowed him not only to locate the origins of the alienation (including in relation to nature) specific to capitalist relations, but to also identify the conditions necessary for the supersession of those barriers (including the creation of a new 'social metabolism').⁵⁷⁴

In the last chapter, we read Marx claim that the capitalist exploitation of human powers and of natural forces, while at first distinguished, later "link up" in the "course of development" because industry and agriculture come to be united with one another on the foundations produced by industry. Previously, it was just the reverse of this: in its precapitalist "infancy" and "childlike" state of unity, manufacturing and agricultural production were wedded to one another

⁵⁷² Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 460-461.

⁵⁷³ "In order to develop the laws of bourgeois economy, therefore, it is not necessary to write the *real history of the relations of production*. But the correct observation and deduction of these laws, as having themselves become in history...point towards a past lying behind this system. These indications [*Andeutung*], together with a correct grasp of the present, then also offer the key to the understanding of the past—a work in its own right which, it is to be hoped, we shall be able to undertake as well. This correct view likewise leads at the same time to the points at which the suspension of the present form of production relations gives signs of its becoming—foreshadowings of the future. Just as, on one side the pre-bourgeois phases appear as *merely historical*, i.e. suspended presuppositions, so do the contemporary conditions of production likewise appear as engaged in *suspending themselves* and hence in positing the *historic presuppositions* for a new state of society." Ibid., 460-461.

⁵⁷⁴ Hudis, Peter, Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism, (Haymarket Books: Chicago; 2003), 119.

on the primitive bases *provided by agriculture*, i.e., the *natural conditions of labour in the land*. However, Marx also held the view that this antagonism between agriculture and industry creates the conditions necessary for their "higher synthesis in the future" precisely on the "basis of the more perfected forms they have each acquired during their temporary separation," and, in the industrial phases of capitalist development, their alienated form of unity.

This explains why, although he arguably appropriated certain ecological elements from Carey's political economy, his relation to both Carey's politics and economics remained critical. It was within this context that he assisted Cluss in preparing a challenge to the American economist. In the article, Cluss insists that Carey's work "totally overlooks the transforming, *revolutionary* element in the destructive effects of industry." Marx accepted Carey's charge that large-scale industry, by reproducing and expanding the metabolic separation, robs the soil of its fertility just as readily as it robs the worker of her health and vitality. However, unlike Carey, he also believed that through this contradictory system involving the all-around exploitation of both labour and nature, capital brings together the necessary preconditions for the "systematic restoration" of this bond in a higher form of society— namely, one congruent with the most complete development of human beings and the return to the recognition of nature as their own social body.

Capitalist production collects the population together in great centres, and causes the urban population to achieve an ever-growing preponderance...The dispersal of the rural workers over large areas breaks their power of resistance, while concentration increases that of the urban workers...In the sphere of agriculture, large-scale industry has a more revolutionary effect than elsewhere, for the reason that it annihilates the bulwark of the old society, the 'peasant', and substitutes for him the wage-labourer. Thus the need for social transformation, and the antagonism of the classes, reaches the same level in the countryside as it has attained in the towns. A conscious, technological application of science replaces the previous highly irrational and slothfully traditional way of working. The capitalist mode of production completes the disintegration of the primitive familial union which bound agriculture and manufacture together when they were both at an undeveloped and childlike stage. But at the same time it creates the material conditions

⁵⁷⁵ Perelman, Michael, <u>Marx's Crises Theory: Scarcity, Labor, and Finance</u>, (Greenwood Publishing: New York; 1987), 16.

for a new and higher synthesis, a union of agriculture and industry on the basis of the forms that have developed during the period of their antagonistic isolation.⁵⁷⁶

Even in its plundering of the environment, and in its exploitation of the physical and mental powers of the human being, capitalism exhibits a tendency to substitute science in the place of superstition— although Marx recognized that this scientific mastery operates within the confines of estrangement and blind necessity of capitalism's own laws. But only through the dissolution of this original-natural bond with nature (this "primitive familial union") is the "development of the full force of production" and "application of science possible for the first time."577 In this strict sense, then, capitalism works to demystify nature itself, although this disenchantment always comes at the cost of mystifying its own social relations. It accomplishes this demystification, however, inasmuch as it overcomes the restricted relationships characteristic of all precapitalist forms of the metabolism with nature—restricted relations based upon the limited development of the productive powers of labour. Instead of treating nature as a divine 'power for itself', capital subjects those forces more and more to the command of socialized labour, but, as such, also appears more and more as an entirely superfluous social form. The historical necessity of capitalism, Marx tells us, is thereby exhausted when it runs up against its own inherent limits and barriers.

[T]he production of *relative surplus value*, i.e. production of surplus value based on the increase and development of the productive forces, requires the production of new consumption...[i.e.,] production of *new* needs and discovery and creation of new use values...Hence exploration of all of nature in order to discover new, useful qualities in things; universal exchange of the products of all alien climates and lands; new (artificial) preparation of natural objects, by which they are given new use values. The exploration of the earth in all directions, to discover new things of use as well as new useful qualities of the old....[This means] development, hence, of the natural sciences to their highest point; likewise the discovery, creation and satisfaction of new needs arising

⁵⁷⁶ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 637-638. The alternative translation of this passage can be found in Marx, Karl, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy', Vol. I, <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 35, Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1996), 506-508.

⁵⁷⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 276.

from society itself; the cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations—production of this being as the most total and universal possible social product, for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures [genussfähig], hence cultured to a high degree— is likewise a condition of production founded on capital...Thus, just as production founded on capital creates universal industriousness on one side— i.e. surplus labour, value-creating labour— so does it create on the other side a system of general exploitation of the natural and human qualities, a system of general utility, utilizing science itself just as much as all the physical and mental qualities, while there appears nothing higher in itself, nothing legitimate for itself, outside this circle of social production and exchange. Thus capital creates the bourgeois society, and the universal appropriation of nature as well as of the social bond itself by the members of society. Hence the great civilizing influence of capital; its production of a stage of society in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere local developments of humanity and as nature-idolatry. For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production. In accord with this tendency, capital drives beyond national barriers and prejudices as much as beyond nature worship, as well as all traditional, confined, complacent, encrusted satisfactions of present needs, and reproductions of old ways of life. It is destructive towards all of this, and constantly revolutionizes it, tearing down all the barriers which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces. But from the fact that capital posits every such limit as a barrier and hence gets ideally beyond it, it does not by any means follow that it has really overcome it, and, since every such barrier contradicts its character, its production moves in contradictions which are constantly overcome but just as constantly posited. Furthermore, the universality towards which it irresistibly strives encounters barriers in its own nature, which will, at a certain stage of its development, allow it to be recognized as being itself the greatest barrier to this tendency, and hence will drive towards its own suspension.⁵⁷⁸

The momentous technological achievements and scientific advances of capitalist society represented for Marx the *ideal overcoming* of precapitalist *nature-idolatry*, but, by no means, the *real overcoming*. Instead, capitalism's own social mastery over the forces of nature appears reflected back upon this society as an unpredictable force of nature, as another form of blind necessity. Hence, the great task left to a socialist society is to radically reappropriate and complete this historical movement by truly rationally regulating and consciously controlling not only the social relations between its members, but also their intercourse with the planet as a whole. Yet, such a free association is only possible on the basis provided by this previous phase

⁵⁷⁸ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 408-410.

of antagonistic social development. Capitalism not only destroys the vegetative precapitalist unity with nature, it also produces the conditions for its own destruction, exhibiting tendencies which point beyond itself.

[A]ncient social organisms of production are much more simple and transparent than those of bourgeois society. But they are founded either on the immaturity of man as an individual, when he has not yet torn himself loose from the umbilical cord of his natural species-connection with other men, or on direct relations of dominance and servitude. They are conditioned by a low stage of development of the productive powers of labour and correspondingly limited relations between men within the process of creating and reproducing their material life, hence also limited relations between man and nature. These real limitations are reflected in the ancient worship of nature, and in other elements of tribal religions. The religious reflections of the real world can, in any case, vanish only when the practical relations of everyday life between man and man, and man and nature, generally present themselves to him in a transparent and rational form. The veil is not fully removed from the countenance of the social life-process, i.e., the process of material production, until it becomes production by freely associated men, and stands under their conscious and planned control. This, however, requires that society possess a material foundation, or a series of material conditions of existence, which in their turn are the natural and spontaneous product of a long and tormented historical development.⁵⁷⁹

Rosdolsky explains that, for Marx, the

original unity between the worker and the conditions of production...has two main forms: the Asiatic communal system (primitive communism) and small-scale agriculture based on the family...Both are embryonic forms and both are equally unfitted to develop labour as social labour and the productive power of social labour. Hence the necessity for the separation, for the rupture, for the antithesis between labour and property (by which property in the conditions of production is to be understood). The most extreme form of this rupture, and the one in which the productive forces of social labour are also most powerfully developed, is capital. The original unity can be re-established only on the material foundation which creates it [i.e., the separation] and by means of the revolutions which, in the process of this creation, the working class and the whole society undergo.⁵⁸⁰

As Rosdolsky claims in the above, this dialectic highlights Marx's view of the *historic necessity* of the metabolic separation between producer and property. This rupture between society and nature enacted and re-enacted by the primitive and capitalist phases of accumulation is presented by Marx as an essential aspect of the "martyrology" of the proletariat as the 'universal class'. The temporary sacrifice of human life and of nature is supposed to be transfigured by this same

⁵⁷⁹ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 172-173.

⁵⁸⁰ Rosdolsky, Roman, The Making of Marx's 'Capital', Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 273.

historical process of suffering, by this slaughter-bench of history. We therefore have to ask, with Hegel, to what *final aim have these sacrifices have been offered*?

In agriculture, as in manufacture, the capitalist transformation of the process of production also appears as a martyrology for the producer; the instrument of labour appears as a means of enslaving, exploiting and impoverishing the worker; the social combination of labour processes appears as an organized suppression of his individual vitality, freedom and autonomy...But by destroying the circumstances surrounding that metabolism, which [in its precapitalist forms] originated in a merely natural and spontaneous fashion, it compels its systematic restoration as a regulative law of social production, and in a form adequate to the full development of the human race.⁵⁸¹

According to Marx, then, the historic crucible of capitalism is like a 'steeling school' in that it forges and tempers the productive powers of social labour, which, when sublated by a higher form of social life, becomes the basis for the free creation and enjoyment of the genuine wealth of society— which is nothing else but these universally developed individuals themselves in their relations of mutual recognition with one another.

Relations of personal dependence (entirely spontaneous at the outset) are the first social forms, in which human productive capacity develops only to a slight extent and at isolated points. Personal independence founded on *objective* [sachlicher] dependence is the second great form, in which a system of general social metabolism, of universal relations, of all-round needs and universal capacities is formed for the first time. Free individuality, based on the universal development of individuals and on their subordination of their communal, social productivity as their social wealth, is the third stage. The second stage creates the conditions for the third.⁵⁸²

Marx treats these three basic forms of the metabolism— precapitalist, capitalist, and socialist—as phases corresponding with the general development of the essential powers of the human species. These claims illustrate that even in his 'economic' writings he continued to grasp this overall process of historical development, and the procession of forms through which this development traverses, as a 'dialectic of negativity', i.e., as a process of 'self-referred negation' in Hegel's sense of the term.

As Gould observes, "Marx traces this development through three [general] stages." The

⁵⁸¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 637-638.

⁵⁸² Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 158.

"universal social individual" is characterized by him as the final "product of this historical development." In the first phase, precapitalist society is marked by personal relations based upon "particularity." The individual members are but natural components of the social organism, and, where relations of domination emerge, the dominated are appropriated as organic accessories of the inorganic body of nature. In contrast to these communities where the members have not yet differentiated themselves from the social whole, Gould tells us that, in the second social form, seemingly "external relations" based upon atomized individuals persist. But this 'abstract universality' of capitalism is said to be producing, within the limits of such estrangement, the social presuppositions for a new society based upon the *real* or *concrete universality* of the capacities, needs, and relations of the individual— i.e., "internal relations that are concretely universal." Sea

Hence, without trying to be too schematic, there is a great truth to Rosdolsky's conclusion that by dividing "history into three stages," Marx was 'coquetting' with Hegel and trying to present them "in the form of a dialectical triad" so to speak. He suggests that in the previously cited passage, Marx points, "on the one hand, to pre-capitalist social formations, and on the other, to the socialist social order which replaces" the capitalist metabolism, in order to argue that capitalism is integral to a much larger process that will eventually break its tight fetters on human development. The end-point to this historical process of human becoming is nothing else but the realization of a fully-developed individual, possible only upon the basis provided by that individual's appropriation of her total social bond with others and with nature. In such a free association of totally-developed individuals, their relations with each other and with nature would take on a 'transparent' (because no longer blind and irrational) form. The social relations

⁵⁸³ Gould, Carol, Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality, (MIT Press: Cambridge; 1978), 1-2.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 7-8.

between individuals, as well as between individuals and nature, would be consciously controlled by the individuals themselves— and, moreover, in a manner fit for, appropriate to, and corresponding with the full development of their own human nature. Or, as Rosdolsky puts it, "history is therefore seen in terms of its most basic final outcome; as a necessary process of the elaboration and development of the human personality and its freedom." However, he adds, "from Marx's point of view the issue was not so much to demonstrate the necessity of this process (this was already recognised by classical German philosophy)," but, instead, to "place" that necessity "on the firm foundation of real history, i.e. the development of the social relations of production."⁵⁸⁵

Hence, Marx's method of critique, precisely by identifying the contradictions intrinsic to the present, underlines immanent tendencies within capitalism which create the real possibility for its own transcendence. Its very own antagonisms set free the means for their resolution, affirming the wisdom of Hegel who once wrote that, in the last instance, *real possibility* always proves to be identical with *historical necessity*.

No social formation is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society. Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation. In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society. The bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production— antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence— but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism.⁵⁸⁶

The law of exchange-value is therefore said to be producing not only the estrangement of the individual from himself, from others, and from nature, but, moreover, to be advancing "beyond"

⁵⁸⁵ Rosdolsky, Roman, The Making of Marx's 'Capital', Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 415.

⁵⁸⁶ Marx, Karl, 'Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*', Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 29, Victor Shnittke and Yuri Sdobnikov (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1987), 263-264.

itself and toward the true "universality and comprehensiveness of his relations and capacities." In a higher society which sublates this alien wealth, the productive relation to nature would then be transformed into, and recognized as, an essential aspect of the "universal development of individuals"— with a condition for this development being the "universal appropriation of nature as well as of the social bond itself by the members of society."

[W]ithin bourgeois society, the society that rests on exchange value, there arise relations of circulation as well as of production which are so many mines to explode it. (A mass of antithetical forms of the social unity, whose antithetical character can never be abolished through quiet metamorphosis. On the other hand, if we did not find concealed in society as it is the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of exchange prerequisite for a classless society, then all attempts to explode it would be quixotic)...In the case of the *world market*, the *connection of the individual* with all, but at the same time also the *independence of this connection from the individual*, have developed to such a high level that the formation of the world market already at the same time contains the conditions for going beyond it.⁵⁸⁷

Precapitalist One-Sidedness, the Emptiness of Estrangement and Full Development

According to Marx, then, this estranged society is creating out of itself the 'real possibility' for the full development of individuality, and, upon this historically arisen basis, an entirely new relation to the earth. Such a free association of fully-developed individuals is therefore no "product of nature, but of history." It presupposes production based upon exchange-relations as "a prior condition," i.e., as a previous phase of world-history. In its ruthless and relentless process of social reproduction, capitalism certainly takes on the proportions of a monstrous "system" of "general exploitation" which holds nothing sacred outside of its narrow circle. Yet, for Marx, it is precisely this system of all-around estrangement which contains within itself the means for advancing into a higher form of social life based upon the all-around development of individuals. Capital lays down the initial foundations for socialist society's universal appropriation of, and practical mastery over its intercourse with, nature. It imposes

⁵⁸⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 159, 161.

upon the wage-labourer a *general industriousness*, an *indifference to particularity*, etc. And, put crudely, this "[u]niversal prostitution appears as a necessary phase in the development of the social character of personal talents, capacities, abilities, activities." 588

The dissolution of all products and activities into exchange values presupposes the dissolution of all fixed personal (historic) relations of dependence in production, as well as the all-sided dependence of the producers on one another....This reciprocal dependence is expressed in the constant necessity for exchange, and in exchange value as the all-sided mediation....The reciprocal and all-sided dependence of individuals who are indifferent to one another forms their social connection...The social character of activity, as well as the social form of the product, and the share of individuals in production here appear as something alien and objective, confronting the individuals, not as their relation to one another, but as their subordination to relations which subsist independently of them and which arise out of collisions between mutually indifferent individuals...Patriarchal as well as ancient conditions (feudal, also) thus disintegrate with the development of commerce, of luxury, of money, of exchange value, while modern society arises and grows in the same measure...When we look at social relations which create an undeveloped system of exchange...then it is clear from the outset that the individuals in such a society, although their relations appear to be more personal, enter into connection with one another only as individuals imprisoned within a certain definition, as feudal lord and vassal, landlord and serf, etc., or as members of a caste etc. or as members of an estate etc. In the money relation, in the developed system of exchange (and this semblance seduces the democrats), the ties of personal dependence, of distinctions of blood, education, etc, are in fact exploded, ripped up (at least, personal ties all appear as personal relations); and individuals seem independent (this is an independence which is at bottom merely an illusion and it is more correctly called indifference), free to collide with one another and to engage in exchange within this freedom; but they appear thus only for someone who abstracts from the conditions, the conditions of existence within which these individuals enter into contact (and these conditions, in turn, are independent of the individuals and, although created by society, appear as if they were natural conditions, not controllable by individuals)....In the case of the world market, the connection of the individual with all, but at the same time also the independence of this connection from the individual, have developed to such a high level that the formation of the world market already at the same time contains the conditions for going beyond it...It has been said and may be said that this is precisely the beauty and the greatness of it: this spontaneous interconnection, this material and mental metabolism which is independent of the knowing and willing of individuals, and which presupposes their reciprocal independence and indifference. And, certainly, this objective connection is preferable to the lack of any connection, or to a merely local connection resting on blood ties, or on primeval, natural or master-servant relations. Equally certain is it that individuals cannot gain mastery over their own social interconnections before they have created them. But it is an insipid notion to conceive of this merely *objective bond* as a spontaneous, natural attribute inherent in individuals and inseparable from their nature (in antithesis to their conscious knowing and willing). This bond is their product. It is a historic product. It belongs to a specific phase of their development. The alien and independent character in which it presently exists vis-à-vis

⁵⁸⁸ This is why in societies based upon commodity-production as the universal-elementary form of production, money becomes raised into a universal equivalent which represents the "possibility of all things needed." It is, as Marx put it more politely while appealing to Shakespeare and Goethe, the *estranged essence* of all human powers, needs, relations, etc. Marx, Karl, 'The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 165-168.

individuals proves only that the latter are still engaged in the creation of the conditions of their social life, and that have not yet begun, on the basis of these conditions, to live it. It is the bond natural to individuals within specific and limited relations of production. Universally developed individuals, whose social relations, as their own communal [gemeinschaftlich] relations, are hence also subordinated to their own communal control, are no product of nature, but of history. The degree and the universality of the development of wealth where this individuality becomes possible supposes production on the basis of exchange values as a prior condition, whose universality produces not only the alienation of the individual from himself and from others, but also the universality and the comprehensiveness of his relations and capacities...The exchangeability of all products, activities and relations with a third, objective entity which can be re-exchanged for everything...is identical with universal venality, corruption. Universal prostitution appears as a necessary phase in the development of the social character of personal talents, capacities, abilities, activities. More politely expressed: the universal relation of utility and use. 589

As Marx tells us here, even these accidental and impersonal connections of the marketplace are preferable to the precapitalist lack of connection, or to localized social connections based upon relations of domination. At the same time, however, these capitalist relations, because they appear as external relations to the individuals who comprise them, take on a naturalized character as blind and erratic forces of nature. This is why Marx resists both the romantic urge to call for a return to an all too idealized precapitalist past, and the complete contentment which the bourgeois consciousness of political economy finds in the illusory freedom of modern life. To the romantic, the rustic idyll of a simplistic social life seems 'lofty' in comparison to the ugly reality of this modern world. And as Marx tells us in the above, these precapitalist relations, even where they manifested themselves as relations of personal dependence, were nonetheless transparent enough to take the form of personal relations—that is, they did not assume a fantastic form as relations between things. In comparison to capitalism, which offers satisfaction only to those satisfied with their own estrangement, these simplistic and seemingly 'idyllic' modes of life offer the sort of limited gratification provided by the one-sided objectification of the individual (e.g., as a shepherd, craftsman, etc.). But this also means that, even in the freer forms of precapitalist society, there is no possibility for the free and full

⁵⁸⁹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 156, 164.

development of human nature.

Thus the old view, in which the human being appears as the aim of production, regardless of his limited national, religious, political character, seems to be very lofty when contrasted to the modern world, where production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the aim of production. In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick? Where he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? In bourgeois economics— and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds— this complete working-out of the human content appears as a complete emptying-out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end. This is why the childish world of antiquity appears on one side as loftier...It is satisfaction from a limited standpoint; while the modern gives no satisfaction; or, where it appears satisfied with itself, it is vulgar.590

Marx steps outside of this "antithesis" between the "romantic viewpoint" and the "bourgeois viewpoint." The latter regards the "complete emptiness" of modern life— in contrast to the relative one-sided "fullness" of precapitalist society— as the end of all history. However, Marx views this "complete emptying-out" of the present as but a transitory phrase in the "complete working-out" of human nature. Capitalism is not the 'end' of history, but merely the last stage in the *prehistory* of *human* society.

[Capitalism produces within the form of estrangement] the comprehensiveness of his relations and capacities. In earlier stages of development the single individual seems to be developed more fully, because he has not yet worked out his relationships in their fullness, or erected them as independent social powers and relations opposite himself. It is as ridiculous to yearn for a return to that original fullness as it is to believe that with this complete emptiness history has come to a standstill. The bourgeois viewpoint has never advanced beyond this antithesis between itself and this romantic viewpoint, and therefore the latter will accompany it as legitimate antithesis up to its blessed end.⁵⁹¹

This speaks to why, although he recognized the tremendous historical and contemporary suffering involved in the destruction of these precapitalist forms of life, Marx never lamented

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 487-488.

⁵⁹¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 162.

their loss in the sense of wishing to return to the past. Although he certainly registered in a powerful literary tone the historical theft and contemporary colonial violence involved in creating the conditions necessary for capitalist production, never did he romanticize about the possibility of returning to— nor, where they still existed inside and outside of Europe, of remaining forever within— these precapitalist forms of life. This is because, even where they did not form the "solid foundation" for despotism, patriarchy, slavery, or serfdom, these 'idyllic' appearances ultimately rested upon the immaturity of humanity's intellectual and practical powers, the narrowness of relatively unmodified needs, and the restrictedness of the individual's relations with others and with nature. Far from idealizing these precapitalist societies and their connection to the inorganic body of nature, Marx asserts that these forms were based, at bottom, upon the limited development of its individual members, including their scientific and intellectual capacities, and, again, the restricted relations with each other and with nature which this lack of development supposes. As Schmidt characterizes it, capitalism, which

rests precisely on the complete isolation of individuals from each other...represents an advance over the limited local totalities based on nature and on relations of personal dependence. Marx therefore had no intention of transfiguring the natural life-process of the pre-industrial stages of society in the irrationalist manner of the neoromantic ideologists...[or] to create a world outlook of a nature-monism.⁵⁹²

While Marx never longed for the return of these archaic social formations, he did however speculate on a number of occasions about the *reuniting* of society and nature, i.e., *restoring* and *returning* to the *original union* between labour and its inorganic body in a *higher form* of society. As Rosdolsky suggests in reference to Marx's views on this question, the "original union" destroyed by capital would be "restored" through a "historical reversal" brought about by a total revolution in the relations of production.⁵⁹³ As Marx put it an address to the International, with the "separation between the Man of Labour and the Instruments of Labour

⁵⁹² Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (Verso Books: London; 2014), 175-176. ⁵⁹³ Rosdolsky, Roman, <u>The Making of Marx's 'Capital'</u>, Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 279.

once established, such a state of things will maintain itself and reproduce itself upon a constantly increasing scale, until a new and fundamental revolution in the mode of production should again overturn it, and restore the original union in a new historical form."⁵⁹⁴ Hence, when Marx (quoting Morgan) refers to the "return of modern societies to the 'archaic' type of communal property," he cautions that we should be too "alarmed at the word 'archaic'." For, by this, he only means to say that the "the new system' towards which modern society tends 'will be *a revival in a superior form* of an archaic [communal] social type'." The "fatal crisis which capitalist production has undergone in the European and American countries where it has reached its highest peak" is a "crisis that will end in its destruction, in the return of modern society to a higher form of the most archaic type—collective production and appropriation."⁵⁹⁵

Real Communality

This is the meaning that Marx attributes to the notion that, in a communist society, individuals would 'return' to the "recognition of nature" as their "real body"— except as a recognition mediated for the first time through their own theoretical understanding and practical mastery over the metabolism with it.⁵⁹⁶ A truly human society would have to *reestablish* the communal unity with nature, but it would have to *establish* it for the *first time* as a *social unity* (and not one *pregiven by nature*). The sort of relations of personal dependence characteristic of precapitalist life, in which social relations are intertwined with the natural conditions of production, must first be replaced by the impersonal "reciprocal dependence" of all upon all in

⁵⁹⁴ Marx, Karl, 'Value, Price and Profit', Speech before the First International Working Men's Association, (June 1865), in Marx, Karl: Value, Price and Profit, (International Publishers: New York; 1969), Eleanor Marx Aveling (ed.), https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/index.htm;

⁵⁹⁵ Marx, Karl, 'Drafts to the Letter to Vera Zasulich', <u>Marx and Engels: Collected Works</u>, Vol. 24, David Forgacs (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1989), 350, 357.

⁵⁹⁶ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 542.

the world-market "before it is possible to think of a real social communality [Gemeinschaftlichkeit]." Long before she will be able to transform herself into a fully-developed individual, the individual will have to be made into a free labourer, cut loose from the umbilical cord of the limited connections which bind her to both nature and to the community. True sociality is something "posited by society, not as determined by nature," because "individuals cannot gain mastery over their own social interconnection before they have created them" (emphasis added). 597

In "all the forms of society in which land ownership is the prevalent form," the "natural element is the predominant one" because individuals are still attached to society and to nature through what are more or less naturally-arisen relations. This is what Forbes referred to earlier as a 'pre-foetal' metabolism. Capitalism, precisely on the basis of the metabolic "break," becomes what Hart calls the

enabling force for the emergence of a human society fully emancipated from primitive dependence on nature. It is, of course, not that society itself, but its midwife. Human evolution before capitalism is marked by two processes: the individuation of the original herd and the separation of social life from its original matrix, the earth as laboratory.⁵⁹⁹

Even in precapitalist societies, the development of personal property, increases in exchange, contact with other communities, etc., were, for Marx, the chief means of such human individuation in history. But this process reaches its alienated peak in the atomized social relations characteristic only of capitalist production— i.e., where externalized relations appear entirely independent of the isolated and dot-like individuals.

And there is something of Hegel in all this. In his presentation of the transition into 'civil society', the relations between individuals "loses" its previously unreflective "ethical character"

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 276.

⁵⁹⁸ Marx, Karl, 'Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy', <u>The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 22.

⁵⁹⁹ Hart, Keith, 'Anthropology', <u>Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics</u>, (ed.) Ben Fine and Alfredo Sadd-Filho, (MPG: Cheshire; 2012), 23.

through the dissolution of the natural substantiality of the family. It becomes replaced instead with a "system of atomism," i.e., a "general system" which "connect[s] [these] self-subsisting extremes" in such a way that money, the universal equivalent, appears as the only mediating link and "form of unity" between "their particular interests." The simple bonds of blood which held the family (Stamm) together, where members moved as if they were a "single individual," are now dissolved so that the social whole "particularises itself abstractly into many persons," i.e., individuals who formally "exist independent and free, as private persons." 600

Marx believed that by overturning the precapitalist "natural form of wealth," by dissolving this "natural community," by releasing the "worker from the soil as his natural workshop," by disrupting the "natural unity of labour," etc., capitalism signified a completely "new epoch" in the way in which humanity relates to the material conditions of its existence. Precisely by tearing apart the old bond with the land and cutting the human being loose from the umbilical cord of her natural species-connection, capitalism replaces these wholly natural conditions with historical ones. In all precapitalist social formations, social relations were more or less relations provided by nature, and not by social development. In such societies, the "restricted relation of men to nature determines their restricted relation to one another, and their restricted relation to one another determines men's restricted relations to nature." Thus, while it was anything but "idyllic," the process of primitive accumulation dissolved what were, in Marx's own estimation, also less than "idyllic" social relations. These precapitalist relations had left society both enthralled to nature (because of the limited forces of production), and, as was often the case, one class of individuals enthralled to another (through relations of personal dependence, patriarchy, slavery, serfdom, etc.).

⁶⁰⁰ Hegel, G.W.F., 'Philosophy of Mind', <u>Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences</u>, A.V. Miller (trans.), (Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2003), § 523.

However, with the emergence of the bourgeois mode of production, the multitude of these relations were dissolved into a single-relation, viz., the relation between wage-labourer and capitalist. By "releas[ing]" the peasant "worker from the soil as his natural workshop," wage-labour has now "replaced the very earth as the ground on which the community stands." It "transforms labour on the soil itself, which appears by its nature as the direct wellspring of subsistence, into a mediated source of subsistence, a source purely dependent on social relations." The "progressive displacement" of natural necessity, and the "possibility of a universal development of the productive forces"— hence, also, a "totality of activities," of "new needs," and of the "comprehensiveness" of the individual's relations with others and with nature— rests, as Meszaros recognizes of Marx's view, upon this original tearing away of the "natural ground from every industry." As Schmidt describes Marx's conception of human development in history, the human being in precapitalist society

appears as a mode of nature's organic existence...The distinction between what is naturally given and what has historically evolved may perhaps be valid for individual phases of pre-bourgeois history...However, the distinction between Asiatic despotism, the slave economy of classical antiquity, and medieval feudalism (three forms of social relationship which are all determined by landownership) fades into insignificance in [the] face of bourgeois society, whose emergence constitutes a decisive rupture in world history...In pre-bourgeois times, the relation between the natural and the historical element formed part of the vast content of nature. In the bourgeois epoch, this relation forms part of history, even as far as unappropriated nature is concerned...[E]arlier modes of human intervention in nature were fundamentally modes of nature's 'selfmediation', since the mediating Subject (individual or community) remained a part of immediately natural existence, [but] under capitalism the mediation of nature became something strictly historical, because social...Pre-bourgeois development had a peculiarly unhistorical character because its material prerequisites— the instrument as well as the material— were not themselves the *product* of labour, but were already found to hand in the land, in nature. Under capitalism, however, these subjective and objective conditions of production became something created by the participants in history. Relationships were no longer determined by nature, but set up by society...Despite all the negativity of the capitalist system (and of course Marx did not overlook this) it signifies, precisely in this negativity, 'a total revolution in, and development of, material production. 603

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⁶⁰¹ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 276.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 285.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 176-179.

The result of this process of human development in history, and the final product of the estrangement which occurs within the capitalist mode of production, is a 'rich individual'—genuinely *rich* insofar as she is able to expend and enjoy the total social wealth of her own powers and needs as an individual, and rich in both of these precisely because she is able to apply and appropriate the common social wealth of her own relations with others.⁶⁰⁴ Through its ceaseless expansion of "new needs" (as well as new abilities and new relations) capitalism promotes the "cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being," that "most total and universal product." The general industriousness and indifference to particularity imposed as a matter of necessity upon the wage-worker drives labour beyond the "natural paltriness" of its precapitalist forms, and, in Marx's estimation, beyond the barriers of capitalism itself. It imposes a general industrious which, when sublated by a higher form of society, becomes the basis for the enjoyment of the genuine wealth of society, the "general property of the new species."

The great historic quality of capital is to create this *surplus labour*, superfluous labour from the standpoint of mere use value, mere subsistence; and its historic destiny [Bestimmung] is fulfilled as soon as, on one side, there has been such a development of

604 "This necessity is itself subject to changes, because needs are produced just as are products and the different kinds of work skills...The greater the extent to which historic needs—needs created by production itself, social needs—needs which are themselves the offspring of social production and intercourse, are posited as necessary, the higher the level to which real wealth has become developed. Regarded materially, wealth consists only in the manifold variety of needs....[I]f agriculture itself rests on scientific activities, if it requires machinery, chemical fertilizer acquired through exchange, seeds from distant countries etc., and if rural, patriarchal manufacture has already vanished—which is already implied in the presupposition—then the machine-making factory, external trade, crafts etc. appear as needs for agriculture. Perhaps guano can be procured for it only through the export of silk goods. Then the manufacture of silk no longer appears as a luxury industry, but as a necessary industry for agriculture. It is therefore chiefly and essentially because, in this case, agriculture no longer finds the natural conditions of its own production within itself, naturally arisen, spontaneous, and ready to hand, but these exist as an independent industry separate from it— and, with this separateness the whole complex set of interconnections in which this industry exists is drawn into the sphere of the conditions of agricultural production—it is because of this, that what previously appeared as a luxury is now necessary, and that so-called luxury needs appear e.g. as a necessity for the most naturally necessary and down-to-earth industry of all. This pulling-away of the natural ground from the foundations of every industry, and this transfer of its conditions of production outside itself, into a general context—hence the transformation of what was previously superfluous into what is necessary, as a historically created necessity— is the tendency of capital. The general foundation of all industries comes to be general exchange itself, the world market, and hence the totality of the activities, intercourse, needs etc. of which it is made up. Luxury is the opposite of the *naturally necessary*. Necessary needs are those of the individual himself reduced to a natural subject. The development of industry suspends this natural necessity as well as this former luxury—in bourgeois society, it is true, it does so only in antithetical form, in that it itself only posits another specific social standard as necessary, opposite luxury." Ibid., 527-528.

needs that surplus labour above and beyond necessity has itself become a general need arising out of individual needs themselves— and, on the other side, when the severe discipline of capital, acting on succeeding generations [Geschlechter], has developed general industriousness as the general property of the new species [Geschlecht]— and, finally, when the development of the productive powers of labour, which capital incessantly whips onward with its unlimited mania for wealth, and of the sole conditions in which this mania can be realized, have flourished to the stage where the possession and preservation of general wealth require a lesser labour time of society as a whole, and where the labouring society relates scientifically to the process of its progressive reproduction, its reproduction in a constantly greater abundance; hence where labour in which a human being does what a thing could do has ceased...Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness and thus creates the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also no longer appears as labour, but as the full development of activity itself, in which natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared, because a historically created need has replaced a natural one. This is why capital is productive; i.e. an essential relation for the development of the productive forces. It ceases to exist only where the development of these productive forces themselves encounters its barrier in capital itself.605

As Rosdolsky insists of this "striking passage from the Rough Draft,"

[c]apitalist production is therefore radically different from all previous modes of production by virtue of its universal character, and its drive to continually revolutionise the material forces of production. If pre-capitalist stages of production were never able to increase labour beyond that required for immediate subsistence, due to their primitive, undeveloped techniques, then the 'great historic aspect of capital' consists in the fact that it 'produces surplus labour, surplus from the standpoint of simple use-value, of mere subsistence'; and it carries out this task by developing, on the one hand, the social forces of production, and on the other, human needs, and capacities for labour, to an extent that has never existed before.⁶⁰⁶

All precapitalist development is therefore development within a restricted range, a matter of national or local history for Marx. In "comparison" to "all earlier" epochs which "appear as mere *local developments*" in retrospect, the world-historical significance of capital is that it is the first social form in which we encounter the *general development* of needs, capacities, and relations—albeit, again, in their alienated mode of becoming. 607 This same process of exploitation (and the struggle against it) is what produces the objective and subjective preconditions necessary for a community of all-around individuals—viz., a free association enabling the cultivation of all of our essential powers, including all of our intellectual, scientific, moral, aesthetic, etc., capacities;

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 325.

⁶⁰⁶ Rosdolsky, Roman, <u>The Making of Marx's 'Capital'</u>, Pete Burgess (trans.), (Pluto Press: 1977; London), 423. ⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 409.

hence, also, creation and enjoyment of the very process itself and of the results our own self-objectifying activity. Herein rests the only *historic justification* for capitalism, its only *civilizing influence* so far as Marx was concerned, i.e., its *necessity* from the standpoint of the coming-intobeing of a socialist society. It is the only 'consolation' which his critique offers for the slaughter-bench of the history of capital and the martyrdom of the proletariat. "Not in vain," he and Engels wrote in their first corroborative work, does the working-class "go through the stern but steeling school of labour."

608 Engels, Frederick, and Marx, Karl, 'The Holy Family; or Critique of Critical Criticism: Against Bruno Bauer and Company', Marx and Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 4, Jack Cohen et al. (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1975), 37. "Thus, on the one hand, we have a totality of productive forces, which have, as it were, taken on a material form and are for the individuals no longer the forces of the individuals but of private property... Never, in any earlier period, have the productive forces taken on a form so indifferent to the intercourse of individuals as individuals, because their intercourse itself was formerly a restricted one. On the other hand, standing over against these productive forces, we have the majority of the individuals from whom these forces have been wrested away, and who, robbed thus of all real life-content, have become abstract individuals, but who are, however, only by this fact put into a position to enter into relation with one another as individuals. Labour, the only connection which still links them with the productive forces and with their own existence, has lost all semblance of self-activity and only sustains their life by stunting it. While in the earlier periods self-activity and the production of material life were separated, in that they devolved on different persons, and while, on account of the narrowness of the individuals themselves, the production of material life was considered as a subordinate mode of self-activity, they now diverge to such an extent that altogether material life appears as the end, and what produces this material life, labour (which is now the only possible but, as we see, negative form of self-activity), as the means. Thus things have now come to such a pass that the individuals must appropriate the existing totality of productive forces, not only to achieve selfactivity, but, also, merely to safeguard their very existence. This appropriation is first determined by the object to be appropriated, the productive forces, which have been developed to a totality and which only exist within a universal intercourse. From this aspect alone, therefore, this appropriation must have a universal character corresponding to the productive forces and the intercourse. The appropriation of these forces is itself nothing more than the development of the individual capacities corresponding to the material instruments of production. The appropriation of a totality of instruments of production is, for this very reason, the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves. This appropriation is further determined by the persons appropriating. Only the proletarians of the present day, who are completely shut off from all self-activity, are in a position to achieve a complete and no longer restricted self-activity, which consists in the appropriation of a totality of productive forces and in the thus postulated development of a totality of capacities. All earlier revolutionary appropriations were restricted; individuals, whose self-activity was restricted by a crude instrument of production and a limited intercourse, appropriated this crude instrument of production, and hence merely achieved a new state of limitation... Modern universal intercourse can be controlled by individuals, therefore, only when controlled by all. This appropriation is further determined by the manner in which it must be effected. It can only be effected through a union, which by the character of the proletariat itself can again only be a universal one, and through a revolution, in which, on the one hand, the power of the earlier mode of production and intercourse and social organisation is overthrown, and, on the other hand, there develops the universal character and the energy of the proletariat, without which the revolution cannot be accomplished; and in which, further, the proletariat rids itself of everything that still clings to it from its previous position in society. Only at this stage does self-activity coincide with material life, which corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals and the casting-off of all natural limitations." Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 95-97.

Capitalism's universalizing tendency is an "essential relation for the development of the productive forces," but it "ceases" to be so when this development "encounters its barrier in capital itself." As such, the "universalizing tendency" germinating within capitalism "can *never* come to real fruition within its own framework," as Meszaros explains of Marx's views in this previous passage. This is the most important *crisis* theory in all of Marx's writings: the crisis of human development in capitalist society. His critique of political economy must therefore be grasped as a sort of 'moral science'. It has as its ethical aim the vision of a form of society in which conditions and relations would permit the free and full development of every individual, i.e., individuals who are both rich in needs and in the real wealth of powers required to satisfy them.

There appears here the universalizing tendency of capital, which distinguishes itself from all previous stages of production. Although limited by its very nature, it strives towards the universal development of the forces of production, and thus becomes the presupposition of a new mode of production....where the free, unobstructed, progressive and universal development of the forces of production is itself the presupposition of society...The feudal system, for its part, foundered on urban industry...With the development of wealth...the economic conditions on which the community rested were dissolved, along with the political relations of the various constituents of the community which corresponded to those conditions: religion, in which it was viewed in idealized form (and both rested in turn on a given relation to nature, into which all productive force resolves itself); the character, outlook, etc., of the individuals. The development of science alone—i.e., the most sordid form of wealth, both its product and its producerwas sufficient to dissolve these communities. But the development of science, this ideal and at the same time practical wealth, is only one aspect, one form in which the development of the human productive forces, i.e., wealth, appears. Considered ideally, the dissolution of a given form of consciousness sufficed to kill a whole epoch. In reality, this barrier to consciousness corresponds to a definite degree of development of the forces of material production...[But] [c]apital posits the production of wealth itself and hence the universal development of the productive forces, the constant overthrow of the prevailing presupposition, as the presupposition of its reproduction...[and therefore tends, despite itself, towards the] highest development of the forces of production, hence also the richest development of individuals...The barrier to capital is that this entire development proceeds in a contradictory way, and that the working-out of the productive forces, of general wealth etc., knowledge etc., appears in such a way that the working individual alienates himself [sich entaussert]; relates to the conditions brought out of him by his labour as those not of his own but an alien wealth...But this antithetical form is fleeting, and produces the real conditions of its own suspension...The result is...the real development of the individuals from this basis as a constant suspension of its barrier, which is recognized as a barrier, not taken as a

⁶⁰⁹ Meszaros, Istvan, <u>Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness: The Dialectic of Structure and History</u>, Vol. 2, (Monthly Review Press: New York; 2011), 286.

sacred limit. Not an ideal or imagined universality of the individual, but the universality of his real and ideal relations. Hence also the grasping of history as a *process*, and the recognition of nature (equally present as practical power over nature) as his real body.⁶¹⁰

In Marx's judgement, the exploitative, but nonetheless necessary, stage of estrangement marked by capitalism signifies the *last antagonistic phase* in the absolute "working-out of the productive forces, of general wealth etc., knowledge etc." This very same "historic tendency" also "begets its own negation with the inexorability which governs the metamorphoses of nature" because it has "itself created the elements of a new economic order, by giving the greatest impulse at once to the productive forces of social labour and to the integral development of every individual producer." At the end of this process of human becoming, Marx believed we would "arrive at the form of economy which ensures, together with the greatest expansion of the productive powers of social labor, the most complete development of man:" socialism.⁶¹¹

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that although Marx criticized capitalism's rupture of the traditional forms of the metabolism, and recognized the ecologically destructive implications of this rift, he also regarded this separation of labour from nature as part of a necessary stage of estrangement. It is 'necessary' only inasmuch as it is integral to creating the conditions and relations for a still higher form of society, i.e., one which has both freed itself from all fetters on human development and which has overcome the divorce from nature. Marx believed that just as the dissolution of feudalism laid down the preconditions for bourgeois society, so too would the inherent laws of capital and the organized struggle against them provide the presuppositions for the coming-into-being of socialism. These ruthlessly universalizing tendencies not only disrupt

⁶¹⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 540-542.

⁶¹¹ Marx, Karl, 'Russia's Pattern of Development' (Marx to the editorial board of the *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*), <u>Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy</u>, Lewis S. Feuer (ed.), (Anchor Books: New York; 1959), 440.

the primitive unity of manufacturing with agriculture, and push labour passed the natural paltriness of its precapitalist forms, they also drive capitalism itself toward its inherent limits.

Marx saw the germs of a completely new social order emerging out of these contradictions. In the impetus which they give to the development of the productive powers of society, and to the technical organization of that productivity, lies the power to satisfy human need and liberate individuals from unnecessary labour. In its application of science to the labour process, in which knowledge itself becomes a direct force in production, Marx discovers the preconditions for mastering the metabolism and rationally regulating the relation to nature in socialism. In the forms of social intercourse given to labour within the factory and which the workers themselves give to their own fraternal associations during their struggle against capital, he sees the seeds of the free association of the future— an association in which the free and full development of every individual becomes the highest aim.

In Marx's conception of such a higher community, individuals would be reconciled with their inorganic social body in nature, and would be able to consciously control for the first time their own metabolism with the earth. It is this conscious control which would allow them to prevent and repair the sort of ecological damage reaped by the blind necessity of the natural laws of capitalist production. Such an association would therefore have to cultivate a new 'recognition of nature', but one which also includes their 'practical power' over the interaction with it. Humanity would thereby 'return' to the communal unity with nature— except, as I have stressed of Marx's view, in a new social form congruent with the most complete actualization and enjoyment of our own human nature.

Conclusion

Marx's historical conception of nature, and of the changing forms of the human metabolism with it, must be understood as a moving dialectic. In Chapter One of this part of the dissertation, we saw that he represented the first forms of the metabolism— which is to say, all precapitalist societies— as presupposing a comparatively unmediated unity between labour and its inorganic body in nature. On account of the immaturity of the productive powers of individuals, their limited forms of social intercourse with one another, and the relatively unmodified natural conditions of production, this was a unity whose shape was always more or less given by nature, and not produced by labour itself. According to Marx, there was no room for the free and full development of all individuals in these precapitalist forms, precisely, because they were more or less tied by an 'umbilical cord' to the soil and to their 'natural species-connection' with each other.

Primitive accumulation tore these children of the earth from the land upon which they were raised, clearing the field for the capitalist exploitation of both the forces of nature and the productive powers of the now free labourers. This formed the subject matter for Chapter Two, where I examined the metabolic dimensions of Marx's representations of this process of primitive accumulation, as well as the meaning and part which they play within his critique of political economy and of the coming-into-being of capitalism. In Chapter Three, we examined the significance of his claim that this separation, while introduced by primitive accumulation, is reproduced on an ever-expanding scale by the wage-labour process itself. The realization of wage-labour is a process of de-realization. It objectifies itself in opposition to itself, and, in doing so, only deepens and completes the divorce from nature. In that chapter, I also demonstrated that Marx's understanding of this 'rift' has distinct ecological implications. The 'natural laws' of

capital are said to violate the actual natural laws of life, undermining the universal-natural conditions of life. This rupture can only be remedied, he argued, by abolishing the blind necessity of the capitalist economy and rationally regulating the interchange with nature in the future.

Yet, as discussed in the last chapter of this part of the dissertation, capitalism itself was also represented by Marx as a necessary phase of estrangement, as the last antagonistic phase of world-history. Its ruthlessly universal tendencies, its all-around exploitation of both nature and humanity, pushes it toward its own inherent barriers. It creates the means, and the individuals who will use them, to supersede its limited form and regulate the metabolism in a mode fit for the full development of the human race. This would mean returning once again to the old recognition of nature as the inorganic body, except in a manner consistent with the most complete actualization of individuals as individuals. This form of society would be bound neither by the mysticism of precapitalist life, where nature appeared as a higher power, nor by the self-mystifying idolatry of capitalist society, where our own mastery over the forces of nature confronts us as an alien entity. Instead, in a free association of individuals, the relation to nature takes on a 'transparent' character because consciously controlled in a way which would not ruin it, but, rather, pass it on to all subsequent generations.

Part III

Rationality, Necessity & Work in Socialism: Marx & the Frankfurt School

Introduction

Some of the most insightful, and at times also most critical, commentaries on the concept of nature in Marx come to us from the members of the Frankfurt Institute, as well as the secondand third-generation of critical theorists influenced by them. At a time when orthodoxy prevailed, the Frankfurt School attempted to critically rethink the meaning of Marx's writings, and, indeed, marked a real revolution in the understanding of them. To borrow Marx's epithets for Feuerbach, we might say that they underwent a settling of accounts with the status of nature within the Marxian dialectic, and were the first group of thinkers, since Marx and Engels themselves, to have made genuine discoveries in this field. They took-up a serious and critical attitude toward Marx's philosophy of nature, and we, too, should afford them the respect of both taking those criticisms seriously and seriously criticizing them when appropriate. For, although they assumed a more thoughtful posture towards the part which nature plays in the dialectic, some of their claims about Marx's concept of nature were deeply mistaken and, to this day, represent the most formidable interpretative barrier to fully comprehending it. Part III of this dissertation is therefore presented in the form of an 'anti-critique' because it subjects these Frankfurt criticisms of Marx's philosophy of nature to scrutiny through a closer evaluation of the relevant texts.

To be sure, we should avoid painting these thinkers with too broad a brush. They were of a different mind on many subjects, including the meaning and significance of the concept of nature in Marx's writings. However, several of the *critiques* of Marx's philosophy of nature

which emerge out of this intellectual tradition share features in common which justify them being considered together in the first chapter of Part III. One of those recurring themes— which we find in different forms in the works of Adorno, Horkheimer, Schmidt, Leiss and Moltmann— is the charge that Marx's conception of history, idea of economic development and political theory underscore a philosophy of nature which is confined within the same paradigms as traditional Western philosophy, scientific materialism and the logic of the marketplace. They allege that Marx's thinking about nature is restricted by the same dualistic ontology as Descartes, or that he analyzes the relation to nature through the same utilitarian framework as Bentham, or that he envisages a 'mastery' of nature which merely reiterates Bacon— and that, as such, his conception of the human relation to nature is susceptible to the Weberian critique of instrumental reason and/or Heideggerian critique of technological rationality. Were Marx's vision of a socialist society to be actualized, according to Adorno, Schmidt and other critical theorists, it would likely only reproduce in a new form the "domination" of nature characteristic of capitalism, European Enlightenment and Western civilization more generally.

Chapter One of Part III, entitled 'The Frankfurt Critique of Marx's Concept of Nature: Rationality, Utility, and Domination', will argue that these critiques are underpinned by philosophic assumptions quite different from Marx's. To be sure, unlike Weber and Heidegger, Marx did not conceive of 'rationality' as a dominating force, and it would be anachronistic to suggest that he did. However, neither was his conception of reason informed so much by Bacon or Descartes or Bentham, as it was by Hegel. We will discover in the first chapter that, even in his later writings, Marx continued to reject utilitarian thinking about the interrelationship between society and nature, and, in fact, criticized the capitalist economy as a "system of general utility" involving the "general exploitation" of both humanity and nature. In juxtaposition to thinkers such as Adorno, Schmidt and Leiss, he explicitly elaborated the view in *Capital* that this

destruction of the planet by capitalism was *irrational*, and that, in a higher society, the *rationally-regulated* relation to the earth would presuppose the mastery over that metabolism— a 'mastery' which would actually allow us to prevent and repair the damage which we do to nature. When our own activities and social relations with one another confront us as uncontrollable and blind forces of nature, that is when they inevitably dominate not only ourselves, but also the portions of nature with which we are intertwined. Hence, Marx argued that only by overcoming the blind necessity of capital, and consciously controlling our own social powers, could we ever hope to prevent our necessary interaction with nature from destroying the necessary bases of human life itself.

As such, comprehending the meaning of his conception of nature in socialism requires coming to terms with the meaning which he ascribes to this idea of rationally regulating the metabolism. The appreciation of the inner-connection between his philosophy of nature and his political philosophy depends very much upon an appreciation of his vision of the direct relation to nature in necessary work. However, the historical and contemporary secondary literature on Marx's conception of nature in socialism has completely misunderstood his famous distinction between the realms of freedom and necessity in 'The Trinity Formula' chapter of Volume III of *Capital*. In Chapter Two, 'Freedom and Necessity: From Marx to Marcuse and Schmidt', I question the significance which Schmidt and Marcuse attach to this distinction between free-time and work-time, and the meaning which they attribute to the necessary interaction with nature in labour.

In his late works from 1967 onward, Marcuse reinterprets Marx's remarks on the realm of necessity as indicating that he represented it as "realm of [continued] estrangement" within socialism. Work-time may be reduced to a minimum, and free-time expanded proportionately, but, according to this reading, the actual activity of the working-day would remain as "unfree" as

it is in capitalism. However, he contends that Marx's theoretical division is itself reflective of the division between life and labour in a capitalist society. He also speculates that the progress of technological rationality since Capital was written has opened-up horizons of human possibility unimagined, or deemed all too utopian, by the Marx of the 'Trinity Formula'. Full automation, Marcuse concludes, would allow for freedom to emerge from within the realm of necessity, making Marx's very distinction "obsolete." In the second chapter, I will argue that Marcuse's interpretation is at odds with the textual evidence. Marx certainly recognized that the workingday could only be reduced to a minimum, and never be abolished outright, in a higher mode of production. However, we will discover that that recognition does not take on the meaning which Marcuse attaches to it precisely because the question of freedom was not reducible for Marx to the question of the expansion of free-time. In fact, in the passage from Volume III, he explicitly refers to freedom within the realm of necessity, and not merely beyond it. Neither in that passage, nor in any of his other writings, do we find Marx characterizing the realm of necessary work as a "realm of alienation" within socialism, or labour as inevitably "unfree" activity. Instead, I will show that, there and elsewhere, he imagines the possibility of liberation within necessary labour, as well as outside of it.

In the second chapter, we will also find that Schmidt's interpretation of the relevant passage is similar to Marcuse's, except that the significance of these expressions takes on ontological dimensions for him. *The Concept of Nature in Marx* argues that the remarks in Volume III provide us with proof that Marx departed from his youthful speculations about the identity between humanism and naturalism, and that, in the later works, it is the irresolvable problem of the non-identity between human society and natural necessity which prevails over the transformative powers of reason, labour and praxis. In the end, Schmidt interprets Marx's comments on the realm of necessity as underlining the "inextinguishable internal moment" of

heteronomy in a socialist society, and the "concrete limits" of all dialectics. It speaks to what he ultimately presents as the "dialectical duality" of the mature Marx's materialism: viz., that nature and natural necessity set insuperable barriers to the realization of freedom, happiness, and the full development of human nature. The second chapter will argue that Schmidt's work, which began as a dissertation written under the supervision of Adorno, anachronistically projects elements of Adorno's critique of Marxism as an identity philosophy into his own interpretation of Marx's late writings. There is no "indestructible boundary" between the subject and object in the Marxian dialectic. These sorts of interpretative claims are the result of Schmidt re-reading Adorno's "negative ontology" and principle of the "primacy of the object" back into Capital. Instead, Marx's claims throughout the Grundrisse and Capital illustrate that he conceived of necessary work being transformed by the revolution to such an extent that it would be made consistent with the full actualization of human nature. Even in these late writings, Marx maintained the view that nature, and the human relation to it in work, could undergo humanization.

Chapter Three of Part III, 'The Vanishing Away of Direct Necessity: Marx's Speculations on the Highest Phases of Socialism', argues that the *Grundrisse* and *Critique of the Gotha Programme* shed a different light on the distinction which Marx establishes in *Capital*. Drawing on this primary literature, as well as commentaries by Sayers and Hudis, the third chapter will explore the implications of these views for his political theory and conception of the productive relation to nature in socialism. More often than not, Marx's remarks in these works complement, rather than contradict, what he has to say in *Capital*— presuming that we interpret it in a more appropriate manner than Marcuse or Schmidt. However, in a few noteworthy instances, he arguably moves beyond the claims found there, compelling us to question further any reading of a sharp distinction between labour and non-labour in his political thinking. In the *Grundrisse*, he

not only holds that labour is a potential form of free and creative activity, he also argues that the "abstract antithesis" between free-time and work-time would eventually have to disappear in a higher social formation. He characterizes this process, by which labour is stripped of its appearance as a mere means-to-an-end activity, as the vanishing away of direct necessity and of the direct form of labour. Labour, in the highest stages of a communist society, would no longer appear as labour. In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, which is the only real outlier in all of his relevant works, these tendencies in Marx's thought are pushed to their outer limits when he imagines work in the highest stages of human development as being transformed from a "mere means" of life into "life's prime want." But even if, as *Capital* suggests, work could never become transformed into life's primary desire and the truest type of freedom, this in no way reaffirms the interpretations offered by Marcuse and Schmidt, as the Marx of *Capital* never presented work in a socialist society as either undesirable or unfree.

The Frankfurt Critique of Marx's Concept of Nature: Rationality, Utility and Domination

Introduction: The Critique of Instrumental Rationality and Domination of Nature

Taken together, the thinkers of the Frankfurt School arguably represent the most serious philosophical challenge to Marx's concept of nature. However, in this chapter, I will argue that many of their critiques are based upon questionable interpretations of key aspects of his writings. They contend that the only reason why class exploitation ceases in Marxism is because it is to be exchanged in the future for the collectivized exploitation of nature. His vision of communism, it is alleged, merely sublimates the same aggressive instincts cultivated by capitalism by redirecting them entirely at nature. These criticisms tend to downplay the extent to which Marx, especially the later Marx of the Grundrisse and Capital, emphasized the real social possibility and even ecological necessity of a new relationship to nature emerging with the advent of the revolution. For instance, Moltmann, building partly upon the work of Bloch, claims that in Marx's socialism the "exploitation [of humanity] caused by capitalism would be overcome," but not the exploitation of nature by industrial society. In the later works, "Marx acknowledged only one transformation:" i.e., the undoing of the "self-alienation of humanity, achieved at nature's cost."612 "Nature remains the submissive slave of humanity" in "communism" as well as in capitalism.⁶¹³ Appropriating the views of Adorno, Schmidt likewise argues that the later Marx only envisions how a "new society is to benefit man alone, and there is no doubt that this is to be at the expense of external nature."614

Having incorporated elements of the Heideggerian and/or Weberian critiques of

Moltmann, Jurgen, 'The Alienation and Liberation of Nature', <u>On Nature</u>, Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame; 1984), 133.

⁶¹³ Ibid., 136-137.

⁶¹⁴ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 155-156.

'instrumental reason' and 'technological rationality' into their interrogation of Marx's philosophical categories, many of these critics accuse historical materialism of endorsing the same ideology of industrialism which underpins capitalist conceptions of 'progress'. For example, Leiss, a former student of Marcuse's, suggests that since "technology was not the yet the source of false consciousness" for Marx as it had been for Heidegger, Marxism was still restricted by the ideological "idea of [the] mastery over nature." Leiss concedes that, within the context of 19th century thinking, Marx's writings undoubtedly contain "profound insight[s]" into the relationship with nature, but that, nonetheless, its "dialectic of man and nature" is no longer an "adequate starting-point" because it cannot account for the development of "technological rationality" in the 20th century. 615 According to this interpretation, the notion which we find expressed in Capital, i.e., of "rationally regulating" the metabolism with nature in such a way as to allow for the full development of "human nature," implies not only that such a society would continue to degrade nature to the status of a dead object, but, moreover, that it would also be unlikely to lead to the promised realization of human nature— or, would realize a human nature quite different from the one Marx dreamt up.

This type of criticism can be traced back primarily to the work of Horkheimer and Adorno. As Horkheimer argues in the *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, up until now the instrumental "mastery of nature has not brought man to self-realization," but, rather, only to the sort of technological "manipulation that leaves the individual" a hollowed-out and one-sided functionary of capital— the very of opposite of Marx's intentions of course. This is a point which he repeats in the *Eclipse of Reason* where he contends that the "history of man's efforts to

⁶¹⁵ Leiss, William, The Domination of Nature, (Beacon Press: Boston; 1974), 83-84.

Horkheimer, Max, <u>Critique of Instrumental Reason</u>, Matthew J. O'Connell (trans.), (Continuum: New York; 1967), 4.

subjugate nature is also the history of man's subjugation by man."617 Even Marcuse—who, more than many of the other Frankfurters, retained the hope that the advances made by industry since Marx could be reorganized to open-up hitherto unimagined horizons of human possibility—argued more and more in his later writings that complete liberation could only be found in a society which overcomes the Promethean rationality of work through full automation. This is because he, too, believed that the "technological transformation of Nature" through industry and science has always "treated Nature as it has treated man— as an instrument of destructive productivity. Yet, according to Marcuse at least, the *completion* of such technological rationality would signify, at the same time, the *end* of utopianism— which is to say, it would create the conditions for realizing the *final goal* of utopian socialism.

However, Horkheimer and Adorno were much more pessimistic than Marcuse. As Horkheimer retorted in the *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, while the administrative "centralization of economic" forces and the corresponding development of "technology" has enabled social production to tend toward "becoming fully automated," the "increased rationality of the individual as a result of his work in industry" has only led to his increased "manipulation." While the immense forces of production created by capitalism have exceeded the imaginative horizons of the most utopian socialists (and this newfound potential finds expression, e.g., in Marcuse's political philosophy), the likelihood of realizing those utopian ideas seems more distant than ever. For Horkheimer and Adorno, then, the progress of reason has led to the disenchantment not only of nature, but also of humanity's own romantic vision of itself.

Horkheimer, Max, Eclipse of Reason, (Continuum: New York: 1974), 105.

Marcuse, Herbert, <u>Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud</u>, (Vintage Books: New York; 1962), 149-150, 160.

Marcuse, Herbert, <u>One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society</u>, (Beacon Press: Boston; 1966), 240-241.

Horkheimer, Max, <u>Critique of Instrumental Reason</u>, Matthew J. O'Connell (trans.), (Continuum: New York; 1967), 4.

[While the] present potentialities of social achievement surpass the expectations of all the philosophers and statesmen who have ever outlined in utopian programs the idea of a truly human society...[the] hopes of mankind [still] seem farther from fulfilment today then they were even in the groping epochs when they were first formulated by humanists. It seems that even as technical knowledge expands the horizon of man's thought and activity, his autonomy as an individual, his ability to resist the growing apparatus of mass manipulation, his power of imagination, his independent judgement appear to be reduced. Advance in [the] technical faculties for enlightenment is accompanied by a process of dehumanization. Thus progress threatens to nullify the very goal it is supposed to realize—the idea of man...As understood and practiced in our civilization, progressive rationalization tends, in my opinion, to obliterate that very substance of reason in the name of which this progress is espoused. 621

Schmidt follows Horkheimer and Adorno in his assertion that the "progress" of the 20th century created "technical possibilities" undreamt of by even the most utopian programs criticized by Marx. However, rather than actualizing this emancipatory potential, the universality of 'reason' continues to be "negatively realized" under advanced capitalism.

Today, when men's technical possibilities have outstripped the dreams of the old Utopians many times over, it appears rather that these possibilities, negatively realized, have changed into forces of destruction, and therefore, instead bringing about an albeit always humanly limited salvation, lead to total destruction, a grim parody of the transformation intended by Marx, in which Subject and Object are not reconciled, but annihilated.⁶²²

Schmidt certainly recognizes that *Marx* was of the "opinion that human happiness" was "proportional to the measure of man's technical mastery of nature," as well as the "social organization of that technical mastery." However, like Adorno, Horkheimer and many other first-, second- and third-generation critical theorists, Schmidt questions whether such "technical progress" *really is* to "man's benefit" or not. 624 He claims that it

belongs essentially to the advance of civilization as more and more organized increasing domination, that nature takes revenge on the men who have degraded it to mere material for human aims, by ensuring that men can only buy their domination by an ever-increasing suppression of their own nature.⁶²⁵

These critiques of 'instrumental rationality' are often interpreted today as a wholesale

⁶²¹ Horkheimer, Max, Eclipse of Reason, (Continuum: New York: 1974), v-vi.

⁶²² Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971),

^{163.}

⁶²³ Ibid., 135.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 138.

rejection of Hegelian reason. But the best minds of the Frankfurt School recognized that the reason which has been "negatively realized" under capitalism (Schmidt), and which therefore only annihilates the genuine "substance of reason in the name of which this progress is espoused" (Horkheimer), is not at all Hegelian. Rather, it is precisely this essential content which has been annihilated by the progress of modern society. In this respect, Hegel's conception of rationality continues to negatively inform Frankfurt critiques of the instrumentalization of reason in capitalist society. And, to differing degrees, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Schmidt leave open the possibility of a truly 'rational' society emerging— i.e., one potentially emancipated from both the domination of one class over another, and the domination of nature by society. ⁶²⁶ In fact,

⁶²⁶ Although this is not how many contemporary critical theorists read Adorno and Horkheimer, there is a good deal of textual evidence to support this sort of interpretation. To be sure, what Bernstein says of Adorno is true. "Yet if Adorno was a Hegelian, he cannot be an orthodox Hegelian...If for Hegel philosophy is one's own time...expressed in thought, then historical changes transforms the possibilities of philosophical expression. To be writing after the French Revolution is significantly different from writing philosophy 'after Auschwitz'. Hegel conceived the French Revolution, including 'the Terror', as formative for our education toward freedom...Adorno thought Auschwitz revealed the intransigent moment of violence in the modern conception of reason." Bernstein, J.M., 'Negative Dialectic as Fate: Adorno and Hegel', The Cambridge Companion to Adorno, Tom Huhn (ed.), (Cambridge Publishers: Cambridge; 2004), 20. This certainly represents a pessimistic view with respect to the possibility of the realization of the rational. Yet, as I have said, it is not a wholesale rejection of Hegelian reason. Rather, this conception of 'rationality' remains, in some respects, the metric by which Adorno and Horkheimer gauge the dehumanization and domination characteristic of the instrumental reason of capitalist society. The Dialectic of Enlightenment sought to explore the "nexus of rationality and social actuality" as well as its "inseparab[ility]" from "nature and the mastery of nature." Yet, the caveat is added that the "critique of enlightenment is intended to prepare the way for a positive notion of enlightenment which will release it from the entanglement in blind domination." Adorno, Theodor W., and Horkheimer, Max, Dialectic of Enlightenment, John Cumming (trans.), (Continuum: New York; 1972), xv-xvi. Or, see Horkheimer in the Eclipse of Reason: the problem of "pragmatic reason is not new. Yet, the philosophy behind it, the idea that reason, the highest intellectual faculty of man, is solely concerned with instruments, nay, is a mere instrument itself, is formulated more clearly and accepted more generally today than ever before. The principle of domination has become the idol to which everything is sacrificed. The history of man's efforts to subjugate nature is also the history of man's subjugation by man." Horkheimer, Max, Eclipse of Reason, (Continuum: New York: 1974), 105. The critique of instrumental rationality takes on a new significance when we understand it in this way. It ultimately speaks to the irrationality of capitalism as a system, as a system which annihilates the promise of Hegelian Reason. Hegelian Reason, in this sense, negatively informs the critical theories of Horkheimer and Adorno. "With the development of the economic system in which control of the economic apparatus by private groups of men, survival as affirmed by reason—the reified drive of the individual bourgeois was revealed as destructive natural power, no longer to be distinguished from self-destruction. The two were indissolubly blended. Pure reason became unreason." Adorno, Theodor W., and Horkheimer, Max, Dialectic of Enlightenment, John Cumming (trans.), (Continuum: New York; 1972), 90-91. "The irrationalism of totalitarian capitalism, whose way of satisfying needs has an objectified form determined by domination which makes the satisfaction of needs impossible and tends toward the extermination of mankind, has its prototype in the hero who escapes sacrifice by sacrificing himself. In other words: the history of renunciation...[However, this hero is] also a sacrifice for the abrogation of sacrifice. His dominative renunciation, as a struggle with myth, represents a society

Adorno and Horkheimer claim that the ultimate aim of their critical theory is to liberate reason from its tendencies toward the domination of nature and to recover its non-instrumental, non-exploitative essence.

In any case, thinkers such as Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Schmidt are mistaken when they extend those critiques of instrumental reason to apply to Marx's conception of the socialist metabolism with nature. For instance, Schmidt concludes that the further development of tendencies inherent in industrialization, irrespective of whether under capitalist or communist conditions, would only lead to the destruction of both society and nature.⁶²⁷ In *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, he refers to this as the dim "prophecy of the *Dialektik der Anfklarung*" issued by Adorno and Horkheimer: viz., the "grim parody" of the "young Marx's dream of a humanization of nature" and "naturalization of man" as it passes over into its opposite, i.e., the *dehumanization* of man and *death* (*without any resurrection*) of nature.⁶²⁸ This apocalyptic possibility is rooted, as Horkheimer explains in the *Eclipse of Reason*, in the 'instrumentalization' of reason itself.

From the time when reason became the instrument for the domination of human and extra-human nature by man—that is to say, from its very beginnings—it has frustrated its own intention of discovering the truth. This is due to the very fact that it made nature a mere object, and that it failed to discover the trace of itself in such objectivization. 629

There is certainly a great measure of truth to Horkheimer's statement. It adequately expresses the connection between the capitalist domination of nature and the mystification of the social relations which achieve this domination. The capitalist economy takes up a 'natural-attitude' towards its own destructive tendencies. Its own social forces appear as blind and uncontrollable forces of nature since they confront the individuals, whose relations they are, as hostile and alien powers. In this sense, the "domination" of nature by capitalist society obscures

that no longer needs renunciation and domination, which gains mastery over itself not in order to coerce itself and others, but in expiation." Ibid., 55-56.

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971),

^{163.}

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 163.

Horkheimer, Max, Eclipse of Reason, (Continuum: New York: 1974), 176.

the "trace of itself in such objectivization," and leads just as much to the domination of human beings. Again, though, to extend this critique of 'instrumental reason' to Marx is quite another matter. Marx regarded the total productive forces of society, including science, technology, machinery, etc., as *objectifications* of the human mind, as the *objective presence* of the essential capacities of individuals. All of the products, means, and forces of production are only so many "moments" and "objectifications of the process" whose "only subjects are the individuals" in their relations with each other. As such, Marx does not foresee a socialist society reducing the nature transformed by the productive powers of labour to an alien and external objectivity; instead, he argued that individuals would relate to it as the inorganic body of society, i.e., as an objectification of their needs, capacities and relations with each other.

According to Horkheimer, modern society fails to recognize the trace of itself in nature because, in practice and theory, it reduces nature to a mere object. However, Adorno takes a different approach. He suggests that these same tendencies toward 'domination' are present in Marx's philosophy of nature because he tried to "take things unlike the subject and make them like the subject" through practice, labour, and reason, and, as such, "underwrote something as arch-bourgeois as the program of an absolute control of nature." Of course, Adorno concedes, Marx only "underwrote" this "program" so as to create the material conditions necessary for the satisfaction of human need and full development of individuals. However, he argues that, in doing so, Marx ignored that this industrial mastery over nature threatens to undermine the very basis of human life in the environment.

However, the points of intersection (examined in Part II of this dissertation) between

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 706.

⁶³¹ Ibid., 712.

⁶³² Adorno, Theodor W., Negative Dialectics, E.B. Ashton (trans.), (Taylor and Francis: New York; 1973), 244.

⁶³³ Ibid., 244.

Liebig's ecological studies and the metabolic theory in *Capital* illustrates just the opposite. Marx's works and correspondence during this middle and late period demonstrate that he was worried about a great many ecological issues. These concerns included deforestation, water pollution, soil erosion and fertility, salinization and desertification, recycling and composting, as well as the environmental effects of increasing urbanization, globalized trade, and chemical fertilization— absolutely astonishing given that he was a man of the 19th century. He recognized that capitalism's destruction of the planet, especially through the industrialization of agriculture, was undermining the natural bases of human life itself. We have already read the ominous warning which he issued in *Capital*: the social laws of capitalism are violating the actual nature-given laws of the metabolism which apply to all historical and possible modes of production.⁶³⁴ He concluded that this unsustainable metabolic rift between society and nature was *irreparable* from the standpoint of the capitalist relations which created it— thereby implying what he will explicitly insist upon only a few dozen pages later in Volume III: viz., that a socialist society can rectify these issues only by *rationally-regulating* the interchange with nature.⁶³⁵

Jarvis argues that Adorno underwent a "reconsider[ation]" of the "relation between economics and domination in Marx's thought." Since he came to feel that "domination cannot be shown to be coeval with property relations," Adorno found it "harder to argue that the end of those relations will also be the end of domination." The "collapse of capitalism," he concluded during this early period of reassessment, "would by no means be guaranteed to bring an end either to mystification or to domination." These aggressive tendencies represent unmastered and even potentially *unmasterable* instincts, which, as such, are possibly transhistorical social

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 911, 949-950.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 959.

Jarvis, Simon, 'Adorno, Marx, Materialism', <u>The Cambridge Companion to Adorno</u>, Tom Huhn (ed.), (Cambridge Publishers: Cambridge; 2004), 93.

phenomena. As Horkheimer elaborates in the *Eclipse of Reason*, this tendency toward domination is also present in all 'identity' philosophies, in which he mistakenly includes both Hegel and Marx. He and Adorno allege that Hegel and Marx envision, as the final outcome of their dialectics, the emergence of a homogeneous and undifferentiated unity between the subject and object, spirit and nature, etc.⁶³⁷

Socialism and the Pure Utility of Nature

Following Adorno and Horkheimer, Schmidt questions whether a Marxist society would undo capitalism's exploitation of the environment. However, according to him, this ecological problem arises not because Marxism is an 'identity' philosophy, as Adorno and Horkheimer claim, but precisely because Marx acknowledged more and more in his late writings that nature's non-identity could never be abolished by labour. The utopian "moment of [the] identity of man and nature" speculated about in *The Holy Family* and *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* has passed over, in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, into this metabolic "problem of non-identity." This is precisely what is so appealing to Schmidt about *Capital*: viz., that it emphasizes that "historically the incompatibility of man and nature, i.e., in the last analysis the necessity of

Horkheimer, Max, Eclipse of Reason, (Continuum: New York: 1974), 174. "every philosophy that ends in the assertion of the unity of nature and spirit as an allegedly ultimate datum, that is to say, every kind of philosophical monism, serves to entrench the idea of man's domination of nature...The very tendency to postulate unity represents an attempt to consolidate the claim of spirit to total domination, even when this unity is in the name of the absolute opposite of spirit, nature: for nothing is supposed to remain outside the all-embracing concept. Thus even the assertion of the primacy of nature conceals within itself the assertion of the absolute sovereignty of spirit, because it is spirit that conceives this primacy and subordinates everything to it...The real difficulty in the problem of the relation between spirit and nature is that hypostatizing the polarity of these two entities is as impermissible as reducing one to the other...On the one hand, each of the two poles has been torn away by abstraction; on the other, their unity cannot be conceived and ascertained as a given fact...[S]ubjective reason is that attitude of consciousness that adjusts itself without reservation to the alienation between subject and object...[while] objective reason displays an inclination to romanticism...[which] expresses a real antinomy...The task of philosophy is not to stubbornly play the one against the other, but to foster a mutual critique and, thus, if possible, to prepare in the intellectual realm the reconciliation of the two in reality."

⁶³⁸ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 137.

labour, triumphs over the unity of man and nature."639

According to Schmidt's interpretation, the middle and late Marx came to the recognition that the externality of natural necessity could never be wholly dissolved by the socialist form of the metabolism. Nature remains "external to men even in a classless society." He argues that the 'negative' implication of this ontology is that nature would continue to be treated in a utilitarian and exploitative fashion in socialism. As such, the "problem of nature, as an object to be mastered, continues to exist for men in their new-found solidarity." In Schmidt's Adornolike interpretation of Marx (i.e., not in the sense that he interprets Marx in the same way as Adorno does, but in the sense that he reads Marx as if he were really reading Adorno),

the Grundrisse shows plainly that...[quoting the Grundrisse] Nature becomes...pure Object for man, a pure thing of utility; it ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical knowledge of its autonomous laws itself appears only as a stratagem for subjecting it to human needs...[From which Schmidt concludes that it] remains to be seen whether this situation can change in any essential feature under post-capitalist conditions...Since the realm of necessity will continue to exist as long as human history, men will always be compelled to behave towards nature in an essentially appropriative, interfering, struggling manner [emphasis added].⁶⁴²

It should be noted that this remark from the *Grundrisse*, which refers to the reduction of nature to an *object of pure utility*, is elaborated in specific reference to the historical becoming of *capitalist* society. This is significant because Marx's sketch of capitalism's historical triumph over precapitalist society should not be understood as an apologia, but, rather, only as a preliminary step in his ruthless criticism of its contradictions. Schmidt misinterprets these statements as if they formed part of some sort of uncritical acceptance of the 'domination' of nature indicative only of capitalist production. But Marx characterizes capitalism in this very same passage as a "system of general utility" which both dehumanizes individuals and destroys nature. To be sure, his conception of history treats capitalism's "general exploitation of the

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.,137.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 136.

⁶⁴² Ibid., 157.

natural and human qualities" in the same way, i.e., as an integral phase in a larger movement of historical development, even if, from a strictly ethical standpoint, he no more endorses the domination of nature than he does the estrangement of the wage-labourer.⁶⁴³ What Schmidt has done, therefore, is to mistake aspects of Marx's 'scientific' analysis of economic history with moralizing claims about the relation to nature in the future.

For Marx, however, the reduction of the whole world to a "matter of utility" is not a determination given by everlasting natural necessity. Far from treating the earth as a mere commodity, in precapitalist forms of social life nature was raised into a *higher power*.⁶⁴⁴ The disenchantment, but at the same time also debasement, of nature to an object of pure utility is the historically specific outcome of bourgeois relations. Needless to say, Marx believed that a socialist society would 'sublate' the productive powers developed in an antagonistic way by capitalism. But in such a higher society, whose newfound "recognition of nature" also proceeds for the first time from this "practical power" over the metabolism with it, individuals would regard their rationally regulated relation to the world as an *objectification* of their own activities, needs, and relations— but, for that same reason, in no way as a mere 'object'. Marx did not conceive of the nature transformed by human activity as a mere object, and, in this, he broke with Feuerbach's contemplative naturalism. For him, it follows that to treat one's own objectification as an object of exploitation, as a matter of mere utility, is to treat one's own objective activity and objective being as a matter of mere utility.

Of course, Schmidt is right that even in a socialist society individuals would have to continue to 'wrestle' with natural necessity through labour (except ever more successfully), and continue to 'subject' natural forces to the human will (except ever more rationally). Needless to

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 409-410.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 409-410.

say, every mode of production is based upon the appropriation of the *use*-values of nature, i.e. in order to satisfy human needs of one sort or another. This is just a fact of the metabolism that is human life, and it applies to all historical and possible forms of production. But Marx's recognition of the simple fact that the appropriation of the *useful* properties of nature would continue in communism does not imply that he adhered to a *utilitarian* philosophy, as Schmidt claims. When Schmidt asserts that Marx assumed that humans would have to confront nature in an "appropriative, interfering, struggling" manner in *all forms of human society*, including communism, he somehow takes this to mean *exploitative* in the specifically capitalist sense of the term. Indeed, he at times conflates the general concepts of need, necessity, necessary labour, use-value, appropriation of nature, etc.— which exist in some way or another in every epoch of human history, and every form of society— with the artificial necessity imposed by the specifically capitalist form of this metabolism.

For Schmidt to suggest that the metabolism characteristic of capitalism would be extended, unchanged, into a socialist society ignores that that society would not be determined by the blind necessity of the bourgeois economy. In a capitalist society, according to Marx, nothing is inviolable. Everything, including individuals and 'external' nature, are *sacrificed* to 'utility' in the most narrowly conceived bourgeois/utilitarian sense of the term— i.e., as when the "only utility whatsoever which an object can have for capital can be to preserve or increase it."645 This system of general exploitation holds "nothing [as] legitimate for itself, outside this circle of social production and exchange." If we were to seriously consider measuring "all human acts, movements, relations, etc.," according to this single principle of utility, we would "first have to deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as historically modified in each epoch." This would mean shedding the one-sided conception of the bourgeois individual as the

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 270.

metric by which we judge the needs of the "normal man." 646

There are many other first-, second-, and third-generation critical theorists who elaborate criticisms comparable to Schmidt's. Leiss likewise dismisses Marx's theory of metabolism as one grounded in a Cartesian dialectic. In the last instance, Marx merely reformulates and reaffirms the instrumental view of humanity's relation to nature. Marxism's philosophy of nature simply "serves as an elaboration of the Saint-Simonian outlook" influenced as it was by "Francis Bacon." Like Schmidt and Leiss, Moltmann also mistakenly claims that Marx's political philosophy is underpinned by a 'utilitarian' and 'instrumental' conception of the human relation to nature. Appropriating Bloch's distinction between 'home' and 'work', he argues that Marx's Promethean conception of labour can never realize its stated aim: i.e., to make itself *at home* in the world. Instead, his thought allegedly remains circumscribed within the same limits as the rest of modern philosophy from Descartes onward. Although Moltmann acknowledges that both "modern idealism" and "dialectical materialism" attempt to "overcome the splitting of the world into subjectivity and objectivity, into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*," he fails to account for how the ontology of internal relations developed by Hegel and Marx is at all consistent with this

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 758-759.

Leiss, William, The Domination of Nature, (Beacon Press: Boston; 1974), 84. As Schmidt correctly claims (however inconsistently), while he may "[a]t first" have "shared Bacon's view, which was inherited and developed by the Enlightenment"— namely, the view that "nature should be seen essentially from the point of view of its usefulness to man"— "Marx went far beyond all the bourgeois theories of nature presented by the Enlightenment." Schmidt, Alfred, The Concept of Nature in Marx, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 78, 155. As Engels explained in the *Dialectics of Nature*, "[t]he dialectics that has found its way into popular consciousness finds expression in the old saying that extremes meet. In accordance with this we should hardly err in looking for the most extreme degree of fantasy, credulity, and superstition, not in that trend of natural science which, like the German philosophy of nature, tries to force the objective world into the framework of its subjective thought, but rather in the opposite trend, which, relying on mere experience, treats thought with sovereign disdain and really has gone to the furthest extreme in emptiness of thought. This school prevails in England. Its father, the much lauded Francis Bacon." Engels, Frederick, Dialectics of Nature, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 297.

Moltmann, Jurgen, 'The Alienation and Liberation of Nature', <u>On Nature</u>, Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame; 1984), 133, 136-137.

Cartesian-Baconian standpoint which he attributes to them. 649

In Private Property and Communism, Marx criticized those who would grasp the "history of industry" only from the "perspective of alienation" by treating the "essential connection" to nature, to others, and to one's own life-activity in an "external utilitarian way." Schmidt and other critical theorists sometimes accept that his early philosophy was explicitly anti-utilitarian in recognizing that this relation to nature through labour has an "essential connection with man's essential nature."650 However, in contrast to them, I believe that this is a lasting feature of Marx's materialism, philosophy of nature and theory of human development. Even into his later writings, he continued to argue that this one-sided principle of utility is merely reflective of an economy where the wholeness of the human being has been divided, and all of her pleasures, activities, and connections to society and nature reduced to a single relation: the exchange-relation. One's life and relations with others appears as an external, accidental and commercial affair in which 'things' ultimately rule over the people who create and consume them. As Marx reminds us while quoting Shakespeare and Goethe in *The Power of Money*, money in bourgeois society perfectly represents this estranged essence of the human being. Everything—every desire, every need, and every bond to society and to nature—can be bought and sold away. 651 Capitalism, as he tells us in both the early manuscripts and again in the Grundrisse, is nothing else but a system of universal prostitution. 652

Schmidt, Moltmann and others are mistaken in contending that the later Marx abandoned

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 133.

See Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism", <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 141-142. Or, see Marx, Karl, 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 76.

Marx, Karl, 'The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 165-169.

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 133. Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 163.

this earlier philosophy of nature—influenced by the humanism of Goethe and the naturalism of Feuerbach, the philosophies of Hegel and of Schiller— for a more hard-nosed utilitarian calculus. 653 Instead, one finds that the late Marx continues to explicitly associate such utilitarianism with the fetishism and perverse logic which prevails in market societies. The entire wisdom of this philosophical school amounts to equating freedom with 'utility', and the positive assertion of one's own personality with 'self-interest'— and both in the most narrowly conceived sense of the expressions.⁶⁵⁴ However, the point of revolutionary praxis is not to replace the particularity of one set of class interests with another, but to overcome class society and satisfy the universal interest of humankind as a whole. This would finally be 'self-interest' not in the narrowly conceived poverty of Benthamite political economy, but in that higher Aristotelian sense of the 'self-love' which is possible only through relations of mutual recognition with others alike in virtue.

> Hegel has already proved in his *Phenomenologie* how this theory of mutual exploitation, which Bentham expounded ad nauseum [is deficient]...[T]he theory of usefulness is depicted [there] as the final result of the enlightenment. The apparent stupidity of merging all the manifold relationships of people in the one relation of usefulness, this apparently metaphysical abstraction arises from the fact that, in bourgeois society, all relations are subordinated in practice to the one abstract monetary-commercial relation...Political economy is the real science of this theory of utility...[A]ll the activity of individuals in their mutual intercourse, e.g., speech, love, etc., is depicted as a relation of utility and utilisation...[these relations having] validity for the individual[s] not on their own account, not as self-activity...[but only as a] relation of utility...[Therefore it means only that] I derive benefit for myself by doing harm to someone else...For him only one relation is valid on its own account— the relation of

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 134.

⁶⁵⁴ As Burkett explains, in the "Marxist view, the monetary valuation of nature, that is, its effective reduction to a private good, indirectly manifests working people's alienation from the essentially communal conditions of social production...Under capitalism, the means of production and the productive division of labour, in short the producers' entire metabolic interaction with nature, are scientifically developed and socialised. But, since this development is driven not by the goal of sustainable improvements in human development...but by competitive monetary accumulation, the productive forces of nature and social labour appear as alien forces holding power over the workers, in fact as productive powers of capital itself." Burkett, Paul, Marxism and Ecological Economics: Toward a Red and Green Political Economy, (Brill: London; 2006), 86-87. Hence, as he concludes in another chapter, the "workers' struggles, both inside and outside the workplace, contain a powerful pro-ecological potential insofar as they contest all forms of money-driven exploitation of labour and nature. The goal must be general disalienation, not more tolerable forms of alienation...Marxism detects a radical potential for worker-community movements to fight for new relations of production that treat human-natural relations as ends in themselves rather than instruments of alienated production and profit-making." Ibid., 140.

exploitation...The material expression of this use is money, the representative of the value of all things, people and social relations...The advances made by the theory of utility and exploitation, its various phases, are closely connected with the various periods of development of the bourgeoisie...The complete subordination of all existing relations to the relation of utility, and its unconditional elevation to be the sole content of all other relations, we find for the first time in Bentham.⁶⁵⁵

This passage from *The German Ideology* indicates that even while breaking with Feuerbachian humanism, Marx continued to criticize utilitarianism in much the same way that he had in the manuscripts on *The Power of Money*, *Private Property and Communism*, and *Estranged Labor*. In particular, he continued to single out Bentham and Mill in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* for regarding all relations, needs and capacities from the standpoint of this shallow principle. Far from reflecting a 'romantic' or 'utopian' *moment* in Marx's early intellectual development (which his later 'economism' obliterates), we find the same sort of critique of the 'stupidity' of Bentham in *Capital*:

the principle of utility was no discovery made by Bentham. He simply reproduced in his dull way what Helvetius and other Frenchmen had said with wit and ingenuity in the eighteenth century. To know what is useful for a dog, one must investigate the nature of dogs. This nature is not itself deducible from the principle of utility. Applying this to man, he that would judge all human acts, movements, relations, etc. according to the principle of utility would first have to deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as historically modified in each epoch. Bentham does not trouble himself with this. With the dryest naivete he assumes that the modern petty bourgeois, especially the English petty bourgeois, is the normal man. Whatever is useful to this peculiar kind of normal man, and to his world, is useful in and for itself. He applies this yardstick to the past, the present and the future...If I had the courage of my friend Heinrich Heine, I should call Mr. Jeremy a genius in the way of bourgeois stupidity.⁶⁵⁶

Although Schmidt acknowledges that Marx went beyond both Benthamite utilitarianism and Bacon's philosophy of nature, he mistakenly claims that the implications of this new view were restricted more and more in the late writings to the purely social world. Whenever Marx and Engels refer to the overcoming of the blind necessity of market relations, they allegedly had in mind only the emancipation of 'man from man', which, according to Schmidt's interpretation,

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 109-113.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 758-759.

is itself possible only on the basis provided by the continued subjugation of nature. Marx does not envision this "exploitation of nature" as "ceas[ing] in the future," but as continuing unabated— limited perhaps only by a more "rationalized" form of exploitation, i.e., one which would only ensure that nature is "robbed step by step of the possibility of revenging itself on men for their victories over it." Hence, he disparages that whenever Marx and Engels "complain about the plundering of nature, they are not concerned with nature itself but with considerations of economic utility." But this is only because Schmidt considers Marx's concern for human need and emphasis upon labour's conscious control over its own relation to nature as *prima facie* anti-ecological. As if human society, its needs, and its 'economic' considerations, were not themselves a part of "nature itself." Or, as if a romantic concern for "nature itself"— that is, as abstracted completely from human beings, their activities, needs and relations with others— could ever form a sound basis for developing a critique oriented toward overcoming the contradictions inherent in the capitalist *relationship between* society and nature.

In his reading, Schmidt effectively reproduces Adorno's claim that Marxism strives toward the "absolute domination of nature," i.e., its "absolute submission to labour." For Schmidt, the new social relations of production proposed by Marx do not imply a "new relation with extra-human nature"— although, as I have already pointed out throughout this dissertation, this seems to be one of the most basic points of connection between Marx's materialist conception of history and his historical conception of nature; it is an elementary presupposition of his historical theory of the metabolism. 660 But Schmidt does not see any necessary link in the

⁶⁵⁷ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 155-156.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 155.

Jarvis, Simon, 'Adorno, Marx, Materialism', <u>The Cambridge Companion to Adorno</u>, Tom Huhn (ed.), (Cambridge Publishers: Cambridge; 2004), 90.

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 495.

late Marx between a revolution towards a "more human society," and the development of a more "human" way of relating to nature. Having expunged Marx's late writings of any trace of the idea of the humanization of nature, and having taken this ostensible "problem of non-identity" as the *great insight* of the "later, and more critical" Marx, it is confounding to find Schmidt subsequently criticizing such a view for its utilitarian and exploitative attitude toward the environment.

The question raised here, of the extent to which a more human society might also enter into a new relation with extra-human nature, has been the subject of an extra-ordinary amount of discussion between interpreters of Marx. Here too, the mature Marx withdrew from the theses expounded in his early writings. In later life he no longer wrote of a 'resurrection' of the whole of nature. The new society is to benefit man alone, and there is no doubt that this is to be at the expense of external nature. Nature is to be mastered with gigantic technological aids...The exploitation of nature will not cease in the future but man's encroachments into nature will be rationalized, so that their remoter consequences will remain capable of control. In this way, nature will be robbed step by step of the possibility of revenging itself on men for their victories over it...[But] [w]e should rather ask, whether the future society will not be a mammoth machine, whether the prophecy of the *Dialektik der Anfklarung*, that 'human society will be a massive racket in nature', will not be fulfilled rather than the young Marx's dream of a humanization of nature, which would at the same time include the naturalization of man.⁶⁶¹

Marx on the Mastery of the Metabolism with Nature

The Frankfurt School's philosophical faith in the emancipatory potential of industry and technical mastery over the forces of nature was understandably shaken by the course of the 20th century. The humanism and promise of liberation, which had until then accompanied all progress in the forces of production, suddenly gave way to the opposite tendency, e.g., advanced forms of barbarism, an industrial-scale holocaust, and the global terror of the atomic age. The development of the productive powers of social labour seemed to offer the future not emancipation but intensified manipulation, not a reconciliation with nature but continued domination. All of the aspects of Marx's political philosophy which appeared to reaffirm these

⁶⁶¹ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 155-156.

anti-ecological tendencies of modernity came under increased suspicion. Under the influence of Weber's notion of the 'iron cage' of reason, the Frankfurters rejected the Marxian conception of the 'mastery' of nature— an idea which they took to imply that the 'exploitative' relation to the environment (characteristic of capitalism) would be extended unmodified into a socialist society.

However, Marx did not share these philosophic assumptions about rationality. Instead, he and Engels argued that capitalism is *antithetical* to a 'consciously controlled' metabolism, and that the rift with nature can only be repaired in a higher society which restores the communal union with it.⁶⁶² This new society would proceed from the "recognition of nature" as its "real body," but this would also include its own "practical power" over the interaction with it; only then would humankind overcome the disastrous separation specific to capitalism.⁶⁶³ Each subsequent generation of socialist society would be obliged to pass on this relation to the planet in an "improved" state.⁶⁶⁴ As such, Marx's vision of how a communist society might go about "rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control," differs qualitatively from what he explicitly criticizes as the ecologically-destructive *irrationality* of capitalism (emphasis added).⁶⁶⁵ Schmidt is therefore mistaken in contending that Marx did not

Capitalism, as Engels puts it, develops the productive powers of social labour which "makes the forces of nature subject to man;" yet, he cautions there, it does so only within the "context of antitheses" since this "productive capacity" is not "handled consciously." Engels, Frederick, 'Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy', The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Martin Milligan (tr.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 217.

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 542.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 911.

Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 959. Or see Marx, Karl, Capital, David McLellan (ed.), Abridged Edition, (Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2008), 470. This is also why I fundamentally disagree with Foster that "there is simply no indication anywhere in Marx's writings that he believed that a sustainable relation to the earth would come automatically with the transition to socialism." Foster argues that, instead, Marx "emphasized the need for planning in this area." See Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology', AJS Volume 105, Number 2 (September 1999), 387. To say that socialism would not necessarily develop a more reasonable relation to nature, because this would demand "planning" in the realm of necessity, forgets just what socialism is. Marx defines such a society in Capital as a free association of more fully-developed individuals who, in the realm of labour, would go about "rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their

foresee the "exploitation of nature...ceas[ing] in the future," but merely "rationalized" so as to prevent nature from reaping its revenge upon humanity.⁶⁶⁶ To be sure, he is right that a *truly* rational relation to the earth would both appreciate the fact that humans live within a "metabolic interaction with nature," and, at the same time, "renounce the ruthless exploitation of the latter." Yet, Marx's philosophy of nature explicitly meets both of these ecological qualifications. It acknowledges that humans are a part of nature, and, at the same time, also offers glimpses into a future society freed from domination. But this liberation of nature from domination presupposes precisely the rational 'mastery' of the metabolism with it. As Burkett puts it,

communal property is designed to promote the free development of human beings (compared to class societies) while protecting the interests of future generations in a sustainable appropriation of nature— one that maintains and even improves the quality of natural wealth. In Marx's vision, the de-alienation of the conditions of production includes a broad diffusion of the scientific knowledge required for effective communal management of natural conditions and their appropriation in the social labour process. Underlying the ecological potential of Marx's vision is an interesting economic paradox...If people want to develop as natural beings, they must develop further as social beings, and an explicit socialization of the natural conditions of production...So if we want to live with nature, we must master our social organization. 668

As McNally claims, the "indifference to nature" that is sometimes mistakenly "ascribed to Marx" in ecological critiques more accurately reflects his own critique of "capital's indifference to nature." It is "precisely this indifference" which is so "central to his claims for the irrationality of capitalism as a system." In *Capital*, as we read in Part II, he argues that the *irrational* tendencies of the 'natural laws' of bourgeois development undermine the actual

common control." Hence, their own social "freedom in this field"— *socialism*— depends completely upon a new and rational relation to the earth, i.e., one based precisely upon the 'plan' of the freely associated producers.

⁶⁶⁶ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 155-156.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 154.

Burkett, Paul, <u>Marx and Nature: Toward a Red and Green Perspective</u>, (St. Martin's Press: New York; 1999), 257.

McNally, David, 'Beyond the False Infinity of Capital: Dialectics and Self-Mediation in Marx's Theory of Freedom', New Dialectics and Political Economy, Robert Albrighton and Joh Simoulidis (ed.), (Palgrave Macmillan: New York; 2003), 14.

universal-natural laws of the metabolism. Foster emphasizes Marx's thoughts on salinization as an example of this tendency. "Agriculture," wrote Marx, "when it progresses spontaneously and is not consciously controlled...leaves deserts behind it." The "moral of the tale" is that the

capitalist system runs counter to a rational agriculture, or that a rational agriculture is incompatible with the capitalist system (even if it promotes technical development in agriculture) and needs either small farmers working for themselves or the control of the associated producers.⁶⁷¹

Throughout *Capital*, Marx continually "draws attention to the irrational consequences" of the unlimited impulses of the capitalist mode of production and its "relation to the finitude of nature." In developing his political ecology of capitalist society, Marx's concerns ranged from the problems of deforestation to water pollution, from composting to the diversion of waterways for large-scale irrigation. As Burkett concludes from Marx's thoughts in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*,

the most influential prejudices against Marx and Engels among ecological thinkers—that they ignored natural limits, championed human domination of nature, embraced an anti-ecological industrialism, downplayed capitalism's reliance on materials and energy, and reduced wealth to labour—have all been thoroughly debunked.⁶⁷³

Burkett argues that the tendency is for ecological critiques of Marx to argue that he adheres to an "industrialist' ideology that is evidently not specific to capitalism." By contrast, Marx himself located the "ecological problem" within this "system's class relations" and regarded it as a by-product of the "social separation of workers and their communities from the land and other necessary conditions of production"⁶⁷⁴ Fine and Saad-Filho complain that "Marxism has been accused of privileging the social at the expense of the natural" because of an

Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology', *AJS* Volume 105, Number 2 (September 1999), 386.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 216.

McNally, David, 'Beyond the False Infinity of Capital: Dialectics and Self-Mediation in Marx's Theory of Freedom', New Dialectics and Political Economy, Robert Albrighton and Joh Simoulidis (ed.), (Palgrave Macmillan: New York; 2003), 15.

Burkett, Paul, <u>Marxism and Ecological Economics: Toward a Red and Green Political Economy</u>, (Brill: London; 2006), 10.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., 155.

"excessive preoccupation with the economic." Unlike these critics, however, Marx does not identify a "trans-historical conflict" between "the environment and the economy," but, rather, sees the ecological crisis exclusive to modern society as a process "driven" by the logic of the capitalist system. He analyzed the problem of "environmental degradation" from the context of these "environmental *relations*...characteristic of *capitalism*." As long as the social relations of individuals to one another and to nature continues to appear to them as merely external relations between things, blindly operating 'behind their backs', the "corresponding tendencies to appropriate and transform the environment" in destructive ways will also be perpetuated.⁶⁷⁵

In Marx's definition of it, socialism certainly depends upon the "full development of [the] human mastery over the forces of nature." But this in no way implies continued 'domination', as Adorno, Schmidt and Leiss suggest. The term 'mastery' also denotes a certain virtuosity, talent, art, skill, or techne— e.g., in the sense that an excellent pianist can be said to have *mastered* the piano. That Marx refers to the "mastery" not only "of so-called nature," but also "of humanity's own nature," illustrates that the meaning which Frankfurt readings often ascribe to this concept is inconsistent with his usage. As Ollman explains, Marx's conception of "mastery" precludes "domination" because it involves "becoming conscious of the internal relations" between human society and nature. As Lichtheim reads Marx, communism is the struggle to "overcome the alienation" produced by capitalism's "previous attempt to master nature" in such an external and domineering way.

Even Engels, since derided by many ecological critics for crowning socialist man as the

⁶⁷⁵ Saad-Filho, Alfredo, and Fine, Ben, Marx's Capital, (Pluto Press: London; 2004), 174-176.

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 488.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 488.

⁶⁷⁸ Ollman, Bertell, Marxism: An Uncommon Introduction, (Stirling Publishers: New Delhi; 1991), 79-86.

Lichtheim, George, Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study, (Praeger Publishing: New York; 1963), 47-48.

"conscious lord of nature," emphasizes that this sort of "mastery" is inconsistent with the environmental degradation of the planet. He cautions us that we should not "flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human conquest over nature." History has shown that we can "by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature." Rather, humanity must recognize that "we belong to nature" in "flesh, blood, and brain." In the past, societies had no "inkling" whatsoever that their irrational behaviour was destroying the nature of which they were but a part. With "each such conquest," nature took its so-called "revenge on us" through "unforeseen effects." With socialism, by contrast, the "conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man." He becomes the "lord over nature, his own master—free." With this "ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom," with this transformation of "animal conditions of existence into really human ones," humankind would be "finally marked off from the rest of the animal kingdom." However, Engels also argued that this very 'mastery' would allow us for the first time to foresee, mitigate, regulate, and/or eliminate even the most "remote consequences" of our negative impact upon the planet. The "possibility is afforded us of mastering and controlling these effects as well." Able to "know and correctly apply its laws," this "mastery" would allow humanity not only to "feel, but to know, its unity with nature." Socialism would therefore do away with the "antinatural idea of a contradiction" between "man and nature."680

In a socialist society, Marx and Engels believed that the "laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face-to-face with man as laws of Nature foreign to, and dominating him, will then be used with full understanding, and so mastered by him." Our own "social organization,"

Engels, Frederick, <u>Dialectics of Nature</u>, (Foreign Language Publishing: Moscow; 1971), 293-295. Engels, Frederick, <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 72-73.

which has up until now appeared as a "necessity imposed by nature and history," would for the first time be determined by "free action."⁶⁸¹ But, in a capitalist society, the opposite is the case. Although capitalism's advancement of the technical and scientific capabilities formally subjects nature to the command of social labour, the productive forces are themselves reflected back and unleashed in such a way that they appear as erratic, unintelligible, and uncontrollable forces of nature. The artificial natural necessity of the capitalist economy therefore takes approximatively the same form for Marx as blind fate did for the ancient dramatists, i.e., it operates with a law-like consistency and iron-clad rigidity, but *seemingly* without any higher purpose outside itself. Individuals are "ruled" by unthinking economic tendencies just as they were originally by the seemingly "blind forces of Nature."⁶⁸² Modern society is just the "Darwinian struggle of the individual for existence transferred from Nature to society with intensified violence."⁶⁸³

Our own *social forces*, having been mystified in this way, react back upon us almost *as if they were themselves natural* and *unconscious forces*. As Novack and Mandel argue, this appeals to Hegel's critique of "industrial society as a 'vast system of mutual interdependence, *a moving life of the dead...*[which] moves hither and yon in a blind elementary way'." "Capitalist society stands in the same relation towards its own economy" as the "savage does towards thunder, lightning, and rain." This is why Marx refers to the contradictory aspect of the capitalist mastery over nature as the *ideal*, but not yet *real*, overcoming of all precapitalist 'nature-idolatry'. We now bow down before our own productive powers as if they were blind and

Engels, Frederick, <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 72-73.

See Marx, Karl, <u>Capital</u>, David McLellan (ed.), Abridged Edition, (Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2008), 470. Or see, Marx, Karl, <u>Capital</u>: A <u>Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 59-60, 68-69.

Hegel quoted in Novack, George, and Mandel, Ernest, <u>The Marxist Theory of Alienation: Three Essays</u>, (Pathfinder Press: New York; 1973), 65.

Thalheimer quoted in Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 42.

wanton forces of nature, i.e., forces which require constant propitiation, appeasement and even human sacrifice. Our own *social history* now occupies the role once played by *natural history* in precapitalist life, except still in its initial semblance as just *another form of natural history*. This is the meaning and significance of Marx's often quoted, but just as often misunderstood, statement in the 'Preface' to *Capital*: viz., that the "economic formation of society is [to be] viewed as a *process of natural history*" (emphasis added). In analyzing this economy, we must regard individuals as being reduced to "personification[s] of economic categories"— a reflection of the "objective process" of production in which they are precluded from consciously controlling their own life-activity and relations with each other.⁶⁸⁶

What so many read here as proof of the mature Marx's economic *determinism* is ultimately nothing else but a trenchant critique of *alienation* and *mystification*. While the political economists treated the 'natural laws' of bourgeois society as eternal and inviolable laws of nature, i.e., as if they belonged to the "final term of human development," Marx's critique reveals their historical and transitory status.⁶⁸⁷ What the critique of political economy emphasizes is not an economistic view of history, but the need to struggle against this fetishism which has inverted the process of human history into one of natural history. Precisely because capitalist

[&]quot;Intrinsically, it is not a question of the higher or lower degree of development of the social antagonisms that result from the natural laws of capitalist production. It is a question of these laws themselves, of these tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results. The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future...One nation can and should learn from others. And even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement— and it is the ultimate aim of this work, to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society— it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs...To prevent possible misunderstanding, a word. I paint the capitalist and the landlord in no sense *couleur de rose* [or, as seen through rose-coloured glasses]. But here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests. My standpoint, from which the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them." Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 90-93.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 174-175.

society has not yet fully emerged from natural history, Marx also defines it as the "last antagonistic" phase in the "prehistory of human society." Only beyond it does truly *human* history begin, because only then do individuals make history upon circumstances which are within their control. As such, what the critique of political economy in *Capital* emphasizes in the last instance is the agency of the estranged to overcome their own estrangement.

Although they fail to acknowledge its ecological implications for the metabolism with nature, Adorno and Schmidt offer otherwise insightful interpretations of this idea in Marx. Adorno argues that Marx understood that the "history of the progressing mastery of nature" becomes, under the regime of capital, an extension of the "unconscious history of nature." That these *natural laws* are disclosed by him as *social laws* in no way "rob[s] Marx's talk of natural history of part of its truth content." These "societal laws" *really* are "experienced in the form of natural laws." The "law [of capital] is natural," so to speak, because its effects really do appear "inevitable...under the prevailing conditions of production," i.e., as if "inherent in its being."

interprets Marx's reference to [capitalism as] natural history as a reference to second—rather than to "first" [nature]...To bolster this interpretation, Adorno cites a later passage from *Capital* where Marx declared that "the law of capitalist accumulation...has been mystified into a law of nature." 692

Schmidt expands upon Adorno's interpretation, noting that the "result of man's control over nature has asserted itself as a natural force because of his inability to control society." Since individuals are confronted by their own alienated forces, capitalist society has "not yet

Marx, Karl, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', <u>Karl Marx: Early Writings</u>, R. Livingstone and G. Benton (trans.), (Vintage Books: New York; 1975), 426.

Adorno, Theodor, Negative Dialectics, (Taylor and Francis: Frankfurt; 2004), 355.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 355.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., 354-355.

Cook, Deborah, Adorno on Nature, (Acumen Publishing: Durham; 2011), 8.

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971),

^{139.}

emerged from natural history" in the truest sense. 694 Schmidt suggests that when Hegel originally made the distinction between "first nature" and "second nature," he had in mind the contrast between the "world of things existing outside of men" as a "blind conceptless occurrence," and the "manifested reason" of "objective Spirit" in the "state, law, society, and the economy." But Marx's critique of political economy "opposes to this" the notion that the "second nature is still the 'first'," operating very much in the form of the "blind necessity" of market relations. 696

Yet, as Schmidt is right to argue, Marxism as a political project is oriented towards reversing this fetishism which has reduced human history to natural history. "If men learn not only to see through the laws ruling their lives in theory, but also to control these laws in practice," then they can "transcend" this "process of natural history." As Bloch defines Marx's view, socialism

posits liberation from blind fate, from unfathomed necessity, allied with a concrete act of pushing back the barriers of nature. Since human beings here consciously make history for the first time, the appearance vanishes of that fate which has been produced by human beings themselves, in class society, and ignorantly made into a fetish. Fate is unfathomed, uncontrolled necessity, freedom is controlled necessity, from which alienation has vanished and real order emerges, precisely as the realm of freedom.⁶⁹⁸

In capitalist as much as in precapitalist society, the relation to others and to nature is mystified into an incomprehensible or stochastic process of natural history. What are really social determinations appear as the erratic sway of elemental forces. Communism thereby necessarily "differs from all previous movements in that it overturns the basis of all earlier relations of production and intercourse," since it "for the first time consciously treats all naturally evolved premises as the creation of hitherto existing men" and, so, "strips them of their natural character

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 134.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 42-43.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 134.

Bloch, Ernst, <u>The Principle of Hope</u>, Vol. II, Plaice, Plaice and Knight (trans.), (MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass; 1994), 624.

and subjugates them to the power of the united individuals."699

[E] very society based upon the production of commodities has this peculiarity: that the producers have lost control over their own social inter-relations...Anarchy reigns in socialized production. But the production of commodities, like every other form of production, has it peculiar, inherent laws inseparable from it; and these laws work, despite anarchy, in and through anarchy...They work themselves out, therefore, independently of the producers, and in antagonism to them, as inexorable natural laws of their particular form of production...Active social forces work exactly like natural forces: blindly, forcibly, destructively, so long as we do not understand, and reckon with, them. But, when once we understand them, when once we grasp their action, their direction, their effects, it depends only upon ourselves to subject them more and more to our own will, and, by means of them, to reach our own ends. And this holds quite especially of the mighty productive forces of today. As long as we obstinately refuse to understand the nature and the character of these social means of action— and this understanding goes against the grain of the capitalist mode of production, and its defenders— so long these forces are at work in spite of us, in opposition to us, so long they master us...[W]hen once their nature is understood, they can...be transformed from master demons into willing servants. The difference is as that between the destructive force of electricity in the lightning in the storm, and electricity under command in the telegraph and the voltaic arc; the difference between a conflagration, and fire working in the service of man. With this recognition, at last, of the real nature of the productive forces of today, the social anarchy of production gives place to a social regulation of production upon a definite plan, according to the needs of the community and of each individual. Then the capitalist mode of appropriation, in which the product enslaves first the producer, and then the appropriator, is replaced by the mode of appropriation of the products that is based upon the nature of the modern means of production; upon the one hand, direct social appropriation, as means to the maintenance and extension of production— on the other, direct individual appropriation, as means of subsistence and of enjoyment. 700

Engels develops the view here that natural necessity takes on the semblance of blind fate only insofar as the necessary social relation between individuals and of individuals to nature is unmastered, i.e., the conditions and relations of their life appear beyond their comprehension and/or conscious control. He reveals in another work that this is a direct appropriation of Hegel's critique of Kant's 'third antinomy'.

Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the insight into necessity (die Einsicht in die Notwendigheit). "Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood [begriffen]." Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends...Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature, a control founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including Theses on Feuerbach and the Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy</u>, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 89-90.
 Engels, Frederick, <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 59-60, 68-69.

product of historical development. The first men who separated themselves from the animal kingdom were in all essentials as unfree as the animals themselves, but each step forward in the field of culture was a step towards freedom....[The] immense productive forces [of capitalism]...alone make possible a state of society in which there are no longer class distinctions or anxiety over the means of subsistence for the individual, and in which for the first time there can be talk of real human freedom, of an existence in harmony with the laws of nature that have become known.⁷⁰¹

The great insight of Hegel's philosophy is that it recognizes the essential role of 'labour' in history. As Engels puts it, all of the "planned action of all animals has never resulted in impressing the stamp of their will upon nature." The "animal merely *uses* external nature;" the human being, by changing nature, "makes it serve his ends, *masters* it." This is the "final," and most "essential distinction between man and other animals, and once again it is labour that brings about this distinction."⁷⁰²

Marx also claims that his own views on this question of the relationship between freedom and necessity are based upon a radical appropriation of Hegel's philosophy. He approves of the Hegelian idea that the "cunning" of reason "consists principally in her mediating activity." Through this mediation, labour is capable of setting industrial and natural forces into motion so that they operate independently of labour, and in the service its own ends. It is capable of "causing objects to act and re-act on each other in accordance with their own nature, [so that] in this way, without any direct interference in the process, carries out reason's intentions." As Marx reiterates elsewhere, Hegel "correctly" recognized that when "man possesses the resolve to use a part of the available natural objects directly as means of labour," he "subsumes them under his activity." Not only does reason work *through* and *with* the forces of nature to realize its own purposes, she applies and leverages the mastery over the laws of nature so as to *redirect* its

Engels, Frederick, <u>Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science</u>, Works of Marxism—Leninism, Vol XVIII, Emile Burns (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1894), 100-101.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Dialectics of Nature</u>, Clemens Dutt (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1976), 291.

See Hegel in Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 283.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., 734.

forces to work purposefully for her.

Marx interprets the emancipatory potential of the immense powers of production brought into being by modern industry and natural science in the light of this Hegelian principle. Industrialism, as a form of production, actually allows individuals to step back from the immediate mode of labour. "No longer does the worker insert a modified natural thing [Naturgegenstand] as middle link between the object [Objekt] and himself." The individual "steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor." The direct form of labour disappears more and more as the labourer "no longer appears so much to be included within the production process." Acting as a "watchman and regulator," labour would be able to direct the process of production by scientifically regulating the total social power. Production is determined here by "neither the direct human labour he performs, nor the time during which he works;" instead, it is determined by the "appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body— it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth."

With this sort of automation, work can be reduced more and more to the conscious application and appropriation of the scientific powers of individuals— i.e., their mastery of the knowledge of nature's laws, practical manipulation of the mechanical, chemical, physical, etc., forces and properties of things. At bottom, production in this sense involves the "analysis and application of mechanical and chemical laws, arising directly out of science." To the "degree that large industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed than on the power of the agencies set in motion during labour time...[which] depends on the general state of science and on the progress of technology." Natural science would then be able to serve genuinely human ends in a socialist society. It would

realize its essentially human function, and be re-constituted as a sort of 'moral science'. Production would involve the "application of the science of material metabolism," and it would be oriented toward the rational "regulation" of this relation for the "greatest advantage of the entire body of society." Here, "general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production*." The "conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it"— all of which is present "not only in the form of knowledge, but also as [the] immediate organs of social practice" in industry.

After all, concludes Marx in this passage from the *Grundrisse*, "Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules, etc." These are all examples of "natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature." Like Hegel, he treats these as "products of human industry," i.e., "organs of the human brain, created by the human hand." They are the "power of knowledge, objectified." These statements from the *Grundrisse* have been interpreted as expressing deeply anti-ecological sentiments given that Marx justifies the regulation of the metabolism through industrial means. The "watchman and regulator...inserts the process of nature, transformed into an industrial process, as a means between inorganic nature, mastering it." However, Marx concludes at the end of all this that the progressive mastery over the portions of nature with which we interact is itself an essential aspect of the "human participation in nature." ⁷⁰⁵

If the human relation to nature and natural necessity is conceived of as an external relation, then the relation to one's own needs and necessary relations with others is also reduced to an external affair. To relate to the nature transformed by labour, to previously objectified labour, as an externality implies that labour also relates to the actual process of objectification, or

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 704-706.

the objective activity of labour, as a process of self-externalization and estrangement. But, in Marx's conception of socialist society, individuals do not stand in such an alien relation vis-a-vis the objective moments and material conditions of their own life-activity. On the contrary, they relate to both the *inorganic body* of nature, and the extended *organs of the human brain* or *organs of social practice*, i.e., the *objectified power of knowledge* in machinery, technology, etc., as *integral* to their *being*, as part of their *objective presence* as individuals. Precisely because nature is to be universally appropriated and mastered by a society of more fully-developed individuals, it would no longer be dominated in the way in which it has been by capitalist society.

Marx's conception of socialism does not envision such a society exploiting the world recreated by its own revolutionary praxis. Instead, he believed that, in a higher society, this relation would take on a 'transparent' form. Individuals would relate to the portions of nature transformed by labour as what they are: viz., not mere objects of utility, but, rather, so many objectifications of their own capacities, needs, and connections with one another. Production, and the general intercourse with nature, would then appear as the development and application of one's own general intellectual, aesthetic, etc., capacities, as the appropriation of the total social wealth of the individual and of the individual's total social bond to others. It is the "appropriation" of the universality and "productive power" of the individual: i.e., her own "understanding of nature," her own "mastery over it" as a "social individual" capable of consciously directing and applying the developed capacities of the "general intellect."

To be sure, when Marx and Engels wrote about the mastery over the material metabolism with nature, they were primarily concerned with overcoming the blind necessity of capitalist relations so as to secure the conditions and relations necessary for this free and full development of all individuals. Yet, as registered in Part II of this dissertation as well as in this chapter, they also acknowledged that the irrationality of the capitalist system of production entails negative

environmental implications which would have to be resolved by such a higher society's rational regulation of the relation to nature. Nature's so-called "revenge" upon society— I say 'so-called' because Engels really treats it not as an act of nature, but as one of the many 'anarchic' results of our own economy— this revenge can only be exchanged for reconciliation by consciously controlling the metabolism. Once it is no longer subject to the blind necessity of capital, Marx believed it would be possible to repair the relation to nature in a social form also appropriate to the full development of human beings. In the end, then, the Marx of the Grundrisse and Capital stresses the same essential content that Adorno and Horkheimer's "critique of enlightenment" claims to: viz., it seeks to "prepare the way for a positive notion of enlightenment which will release it from the entanglement in blind domination," including over nature. 706 But Marx's conception of nature is underpinned by philosophical assumptions quite different than those which inform Frankfurt critiques of it. For Marx and Engels, only a society which has mastered its metabolism with the earth, and overcome the artificial division specific to capitalist production, will be able to free itself from dominating nature as if it were something 'external'. The union with nature can be restored only in a higher society, i.e. one which has given the greatest impetus to the realization of human nature and full development of the general intellectual powers of the individual.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that Adorno, Schmidt, Leiss and other critical theorists extended their critiques of the *instrumental* and/or *technological* 'rationality' of capitalism into criticisms of Marx's conception of the relation to nature in a higher society. They allege that, in

Adorno, Theodor W., and Horkheimer, Max, <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u>, John Cumming (trans.), (Continuum: New York; 1972), xv-xvi.

the sort of socialism which he envisages, all of the technical forces and apparatuses of control developed by capital would simply be redirected by classless society towards the domination of nature. According to this reading, Marx's view of nature, and of the social relation to it, was confined to a utilitarian perspective. However, far from endorsing utilitarianism, this chapter has argued that his critique of political economy was explicitly anti-utilitarian well into the late writings. The needs, pleasures, capabilities and activities of individuals, as well as their relations with each other and with the earth itself, are not reducible to Bentham's one-sided principle. And where the lives of individuals are indeed whittled down to this narrow circle of utility, as in a capitalist economy, it amounts to nothing less than what he referred to as a dehumanizing system of universal prostitution. Utilitarianism is a doctrine which treats the total social wealth of the human personality as an entirely accidental, external and commercial affair—and, hence, Marx believed such a philosophy corresponded perfectly with the estranged appearances of modern life.

This chapter has also tried to demonstrate that Marx did not share the Frankfurters' philosophic assumptions about the 'iron cage' of reason, nor is his theory of the metabolism susceptible to their critiques of it. Rather, we found that his conception of 'rationally regulating' the realm of necessity in no way corresponds with what they characterize as 'instrumental' rationality. In fact, the latter is more consistent what Marx himself criticizes as the *irrationality* of the bourgeois economy as a "system of general utility," a system involving the "general exploitation" of both natural forces and human qualities. His writings therefore present the ecological problem as a product of the blind necessity of specifically capitalist relations. It is *this* economy which results in the domination of nature *precisely because* individuals do not rationally regulate and consciously control their own intercourse with it.

Adorno, Schmidt and others challenge that this conception of the 'mastery' of the metabolism in socialism reproduces in theory capitalism's 'domination' of nature. Yet, that Marx

and Engels simultaneously refer to the 'mastery' of human nature suggests that they must have meant something quite different by the term. I have elaborated and defended the reading that Marx did not adhere to the view that the nature mediated, modified, and mastered by labour would be reduced to an object of pure utility and exploitation. To do so would only reaffirm the alienation which reduces one's own activities and relations with others to the same. The ethical content of his critique of political economy is in fact oriented toward the undoing of this very mystification. He grasped the nature transformed by human practice as the objectification of human being— and, for that reason, no mere object of utility. In an emancipated society, these working subjects would relate to the objective moments and material conditions of their reality as belonging to their inorganic and objective body. As such, this chapter has argued that Marx's ontology of internal relations does not analyze the nature with which humans interact as something external and necessarily alien, but, rather, as part of their being and presence as socially-related individuals. In a freely-associated form of production, they would relate to nature in labour through the appropriation of their own universal powers and general intellect, and as something integral to the enjoyment of their own activities, needs and relations with each other.

Freedom and Necessity: From Marx to Marcuse and Schmidt

Introduction

In my judgement, grasping the internal connection between Marx's political philosophy and his philosophy of nature requires that we grasp the meaning of his distinction between the realms of freedom and necessity in a much commented passage from Volume III of *Capital*. Marcuse and Schmidt also emphasize the importance of this question as a way of coming to terms with Marx's understanding of the relation to nature in socialism. However, this chapter argues that the interpretations which they offer are untenable.

In his final writings from 1967 onward, Marcuse reversed his previous interpretation of the relevant passage from 'The Trinity Formula' chapter. During this late period of reassessment, he claimed that, in this "classical" rendition given in Volume III, Marx defined the working-day in a socialist society as a continued "realm of estrangement." The time spent working would be reduced, but the actual process of necessary work would remain inescapably "unfree." However, he also contends that the progress towards full automation during the 20th century has undermined the validity of Marx's distinction. Breaking with what he came to regard as an "obsolete" division between work-time and free-time, Marcuse emphasized instead the possibility for freedom to emerge within the realm of necessity. In the first portions of this chapter, I will substantiate that, contrary to Marcuse's claims, Marx envisioned the same possibility. In fact, we will find that the relevant passage from Capital elaborates specific conditions for such freedom within the realm of necessary work. The realization of freedom was not reducible for Marx to the expansion of the free-time reserved for end-in-itself activity. Free-time was not only form of freedom which he conceived of. Instead, he imagines the possibility of

liberation within, and not merely beyond, necessary labour.

Schmidt interprets Marx's remarks in Capital on what remains of necessary labour-time in socialism as highlighting the ontological break in the development of his philosophy of nature. The earlier and more "utopian" notion of the humanization of nature is allegedly exchanged in the later and "more critical" writings for the insoluble "problem of non-identity." Although he acknowledges that it is mediated and transformed by human practice, Schmidt claims that the insuperable non-identity of nature is merely confirmed by the continued necessity of labour in socialism. The intransigent portions of nature were ostensibly represented by this mature Marx as eternal limits to self-determination and self-realization, everlasting nature-given barriers to praxis, freedom, and human happiness. Regardless of however much it is made into an object for-us, says Schmidt, nature's objectivity remains in-itself indifferent and external to the progress of civilization, just as humanity's relation to it through labour remains unalterably instrumental, unfree, and alien. I will argue that all of these shortcomings in Schmidt's interpretation of Marx can be traced back to his uncritical relationship to Adorno. He actually re-reads elements of Adorno's critique of Marx back into Marx's late writings. In the place of the dialectic of negativity appropriated from Hegel, we find Adorno's 'negative dialectic'. The historical materialist principle of the 'priority of external nature' is substituted with Adorno's neo-Kantian notion of the 'preponderance of the object'. And Marx's statement about the convergence between nature and history is replaced instead with Adorno's criticism of this hypothesis as simultaneously true and false. Having projected Adorno into Marx's late writings in this way, Schmidt can then refer us to the "dialectical duality" and "inextinguishable internal moment" of antinomy in Marx's materialism!

Marcuse on the Relationship between Freedom and Necessity

In my opinion, Marx's late writings envisage the possibility of a radically new relation to nature developing within socialism. We are given a glimpse into that vision in the aforementioned passage from the 'Trinity Formula' chapter of *Capital* in which he distinguishes between the realms of freedom and necessity. But the significance of this distinction, and its implications for Marx's philosophy of nature, have been completely misrepresented by historical and contemporary secondary literature. Marcuse, who expended a considerable amount of effort thinking through this question and Marx's response to it, also defended the view that it was of the greatest relevance to both an appreciation of Marx's conception of nature, as well as to the contemporary theory and practice of socialism. He believed, not without justice, that the very *idea* of socialism— both in Marx's time, and a century later— turned upon theorizing the meaning of this distinction.⁷⁰⁷ However, while Marcuse was right to emphasize the theoretical and practical importance of this question, his interpretation of the relevant passage from Volume III of *Capital* is underpinned by a mistaken assumption about the character of work in socialism: namely, the assumption that Marx characterizes the realm of necessity as a realm of non-freedom.

To be fair, Marcuse's interpretation underwent considerable change between the 1940s and 1970s. In his earlier writings, he had argued that Marx's political philosophy is predicated not only upon a rational reorganization of the forces of production toward the aim of satisfying human needs, but also upon a radical remaking of the production process itself. From *Reason and Revolution* to *One Dimensional Man*, he contends that Marx's conception of socialism is dependent not merely upon the reduction of the working-day to a minimum, but upon the transformation of work into a form of free activity and mode of self-actualization. Yet, certain tendencies within Marcuse's own thought, which were present from *Eros and Civilization*

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The End of Utopia', <u>Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia,</u> Shapiro and Weber (trans.), (Penguin Publishers: London; 1970), 62-66. Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration', *Praxis: A Philosophical Journal*, 5 (1969), 22-23.

onward, eventually provoked him into a 'reconsideration' of this earlier reading. His increased emphasis upon desublimated forms of play, turn toward the utopian socialism of Fourier, notion of a fully automated society, as well as his critiques of technological rationality and of the performance principle— all of these combine to lead him into a late period of reappraisal.

The decisive break occurs in 1967, when he begins to reinterpret the realm of necessity as a realm of continued estrangement within socialism. While the time spent working may be limited, the actual activity of working, he now insists of Marx's view in *Capital*, remains fundamentally unfree. As such, during this period of reassessment, he came to criticize the very distinction between necessity and freedom as one which is still theoretically confined within the contradictions of capitalism. The division which *Capital* establishes between work-time and freetime is itself reflective of the division of labour and life within modern society. However, for Marcuse, the course of the technological rationality of 20th century capitalism meant that this division between labour-time and free-time had become obsolete, belonging to a now defunct stage in the history of socialist theory. Total automation could abolish work by transforming it into and/or substituting it with play, opening-up aesthetic horizons of human possibility unimagined by the Marx of the 'Trinity Formula'.

In his earlier works, such as *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse had by contrast stressed the philosophic *continuities* between the early and late Marx precisely with respect to the concepts of labour and nature. Labour is a condition of existence in every form of society, but he suggests that, in both the early and late texts, Marx envisioned an 'abolition' of labour in the dialectical sense of the expression. The tendency toward the quantitative reduction of the time spent in labour, although it has its absolute limits, would also be accompanied by a qualitative transformation of the labour process itself. Given that this mode of production would so different from what prevails in both precapitalist and capitalist societies, Marcuse contends that Marx was

even reticent at times to refer to such activity *as 'labour'*. In other instances, however, Marcuse notes that he places a wholly positive emphasis upon labour as a potentially and essentially free form of self-realization.

Labor in its true form is a medium for man's true self-fulfillment, for the full development of his potentialities; the conscious utilization of the forces of nature should take place for his satisfaction and enjoyment. In its current form, however, it cripples all human faculties and enjoins satisfaction...Marx's social practice embodies the negativity as well as its overcoming. The negativity of capitalist society lies in its alienation of labor; the negation of this negativity will come with the complete abolition of alienated labor...Elsewhere, Marx says the same thing: 'The communistic revolution is directed against the preceding mode of activity, does away with labor'. And again, 'the question is not the liberation but the abolition of labor'...[L]abor has already been made 'free': free labor is the achievement of capitalist society...These amazing formulations in Marx's earliest writings all contain the Hegelian term Aufhebung, so that abolition also carries the meaning that a content is restored to its true form. Marx, however, envisioned the future mode of labor to be so different from the prevailing one that he hesitated to use the same term 'labor' to designate alike the material process of capitalist society...An 'association of free individuals' to Marx is a society wherein the material process of production no longer determines the entire pattern of human life...He contemplates a society that gives to each not according to his work but his needs. Mankind becomes free only when the material perpetuation of life is a function of the abilities and happiness of associated individuals...The early writings took labor to be the general form of man's struggle with nature...basic to all forms of society...To be sure, the struggle with the 'realm of necessity' will continue with man's passage to the stage of his 'actual history'...Nevertheless, when society has become the free subject of this struggle, the latter will be waged in entirely different forms. For this reason, it is not permissible to impose the dialectical structure of pre-history upon the future history of mankind. 708

As noted in the previous chapter, although Marcuse accepted the critique of instrumental reason elaborated by Horkheimer and Adorno, he nonetheless retained the radical hope that the social revolution might restructure these productive forces so as to allow for the full flourishing of human potential. In a capitalist society, of course, the immense productive forces are not oriented toward human emancipation, but, instead, are used as a means of degrading man and man's relation to nature. However, like Marx, Marcuse regarded the capitalist "progress in the mastery of necessity" as a prerequisite phase of development. A higher form of society would have to radically reorganize these forces of production for new ends, effectively redirecting this social mastery over nature toward the aim of human liberation. In this respect, Marcuse believed

Marcuse, Herbert, <u>Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud</u>, (Vintage Books: New York; 1962), 276, 282-283, 292-293, 295, 316-317.

that the upper "limits of technical possibility" were completely "incompatible" with capitalist conditions, and could only become a "reality" with freely-associated labour as its basis.⁷⁰⁹ As he writes in the *Essays on Liberation*, the "libertarian possibilities of technology and science are effectively contained within the framework of given reality."⁷¹⁰ This essential content is 'contained' within capitalism in both senses of the term, i.e., in that it is both *immanent to*, and yet *limited by*, the form which it currently assumes.

In the revised 1961 'Preface' to Eros and Civilization, Marcuse argues that the utopian implications of his earlier studies had led him to adopt the view that this technological rationality of modern society is potentially self-superseding in a Marxian sense. The forces which have been used up until now as a means of domination may find themselves being reoriented toward emancipation and reconciliation. Marx too, he says, had recognized that the tendency to reduce necessary work-time in order to expand its surplus form would, if completed, lead to its own suspension— i.e., the passing over from "quantitative" into "qualitative change." The "end of technology rationality" in both senses of the expression (i.e., its "limit" and "goal") is marked by this dialectical "turn from quantity into quality" in the labour process. According to Marcuse, the movement toward full automation within capitalist society has therefore opened-up undreamt of horizons of human possibility. Through the constant marginalization of necessary labour-time and elimination of direct forms of production, capital has created the concrete conditions for the future "reversal" of the existing relation between free-time and work-time. Instead of working full-time, the advanced contradictions of capitalist industry have produced the prospect of "free time becoming full time" in socialism.⁷¹¹

Marcuse, Herbert, One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society, (Beacon Press: Boston; 1966), 35.

Marcuse, Herbert, <u>An Essay on Liberation</u>, (Beacon Press: Boston; 1969), 45.

[&]quot;The very idea of a non-repressive civilization, conceived as a real possibility of the established civilization at the present stage, appears frivolous. Even if one admits this possibility on theoretical grounds, as an

The technological processes of mechanization and standardization might release individual energy into a yet uncharted realm of freedom beyond necessity...[T]he individual would be liberated from the work world's imposing upon him alien needs and alien possibilities. The individual would be free to exert autonomy over a life that would be his own...This is a goal within the capabilities of advanced industrial civilization, the 'end' of technological rationality...To the extent to which the work world is conceived of as a machine and mechanized accordingly, it becomes the potential basis of a new freedom for man...Here is the internal contradiction of this civilization: the irrational element in its rationality. It is the token of its achievements. The industrial society which makes technology and science its own is organized for the ever-more-effective domination of man and nature...It becomes irrational when the success of these efforts opens new dimensions of human realization...[Hence] the institutions which served the struggle for existence [in capitalist society] cannot serve the pacification of existence [in socialism]. Life as an end is qualitatively different from life as a means...To be sure, labor must precede the reduction of labor, and industrialization must precede the development of human needs and satisfactions. But as all freedom depends on the conquest of alien necessity, the realization of freedom depends on the techniques of this conquest...Advanced industrial society is approaching the stage where continued progress would demand the radical subversion of the prevailing direction and organization of progress. This stage would be reached when material production (including the necessary services) becomes automated to the extent that all vital needs can be satisfied while necessary labor time is reduced to marginal time. From this point on, technical progress would transcend the realm of necessity, where it served as the instrument of domination and exploitation which thereby limited its rationality; technology would become subject to the free play of faculties in the struggle for the pacification of nature and of society. Such a state is envisioned in Marx's notion of the 'abolition of labor'...Within the established societies, the continued application of scientific rationality would have reached a terminal point with the mechanization of all socially necessary but individually repressive labor...But this stage would also be the end and limit of scientific rationality in its established structure and direction. Further progress would mean the break, the turn of quantity into quality. It would open the possibility of an essentially new human reality— namely, existence in free time on the basis of fulfilled vital needs...In other words, the completion of the technological reality would be not only the prerequisite, but also the rationale for transcending the technological rationality...[T]he break in turn depends on the continued existence of the technical base itself. For it is this base which has rendered possible the satisfaction of needs and the reduction of toil— it remains the very base of all forms of human freedom. The qualitative change rather lies in the reconstruction of this base—that is, in its development with a view of different ends.⁷¹²

In this passage from *One Dimensional Man*, and in the previous passage from *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse acknowledges something of great importance. Namely, again, that Marx believed that the tendency toward the quantitative reduction of the working-day would reach a

extension of the achievements of science and technology, one must be aware of the fact that these same achievements are being used to the contrary, namely, to serve the interests of domination...But, at the same time, the capabilities of this society, and the need for an ever increasing productivity, engender forces which seem to undermine the foundations of the system. These explosive forces find their most telling manifestation in automation. Automation threatens to render possible the reversal of the relation between free time and working time on which the established civilization rests: the possibility of working time becoming marginal, and free time becoming full time." Ibid., vi.

Marcuse, Herbert, <u>One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society</u>, (Beacon Press: Boston; 1966), 2-3, 16-18, 230-231.

point beyond which it would have to undergo distinctly qualitative change. Although he certainly advocated for the minimalization of necessary labour, Marx also recognized that, apart from that, labour itself would also have to be reconstructed as an ennobling, creative, and even enjoyable form of activity. Not only is the time spent in work to be pressed down to a reasonable limit, but the actual work itself must be totally transformed into a mode of self-actualization. This is the meaning which we have seen Marcuse correctly ascribe to Marx's conception of the 'abolition' of labour. Although necessary labour remains a function of every form of society, the activity of freely associated producers would be so distinct from all previous forms of production that Marx even characterized it as the disappearance of the direct form of labour and vanishing away of unmastered necessity. It would be a form of production determined entirely by the individual's appropriation of the total social wealth of her own general powers and the comprehensiveness of her own relations with others.

To be sure, in *One Dimensional Man* Marcuse's reading also rightly places a great emphasis upon the possibility which industrialization provides for expanding the realm of endin-itself freedom to its outermost limits in the future. The technological rationality of modern society is self-superseding because the tendency of automation is to contract necessary labour-time to a near vanishing-point. "Automation, once it becomes *the* basis of material production, would revolutionize the whole society...Complete automation in the realm of necessity would open the dimension of free time....This would be the historical transcendence toward a new civilization." However, notwithstanding this emphasis upon the marginalization of labour-time, Marcuse can also be found arguing as late as 1964-65 that, in addition to the "[d]istribution of the necessities of life regardless of work performance, reduction of working time to a minimum, [and] universal all-sided education toward exchangeability of functions," the mature Marx

⁷¹³ Ibid., 36-37.

understood "self-determination at the very base of human existence, namely in the dimension of necessary labor," as the "most radical and complete revolution."⁷¹⁴ Right up until *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse sees no contradiction whatsoever on this point between the Marx of the *Grundrisse* and the Marx of *Capital*. In Marx's conception of socialism, the "free play of thought and imagination assumes a rational and directing function in the realization of a pacified existence of man and nature...[through] the satisfaction of man's material needs, [and] the rational organization of the realm of necessity."⁷¹⁵

However, Marcuse's reading of Marx began to shift in 1965. In *The Individual in the 'Great Society'*, written the year after the publication of *One-Dimensional Man*, he continues to defend the view that freedom is what "links the two realms" for Marx because the "'realm of freedom' presupposes a social organization of labor guided by the standards of utmost rationality in the satisfaction of individual needs for the society as a whole." With this rationally regulated realm of necessity as its basis, free-time could expand proportionate to the degree that necessary work-time is reduced. The increased time spent outside of work would be "free time in the literal sense that it would be under the control of the individual." At the same time, Marcuse still continues to acknowledge that a certain liberation is possible *within* labour, and not merely *beyond* it. In the "Marxian concept, man is free also in the realm of necessity."

Yet, in *The Individual in the 'Great Society'*, he starts to understate the full meaning of this freedom, whittling it down to the simplest sense of 'self-determination'. The human being is 'free' in work, he concludes, only "to the extent to which he has organized it in accordance with his human needs in transparent rationality." But it "remains a 'realm of necessity"— which Marcuse now understands to mean a form of *alienation* "imposed upon man by the continued

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., 234-235.

struggle with nature, scarcity, and weakness." The "time spent in this struggle would be greatly reduced," but, unfortunately, would likely "still take up much of the individual's existence." At most, this so-called 'freedom' in work-time resolves itself into something inescapably instrumental for Marcuse: viz., freedom in this field is merely a means for creating the conditions for end-in-itself freedom. According to this reading of *Capital*, liberation in labour amounts to merely redirecting the existing capitalist mastery over the metabolism with nature toward the ends of human emancipation. But these ends would continue to be enjoyed outside of any actual time spent in work. In this interpretation of the late Marx, work is represented as a regrettable sphere of irresolutely instrumental, unfree and unaesthetic activity.⁷¹⁶

As we have seen, in *Reason and Revolution* Marcuse interpreted Marx as arguing that labour in its "true form" is a mode of man's "self-fulfillment" allowing for the "full development of his potentialities." The "struggle with the 'realm of necessity' will continue" in socialism, but it would be "waged in entirely different forms." In *One Dimensional Man*, he suggested that Marx envisioned a form of production governed by the "free play of faculties in the struggle for the pacification of nature"— a "most radical and complete revolution" indeed. However, in the writings composed during the last half decade of his life, Marcuse reinterprets the relevant passage from *Capital* in a completely different manner.

In the 1967 *The End of Utopia*, he claims that the 'Trinity Formula' represents work as fundamentally "unfree" activity; the realm of necessity remains an ineradicable "realm of alienated labour" even *within* a freer society.⁷¹⁷ At the same time, as already noted, he also challenged that this very distinction belongs to a now antiquated phase in the theoretical

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Individual in the Great Society', <u>Towards a Critical Theory of Society</u>, Douglas Kellner (trans.), (Routledge: New York; 2011), 28.

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The End of Utopia', <u>Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia,</u> Shapiro and Weber (trans.), (Penguin Publishers: London; 1970), 62-66.

development of socialism. The technological rationality of 20th century capitalism expanded the practical possibilities for emancipation in ways which were either unanticipated, or deemed utopian, by the Marx of *Capital*. This is why, in his 1969 *The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration*, Marcuse goes so far as to contend that Marx's distinction is reflective of the *bourgeois* "division" between "work" and "happiness." Marx, he claims mistakenly, "seems to believe that free human activity is essentially different from socially necessary work."⁷¹⁸ Marx assumes that "freedom cannot enter the realm of necessary labour," at least not in the "classical Marxian concept" found in *Capital*.⁷¹⁹ This is why Marcuse began to argue in the late 1960s that a 'return' to the *Grundrisse* was necessary inasmuch as it, but not *Capital*, envisioned a "radical transformation of the labour process" which "could make possible free activity in the realm of labour."⁷²⁰

Nowhere, not even in the *Reconsideration*, does Marcuse offer us an explanation or justification for his about-face. The question then becomes *which* of his interpretations is the accurate one? Is it the Marcuse who suggests that Marx treated labour as a potentially creative form of self-objectification involving the free development of the intellectual and aesthetic energies of individuals, or, by contrast, the Marcuse who suggests that the Marx of *Capital* broke with this view by treating the realm of necessity in socialism as a realm of continued estrangement?

As Kellner notes, it is obvious that Marcuse "struggled with the concept of the relation between the realms of freedom and necessity." Eventually, he turned away from what he came to

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration', *Praxis: A Philosophical Journal*, 5 (1969), 22-23.

Marcuse quoted in Kellner, Douglas, <u>Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism</u>, (University of California Press: Berkeley; 1984), 325.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 325.

see as the rigid dualism of *Capital*, returning to the more 'utopian' vision of the *Grundrisse*.⁷²¹ Now, to his credit, "Marcuse was one of the first 'Western Marxists' to see the significance of the Grundrisse for Marxian theory," emphasizing its "model of liberated labour in several essays and in *ODM*'— which is to say, before its general reception in the English-speaking world.⁷²² However, Kellner glosses over the fact that One Dimensional Man does not identify any sort of contradiction between the Grundrisse and Capital on this question of labour in socialism. Instead, Marcuse repeatedly paraphrases Marx's remark from the 'Trinity Formula' that freedom can also exist within the realm of necessity. But, by 1967, Marcuse has completely "rejected" his endorsement of this previous reading, abandoning what he now sees as Capital's "unbridgeable gap between the realms of freedom and necessity." Thereafter, "Marx's Grundrisse [alone] was of utmost importance in helping Marcuse to envisage a Marxian notion of liberated labour and the realm of freedom appearing within the realm of necessity"— in comparison to which the "classical" conception elaborated in Volume III appears not only anachronistic, but, indeed, symptomatic of the antitheses of capitalist society. 723 In Capital, Marcuse now alleges in his new reading, Marx merely speaks to the "reduction of the working day," but not the "transformation of work itself."724

This period of reassessment reinforced Marcuse's view that the technological rationality of capitalist society is self-sublating in the sense that it would bring about the *end* of all utopianism, i.e., the realization of the *final goal* of utopian socialism. The practical horizons opened-up by the technical mastery over the metabolism has meant that the 'utopian' ideas are no longer utopian, no longer a 'no-where', but real possibilities growing within the womb of the

⁷²¹ Ibid., 325.

⁷²² Ibid., 470.

⁷²³ Ibid., 324.

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration', *Praxis: A Philosophical Journal*, 5 (1969), 22-23.

present.⁷²⁵ He felt that these new possibilities compelled us to rethink and retheorize what has ostensibly become an increasingly "obsolete" definition provided by the Marx of Volume III.

Today the notion of the end of utopia implies the necessity of at least discussing a new definition of socialism. The discussion would be based on the question whether decisive elements of the Marxian concept of socialism do not belong to a now obsolete stage in the development of the forces of production. This obsolescence is expressed most clearly, in my opinion, in the distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity according to which the realm of freedom can be conceived of and can exist only beyond the realm of necessity. This division implies that the realm of necessity remains so in the sense of a realm of alienated labor, which means, as Marx says, that the only thing that can happen within it is for labor to be organized as rationally as possible and reduced as much as possible. But it remains labor in and of the realm of necessity and thereby unfree. I believe that one of the new possibilities, which gives an indication of the qualitative difference between the free and the unfree society, is that of letting the realm of freedom appear within the realm of necessity— in labor and not only beyond labor. To put this speculative idea in a provocative form, I would say that we must face the possibility that the path to socialism may proceed from science to utopia and not from utopia to science...What is at stake is the idea of a new theory of man, not only as theory but also as a way of existence: the genesis and development of a vital need for freedom and of the vital needs of freedom— of a freedom no longer based on and limited by scarcity and the necessity of alienated labor...The progressive reduction of physical labor power in the production process (the process of material production) and its replacement to an increasing degree by mental labor concentrate socially necessary labor in the class of technicians, scientists, engineers, etc. This suggests possible liberation from alienated labor. It is of course a question only of tendencies, but of tendencies that are grounded in the development and the continuing existence of capitalist society...And if capitalism heeds this requirement and continues automation regardless, it will come up against its own inner limit...In the Grundrisse Marx showed that complete automation of socially necessary labor is incompatible with the preservation of capitalism. Automation is only a catchword for this tendency, through which necessary physical labor, alienated labor, is withdrawn to an ever greater extent from the material process of production. This tendency, if freed from the fetters of capitalist production, would lead to a creative experimentation with the productive forces...[The] play with the potentialities of human and nonhuman nature would become the content of social labor.⁷²⁶

He repeats this same point in his *Reconsideration*. The "New Left," he suggests there, could unlock possibilities which were dismissed as utopian by the Marx of *Capital*, but which are nonetheless real potentialities developed only through the contradictions of 20th century

He claims that, earlier, social theory had been limited to calling for the "enlargement of the realm of freedom." The New Left of 1968 showed that "what is denounced as 'utopian' is no longer that which has 'no place'...The more these technical capacities outgrow the framework of exploitation...the more they propel the drives and aspirations of men to a point at which the necessities of life cease to demand aggressive performances....and the 'non-necessary' becomes a vital need...Marx and Engels refrained from developing concrete concepts of the possible forms of freedom in a socialist society; today, such restrain is no longer justified. The growth of the productive forces suggests possibilities of human liberty very different from, and beyond those envisaged at the earlier stage." See Marcuse, Herbert, An Essay on Liberation, (Beacon Press: Boston; 1969), 3, 5.

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The End of Utopia', <u>Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia</u>, Shapiro and Weber (trans.), (Penguin Publishers: London; 1970), 62-66.

capitalism. Again, he acknowledges once more that there was an earlier "Marxian conception of the relation between freedom and necessity" to be found in the *Grundrisse*, except that he reiterates that this "most advanced vision of a free society" was abandoned by, and is completely inconsistent with, the "classical" conception found in *Capital*. The "content of socialism" as found in Marx's critique of political economy must be therefore be

preserved,— aufheoben, in a more radical, a more 'utopian' and at the same time more realistic concept of a free society, a vision of socialism which may perhaps be best characterized by a new relationship between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity, which differs from the classical conception of this relationship in Marx's Capital. I recall to you the classical Marxian conception. Human freedom in a true sense is possible beyond the realm of necessity. The realm of necessity itself forever remains a realm of unfreedom, and the optimum that can be achieved there is a significant reduction of the working day, and a high degree of rationality...Now this conception epitomizes the division of human existence into labor time and free time, the division between reason, rationality on the one hand, and pleasure, joy, fulfillment on the other hand, the division between alienated and non-alienated labor. According to this classical Marxian concept, the realm of necessity would remain a realm of alienation, no matter how much the working day is being reduced. Moreover this conception seems to imply that free human activity is essentially different from socially necessary work. Nor does the earlier Marxian notion of the all-around individual who can do one thing today and another tomorrow seem applicable to a highly developed industrial society. I am aware of the fact that there is still another Marxian conception of the relation between freedom and necessity in the famous and often quoted passage from the Grundrisse...This concept envisages conditions of full automation, where the immediate producer is indeed; 'dissociated' from the material process of production and become a free 'Subject' in the sense that he can play with, experiment with the technical material, with the possibilities of the machine and of the things produced and transformed by the machines. But as far as I know this most advanced vision of a free society was apparently dropped by Marx himself and no longer appears in *Capital* and the later writings.⁷²⁷

As Kellner notes, Marcuse came to feel during this late period in his intellectual development that "Marxism is not utopian enough, for the technical-material possibilities at hand" have developed far beyond Marx's wildest imaginations. The technological rationality of advanced capitalism has made

possible [an] even more radical and emancipatory social transformation than Marx envisaged. In describing the most advanced and emancipatory possibilities of a new society, Marcuse now rejects the previous ontological dualisms in his thought between the realm of necessity and freedom, and work and play. He formulates his critique of these dichotomies as a critique of the Marxian concept which conceives of the real of freedom only beyond the realm of necessity, which remains a realm of alienated labor,

Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration', *Praxis: A Philosophical Journal*, 5 (1969), 22-23.

as if one could be free only in a realm beyond labor. Whereas in earlier work, Marcuse seemed to maintain this distinction...[he later] posits the possibility of non-alienated labor which can be genuinely self-fulfilling, and thus reduces the sharp division in his theory between labor and play, as well as overcoming the excessively negative concept of labor as inevitable necessity, unfreedom...In this Marcusian view, the "realm of freedom" may perhaps appear in the work process itself, in the performance of socially necessary labor...By the late 1960s, these reflections led Marcuse to criticize the concept in Marx's Capital III which maintains "Human freedom in the true sense is possible only beyond the realm of necessity." Marcuse now argues that Marx's distinction between the realm of freedom and necessity epitomizes the division of the human existence into labor time and free time, the division between reason, rationality on the one hand, and pleasure, joy, fulfillment on the other hand, the division between alienated and non-alienated labor. According to the classical Marxian concept, the realm of necessity would remain a realm of necessity, no matter how much the working day is reduced...[F]ree human activity is essentially different, and must remain essentially different from socially necessary work...Marcuse then argues that there is another Marxian conception in the Grundrisse which posits the possibility of freedom and creative activity within the realm of necessary labor, thus overcoming the dichotomy between free creative activity and socially necessary labor in Capital III. 728

During this late period of reappraisal, Marcuse argued that, in Marx's division in *Capital*, the "same subject lives a different life in the two realms"— it amounts to a division of the human being itself. In the "Marxian conception," the "realm of necessity would continue under socialism to such an extent that real human freedom would prevail only outside the entire sphere of socially necessary labour." "Alienation" is thereby raised into a metaphysical, rather than a historical, contradiction in Marcuse's reading of Marx because it can only be "reduced with the progressive reduction of the working day, but the latter would remain a day of unfreedom, rational but not free." However, as noted, Marcuse also felt that the productive powers developed since Marx wrote *Capital* have created the "possibility of freedom within the realm of necessity." The "quantitative reduction of necessary labor could turn into quality (freedom), not in proportion to the reduction but rather to the transformation of the working day, a transformation in which the stupefying, enervating, psuedo-automatic jobs of capitalism would be abolished." He characterizes this "ingression of freedom into the realm of necessity" as culminating in the

Kellner, Douglas, 'Introduction', <u>Marxism, Revolution and Utopia: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse</u>, Vol. VI, Douglas Kellner (ed.), (Routledge: London; 2014), 45-47.

"union between causality by necessity and causality by freedom." 729

Marx on the Possibilities for Freedom within the Realm of Necessity

This 'Marcusian' idea of freedom emerging within the realm of necessity would be a substantive and original contribution to the theoretical development of socialism if the Marx of *Capital* had not already formulated it a century earlier—and, indeed, been given credit for it at one time by Marcuse. If Marcuse's re-interpretation of *Capital* were only accurate, then, we would be right to reject with him its 'classical' conception of socialism as an irrelevant one, and embrace instead the more 'utopian' sentiments expressed in the *Grundrisse*. If the Marx of the 'Trinity Formula' really did conceive of work in a socialist society as an ineradicable form of non-freedom, Marcuse would be right to retheorize the meaning of the distinction between freedom and necessity in Marxism.

However, Marcuse is deeply mistaken about Marx's conception of labour. By supposing that Marx defines the realm of labour as a realm of estrangement, which can only be reduced but never eliminated by socialism, I believe that Marcuse contributes to what Sayers calls the "almost universally misunderstood distinction" between freedom and necessity in *Capital*. As he suggests, "in distinguishing between a realm of 'freedom' from a realm of 'necessity'" in Volume III, "Marx is not making a distinction between spheres of freedom and unfreedom." It is a "mistake— though a common one— to infer that the realm of necessity must therefore be a realm of unfreedom," but there is "no evidence that Marx makes this assumption, either here or elsewhere" in *Capital*. 730 Contrary to what Marcuse suggests in his writings from this late period, nowhere in the relevant passage, nor in any of Marx's other works for that matter, do we find

Marcuse, Herbert, An Essay on Liberation, (Beacon Press: Boston; 1969), 20-22.

⁷³⁰ Sayers, Sean, Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes, (Palgrave: Hampshire; 2011), 115.

him characterizing work in socialism as "unfree" activity and the realm of necessity as a "realm of alienation." He is mistaken in interpreting Marx's dialectical distinction as one still confined within the antagonisms indicative of the capitalist economy. Instead, in *Capital* Marx argues that, in contrast to the mental and moral degradation of wage-labour, freely associated producers would regulate the entire production process through the application of their intellectual and aesthetic faculties. Work would become a free form of action, no longer hindered by the conditions of alienation.

At first glance, admittedly, Marcuse's reading seems to find some confirmation in the particular passage from the 'Trinity Formula'. It appears as if any notion of the humanization of nature, and of the human relation to nature in work, has been abandoned by Marx. He states there that, irrespective of however much it is radically reorganized and rationally regulated, this sphere of instrumental activity "always remains a realm of necessity." The truest "realm of freedom," he insists unequivocally, "really begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends." It "lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper." That "true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond it," i.e., outside of the time spent performing work-related activities. This is why Marx insists that the "reduction of the working day is the basic prerequisite" for the cominginto-being of a higher society. The significance which he attached to this struggle over the length of the working-day cannot be overstated. Capitalism's contradictory tendency to increase surplus labour by reducing its necessary form is, for the same reason, characterized as its "civilizing influence" and great "historic justification." 731 Only by doing so does capital create the presuppositions for its own suspension, and for the genesis of a form of production no longer

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959.

governed by socially-necessary labour-time.

At the same time, however, just as the capitalist impulse to extend the working-day beyond its normal length reached its natural limits, so too did Marx believe that the tendency toward the reduction of necessary labour-time in socialism had its absolute limits. For him, it was tautological that production could never be 'abolished' (in the colloquial sense) by a particular mode of production, including even the communist mode of production. 732 This is an essential premise of his theory of the metabolism. Since labour is the "appropriation of what exists in nature for the requirements of man," it is a "universal condition for the metabolic interaction [Stoffwechsel] between man and nature, the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and it is therefore independent of every form of that existence, or rather common to all forms of society in which human beings live."⁷³³ Marcuse is therefore correct that *Capital* only foresees this sphere of instrumental activity being increasingly limited or shortened to a basic "minimum" in the future. 734 The absolute barriers to real human possibility in history are the nature-prescribed universal-natural conditions of this necessary interchange with nature, i.e., the eternal aspect of the natural necessity which mediates this metabolism in all of the historical and possible forms of human life. This necessity can be mediated and mastered, e.g., manipulated to serve to human needs, but it will never disappear altogether. It is only the form of this necessity which can be abolished. Thus, in "all forms of society and under all possible modes of production," humans will have to "wrestle with nature" through labour in order to transform and

Marx, Karl, 'Marx to Kugelmann in Hanover: July 11, 1868', <u>Marx and Engels: Selected Writings</u>, Vol II, (Progress Publishers: Moscow; 1977), 418-419.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 290.

See ibid., 133; also see Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959; Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political</u> Economy, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 706, 708, 770.

appropriate its use-values and "satisfy" both their natural and socially-developed "needs." 735

Even when the productive powers of socialized labour have been maximized by a communist society, this tendency toward the minimization of the realm of necessity would eventually run-up against the outer limits of necessity and the laws of nature themselves. Marx reaffirms this elsewhere in *Capital* when he claims that the tendency toward minimizing the realm of necessity by developing the universal powers of labour pushes up against its "absolute minimum limit"— which is to say, the "universality of labour" in the other sense of the expression. Labour may be reduced to a minimum, but it remains a "necessity imposed by nature."

In capitalist society, free time is produced for one class by the conversion of the whole lifetime of the masses into labour-time....The intensity and productivity of labour being given [as the same in a socialist society], the part of the social working day necessarily taken up with material production is shorter and, as a consequence, the time at society's disposal for the free intellectual and social activity of the individual is greater, in proportion as work is more and more evenly divided among all the able-bodied members of society, and a particular social stratum is more and more deprived of the ability to shift the burden of labour (which is a necessity imposed by nature) from its own shoulders to those of another social stratum. The absolute minimum limit to the shortening of the working day is, from this point of view, the universality [Allgemeinheit] of labour.⁷³⁶

Labour can be contracted to occupy an increasingly smaller portion of the day, but there would remain an irreducible limit to this process. Marx therefore accepted that the 'struggle' with necessity would be extended into every phase of socialist society. However, Marcuse's late writings underemphasize the extent to which Marx also believed that it would then begin to take place upon a completely transformed basis. The problem with Marcuse's reinterpretation is that he characterizes the realm of necessity as "forever remain[ing] a realm of unfreedom." Even in the most comprehensive social form possible, it would remain a "realm of alienation...no matter

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 667.

how much the working day is reduced."⁷³⁷ There is absolutely no evidence that Marx entertained this view during any period in his intellectual development.

On the contrary, Marx (including the Marx of *Capital*) explicitly argued that necessary labour could not only be *reduced to a minimum* in the future, but also *completely transformed* by the revolution (and, indeed, by the further development of socialist society on its own continually recreated foundations). Marcuse himself had earlier characterized this vision of Marx's as the passage from quantity to quality, and 'abolition' of labour. The remaining portions of a rationally regulated and reduced realm of necessity would also have to be radically reorganized in such a way as to allow for the most complete realization and freest possible expression of the individual's intellectual, scientific, artistic, etc., abilities and needs. Indeed, the Marx of the 'Trinity Formula' states that the intercourse with nature would have to be carried out in a manner both compatible with, and worthy of, the most complete development and enjoyment of our own "human nature." The work of material production in a free association would have to enable the free development, practical application, creative experimentation, disciplining, combining and appropriating of all of one's multifaceted capacities—including, e.g., the interdisciplinary knowledge of the science of this metabolism itself.

In this necessary metabolism with the earth, Marx held that a fully socialized individual would relate to the inorganic body of so-called 'external' nature as the laboratory of her own labour powers. Nature would be recognized as the means and material in which she objectifies herself, which she continually reshapes into a more human mode through the form-giving fires of her own activity and in concert with others. It would then *appear* as what it really *is*: part of the

⁷³⁷ Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity: A Reconsideration', *Praxis: A Philosophical Journal*, 5 (1969), 22.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959.

objective presence of the individual as an individual, but as a social individual made up of a totality of needs, relations, activities, etc. For this reason, the totally developed individual of an emancipated society would not only freely take-up the tasks required of her, but, at the same time, would regard these as part of the necessary process of working-out of her vital powers to their fullest degree, and as only so many ways of giving free breadth to the already developed capacities of her 'general intellect'. Even though he marks off this realm of necessity from the truest realm of freedom, nowhere in Marx's writings, including in *Capital*, will we find anything resembling Marcuse's "realm of unfreedom" or "realm of alienation." On the contrary, in *Capital*, as well as in the *Manuscripts*, *Grundrisse* and all of Marx's other relevant texts on the subject, labour is presented as an essentially positive form of creative activity and mode of self-actualization— at most a different, but nonetheless very real, form of freedom.

The distinction which Marx draws in *Capital* between work-time and free-time in a socialist society is *not* a distinction between *freedom* and *unfreedom*, as Marcuse suggests. A closer reading of the relevant passage finds a more nuanced distinction between *two different forms of freedom*. "Freedom" in this realm of necessary labour consists of associated individuals "rationally regulating their interchange with Nature," instead of being ruled by their own social power as if it were among the "blind forces of Nature." When we read Engels earlier referring to the "ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom," he had in mind precisely this freedom *within the realm of necessity*. The "laws of his own social action," which have up until now confronted him as a "necessity imposed by Nature and History," must become the result of his own "free action." In his *Marx and Alienation*, Sayers dispels the notion that

⁷³⁹ Marx, Karl, <u>Capital</u>, David McLellan (ed.), Abridged Edition, (Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2008), 470.

Engels, Frederick, <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 72-73.

Marx was characterizing necessary work as unfree activity in Capital.

It is sometimes argued that there are two conflicting strands in Marx's thought on work and freedom. In his early writings Marx maintains that, although work in contemporary society is an alienated activity, it need not be so. Alienation can and will be overcome in a future society. Potentially, work can be a fulfilling and liberating activity...In his later work, however, some say he changes his outlook and that this is evident from the following well-known passage from Capital [about the distinction between the "realm of necessity" and the "true realm of freedom"]...He appears to say that economically necessary labour is inescapably alienating and unfree...'True freedom' is attainable only outside of work. The aim of a future society, therefore, is not humanise work but rather to reduce it to the unavoidable minimum and to expand the 'realm of freedom'...It is a mistake, I shall argue, to interpret Marx as opposing the realms of freedom and necessity. Moreover, properly understood, this passage provides no grounds for thinking that Marx's views on work and freedom changed significantly in his later writings...[I]t is a mistake— though a common one— to infer that the realm of necessity must therefore be a realm of unfreedom. This inference is predicated on the assumption that economic labour is necessarily unfree. There is no evidence that Marx makes this assumption, either here or elsewhere. Quite the contrary. In this passage, Marx explicitly talks of freedom in the realm of necessity ('freedom in this field...') and spells out conditions for it...[T]here can be freedom in the sphere of necessary work. Marx is explicit on this score. He specifies two conditions for such freedom in the passage from Capital that I am discussing.⁷⁴¹

As Marx puts it in the passage in question:

Freedom, in this sphere, can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature.⁷⁴²

Of course, the very possibility of a form of production capable of "regulating all the forces of nature" is not given by the "merely natural, spontaneous form" of precapitalist labour—which is itself "merely human exertion as a specifically harnessed natural force." Such a society is only really possible on the basis of a post-capitalist form of labour which has already developed a more "social," "scientific," and "general character"— and, thus, is present in its "exertion as subject." In such a society, the process of working would therefore involve a "real

Sayers, Sean, Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes, (Palgrave: Hampshire; 2011), 65-74.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959.

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 611-612.

freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour."744 Here, in the Grundrisse, Marx once again describes the freedom in this field of necessity as a real freedom— not a realm of unfreedom or realm of alienation. Contrary to Marcuse's interpretative claims, the Grundrisse and Capital complement, rather than contradict, one another on this question. In fact, we find the same conception of labour reappearing again and again throughout Capital. No longer "conditioned by a low stage of [precapitalist] development of the productive powers of labour" and, thus, "also limited relations between man and nature," the "practical relations of everyday life between man and man, and man and nature," would at last assume a "transparent and rational form," i.e., the "conscious and planned control" of "freely associated men." In such a higher society, as he states elsewhere in Capital, the direct "metabolism" with nature in work would be carried out in a "form adequate to the full development of the human race." The end-point to this process of man's coming-into-being through labour is an emancipated society in which work itself appears not merely as the objective development, but, what is more, as the free expression and positive affirmation of the objectively developed needs, capacities, and relations of individuals to one another and to nature. As such, Marx tells us in yet another instance in Capital that in a "fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labours," would freely take-up the various "functions" and necessary tasks required of him, regarding them as only "so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers."⁷⁴⁷

Marx's views on the possibilities for freedom within necessary labour in no way contradict his views on the possibilities for freedom from labour which is unnecessary. But there

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., 611-612.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 172-173.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 637-638.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David McLellan (ed.), Abridged Edition, (Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2008), 292. Or, see Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 618.

is no doubt that an increase in free-time is also an essential aspect of his notion of a communist society. An expansion of free time is integral to the sort of emancipatory project which Marx outlines because he believes it would allow for the greatest degree of human flourishing and facilitate unprecedented cultural achievements. And, of course, free-time can grow only proportionate to the degree that the time spent in labour is diminished, e.g., by advances in the productive powers or organization of social labour.

Real economy— saving— consists of the saving of labour time...but this saving identical with development of the productive force. Hence in no way *abstinence from consumption*, but rather the development of power, of capabilities of production, and hence both of the capabilities as well as the means of consumption.⁷⁴⁸

Marx also held that such increases in free-time would have a compounding effect upon the tendency toward the minimization of labour-time in socialism. The "more the productivity of labour increases, the more the working day can be shortened, and the more the working day is shortened, the more the intensity of labour can increase." This is because he understood "free time" as "both idle time and time for higher activity." He conceived of the social individual of the future spending their enlarged non-working day not merely in rest and recreation—which is also essential to the revitalization of the labourer and, hence, her productive powers—but also upon end-in-itself activities involving the creation and enjoyment of a diversity of aesthetic and scientific capacities. An "increase of free time," when used as "time for the full development of the individual," "in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labour" and is itself the "greatest productive power." Such "free time" has "naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 711.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 667.

subject."750

Under the regime of capital, of course, increases in the productivity of social labour take on an "antagonistic form" allowing, e.g., for the luxury and "pure idleness of one section of society." In a socialist society, however, this "monopolization of social development (with its material and intellectual advantages) by one section of society at the expense of another disappears." Capitalism's own tendency toward contracting necessary labour-time to a minimum, in order to enlarge its superfluous portion, provides the material foundation for the future possibility of enlarging the free-time reserved for the end-in-itself development of individualities. Although the needs of these more fully-developed individuals would be greater, Marx nonetheless speculates that the revolutionary re-expropriation of surplus labour-time, as well as the continued development of the productive powers within socialism, would enable an increase in non-labour time for all. The expropriation of the expropriators would then "permit this surplus labour to be combined, in a higher form of society, with a greater reduction of the overall time devoted to material labour."

The creation of a large quantity of disposable time apart from necessary labour time for society generally and each of its members (i.e., room for the development of the individuals' full productive forces, hence those of society also), this creation of notlabour time appears in the stage of capital, as of all earlier ones, as not-labour time, free time, for a few. What capital adds is that it increases the surplus labour time of the mass by all the means of art and science, because its wealth consists directly in the appropriation of surplus labour time...It is thus, despite itself, instrumental in creating the means of social disposable time, in order to reduce labour time for the whole society to a diminishing minimum, and thus to free everyone's time for their own development. But its tendency always, on the one side, to create disposable time, on the other, to convert it into surplus labour...The more this contradiction develops, the more does it become evident that the growth of the forces of production can no longer be bound up with the appropriation of alien labour, but that the mass of workers must themselves appropriate their own surplus labour. Once they have done so- and disposable time thereby ceases to have an antithetical existence—then, on one side, necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other, the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that, even though

⁷⁵⁰ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 711.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959.

production is now calculated for the wealth of all, disposable time will grow for all. For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. The measure of wealth is then not any longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time. Labour time as the measure of value posits wealth itself as founded on poverty, and disposable time as existing in and because of the antithesis to surplus labour time; or, the positing of an individual's entire time as labour time, and his degradation therefore to mere worker...Real wealth manifests itself, rather— and large industry reveals this— in the monstrous disproportion between the labour time applied, and its product, as well as in the qualitative imbalance between labour, reduced to a pure abstraction, and the power of the production process it superintends...The theft of alien labour time, on which the present wealth is based, appears a miserable foundation in face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself. As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value of use value. The surplus labour of the mass has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the non-labour of the few, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time so as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them. Capital itself is the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth. Hence it diminishes labour time in the necessary form so as to increase it in the superfluous form; hence posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition— question of life or death— for the necessary. On the one side, then, it calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value. Forces of production and social relations—two different sides of the development of the social individual— appear to capital as mere means, and are merely means for it to produce on its limited foundation. In fact, however, they are the material conditions to blow this foundation sky-high. 'Truly wealthy a nation, when the working day is 6 rather than 12 hours. Wealth is not command over surplus labour time' (real wealth), 'but rather, disposable time outside that needed in direct production, for every individual and the whole society.' (The Source and Remedy etc. 1821, p. 6.).752

We see in this passage from the *Grundrisse* that the ethical substantiality of Marx's conception of an emancipated society depends very much upon the expansion of the realm of end-in-itself activity, i.e., of the free-time reserved for the free development of the general powers of all individuals. No longer would the surplus labour-time of the many stand in direct antagonism to the free-time of the few. The producers would re-expropriate that surplus labour as time for their own end-in-itself development. However, with the disappearance of the 'direct'

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 705-706.

form of labour, and the overcoming of the division between mental and manual labour, neither would the process of production continue to stand in immediate antithesis to their own free-time. Rather, work-time would also have to resolve itself into the appropriation of the universally-developed powers of the individuals by the individuals themselves. The labour they perform would be their mastery over the metabolism with nature and scientific command over their own social intercourse with one another. Here, 'general social knowledge', i.e., the objectified 'power of knowledge', the 'organs of social practice', becomes the 'direct force of production'. Hence, instead of 'direct labour' or even necessary labour-time, it is the free and full development of the 'general intellect' which would determine this mode of labour.

This is why I feel it is important to acknowledge that in *Capital*, as in the *Grundrisse*, Marx's vision of socialism includes both the reduction of necessary labour and the transformation of the process of work. To be sure, the progressive marginalization of labour-time is a presupposition for the coming-into-being of his conception of a free society. However, since he believed that necessary work could only be limited, and never eliminated, the question also turns upon what becomes of the remaining portions of labour. Marcuse's interpretation is skewed by the belief that Marx characterizes such activity as remaining unfree. As Hudis explains,

Marcuse is certainly correct that for Marx the realisation of freedom centres on the problem of time. Marx repeatedly emphasizes throughout his work that in a new society, time will become the space for human development. However, Marcuse also makes the questionable claim that, for Marx, the problem of time revolves solely around the reduction of the working day to an absolute minimum...Freedom defines -every phase of the new society for Marx, even when that society still operates in accordance with natural necessity.⁷⁵³

In my understanding, and in direct contrast to Marcuse's, the same revolutionary process through which the producers re-expropriate their surplus labour would also have to ensure that the actual process of production, the *activity of labour*, is no longer posited in the abstract

203.

Hudis, Peter, Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism, (Haymarket Books: Chicago; 2003), 202-

antagonism in which currently exists vis-a-vis free-time. In other words, both free-time and work-time would have to allow for the free and full development of the associated producers, the cultivation of the total social wealth and personality of each and every individual. Work would have to be transformed in such a way that it becomes the appropriation and application of these multifaceted capacities, including the scientific mastery over the social body of nature and over the objective organs of practice. In *all* spheres of human life, activities would be oriented toward the free development and enjoyment of true social wealth— the capacities and needs and relations of the individuals.

Marcuse is therefore mistaken in assuming that, for the Marx of *Capital*, it was a cruel burden of nature that labour-time could not be dissolved completely into free-time for end-initself activity. "Marcuse's position" on the meaning of labour in Marx's later writings is "premised upon the view that the 'toil' necessary involves 'anxiety'."⁷⁵⁴ By contrast, I believe that his view of labour remained fundamentally Promethean rather than Sisyphean in that, far from simply representing suffering and drudgery, work embodies the civilizing impulse of human history. Moreover, it is itself a potentially and essentially free form of activity. In *Capital* and the later works more generally, Marx retained the view, developed from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* to the *Grundrisse*, that work would be transformed by the revolution into a form of free activity. Even though, in *Capital*, he presents the 'true' realm of freedom as preferable to the freedom which exists within the realm of necessity, he does not in the least bit present such labour as an unfortunate aspect of the crudity of human existence.⁷⁵⁵ This is because,

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., 202-203.

Marx's thoughts on *surplus* labour-time in a socialist society are underpinned by the same assumptions. In the 'Trinity Formula', he states that, just as necessary labour will have to be performed "under all possible modes of production," so too, in all stages of society, will humans have to contribute surplus labour of one sort or another. Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, he did not believe that, with socialism, all non-necessary labour time would be re-expropriated as free-time. Indeed, he recognizes in several instances in *Capital* that the tendency toward minimizing the time spent working will never lead to the abolition of the surplus (let alone necessary) component of

in addition to free-time, Marx held that the labour process itself could be made congruent with the most complete realization of the "real wealth of society," viz., the full development of the capabilities and needs of the human species.⁷⁵⁶

Schmidt on the Humanization of Nature in Marx's Late Writings

In his earlier writings, Marx had presented history as the progressive revelation through labour of the "human essence of nature" and genuine "natural existence" of humanity. 757 This is arguably the most important internal connection between his early anthropological conception of the human species-being and his broader ontology of nature. The 'young' Marx entertained the view that the "richness of man's essential being" could only be actualized through its self-

the working day. A rationally regulated form of the metabolism implies that a "certain quantum of surplus labour is required as insurance against accidents." Marx also offers what is, in my opinion, a more philosophically substantive reason for the continued demand for surplus-labour in a socialist society. As we know, necessary labour-time is the time required to satisfy the needs of individuals and reproduce them in their given state, whereas surplus-labour is the labour expended to satisfy conditions "beyond the extent of given needs." Yet, the 'natural' needs of individuals are constantly transformed by the progress of civilization, just as distinctly social needs also emerge through the same process of historical development. The old needs are reproduced and satisfied in a new form, while new needs and the means for their satisfaction are created for the first time. This is why the "realm of natural necessity expands with his development, because his needs do too." A communist society would only enable this development of human need to proceed more freely, placing its foundations for the first time on a truly human footing. Hence, in addition to "insurance against accidents," surplus-labour might also be required for the "progressive extension of the reproduction process that is needed to keep pace with the development of needs and the progress of population." Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959. Marx makes a similar point elsewhere in Capital: "The minimum length of the working day is fixed by this necessary component, which is however itself capable of further contraction. If the whole working day were to shrink to the length of its necessary component, surplus labour would vanish, something which is impossible under the regime of capital. Only the abolition of the capitalist form of production would permit the reduction of the working day to the necessary labour-time. But even in that case the latter would expand to take up more of the day, and for two reasons: first, because the worker's conditions of life would improve, and his aspirations become greater, and second, because a part of what is now surplus labour would then count as necessary labour, namely the labour which is necessary for the formation of a social fund for reserve and accumulation." Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 667. Hence, no matter how much the forces of production are developed, total labour-time can never be completely dissolved into 'free-time' for end-in-itself activity. "Surplus labour in some form must always remain." However, just as is the case with necessary work, what matters here for Marx is precisely the form which this labour assumes. Everything turns on the nature of the *relation* between the workers and the work which they accomplish.

Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: 756 London; 1990), 637-638.

Marx, Karl, 'Estranged Labor', The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Martin Milligan 757 (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 112. Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009),135, 137, 141, 146.

objectification in a "humanized nature." The "nature which develops in human history" is therefore synonymous for him with the "genesis of human society," i.e., "man's real nature" or "true anthropological nature"— except, at first, in its still "estranged form" of becoming. But only in a form of society which has traversed through this phase of negativity, and which has sublated for itself the positive wealth of these developments, did Marx believe we would encounter "the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment." Only in socialism would we find that "society is the unity of [the] being of man with nature— the true resurrection of nature." With this most total social movement, the Marx of the 1840s argued that humanity would resolve at last the Hegelian "riddle of history:" communism is the real reconciliation to the historically-arisen antitheses between "man and nature…existence and essence, objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity."

Many Frankfurt critiques of Marx's philosophy of nature interpret his later distinction between the realms of freedom and necessity as a departure from this earlier conception of the humanization of nature in socialism. For the late Marx, or so the tale is told, all of these aforementioned antagonisms would remain unresolved even in the highest phases of an emancipated society. He allegedly broke with his earlier ontology by recognizing that nature retains its indifference to human civilization in all of its possible configurations. According to this reading, the problem of nature's non-identity is one which cannot be transcended by history and which, even in the final form to be given to human development, will prevail over the transformative potential of praxis, labour, and reason.

[In the] early writings, communism overcomes the alienation of both humanity and nature, bringing both their true being...When, through the abolition of private property

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 141.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., 135, 137, 146.

and the overcoming of alienating work, humans become truly human, they will also discover the human essence of nature...Marx himself had taken leave of the nature philosophy visions of his early writings by the time of *Das Kapital*. In *Das Kapital* there is no more talk of a "naturalization of humanity" or the "resurrection of nature"...For the later Marx the conflict between humanity and nature remains. Despite all attempts at mediation, [the contradictions between] nature's necessity and human freedom remain in the end unresolved.⁷⁶²

The sort of reading elaborated here by Moltmann is actually quite commonplace among critical theorists who question the ecological relevance of the later Marx's philosophy of nature. Schmidt's *The Concept of Nature in Marx* is perhaps the best example of this tendency in the historical secondary literature on the subject. In the early writings, Marx saw in "history, stamped as it is with the imprint of human labour, a clearer and clearer equivalence between naturalism and humanism." But Schmidt claims that this youthful idea of the "progressive humanization of nature" historically "coincid[ing]" with the "naturalization of man," being still "influence[d]" by "Feuerbach and Romanticism," was abandoned by the "later, and more critical, Marx." In the 1840s, the 'ideological' "moment of the identity of man and nature" still "dominate[d] Marx's thought." By the 1860s, the metabolic "problem of non-identity" has compelled him to relinquish certain elements of the theory of praxis which had led into the allegedly naive Hegelo-Feuerbachian "equation of humanism and naturalism."

Capital is to be taken as the epitome of this supposed transition in Marx's philosophical thought because there, according to Schmidt, the heteronomy of natural necessity is treated as an ineradicable moment of antinomy within the dialectic.⁷⁶⁵ This is similar to the mistaken reading which Marcuse adhered to, except that, with Schmidt, it is expressed in distinctly ontological terms. In 'The Trinity Formula' chapter, "Marx's utopia[n]" dream about the endless expansion of

Moltmann, Jurgen, 'The Alienation and Liberation of Nature', <u>On Nature</u>, Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame; 1984), 133, 136-137.

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 176.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., 137.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., 76-78.

free-time for end-in-itself activity within this "true realm of freedom" finds itself suddenly "encumbered" by the irreducibility of this problem of "non-identity"— viz., by what "always remains" of necessary labour-time within the "realm of necessity."⁷⁶⁶ The earlier vision of the confluence of humanism and naturalism at the end of history supposedly gives way at this moment to a reluctant recognition that natural necessity could never be humanized. Marx's youthful Promethean emphasis upon the civilizing impulse of labour is thereafter replaced with the notion that the Sisyphean "struggle of man with nature could be transformed but not abolished."⁷⁶⁷ This is the meaning which he mistakenly attributes to Marx's claims "at different points in *Capital* that labour could never be abolished."⁷⁶⁸

Here, Schmidt misunderstands the independent meanings of the early and late writings, as well as the philosophic continuities between them. *The Concept of Nature in Marx* presents one-sided caricatures of both the young and mature Marx's concepts of nature and labour. The Marx of the manuscripts is said to have adhered to the utopian belief that labour would be abolished outright in a higher form of society, ⁷⁶⁹ whereas the Marx of the critique of political economy acknowledged with regret that necessary work could only be limited. ⁷⁷⁰ When we examine their contexts, the sporadic references in the earlier writings to the 'abolition' of labour tend to refer more specifically to the abolition of the *division* of labour, *alienated* labour, etc. In the few instances when the young Marx or Engels speak in more general terms of the abolition of labour, they seem to have in mind not so much the end of production *per se*, but, rather, its total transformation into a form of free activity. They foresee the process of work being reorganized in such a way as to make it a positive confirmation of all of one's essential capacities and

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Ibid., 37.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., 176.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., 36.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., 76.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., 69, 79-80, 97-98, 139.

connections with others.

If anything, Marx's middle and late writings move closer toward envisioning an abolition of labour in the colloquial sense, but, even then, in a still quite qualified manner. For example, the Grundrisse refers to the disappearance of the direct form of labour because it imagines the individual acting more and more like a watchman and regulator over the industrial process and forces of nature which have been brought under the command of the general intellect. Marx held that this scientific power over the social organs of practice and metabolism with the inorganic body of nature would completely transform the labour process so that it would no longer appear as labour. He tells us that it would be neither direct labour, nor even the total labour-time involved, which determines this mode of production, but the individual's appropriation of her own intellectual capacities, and the application, by freely-associated labourers, of their own total social power to the mastery of the metabolism with nature. The same notion can be found in Capital, especially in the chapter on machinery (as well as in the notes for the 'Resultate'). There, Marx places a similar emphasis upon the emancipatory potential of machinery, conceiving of a form of automation which might allow workers to consciously direct the industrial forces set into motion by socialized labour. This command over the industrialized metabolism with nature would enable the producers to step back from the immediate process of production, and relate to it more and more as a form of activity based upon the development and appropriation of their own abilities, needs, and relations.

Schmidt's thesis with respect to the question of the humanization of nature in the late writings therefore rests upon a series of mistaken assumptions. One of those assumptions is that the later Marx conceived of the productive relation to nature in socialism as antithetical to the full development of human nature. Since natural necessity will never disappear, and necessary work is a requirement of every type of society, Schmidt assumes that, in the sort of socialism

which Marx envisions in the 'Trinity Formula', humans would continue to relate to the conditions of their existence in an 'external' and 'alien' way.⁷⁷¹ In this reading of *Capital*, "what is essential is that historically the incompatibility of man and nature, i.e., in the last analysis the necessity of labour, triumphs over the unity of man and nature"— precluding any possibility of a humanization of nature.⁷⁷² According to Schmidt, then, in the mature Marx's materialism and theory of the metabolism, the historical "horizons" of human praxis are bounded in an unfree way by the unalterable "structure of matter itself."⁷⁷³

But this would be to suggest that Marx adhered to the same 'negative ontology' as Schmidt and Adorno. However, in both the early and late works, the connection between Marx's ontology and anthropology is underpinned by a doctrine of internal relations. He did not conceive of the nature of which humanity is but a part of, and with which it interacts, as an insuperable otherness. Instead, he wrote of the necessity of repairing the union with nature, humanity's own 'inorganic body', and of doing so in the only social form fit for the *flourishing* of human nature. Schmidt takes Marx's thoughts on the realm of necessity as evidence of his view that the non-identity of nature erects external barriers to praxis which can never be overcome, and which prevent any possibility of humanizing nature and the human relation to it. But Marx had read his Aristotle: Aristotelian nature, just like Hegelian history, does nothing in vain. Rather than grasping natural necessity as an eternal limit to the complete realization of human nature, Marx presents human nature as a movement of absolute becoming in which labour constantly overcomes nature's given limits and attains an eventual mastery over its own metabolism with it. The continued necessity of labour in socialism is not taken as an ontological barrier to praxis, freedom, or happiness. Instead, just like the early writings, Marx's later writings

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., 157.

⁷⁷² Ibid., 176.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., 69-70, 139, 159, 169.

represent the relation to nature in work as a potentially life-affirming activity, as an essential mode of one's objective presence as an individual, as the appropriation of one's total social powers and total social bond with others.

To be sure, from the *Grundrisse* to *Capital*, he places a great emphasis upon the reduction of necessary labour-time as I have noted. As we have also seen, however, the realization of freedom was not reducible for him to an increase in free-time. Instead, his late works also place a great emphasis upon the transformation of the labour process. Schmidt mistakenly claims that the 'Trinity Formula' chapter provides proof that Marx turned away from his youthful speculations, becoming increasingly sceptical about whether the realm of necessity could ever be humanized. Yet, far from highlighting the "incompatibility" of humanity and nature, as he suggests, the relevant section from the 'Trinity Formula' is explicitly underpinned by the opposite assumption. If the realm of necessity were a realm of dehumanization for Marx, it is unlikely that, in the same passage, he would have referred to the activity of necessary work as "worthy" of "human nature." Contrary to the interpretation given by Schmidt, this notion that the relation to nature in labour can be made congruent with the most complete realization of the human being implies precisely what Marx had described earlier as the simultaneous *humanization of nature* and *naturalization of human society*.

We find indications of a similar internal connection between Marx's ontological conception of nature and anthropological conception of human nature in key passages throughout *Capital*. For instance, in the chapter on the labour process, he contends that by "changing" the "material of nature" and giving it a "form" adequate to the progressive expansion of human "need," the human being not only realizes his own "purposes" in that so-called "external nature,"

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959.

but also "changes his own nature." For the Marx of *Capital*, as for the Marx of the early philosophic manuscripts, the history of humanity's relation to nature is therefore synonymous with the history of humanity's own coming-into-being. The relation to nature through labour is a metric by which he gauges humanity's own level of development and the overall state of the productive powers of society. The implications of this philosophic anthropology for his conception of socialism are clarified not only in the cited passage from Volume III, which insists that work can be made fully congruent with human nature, but also throughout Volume I. For example, in the section on machinery and agriculture, we have read him explicitly state that socialism would have to bring about the "systematic restoration" of the "metabolism" with nature in a "form adequate to the full development of the human race."

However, some of the most damning indictments of Schmidt's thesis on the humanization of nature are found not in *Capital*, but throughout *The Concept of Nature in Marx* itself. Suddenly, while commenting on a passage from *Capital*— the one in which Marx writes that, by "changing" nature, the human being "changes his own nature"— Schmidt states quite clearly the meaning of this expression: viz., that the "content of this metabolic interaction is that nature is humanized while men are naturalized." This inconsistent claim appears only a few pages after he insists that the "later, and more critical, Marx" of *Capital* abandoned any notion of the "progressive humanization of nature" and "naturalization of man." In the next chapter, Schmidt acknowledges quite correctly once more, but again without registering its implications

[.]Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 283-284.

Marx, Karl, 'Private Property and Communism', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 142-143, 145.

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books: London; 1990), 637-638.

⁷⁷⁸ Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 78.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., 76.

for his central thesis, that it also "clearly appears from the *Grundrisse* that the surviving, humanized realm of necessity can just as well become a sphere of man's self-realization as the realm of freedom." This is because Marx followed Hegel in grasping "labour" as that which "signifies man's fulfilment as well as his suffering." However, in that same chapter, Schmidt also returns once more to the other trope of a 'break' between Marx's early and late philosophies of nature. The "mature Marx withdrew from the theses expounded in his early writings" in relation to the question of whether a "more human society might also enter into a new relation with extra-human nature." The "young Marx's dream of a humanization of nature, which would at the same time include the naturalization of man," is exchanged for a recognition that the exploitative and external relation to nature would be extended into socialist society. ⁷⁸¹ Backtracking yet again from this thesis, Schmidt wrote of how the

'[r]esurrection of nature', 'humanization of humanity'— today, these are no longer the product of [Marx's] eschatological fantasy. Their achievement is the prerequisite for whether humanity enters into a more reasonable state of existence, indeed for whether it even survives.⁷⁸²

The Concept of Nature in Marx was the outcome of Schmidt's doctoral work, which was carried out under the supervision of Adorno. This is relevant because, in my judgement, his interpretation projects elements of Adorno's critique of Marx back onto Marx's late writings. Adorno had repudiated what he regarded as the self-idolatrous conception of the humanization of nature. As noted earlier, he felt that the problem with Marxism as an 'identity philosophy' is that it tries to make the objects of nature, which are unlike the human subject, into the subject—but that doing so only reduces the individual, who is unlike a thing, into a mere thing. In other words, Adorno believes that "human beings are already natural, all too natural, and nature unavoidably

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., 143-144.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., 155-156.

Schmidt quoted in Moltmann, Jurgen, 'The Alienation and Liberation of Nature', <u>On Nature</u>, Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame; 1984), 137.

human, all too human."⁷⁸³ He therefore sought to reverse the goal of the young Marx: viz., as Cook puts it, to "dehumanize nature and denaturalize humanity," recognizing the absolute "non-identity of nature and human history."⁷⁸⁴ Having projected *Adorno*'s idea of non-identity into his reading of *Capital*, it is no wonder that Schmidt then concludes that the realization of the later Marx's conception of socialism would be more likely to realize the "prophecy of the *Dialektik der Anfklarung*" rather than the "young Marx's dream of a humanization of nature."

In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno claims that the pre-Frankfurt dialectic of Marx's philosophy could not recognize that the "antithesis of nature and history is both true and false." Cook explains why the "traditional antithesis between nature and history is true in one respect true and false in another" for Adorno's philosophy. The antithesis is *true* because Marx's conception of the internal connection between humanism and naturalism is the ideological result of "deifying history" in a Hegelian way. However, the antithesis also appears as *false* because, like Marx, Adorno also refers to a certain *convergence* between natural and human history— except, with the caveat in mind that in the alienated "vanishing point" of this *negative unity* these two poles are not made "identical." Hence, even when Adorno places an "emphasis" upon the confluence of human and "natural history," it "does not mean that he adopts Marx's early goal:" viz., "of 'naturalizing' human beings and 'humanizing' nature." The problem with *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, as Cook explains, is that

Adorno's former student, Alfred Schmidt, believes that Marx had a similar conception of the relationship between nature and history. Although Schmidt seems to ignore that society's goal is "the true resurrection of nature— the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfilment," he accurately captures Adorno's view [in his *re-reading of Marx!*] of the relationship when he remarks that "Natural and human history together constitute...a differentiated history...[H]uman history is not

Adorno quoted in Cook, Deborah, Adorno on Nature, (Acumen: Durham; 2011), 23-24, 26.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid., 23-24, 26.

Adorno, Theodor W., Negative Dialectics, E.B. Ashton (trans.), (Continuum: New York; 1973), 357.

Cook, Deborah, Adorno *on* Nature, (Acumen: Durham; 2011), 9.

Adorno, Theodor W., <u>Negative Dialectics</u>, E.B. Ashton (trans.), (Continuum: New York; 1973), 321.

Cook, Deborah, Adorno on Nature, (Acumen: Durham; 2011), 16-17.

merged in pure natural history; natural history is not merged in human history"...Contrasting Marx's account of mediation with Hegel's, Schmidt observed that, in Marx, "it is nonidentity which is victorious."⁷⁸⁹

Like Cook, Brown seems to suspect that Schmidt's dissertation *re-reads Adorno back into Marx*. Schmidt's characterization of Marx's understanding of the "relation to nature in a post-capitalist society is problematic," Brown concludes, because it is "not clear that Marx separated nature and society" in the specifically Adorno-like "way Schmidt describes." "[S]uch a separation does not appear in *Capital*."⁷⁹⁰

Schmidt on the Dialectical Duality of Marx's Materialism

Notwithstanding the fact that *The Concept of Nature in Marx* remains *the* starting-point for any consideration of the secondary literature on Marx's philosophy of nature, the great shortcoming of Schmidt's work is that he reads Marx's *Capital* as if it were really written by Adorno. It is anachronistic to re-interepret the meaning of his writings in this way. The outcome of such an interpretative approach is both foreseeable and inevitable. Instead of a 'dialectic of negativity', Schmidt presents Marx as having adhered to something resembling a 'negative dialectic'. In the place of Marx's ontology of nature, informed as it was by Hegel, we find a negative ontology shaped by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. In Adorno's philosophy, the non-identity of humanity and nature, freedom and necessity, etc., prevails over the

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., 23-24, 26.

Brown, Heather A., Marx on Gender and the Family: A Critical Study, (Brill: Leiden;2007), 62. When we see these continuities between Adorno and Schmidt, it is hard to agree with Foster that Schmidt recognized the ecological dimensions of *Capital* and that he moved away from Adorno's critique of Marx: "To be sure, when Western Marxism had first emerged as a distinct tradition in the 1920s and 1930s, one of the major influences was the Frankfurt School, which developed an ecological critique (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972). But this critique was largely philosophical, and while it recognized the ecological insights in Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, it lost sight of the ecological argument embedded in *Capital*. Hence, it generally concluded that classical Marxism (beginning with the later Marx) supported a 'Promethean' philosophy of the straightforward domination of nature. Not until the 1960s and 1970s did a more complex interpretation begin to emerge in the writings of the thinkers influenced by the Frankfurt tradition (Schmidt 1971; Leiss 1974)." Foster, John Bellamy, 'Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology', *AJS* Volume 105, Number 2 (September 1999), 395.

transformative potential of praxis. This is what he refers to as the doctrine of the "preponderance" or "primacy of the object."⁷⁹¹ In this anti-system or negative ontology, the primacy of the objective content of nature places irrevocable limits upon the freedom of the human subject. Nature sets external barriers to human activity which likely preclude any possibility of a reconciliation with it, now or in the future. As we have seen, the same is true of Schmidt's *reading of the late Marx's writings*. This is why Schmidt regards the ostensible "problem of non-identity" in *Capital* as the pinnacle of the mature Marx's thoughts on nature. "[W]hat is essential [in *Capital*] is that historically the incompatibility of man and nature, i.e., in the last analysis the necessity of labour, triumphs over the unity of man and nature."⁷⁹²

To be sure, Schmidt is right that the 'struggle' with nature through labour cannot possibly be 'abolished' altogether. However, the meaning which he and others attach to this expression is in no way consistent with the significance which Marx's materialism ascribes to it. Schmidt interprets what "always remains" of necessary labour-time as an "inextinguishable internal moment" of antinomy within communism. According to this view, work is no longer the agency which brings about the identity of society and nature, as it had been for the early Marx; instead, labour is a form of mediation which merely confirms that an "indestructible boundary" separates the subject from the object in the Marxian dialectic. Marx allegedly recognized more and more in the late writings that this "dialectical duality" or "problem of non-identity" could not be overcome by his political theory precisely because it could never be overcome by human practice. "Page Under the influence of Adorno, these are what Schmidt's interpretation spells out as the heteronomous "natural' limits of all historical dialectics: the fact that it is the 'concrete', not

Adorno, Theodor, 'Subject and Object', <u>The Adorno Reader</u>, Brian O'Connor (ed.), (Blackwell Publishing:Oxford; 2000), 143. See Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 76.

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 30.

⁷⁹³ Ibid., 10-11, 134-135, 176.

the 'abstract' form of human work, which cannot be superseded." He states right at the outset of his work that this "contradiction," this "dialectical duality," is not the result of "logical inconsistency" in his reading of Marx; rather, it is an "error" which cannot be "eliminated" by the contortions of dialectical reasoning because Marx, like Adorno, recognized that it could not be "eliminated" as a "contradiction within the facts" of nature.⁷⁹⁴

However, it should be noted that while Marx's views on the question of the relationship between freedom and necessity were based upon a direct appropriation of Hegel's philosophy, Adorno's materialism proceeds instead from Kant. Adorno's aforementioned principle of the primacy of objectivity reformulates the antithesis first raised by the third antinomy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. His negative ontology treats the practically unmastered 'in-itselfness' of nature as an irremovable barrier to the historical development of freedom. As such, Schmidt's reading not only anachronistically projects elements of Adorno's philosophy back into *Capital*, it at the same time misstates the historical genealogy of Marx's ideas by substituting Kant in the place of Hegel. Indeed, he claims that Marx's "materialist critique of Hegel's identity of Subject and Object led him back to Kant" in the sense that historical materialism "retained Kant's thesis of the non-identity of Subject and Object" in a modified form. This is the meaning behind Schmidt's thesis that the "mature Marx['s]" concept of *self-objectification* never "restores the Hegelian identity of Subject and Object," or any sort of "unity of man and nature," arguing, instead, that the "moment of non-identity" is "retained under all social conditions."

[U]ltimately, the result of Schmidt's philosophical pedantry is a vision of nature quite opposite to the spirit and practical intent of Marx's later work...[It is a] nature-philosophy that is wholly Schmidtian. There are in Schmidt two concepts of nature...[T]his duality results from the particular philosophical lenses through which Schmidt interprets Marx...Whereas much has been made of Marx's debt to Hegel...much less has been made of his debt to Kant. Schmidt's work was meant to help

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., 10-11.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., 74.

redress this omission. Hence he suggests that Marx adopted 'an intermediate position' between Kant and Hegel...The unity of Subject and Object he maintains against Kant, their absolute non-identity against Hegel...It is no accident, therefore, that Schmidt views 'Marxist materialism' as embodying a 'dialectical *duality*' (p. 136) rather than a dialectical unity...Nature is less a differentiated unity than a differentiation on the one hand and a unity on the other. In his attempt to define Marx's concept of nature in opposition to both Kant and Hegel, Schmidt shuttles from Hegel to Kant and back again without ever breaking free. He remains firmly within their problematic...Schmidt has done exactly as he intended: he has placed Marx wholly between Kant and Hegel, not beyond them.⁷⁹⁷

In this way, Schmidt's reading of Marx mythologizes along with Kant and Adorno the unannexed portions of nature. He treats the unmasterable limits of everlasting necessity as an insoluble barrier to nature's humanization and, ipso facto, to the full realization of our own human nature. In his philosophic calculus, the minimized realm of work that Marx writes of in 'The Trinity Formula' is 'ontologized' into an inevitable *remainder* from the imperfect equation between human freedom and natural necessity. The properties of the properties of the dismisses as Engels' (positive) "ontology" tries to drive a wedge between what he dismisses as Engels' (positive) "ontology" of nature and Marx's materialist conception of it. Engels, he suggests mistakenly, regarded the dialectic as dissolving the distinction between human-as-subject and nature-as-object into a homogeneous identity, whereas the late Marx, he suggests just as mistakenly, was much "more dialectical in seeing that the realm of freedom does not simply replace the realm of necessity," but "retains it as an inextinguishable internal moment" of a nature-given heteronomy.

In Schmidt's interpretation of Marx, the continued necessity of labour in socialism "completely confirms nature's independence," "externality," and irreducible "non-identity." The "social mediation of nature" by labour will always reaffirm its insoluble "dialectical"

⁷⁹⁷ Smith, Neil, <u>Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space</u>, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press), 40-44.

Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971),135-136.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid., 135-136.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., 64-76.

duality."801 He acknowledges that the earlier concept of praxis still continues to play an essential role in Marx's late works, except with the reservation in mind that it does so in a way which now comes to confirm, rather than negate, this insuperable otherness of nature's objectivity.802 Regardless of however much we make nature "for-us," its objective status always remains "external" to that mediating activity.803 Even in "socialism," the "highest form of the real mediation between man and nature," "nature's objectivity...remains something external."804 In these statements, Schmidt's negative ontology conflates objectivity and estrangement, whereas, in Marx's materialism, the objectification of labour is identical with its alienation only within the context of the contradictions of capitalism. Marx might even accuse Schmidt's treatment of the 'externality' of nature here of forgetting along with Feuerbachian naturalism that the "difference between the individual as a person and whatever is extraneous to him is not a conceptual difference but a historical fact" and that, as a historical fact, this "distinction has a different significance at different times."805

Hence, Marx did not grasp nature, nor the human interaction with it through work, in the Adorno-like way that Schmidt quite often lapses into. While Schmidt is right that the Marxian dialectic retains necessity, it preserves it in the sense that it *sublates* it. Others seem to have arrived at comparable conclusions about Schmidt's reading. For instance, Brown argues that "necessity is sublated, not transcended," in Marx's philosophy of nature. While Schmidt makes a good case for why "labour, and thus humanity's relation to nature, can never be fully transcended," his interpretation of the "relation to nature" in a "post-capitalist society is

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⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 96.

⁸⁰² Ibid., 31.

⁸⁰³ Ibid., 159.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid., 71.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The German Ideology, Including *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, C.J. Arthur (trans.), (Prometheus Books: New York; 1998), 90-91.</u>

problematic" because it ignores Marx's emphasis upon the *transformation* of necessary work. 806 Freely associated producers will certainly have to continue to 'wrestle' with nature, but, as Engels claims, the "struggle for individual existence disappears" because society "emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones."807 In this respect, Marx tells us that necessity, in its 'direct form', *vanishes* with the further development of socialism. The mere expediency of animal need has been replaced by a *higher necessity*— one which includes within it the *need* for freedom and self-realization even in the activity of work.

In Marx's view, then, the continued necessity of labour in socialism in no way proves the disunity and incompatibility between society and nature as The Concept of Nature in Marx alleges. Rather, it affirms the very opposite of Schmidt's intended thesis: viz., it confirms the integral connection in Marx's late writings between the possibility of the coming-into-being of human society, and the requirement of simultaneously humanizing nature and man's direct relation to it through work. The direct metabolism with nature, he believed, would have to be transformed in such a way as to make it consistent with a good life for all.

Had he thought otherwise and regarded labour as *unfree by nature*, Marx would only have fallen into the fallacy which he wrongly accused Hegel of lapsing into: viz., of conflating labour's *objectification* with its *alienation*.⁸⁰⁸ Indeed, he also accused the economists of the same in his later writings: the economists treat a "process of production [which] has mastery over man, instead of the opposite," as just as much a "nature-imposed necessity as productive labour itself." These "bourgeois economists are so much cooped up within the notions belonging to a

Brown, Heather A., Marx on Gender and the Family: A Critical Study, (Brill: Leiden; 2007), 62.

⁸⁰⁷ Engels, Frederick, <u>Socialism: Utopian and Scientific</u>, Edward Aveling (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 2008), 72-73.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 177-178.

⁸⁰⁹ Marx, Karl, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Ben Fowkes (trans.), Vol. I, (Penguin Books:

specific historic stage of social development that the necessity of the *objectification* of the powers of social labour appears to them as inseparable from the necessity of their *alienation visà-vis* living labour."⁸¹⁰ But for Marx it is not the *objectivity of nature* (including the human dependence upon it in labour, need, etc.) which must be abolished, but merely the *estranged mode of nature's objectivity* in a capitalist society.⁸¹¹ Only in this form of economy is the realization of labour its de-realization, is its objectification the creation of an alien objectivity.⁸¹² Of course, *this* is what the revolution would destroy according to Marx's view. It would put an end not to production in general, but to a form in which the products, means, relations and process of production appear to the producers themselves as something alienating and unfree. The revolutionary praxis required to usher in a higher society would have to create for itself the subjective and objective conditions (already partly created by the dissolution of capital) for the freer and fuller development of each and every individual not merely *outside of*, but *within*, the activity of work.

Clearly, Marx did not share Schmidt's philosophical assumptions about the externality of nature, and non-identity between nature and society. Instead, he analyzed this relationship as an organic complex or totality in which internal relations persist between the various elements. If there really were an "indestructible boundary between the Subject and the Object" in Marx's mature writings, what does it mean to say that, by "grasping...history as a *process*," man can eventually come to the "recognition of nature (equally present as [his] practical power over

London; 1990), 174-175.

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (tr.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 831-832.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 180-182.

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 454.

nature) as his real body," i.e., as his own *inorganic* and *objective social body?*⁸¹³ If this "social mediation of nature" by labour only "confirms" Adorno's "primacy of the object" and Schmidt's "natural limits" to freedom, praxis, and reason, then why does Marx refer to the *rational regulation* and *freedom of this field* of work as *completely worthy* of our *human nature?*⁸¹⁴ If the "problem of non-identity" was "inextinguishable" for Marx in the way that Schmidt presents it, then why did he call for the *restoration* of the old metabolic *union* with nature in a higher society— namely, one for the first time congruent with the full development of the new species? Marx's conception of nature as an extension of the human "body," as mediated by the "organs of its social practice," as the "objectification of the subject," etc.— all of this seems to presuppose the 'identity-in-difference' made possible by praxis, and not, as Schmidt preferred, some sort of ontological divide.

Conclusion

The notion that Marx represented necessary labour in a socialist society as unfree activity is an absolutely untenable interpretation of both his political philosophy and his philosophy of nature. Adhering to this view requires that we misunderstand his concept of labour, and, indeed, that we go so far as to conflate the objectification of labour with its alienation. Contrary to what Marcuse suggests in his later writings on the subject, the passage from the 'Trinity Formula' explicitly refers to the possibility of freedom *within* the realm of necessity, and not merely *beyond* it. This would be realized when a community of freely and fully developed individuals master their metabolism with nature in a form appropriate to the expression and enjoyment of

⁸¹³ Ibid., 540-542.

See Adorno, Theodor, 'Subject and Object', <u>The Adorno Reader</u>, Brian O'Connor (ed.), (Blackwell Publishing:Oxford; 2000), 143; Schmidt, Alfred, <u>The Concept of Nature in Marx</u>, Ben Fowkes (trans.), (New Left Books: London; 1971), 64-76, 96.

their own human nature. I have argued that Marcuse is therefore mistaken in believing that Marx's notion of emancipation was restricted to the expansion of the realm of end-in-itself activity. Although he placed a great emphasis upon the reduction of the working-day and corresponding increase in free-time, he also placed a great emphasis upon the transformation of the labour process into a form of free activity.

For the same reason, I argued that Schmidt is also mistaken when he interprets Marx's comments on necessary labour as underlining an "inextinguishable internal moment" of unfreedom, "externality," and "non-identity" in socialism. Marx's philosophy of nature is not underpinned by a "negative ontology," his dialectic is not confined within the "indestructible boundary" between subject and object, and his materialism is not determined by the "dialectical duality" between freedom and necessity. In all these instances, Schmidt proceeds from Adorno, not Marx. His interpretation of Marx begins from and ends with Adorno in all but name. The dialectic between freedom and necessity in the writings of Marx and Engels is indebted to Hegel's critique of Kant's third antinomy. In Schmidt's interpretation, however, Kant's doctrine of the irreducible heteronomy of nature is re-read back into the mature Marx's materialism through the mediation of Adorno. He projects Adorno's 'negative dialectic' onto Marx's dialectic of negativity, and, in the place of Marx's conception of objectification substitutes Adorno's principle of the primacy of the object.

But far from affirming Adorno's anti-system and philosophy of non-identity, Marx characterized the nature with which humans interact as their inorganic body. In the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, he speculated about the possibility of a *reconciliation with nature*, of re-establishing the *unity with nature* in a higher form of production, i.e., the only one *compatible with* and *worthy of human nature*. Thus, even into the later writings, Marx continued to speculate about something like the 'humanization of nature' and the human relation to it. The evidence explored

in this chapter suggests that he believed that the direct metabolism with nature in work could be carried-out in a way consistent with the full development and enjoyment of our own human potential, with the free creation and appropriation of a totality of needs and capacities.

The Vanishing Away of Direct Necessity: Marx's Speculations on the Highest Phases of Socialism

Introduction

In contrast to Marcuse, who sees a contradiction between *Capital*'s conception of the realm of necessity and the *Grundrisse*'s notion of liberation within labour, I argued in the previous chapter that both writings present work in socialism as a mode of free activity. There is a great deal of continuity in Marx's thoughts on this issue across all of his relevant writings. Occasionally, however, the *Grundrisse* and, still more, the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* go beyond the views presented in *Capital*. In a few notable instances, these writings even problematize the distinction drawn in the 'Trinity Formula'. Appealing to these primary texts, as well as to commentaries by Sayers and Hudis, this chapter defends the interpretation that Marx also speculated about the possibility of work being taken-up less and less as a mere means-to-anend activity, and more and more for its own sake in the highest stages of human society.

In the *Grundrisse*, for example, we discover that he not only conceives of work being transformed into a creative form of self-objectification, but, moreover, of being transformed to such a degree that the "abstract antithesis" between free-time and labour-time would be done away with. The labour process could shed its semblance as externality and instrumentality, so that work becomes something that is no longer work. This is the moment in which natural necessity vanishes because it is replaced with a higher necessity, viz., the *need* for the most complete freedom *within* work, as well as *outside* of it. Transformed in such a way, the necessary relation to nature in work would become subject to the free articulation and enjoyment of the intellectual, aesthetic and moral faculties of individuals. In the *Gotha* critique, I will argue that these tendencies in Marx's thought are pushed to their limits when he speculates that in the

highest possible stage of human development— with all other needs satisfied and human powers maximized— humanized work of this sort would be transformed from a mere means of satisfying need into the highest of all needs.

Overcoming the Antithesis between Free-Time and Labour-Time

We have seen that Marx conceived of work as a potentially free and creative form of activity, one involving the combination, experimentation, development and appropriation of a range of essential powers. In *Capital*, he did not treat necessary labour as necessarily alienating. He did not characterize the time spent outside of labour, i.e., free-time for 'higher activity', as the only form of 'free activity'. In fact, according to the view which he elaborates in the Grundrisse, such an "abstract antithesis" between free-time and work-time would have to disappear in a higher social formation, as it only appears to be true from the narrow standpoint offered by the "bourgeois economy."815 The speculative significance of this notion is pushed to its outer limits in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, which refers to work in the highest phases of socialism as an activity transformed from a mere "means of life" into "life's prime want."816 As such, to differing degrees in the Grundrisse and Gotha critique, Marx imagines the possibility of work being performed less and less as a purely instrumental activity, and more and more for its own sake as well. This shedding of mere instrumentality, together with the vanishing-away of direct necessity and direct form of labour, is the moment when work would no longer be recognized as work. Although these texts sometimes create points of philosophical tension with his formulations in Capital, more often than not they complement, rather than contradict, what Marx has to say in the 'Trinity Formula'. But they definitely cast a different light upon the usual

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 611-612.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 321.

meaning given to its distinction between the realms of freedom and necessity, undermining even further the sharp division imputed into it by Marcuse and Schmidt.

In the *Grundrisse*, for instance, Marx criticizes Smith and Fourier because the "repulsive" appearance which they attribute to work only "holds" true for "contradictory labour" in its "historic forms as slave-labour, serf-labour, and wage-labour"— "A. Smith, by the way, has only the slaves of capital in mind." Smith is "right" that work is drudgery in these historic examples of "external forced labour," and that, given such undignified circumstances, only in "not-labour" do humans find "freedom and happiness." Yet, this simply implied for Marx that labour has "not yet created the subjective and objective conditions for itself." In other words, in a free association, he supposed that it would be possible for individuals to find freedom in necessity and not merely beyond it, happiness within work as well as outside of it.

In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou labour! was Jehovah's curse on Adam. And this is labour for Smith, a curse. 'Tranquillity' appears as the adequate state, as identical with 'freedom' and 'happiness'. It seems quite far from Smith's mind that the individual, 'in his normal state of health, strength, activity, skill, facility', also needs a normal portion of work, and of the suspension of tranquillity....The sacrifice of tranquillity can also be called the sacrifice of laziness, unfreedom, unhappiness, i.e. negation of a negative state [although, Marx in no way conceived of 'free-time' in this way either as we have seen]. 817

In Marx's opinion, Smith's "definition" of labour as a "curse" is not even consistent with the "pastoral, etc., state, which it has lost," and neither is it applicable to the "semi-artistic worker of the Middle Ages." In the latter form of labour, he tells us elsewhere, the producer related to production not as a *mere means* but as "half artistic, half end-in-itself." If Marx believed this to be true even of such *one-sided* forms of *precapitalist* labour, based ultimately upon the *incomplete* development of human beings, then we have no reason to suspect along with Marcuse or Schmidt that the more *all-around* and *fully-developed* individuals of a *socialist*

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 611-612.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 611-612.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 497.

society would relate in an unartistic, unfree, and purely instrumental way to the necessary tasks of production. On the contrary, Marx criticizes Smith and Fourier in the *Grundrisse* precisely because they both forget that the worker develops a "definite relation by his own self to the thing he works on, and to his own working capabilities." The "work of material production" is therefore potentially and essentially "positive, creative activity." In a higher society, "labour becomes attractive work, the individual's self-realization."⁸²⁰

Marx can claim in this same passage from the *Grundrisse*, without contradicting himself later in Capital, that work in a higher society will shed its appearance as mere 'instrumentality'. To be sure, it still remains the case that labour "obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacles to be overcome in attaining it." But not only does Smith's definition of labour give us "no inkling" that the "overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity," it also forgets that necessary work can become a form of liberated activity: viz., it can be a "real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour." While necessary work would obviously still satisfy needs of this or that sort, which are external to the activity itself, Marx suggests that it could be taken-up less and less as a mere means-to-an-end because, when transformed, the activity itself may also provide satisfaction. Hence, we find the peculiar Hegelese expression in this passage that the "external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies," and become transformed more and more into "aims which the individual himself posits."821 In this sense, although Marx claims in *Capital* that the true "realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends," here we see that even necessary labour in a socialist society would be "determined" less and less by external

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Ibid., 611-612.

⁸²¹ Ibid., 611-612.

expediency and natural necessity.⁸²² Expressed in speculative terms, it is the vanishing-away of necessity, or its subsumption from *within* by the realm of freedom. As Hudis points out,

Marx states in Volume III of *Capital*, 'The realm of freedom really begins only when labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper'...If such a principle prevailed, human relations would still be governed by natural necessity and external expediency. Society would still be governed by material production. But the *true* realm of freedom lies beyond all this...In a truly free society, however, human life-activity [in labour] is no longer *defined* by labour estranged in material production. It is not defined by external or natural necessity. According to Marx, the amount of time engaged in material production would be drastically reduced in the new society, thanks to technological innovation and the development of the forces of production. At the same time, labour, like all forms of human activity, would become *freely* associated.⁸²³

Marx argues that the work-related activity which satisfies these so-called "external natural" ends can become gradually stripped of its initial appearance as merely means-to-an-end activity—just as the "external aims" themselves are no longer confined within the small circle of unmediated necessity, but have become posited as *human* needs. Instead of relating to work as something entirely undesirable, the tasks of a humanized realm of labour would then be increasingly regarded as free forms in the "objectification of the subject." Not only would the individual *realize her own purposes* in the materials, the activity itself can become a mode of "self-realization." This is why Marx goes so far as to claim that, in a socialist society, "labour also no longer appears as labour, but as the full development of activity." Here, "natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared" and a "historically created need has replaced a natural one"—viz., including the *need* for *fully free activity in work*. This is what freedom within the realm of necessity makes of means-to-an-end activity: namely, it transforms it into something *more* than a *mere means*. As Sayers puts it, the labour required to "satisfy" our "needs becomes free activity," and "free activity [in labour] become a need." In this sense, "Marx seems to envisage that not

Marx, Karl, <u>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</u>, David Fernbach (trans.), Vol. III (Penguin Books: London; 1991), 958-959.

Hudis, Peter, Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism, (Haymarket Books: Chicago; 2003), 181-182, 198-200.

⁸²⁴ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 611-612.

⁸²⁵ Ibid., 325.

only the antagonism but ultimately even the distinction between the realms of necessity and freedom will eventually be overcome." Marx will stress not simply the "reduction" of labour-time so as to expand free-time, but, at other times, also the "ultimate overcoming of the very distinction between these realms."826

Although Marx refers positively here and elsewhere to the withering away of the "direct form" of labour and "direct form" of necessity, this does not mean that he regarded *direct* forms of necessary labour as necessarily alienating. Insofar as freely-associated production still "requires practical use of the hands and free bodily movement, as in agriculture," it may even be reduced to a *healthy* form of "exercise"— in addition to requiring the *scientific knowledge* of the biology of plants, soil, meteorology, organic chemistry, etc., and, perhaps, performing an *aesthetic* function as well.⁸²⁷ It is not difficult to see why, based upon such a lofty conception, Marx speculates about the necessary tasks of work being performed partly for their own sake inasmuch as they allow for both the creation and enjoyment of one's own abilities and relations with others. Transformed in such a way that it exhibits many of the same desirable qualities which we find in the end-in-itself activity of the true realm of freedom (e.g., art, science), a "healthy" and "normal portion" of humanized work would be taken-up as a practical activity which gives *free scope* to scientific experimentation, aesthetic and intellectual creativity, or, more generally, to the application, exercising and combining of a whole array of capacities.

This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and, at the same time, practice [Ausübung], experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society.⁸²⁸

"Really free working," writes Marx in his *Grundrisse*-critique of Smith and Fourier, involves an "intense exertion" of one's essential powers— for which he gives us an example of

⁸²⁶ Sayers, Sean, Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes, (Palgrave: Hampshire; 2011), 65-74.

⁸²⁷ Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 711.

⁸²⁸ Ibid., 712.

an *end-in-itself* activity, "e.g. composing." Yet, because labour can shed its appearance as a purely instrumental activity— because it can assume the form of "creative activity," as "enjoyable" and "attractive work," and be transformed into a mode of "self-realization," "real freedom," and the "objectification of the subject," etc.— he concludes that the "work of material production can achieve this character," i.e., the same character as end-in-itself activities such as "composing,"

(1) when its social character is posited, (2) when it is of a scientific and at the same time general character, not merely human exertion as a specifically harnessed natural force, but exertion as subject, which appears in the production process not in a merely natural, spontaneous form, but as an activity regulating all the forces of nature.⁸²⁹

As Sayers notes, Marx is really speculating in the *Grundrisse* and other works about the possibility that, in the highest stages of socialist society, labour would no longer be a *mere means* of life, but might "become an end-in-itself." Hudis agrees: Marx argues, in several instances, that labour can be "radically transformed as compared with capitalism, since it serves not as a means to an end but as an end in itself."

We have seen that *Capital* adheres to the view that in "all forms of society" the realm of necessity "remains a realm of necessity," whereas the *Grundrisse*, by contrast, contends that "necessity in its direct form has disappeared" and is replaced with a *higher necessity* in a free society. In the final form given to the critique of political economy, Marx asserts that the "realm of freedom really begins only when labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends," whereas, in the 'Rough Draft' for that critique, he claims that the "external aims [of labour] become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies." The earlier work presents labour as a form of "real freedom" whose "abstract antithesis" vis-a-vis "free time"

⁸²⁹ Ibid., 611-612.

⁸³⁰ Sayers, Sean, Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes, (Palgrave: Hampshire; 2011), 115.

Hudis, Peter, Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism, (Haymarket Books: Chicago; 2003), 198-201, 204, 210.

would have to be destroyed by socialism. The magnum opus, however, defines labour as something distinct from the "true realm of freedom." Now, either Marx's views on this question changed considerably in the half decade between the writing of the *Grundrisse* and the *Economic Manuscripts of 1863-64* (which became Volume III of *Capital*), as Schmidt and Marcuse suggest, or, the meanings which they attach to these terms are different from the ones which Marx ascribed to them.

If Marx's thoughts on freedom and necessity in the Grundrisse and Capital are largely consistent with one another, as I believe they are, then the relation between these two realms must be interpreted in a much more nuanced manner than is commonly accepted in secondary literature. Since he felt that production in general could never be abolished by a particular mode of production, Marx also never speculated about the complete dissolution of labour-time into free-time. Once we have accepted the metabolic premise that labour can only be reduced to a healthy and normal limit, the whole matter turns on the form which that activity assumes. In some works, such as the Grundrisse and still more the Gotha Programme, he argues that the further development of socialist society would eliminate not only the "abstract antithesis," but perhaps even the very distinction, between free-time and work-time. Yet, even if, as Marx claims in Capital, the truest freedom afforded by pure end-in-itself activity remains preferable to the nonetheless quite real freedom which might exist within the realm of necessity, this does not imply that he envisioned work as completely undesirable and/or entirely instrumental. On the contrary, he asserts in Capital that a society of more fully developed individuals would assume the necessary demands of labour as something which allows for the free play of their mental faculties, which affords them free space for the expression of their aesthetic and even moral powers. Although these necessary tasks would continue to satisfy needs of this or that sort, they would also satisfy the need for freedom and self-realization in work.

Elsewhere he asserts that labour can be 'self-realization, objectification of the subject...real freedom"...The idea that economically necessary work can be free and fulfilling is a fundamental idea in Marx's outlook, both here and throughout his work...In his early writings Marx describes work as the 'vital activity' of human beings, their 'species activity', the 'essential activity' by which human beings are distinguished from animals...He maintains these views throughout his life. In the Grundrisse he describes labour as potentially a 'free' activity; in the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' he envisions that it may become 'life's prime want'...By objectifying ourselves in our products, we come to recognize our powers and capacities as real and objective, and thus we develop a consciousness of self. Moreover, by humanising the world we come to feel increasingly at home in it...[and] it is through the productive activity of work that we overcome our alienation from nature and develop and recognize our distinctive powers...Thus for both Hegel and for Marx work is not only a means to satisfying needs, it is also an activity of self-development and self-realisation. Moreover, this process of objectification and self-realisation is present in other forms of practical activity as well. Marx also insists that time devoted to necessary labour must be reduced so that "disposable time" for free activity, the "realm of freedom," can be increased. Is there not a contradiction here? If activity in the realm of necessity can be free, as I have been arguing is Marx's view, why should it be reduced? Does this passage from Capital not imply after all that, for Marx, work in the realm of necessity is a regrettable necessity as writers like Berki and Cohen assert?...To maintain that economic work can be a liberating and fulfilling activity is not to say that it is the only such activity or that it should be our sole activity. Yet in industrial society, particularly when Marx was writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, working hours had been extended to extreme lengths...Marx wants work time to be reduced to what he calls a "normal length"...not because he thinks that in ideal conditions necessary work should be eliminated altogether, but so that people can have the time and energy for other activities as well, and fulfill themselves in a variety of ways...Work and free time have stood in antagonistic opposition to each other [up until now]. To be free has meant not working, and to work has meant being unfree. Neither condition has been satisfactory...In a society of the future, Marx envisages that the antagonism which has hitherto prevailed between these aspects can be transcended. The purpose of limiting the working day is not to minimise or eliminate work in the "realm of necessity" as such, but rather to overcome the antagonistic relation which has existed historically between work and freedom...Will the aim of the society continue to be to minimise necessary labour in order to maximise free time? Will the distinction between the realms of necessity and freedom persist even when the antagonism between these two realms are overcome?...[Marx sometimes] seems to imply that the distinction between the realms of necessity and freedom must continue to exist in any future society...However, other themes in Marx's thought point in a different direction, towards the reduction and ultimate overcoming of the very distinction between these realms. Fundamental to Marx's outlook is the view that human needs develop and change historically. As Marx puts it in the passage from Capital under discussion, the realm of necessity "expands," needs become more developed and differentiated...Conversely, as needs develop, free activity itself becomes a need...Marx foresees the emergence of the person "rich in needs" who is "simultaneously the man in need of a totality of vital human expressions...the man in whom his own realization exists as inner necessity, as need"...Work to satisfy basic needs becomes free activity and free activity becomes a need. In this way, Marx seems to envisage that not only the antagonism but ultimately even the distinction between the realms of necessity and freedom will eventually be overcome...However, even if his view is that the distinction persists, this goes no way towards vindicating the accounts of writers like Berki and Cohen. For, as I have argued, in distinguishing between a realm of "freedom" from a realm of "necessity," Marx is not making a distinction between spheres of freedom and unfreedom. 832

Sayers is right that Marx pointed to the possibility of labour becoming more than a mere means-to-an-end. As work is transformed, it could take on attributes similar to the realm of endin-itself activity, and, hence, become something done at least partially for its own sake. Perhaps these possibilities were ones which he believed could only be actualized in the most advanced stages of a socialist society. Without falling into the schematic view which insists that there will have to be one, two, or twelve stages to communism, Marx was right to postulate that, in the immediate phases of the revolution, we would find "communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges."833 Hence, just as the "system of bourgeois economy has developed for us only by degrees, so too [will] its negation."834 Ultimately, however, we can find Marx conjecturing in the Critique of the Gotha Programme that in the highest rungs of human possibility— i.e., with all other needs satisfied and human powers maximized— the new species of individual will even relate to the need for such meaningful work "not only a means of life but [as] life's prime want."835

This passage in question from the *Gotha* critique is highly qualified. Only after natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared and all other needs have been satisfied does fully free work become posited as a *need*, as the *highest necessity*. Once the universally-developed individual has completely transcended the division of labour, then the last division of activity—the very division between activity in the realms of necessity and freedom—might need to be

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 320.

Marx, Karl, <u>Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy</u>, Martin Nicolaus (trans.), (Penguin Books: London; 1993), 712.

Marx, Karl, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', <u>Selected Writings</u>, Lawrence H. Simon (ed.), (Hackett Publishing Company: Indianapolis; 1994), 321.

transcended too. As Hudis suggests, Marx indicates that this process of stripping away labour's pure instrumentality to the point of it becoming life's 'prime want' is only really possible in the highest reaches of a communist society.

There is, however, an important difference between the Critique of the Goth Programme and these earlier writings, in that the Critique suggests for the first time that the postcapitalist relations under discussion thus far in Marx's work had pertained to the initial phase of the new society, which is still defective from the vantage-point of what eventually follows it...Marx discusses the radically different distributive principle that governs a higher phase of communism as follows: 'From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs!'...This does not mean that labour as such vanishes in a higher phase of socialism or communism. Marx explicitly states that in such a higher phase, labour would no longer be 'only a means of life but life's prime want'. Labour is now radically transformed as compared with capitalism, since it serves not as a means to an end but as an end in itself...It is not hard to see that Marx's vision of higher phase of socialism or communism requires a momentous material and intellectual transformation. It certainly does not emerge overnight!...These include an end of the separation between mental and manual labour; the transformation of labour from a mere means to an end in itself; a dramatic increase of the productive forces such as to alleviate the possibility of poverty and want; and 'the all-around development of the individual'...He is not pushing off the realm of freedom to some far horizon. The realm of freedom emerges simultaneously with the elimination of capitalism. Marx is realistic to understand, however, that a free society itself undergoes development. There would be no necessity for it to undergo further self-development if it did not contain some kind of internal defect [carried over from capitalism] that impels the forward movement...The fact remains, however, that conditions in the lower phase of socialism or communism are defective and limited as compared to those that follow in a higher phase...Marx conceives of this phase as the passing-beyond of natural necessity— not in the sense that labour as such would come to an end, but rather that society would no longer be governed by the need for material production and reproduction. 836

One thing is for certain about Marx's famous claim that work would no longer be performed as a *mere means* in the highest phases of communism. If one were to uncritically accept the interpretation which is usually given to the distinction between freedom and necessity in *Capital*, then this would be a startlingly anti-Marxist statement. For example, Cohen claims that, in comparison to the Marx of the *Gotha Programme* who believes work can be transformed into "life's prime want," the Marx of the 'Trinity Formula' believes that, "being a means of life, it cannot be wanted" at all! According to this standpoint, "freedom" in a socialist society is

Hudis, Peter, Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism, (Haymarket Books: Chicago; 2003), 198-201, 204, 210

"regrettably limited" for the Marx of *Capital* to free-time.⁸³⁷ It is true that, in *Capital*, life's prime want is the end-in-itself activity of the truest realm of freedom, whereas, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, the truest freedom also arises within a realm of necessity which no longer appears as a realm of necessity. In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, which is the only real outlier in all of Marx's relevant works on the subject, tendencies in his thought which we also find in his early and middle writings are pushed to their outer limits. In the *Critique*, but also to a lesser extent in the *Grundrisse*, Marx questions and even problematizes the division between freedom and necessity in ways which are not pursued in *Capital*.

However, even if Marxists choose to adopt the view in *Capital* that the "distinction persists, this goes no way towards vindicating the accounts" which characterize Marx as making a "distinction between spheres of freedom and unfreedom."838 As I have argued in my critiques of Marcuse and Schmidt, and as Sayers reaffirms in his critique of Cohen, nowhere in *Capital* does Marx characterize labour in a higher society as undesirable or unfree, alienated or dehumanizing. To suggest that is to misunderstand the philosophy underpinning his distinction between freedom and necessity.⁸³⁹ Insofar as the distinction between the realms of freedom and necessity is maintained in socialism, the more appropriate way to interpret it is as a distinction between two forms of freedom. Both spheres of freedom would have to be reorganized so as to allow for the full development and free application of essential human capacities. But, according to the Marx of the *Grundrisse* and *Gotha Programme*, the outer limits of the revolutionary process and of the transformation of the direct relation to nature in work would be reached when labour is stripped of the appearance of simple externality and taken on no longer as a mere

Cohen, Gerald Allen, <u>Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence</u>, (Oxford University Press: Oxford; 2004), 234.

See Sayers, Sean, Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes, (Palgrave: Hampshire; 2011), 65-75.

⁸³⁹ Ibid., 115.

means— even if we should choose to qualify in the spirit of *Capital* that, unlike the pure end-initself activity of the "true" realm of freedom, it could never become transformed into the "prime want" of life.

Hence, although points of difference certainly exist between the Grundrisse, Capital and the Critique of the Gotha Programme, I believe that, aside from these few exceptions, they complement rather than contradict one another. Marx's different formulations show no signs of an ontological break in his conception of nature and the human relation to it in work. In fact, far from changing his mind in any substantive way on this matter, a direct line of continuity can be drawn from his dissertation on Epicurus to his critique of political economy. We find a similar conception of the relationship between freedom and necessity, and a similar notion of labour and its relation to nature, in early works such as The Holy Family, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, The Paris Notebooks, and The German Ideology. From the mid-1840s onward, Marx distinguished the alienation of labour from its objectification— which is to say, he envisioned the possibility of non-alienating forms of labour. His earlier idea of a universal species-being affirming its universality in the objective activity of work, in its transformation of nature, is enriched by and finds its complement in the later conception of universal development in the Grundrisse and Capital. There, too, Marx foresees the possibility of universally-developed individuals interacting with nature in such a way as it make work actually worthy of that human nature.

Vuillemin once argued that labour "springs apparently from necessity," but ultimately "realizes the work of liberty and affirms our power." As he explains of Marx's views, "necessity expresses (for man) a hidden freedom." Arendt had actually ridiculed this approach as an attempt to reconcile the "flagrant contradictions" in Marx's writings through a "sophisticated"

vulgarization."⁸⁴⁰ However, any primer on Hegel could have taught her what happens to 'contradictions' in the dialectic. Freedom can flourish within necessity, and not merely beyond it. Means-to-an-end activity can be transformed into something more like end-in-itself activity. Necessity can disappear because its direct form is replaced with a higher necessity, including, the need for self-realization in the whole of one's life. Marxism as a political project is oriented toward creating the conditions for happiness inside (and not merely outside) of work.

As I have suggested, this way of interpreting Marx is actually more consistent not only with the late works examined in this chapter, but also with his writings going back to the 1840s. In the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, we find him elaborating the view that "productive life...appears to man in the first place merely as a means of satisfying a need." Yet, the "whole character of a species, its species-character, is contained in the character of its life activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species-character." Thus, the young Marx does not speak of abolishing labour per se, as is sometimes claimed; rather, he argues that we need only to radically reverse the condition of "[e]stranged labor:" i.e., the situation which "makes his life activity, his essential being, a mere means to his existence." Unlike the other animals, "man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom." Indeed, he argues that, under emancipated conditions, "work" would be carried out according to the "laws of beauty." 841 It is in work, he says, that man confirms himself as man, in work that he raises himself above the rest of nature and distinguishes himself from the rest of the animal kingdom— even if the immediate result of wage-labour has meant just the opposite: i.e., complete dehumanization and the reduction of the human to an animal existence.

In creating a world of objects by his personal activity, in his work upon inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species-being...It is just in his work upon the objective

Arendt, Hannah, <u>The Human Condition</u>, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 1998), 104.

Marx, Karl, 'Estranged Labor', <u>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</u>, Martin Milligan (trans.), Dirk J. Struik (ed.), (International Publishers: New York; 2009), 113.

world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. Through this production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created.⁸⁴²

This way of rendering the relationship between freedom and necessity is not only a more sophisticated way of interpreting the relevant passage from Volume III of *Capital*, and its connection to Marx's oeuvre as a whole, it is also more consistent with the philosophic tradition from which his thought descends. To suggest otherwise is to ignore, like Schmidt, the Hegelian origins of Marx's ideas. Hegel repudiated Kant's third antinomy. Rejecting the abstract independence which Critical Philosophy afforded to these two principles, Hegel conceived of these fixated terms as but "moments" in the coming-into-being of "the true freedom and the true necessity."

Take, for example, the antinomy of freedom and necessity. The main gist of it is that freedom and necessity as understood by abstract thinkers are not independently real, as these thinkers suppose, but merely ideal factors (moments) of the true freedom and the true necessity, and that to abstract and isolate either conception is to make it false...In every dualistic system, and especially in that of Kant, the fundamental defect makes itself visible in the inconsistency of unifying at one moment what a moment before had been explained to be independent and therefore incapable of unification. And then, at the very moment after unification has been alleged to be the truth, we suddenly come upon the doctrine that the two elements, which, in their true status of unification, had been refused all independent subsistence, are only true and actual in their state of separation. Philosophising of this kind wants the little penetration needed to discover, that this shuffling only evidences how unsatisfactory each one of the two terms is. And it fails simply because it is incapable of bringing two thoughts together...It argues an utter want of consistency to say, on the one hand, that the understanding only knows phenomena, and, on the other, assert the absolute character of this knowledge, by such statements as 'Cognition can go no further'; 'Here is the natural and absolute limit of human knowledge.' But 'natural' is the wrong word here. The things of nature are limited and are natural things only to such extent as they are not aware of their universal limit, or to such extent as their mode or quality is a limit from our point of view, and not from their own. No one knows, or even feels, that anything is a limit or defect, until he is at the same time above and beyond it...For living beings as such possess within them a universal vitality, which overpasses and includes the single mode; and thus, as they maintain themselves in the negative of themselves, they feel the contradiction to exist within them...This illustration will show...that our knowledge of a limit can only be when the unlimited is on this side in consciousness.⁸⁴³

Appropriating this Hegelian conception, we have already read Engels argue that the

⁸⁴² Ibid., 114.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, <u>Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences and Other Critical Writings</u>, Ernst Behler (ed.), (Continuum: New York;1990), §§ 28, 48.

"freedom" to be gained in this field of natural necessity is not to be sought in the "dream of independence [from] natural laws," but only through the very mastery of the "knowledge of those laws." He 'cunning of reason', Marx references Hegel in *Capital*, consists of the fact that it realizes its own ends by redirecting the forces of nature to work for itself. The human being is capable of radically reversing the determinative power of natural necessity when she sets into motion the forces of nature and industry to operate independently of her own direct labour. Reason works through these means, but it realizes its own ends—ends which, in a higher society, fall outside the immediacy of external necessity and are posited in a truly human form. In the *Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel's archetype for this conception of labour as *liberating activity* is Hercules. As Hegel remarked there of the twelve *labours*, it was through his *struggle* with natural necessity (i.e., with lions, bull and monsters) that Hercules elevated himself above natural immediacy and raised himself into spiritual self-certainty. Hercules

This more Hegelian way of understanding the relationship between freedom and necessity in Marx's writings allows us to follow the definite threads of continuity which weave together the various phases of his intellectual development. Even as early as his doctoral dissertation on ancient materialist philosophies of nature, he preferred the Epicurean cosmology

Engels, Frederick, <u>Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science</u>, Works of Marxism—Leninism, Vol XVIII, Emile Burns (trans.), (International Publishers: New York; 1894), 157.

Marx, Karl, The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature, (Progress 845 Publishers: Moscow; 1902), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1841/dr-theses/ch03.htm. "Hercules is principally represented as having lived and died as a human being who was then raised up among the gods. He possesses human individuality, and he worked like a slave...This spiritual individuality of human beings is on a higher level than that of Zeus and Apollo, for human spirituality is a singular, free, pure, abstract subjectivity, undetermined by nature. Hercules too is a singular subject, with his own natural life, within which his labours and his virtues lie. But this natural life, this conditionedness, this dependence, upon natural life is precisely finitude. At the same time it is (only) abstract finitude, the point of singularity, that has comprehended all natural content within itself, but which, as a spiritual subject, both can break free from it and has done so. The other gods are not free is this way; they still have in their essence a natural content...There is much evidence to show that the Greeks saw this distinction and were quite aware of it. For instance, they assign to Hercules a very high place indeed. Aeschylus makes Prometheus say that what comforts him in his defiance is the fact that Zeus will have a son who will cast him down off his throne; by this he means Hercules [as the representative of human nature]." Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. II, Peter C. Hodgson (ed.), (University of California Press: Berkeley; 1995), 467-468.

of 'chance' to the Democritean principle of natural necessity. Epicurus had recognized that freedom could be found within necessity, that the determinations of nature did not preclude the possibility of self-determination. Democritean materialism, however, "traces everything back to necessity," i.e., an "inexorable necessity" which "cannot be persuaded." Democritus' thinking is therefore a "slave" to the "destiny" and blind "necessity" entertained by the pre-Socratic "physicists" before him. By contrast, Epicurus was commended by Marx for recognizing that "chance is unstable." In "Epicurus we have been redeemed, set free," Marx writes quoting Cicero. "It is a misfortune to live in necessity," but Epicurus shows us that to "live in necessity is not a necessity. On all sides many short and easy paths to freedom are open." It is even "permitted to subdue necessity itself." 846

In the early 1840s, when Marx appealed to the philosophies of Holbach and Helvetius, he credited them for arriving at the same essential insight as Epicurus and Hegel. Since their views were premised upon the notion that "Man is subject to the same laws as nature," their materialisms led them to conclude that "[p]ower and freedom are identical." Marx's vision of the freedom within the realm of necessity therefore involves precisely what Marcuse refers to as the unity of causation by necessity and causation by freedom. Self-determination within the realm of necessity works through the determinations of nature in order to realize its own ends, ends beyond those determined by necessity itself and which include the need for freedom in work. Hence, this freedom presupposes the universally-developed powers of socialized labour and the scientific mastery of the laws of nature made possible by general social knowledge— in presupposes, in a word, *socialism*.

Marx, Karl, <u>The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature</u>, (Progress Publishers: Moscow; 1902), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1841/dr-theses/ch03.htm>.

Engels, Friedrich, and Marx, Karl, <u>The Holy Family: Or, Critique of Critical Critique</u>, (Foreign Languages Publishing: Moscow; 1956), 175-177.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I argued that Marcuse and Schmidt were mistaken in their interpretations of Marx's distinction between freedom and necessity in the 'Trinity Formula'. Freedom is possible within the realm of necessity, as well as beyond it. Marx claims in several instances throughout Capital that the relation to nature in work can be made congruent with the most complete development of human nature. It becomes consistent with the full realization and enjoyment of that human potential not merely by reducing the time spent in labour to a healthy and normal limit, but by transforming the activity itself into a form of free activity and selfactualization. Even in Capital, he speculates about the possibility of a form of labour which would be taken-up freely as an expression and enjoyment of the multifaceted needs and capacities of individuals. This is a view which he maintained in his early works from the 1840s, in his preparatory manuscripts for the critique of political economy, as well as in the writings composed after the Paris Commune. Far from being a "sophisticated vulgarization" of the "flagrant contradictions" in Marx's writings, as Arendt suggests, we have seen that this way of treating necessity is not only more consistent with his oeuvre as a whole, but also with the philosophic tradition to which he belonged.

More often than not, Marx's other works complement, rather than contradict, what he has to say in the 'Trinity Formula'. However, despite a great degree of consistency, this chapter has argued that in a few noteworthy instances his speculations in the *Grundrisse* and, especially, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* go beyond those of *Capital*. In these works, he complicates and even problematizes the sort of distinction between free-time and labour-time which he sets up in the critique of political economy. In the critique of political economy, activity within the realm of necessity is represented as activity within the realm of necessity, whereas, in the 'Rough

Draft', emphasis is placed upon the vanishing away of direct necessity. At the very least, this would mean overcoming the "abstract antithesis" between free-time and work-time. On this point, the view which Marx elaborates in *Capital* is not necessarily incongruous with the *Grundrisse* if one interprets the passage from the 'Trinity Formula' in a more appropriate and sophisticated manner.

However, other differences point to real divergences in his thinking. In Capital, the truest freedom lies beyond labour because labour is said to be still determined by necessity and expediency; in the Grundrisse, though, Marx imagines the possibility of a form of necessary work no longer determined by necessity and expediency, a form of labour which is no longer recognized as labour. In Capital, life's prime want is the expansion of free-time for end-in-itself activity, whereas, in the Gotha critique, he envisions necessary work becoming more than a mere means-to-an-end activity. With all other needs satisfied, the need for the fullest freedom within this sphere of necessity would be reposited as the highest of needs, the primary want. In these other works, then, Marx speculates about the possibility of transcending to some degree or another the distinction between freedom and necessity, labour-time and free-time, means-to-anend and end-in-itself activity, etc., in the highest phases of human development. Once individuals have developed their powers universally, satisfied all of their other needs, and radically reduced the time spent in the rationally reorganized realm of labour, the only goal left would be to realize the truest type of freedom within necessary labour. Once the division of labour is completely eliminated, then this last division of activity— the distinction between activity in the realms of freedom and necessity—might have to be eliminated.

But even if, as *Capital* suggests, the distinction would remain, Sayers is right that this does not lend itself to substantiating the views of those who interpret the realm of necessity as a dehumanizing realm of continued estrangement within socialism. Rather, Marx believed that the

distinction, insofar as it would be retained by a free society, would be a distinction between two different forms of freedom. In short, the *Grundrisse*, *Capital*, and *Critique of the Gotha Programme* offer us three different visions of free activity within the labour process, but all of them consistently characterize work in socialism as a form of free activity. In all of these writings, and in all of his other relevant writings on the subject, Marx treats work in communism as a form of self-realization and self-development, as an activity which gives room to the free expression and enjoyment of one's own scientific and aesthetic powers, the creation and appropriation of a totality of needs. To understand Marx's conception of necessary work in socialism in this way is to understand it as the point of connection between his political philosophy and his philosophy of nature, between his conception of nature and of human nature.

Conclusion

Part III of this dissertation considered Frankfurt School critiques of Marx's conception of nature in a socialist society, as well as their critiques of his distinction between the realms of freedom and necessity in such a social formation. The first chapter argued that Marx's notion of rationally regulating the intercourse with nature is not based upon the same philosophic assumptions as the tradition of instrumental rationality extending from Bacon and Descartes to Bentham and Mill, nor is it susceptible to the Frankfurt critique of such 'rationality'. Marx explicitly criticized the blind necessity of the capitalist exploitation of nature and labour as a system of general utility. This is the society where individuals do not rationally regulate their interchange with the earth. When he uses the term 'mastery', it therefore means something quite different than the 'domination' of nature characteristic of capitalism. Marx, after all, speaks in the same breath of the 'mastery' of the powers of "human nature," not just those of "so-called external nature." He certainly conceives of a socialist society as one which is able to mediate, regulate, and appropriate all the forces of nature by harnessing the collective forces of the general intellect and general industriousness of individuals. But only in this form of society did he believe that individuals would be able to prevent, mitigate, and eliminate humanity's detrimental impact upon the planet, healing the rift which appears irreparable from the standpoint of capital, and restoring, once and for all, the everlasting bond with our own inorganic body.

In order to fully appreciate the role which nature plays in Marx's representations of such a higher social formation, I argued in Chapter Two that readers have to appreciate the relation/distinction between the realms of freedom and necessity— both when socialism is still stamped by the old society, and as it might develop anew upon its own continually recreated basis. One thing is constant throughout Marx's writings on this subject. He never represented the

realm of necessity in socialism as a realm of unfreedom, as both Schmidt and Marcuse suggest. Work was always regarded by him as a potentially creative and free form of activity. When the direct form of labour has been replaced with a fully socialized individual capable of regulating the forces of nature through the application of her own general powers, and through the appropriation of her total social relation to others, the labourer would take on more of a directive and scientific function as a watchman and regulator. However, even where the direct form of labour persists, Marx speculates that a healthy and minimal portion of it could also be transformed into a form of self-development and self-expression. Even for the late Marx, nature could be humanized and the necessary relation to it through work transformed (so as to be consistent with the complete actualization of human nature).

Just as the direct form of labour disappears more and more, so too does the direct form of necessity. Even though the social struggle with nature continues, the animal expediency and artificial natural necessity of capitalist society is abolished, and free activity in the realm of necessity becomes posited as a need, as a higher necessity. This implies dissolving to some degree the purely instrumental and wholly external 'semblance' of work as a mere means-to-anend activity. It implies overcoming the 'abstract antithesis' between free- and labour-time. As I have suggested in Chapter Three, the outer limits to this process of shedding instrumentality and inverting necessity would involve the transformation work into life's prime want. Once appropriation is carried out according to need and all needs gratified, this sort of work would become posited as a need. Once the partially developed individual stamped by the division of labour has given way entirely to the most totally developed social being, a whole new species of person, then the very last division of activity might need to be abolished— the division between activity in the realms of freedom and necessity. But, as Sayers argues, even if Marx was of the

mind that work could never become a pure end-in-itself, and even if he assumed (as he does in *Capital*) that the distinction between these realms would remain in some form, this in no way vindicates the views of those like Schmidt and Marcuse who claim that he defined this realm as one of estrangement.

Afterword

Marx's early philosophical writings, economic interpretation of history, political theory, anthropology, sociology and critique of political economy were all connected in one way or another to his historical conception of nature and the human interaction with it. Far from being uninterested in questions about nature, such questions dominated his thinking from the earliest to the last of his writings. From his doctoral dissertation on the Epicurean philosophy of nature to his analysis of precapitalist forms of the metabolism, from his critique of Hegel's philosophy of nature and Feuerbach's naturalism to his critique of the metabolic rift, Marx grappled with these concerns in thoughtful, original, and critical ways.

Far from invalidating Marx, the history of the 20th century only confirmed the ecological dimensions to his critique of capitalism. The 'natural law' and 'blind necessity' of the capitalist economy continued to undermine the universal-natural conditions and actual natural laws of life necessary for human society in all of its possible forms— and it accomplished this task on a far greater scale than even Marx had foreseen. These advanced environmental contradictions of contemporary capitalism compel us to rethink the meaning of nature not merely in Marxist theory, but, more importantly, in our own social practice. If the history of the 20th century only confirmed these contradictions first identified by Marx's critique, then it will be up to the first century of this new millennium to resolve these antagonisms, preventing the mutually assured destruction of both the human species and the ecosystem to which we belong.

This general exploitation of both 'external' nature and of human nature must be abolished. As a system which saps the original sources of all wealth—labour and nature—capitalism must be destroyed. These statements are as true today as the day Marx first wrote them. Capitalism is not only absolutely inconsistent with the full development of individuals, it is inconsistent with

any notion of a lasting form of the metabolism with nature. Neither nature nor society can afford to let capitalism 'wither away' on the vine. The rift which appears irreparable from the capitalist stage of development, and which continues to violate the everlasting laws of human life, can only be healed by radically reconstituting the connection between labour and its inorganic body in the earth. Then, and only then, might humankind finally proclaim together with Marx: socialism is the completed unity of nature and humanity.

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