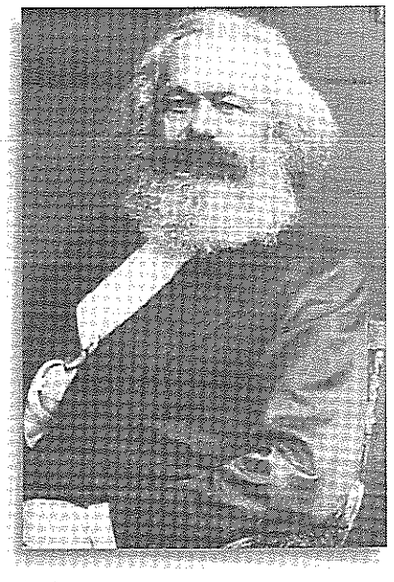
2 Karl Marx (1818–1883)



Karl Marx

Key Concepts

- Class
- Bourgeoisie
- Proletariat
- Forces and relations of production
- Capital
- Surplus value
- Alienation
- Labor theory of value
- Exploitation
- Class consciousness

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

—Marx and Engels ([1848] 1978:473)

Have you ever worked at a job that left you feeling empty inside? Perhaps you have worked as a telemarketer, reading a script and selling a product that, in all likelihood, you had never seen or used. Or perhaps you have worked in a fast-food restaurant, or in a large factory or corporation. Sometimes we have jobs that make us feel like we are "just a number," that even though we do our job, we might be easily replaced. This is precisely the type of situation that greatly concerned Karl Marx. Marx sought to explain the nature of the capitalist economies that came to the fore in western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He maintained that the economic deficiencies and social injustices inherent to capitalism would ultimately lead to the breakdown of capitalist societies. Yet Marx was not an academic writing in an "ivory tower": he was an activist, a revolutionary committed to the overthrow of capitalism. And as you will see shortly, Marx paid a personal price for his revolutionary activities.

Though Marx's prediction that capitalism would be replaced by communism has not come true (some would say, "not yet"), his critique of capitalism continues to resonate with contemporary society.

His discussions regarding the concentration of wealth, the growth of monopoly capitalism, business's unscrupulous pursuit of profit (demonstrated, for instance, by the recent scandals surrounding WorldCom, Enron, Countrywide, Bear Stearns, Merrill Lynch, and Bernard Madoff, to name but a few), the relationship between government economic policy and the interests of the capitalist class, and the alienation experienced in the workplace all speak to concerns that affect almost everyone, even today. Indeed, who has not felt at one time or another that his job was solely a means to an end—a paycheck, money—instead of a forum for fulfilling his aspirations or cultivating his talents? Who has not felt as though she were an expendable "commodity," a means or tool in the production of a good or the provision of a service where even her emotions must be manufactured for the sake of the job? Clearly, Marx's ideas are as relevant today as they were more than a century ago.

A Biographical Sketch

Karl Marx was born on May 5, 1818, in Trier, a commercial city in southwestern Germany's Rhineland.[1] Descended from a line of rabbis on both sides of his family, Marx's father, Heinrich, was a secularly educated lawyer. Though Heinrich did not actively practice Judaism, he was subject to anti-Semitism. With France's ceding of the Rhineland to Prussia after the defeat of Napoleon, Jews living in the region were faced with a repeal of the civil rights granted under French rule. In order to keep his legal practice, Heinrich converted to Lutheranism in 1817. As a result, Karl was afforded the comforts of a middle-class home.

Following in his father's footsteps, Marx pursued a secular education. He enrolled as a law student at the University of Bonn in 1835, then transferred the following year to the University of Berlin. In addition to studying law, Marx devoted himself to the study of history and philosophy. While in Berlin, Marx also joined the Young Hegelians, a group of radical thinkers who developed a powerful critique of the philosophy of **Georg W. F. Hegel** (1770–1831), the dominant German intellectual figure of the day and one of the most influential thinkers of the nineteenth century. Marx constructed the basis of his theoretical system, historical materialism, by inverting Hegel's philosophy of social change. (See pp. 32–33 for a brief sketch of Hegel's philosophy and its relation to Marx's theory.)

In 1841, Marx earned a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Jena. However, his ambitions for an academic career ended when the Berlin ministry of education blacklisted him for his radical views.[2] Having established little in the way of career prospects during his student years, Marx accepted an offer to write for the *Rheinische Zeitung*, a liberal newspaper published in Cologne.

Marx soon worked his way up to become editor of the newspaper. Writing on the social conditions in Prussia, Marx criticized the government's treatment of the poor and exposed the harsh conditions of peasants working in the Moselle wine-producing region. However, Marx's condemnation of the authorities brought on the censors, and he was forced to resign his post.

Soon after, Marx married his childhood love, Jenny Von Westphalen, the daughter of a Prussian baron. The two moved to Paris in the fall of 1843. At the time, Paris was the center of European intellectual and political movements. While there, Marx became acquainted with a number of leading socialist writers and revolutionaries. Of particular importance to his intellectual development were the works of the French philosopher **Henri de Saint-Simon** (1760–1825) and his followers. Saint-Simon's ideas led to the creation of Christian Socialism, a movement that sought to organize modern industrial society according to

[1]Prussia was a former kingdom in eastern Europe established in 1701 that included present-day Germany and Poland. It was dissolved following World War II.

[2]Marx's mentor and colleague, Bruno Bauer, had promised him a faculty position at the University of Bonn. But when Bauer was dismissed from the university for advocating leftist, antireligious views, Marx was effectively shut off from pursuing an academic career.

the social principles espoused by Christianity. In their efforts to counter the exploitation and egoistic competition that accompany industrial capitalism, Saint-Simonians advocated that industry and commerce be guided according to an ethic of brotherhood and cooperation. By instituting common ownership of society's productive forces and an end to rights of inheritance, they believed that the powers of science and industry could be marshaled to create a more just society free from poverty.

Marx also studied the work of the seminal political economists **Adam Smith** (1723–1790) and **David Ricardo** (1772–1823). Smith's book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) represents the first systematic examination of the relationship between government policy and a nation's economic growth. As such, it played a central role in defining the field of political economy. (See p. 24 for summary remarks on Smith's views.) For his part, Ricardo, building on Smith's earlier works, would further refine the study of economics. He wrote on a number of subjects, including the condition of wages, the source of value, taxation, and the production and distribution of goods. A leading economist in his day, Ricardo's writings were influential in shaping England's economic policies. It was from his critique of these writers that Marx would develop his humanist philosophy and economic theories.

During his time in Paris, Marx also began what would become a lifelong collaboration and friendship with **Friedrich Engels**, whom he met while serving as editor of the *Zeitung*. Marx's stay in France was short-lived, however, and again it was his journalism that sparked the ire of government authorities. In January 1845, he was expelled from the country at the request of the Prussian government for his antiroyalist articles. Unable to return to his home country (Prussia), Marx renounced his Prussian citizenship and settled in Brussels, where he lived with his family until 1848. In Brussels, Marx extended his ties to revolutionary working-class movements through associations with members of the League of the Just and the Communist League. Moreover, it was while living in Brussels that Marx and Engels produced two of their most important early works, *The German Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto* (see selections at the end of this chapter). In 1848, workers and peasants began staging revolts throughout much of Europe. As the revolution spread, Marx and Engels left Brussels and headed for Cologne to serve as coeditors of the radical *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, a paper devoted to furthering the revolutionary cause. For his part in the protests, Marx was charged with inciting rebellion and defaming the Prussian royal family. Though acquitted, Marx was forced to leave the country. He returned to Paris, but soon was pressured by the French government to leave the country as well, so Marx and his family moved to London in 1849.

In London, Marx turned his attention more fully to the study of economics. Spending some 60 hours per week in the British Museum, Marx produced a number of important works, including *Capital* (see below), considered a masterpiece critique of capitalist economic principles and their human costs. Marx also continued his political activism.

From 1851–1862, he was a regular contributor to the *New York Daily Tribune*, writing on such issues as political upheavals in France, the civil war in the United States, Britain's colonization of India, and the hidden causes of war.[3] In 1864, Marx helped found and direct the *International Working Men's Association*, a socialist movement committed to ending the inequities and alienation or "loss of self" experienced under capitalism. The *International* had branches across the European continent and the United States, and Marx's popular writing and activism gave him an international audience for his ideas.

Yet, the revolutionary workers' movements were floundering. In 1876, the *International* disintegrated, and Marx was barely able to support himself and his wife as they struggled against failing health. Jenny died on December 2, 1881, and Marx himself died on March 14, 1883.

[3]A number of articles attributed to Marx were actually written by Engels, whose assistance allowed Marx to continue to collect a wage from the newspaper. Engels, whose father owned textile mills in Germany and England (that he would later inherit), also provided Marx with financial support throughout his years in London. The depth of Engels's devotion even led him to support an out-of-wedlock child fathered by Marx.

Intellectual Influences and Core Ideas

The revolutionary spirit that inflamed Marx's work cannot be understood outside the backdrop of the sweeping economic and social changes occurring during this period. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution that began in Britain 100 years earlier was spreading throughout western Europe. Technological advances in transportation, communication, and manufacturing spurred an explosion in commercial markets for goods. The result was the birth of modern capitalism and the rise of middle-class owners of capital, or the **bourgeoisie**, to economic and political power. In the wake of these changes came a radical reorganization of both work and domestic life. With the rapid expansion of industry, agricultural work declined, forcing families to move from rural areas to the growing urban centers. It would not take long for the size of the manufacturing labor force to rival and then surpass the numbers working in agriculture.

Photo 2.1 Sordid Factory Conditions: A Young Girl Working as a Spinner in a U.S. Textile Mill, Circa 1910.

Nowhere were the disorganizing effects of the Industrial Revolution and the growth of capitalism more readily apparent than in Manchester, England. In the first half of the nineteenth century Manchester's population exploded by 1,000 percent as it rapidly became a major industrial city.[4] The excessive rate of population growth meant that families had to live in makeshift housing without heat or light and in dismal sanitary conditions that fueled the spread of disease. The conditions in the mechanized factories were no better. The factories were poorly ventilated and lit and often dangerous, and factory owners disciplined workers to the monotonous rhythms of mass production. A 70-hour workweek was not uncommon for men and women, and children as young as six often worked as much as 50 hours a week. Yet, the wages earned by laborers left families on the brink of beggary. The appalling living and work standards led Engels to describe Manchester as "Hell upon Earth."

Photo 2.2 Sadly, for some factory workers, little has changed over the past century. Here, 16-year-old girls are assembling Keds sneakers at the Kunshan Sun Hwa Footwear Company, in China. The girls apply the toxic glue with their bare hands. At the end of the day, they must line up and leave single file. The factory is surrounded by a 15-foot wall topped with barbed wire.

It was in reaction to such dire economic and social conditions that Marx sought to forge a theoretical model intended not only to *interpret* the world, but also to *change* it. In doing so, he centered his analysis on economic **classes**. For Marx, classes are groups of individuals who share a common position in relation to the means or **forces of production**. These refer to the raw materials, technology, machines, factories, and land that are necessary in the production of goods. Each class is distinguished by what it owns with regard to the means of production. Marx argued, "wage labourers,

[4]Manchester was also the site of Engels's urban ethnography, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), and the location of one of his family's textile mills. It was Engels's work that early on helped to crystallize Marx's conception of the proletariat as the revolutionary force in modern industrial society.

capitalists and landowners constitute [the] three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production." Thus, under capitalism, there are "the owners merely of labour-power, owners of capital, and landowners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit, and ground-rent" ([1867] 1978:441).[5]

Private ownership of the means of production leads to class relations based on domination and subordination. While wage earners are free to quit or refuse a particular job, they nevertheless must sell their labor power to someone in the capitalist class in order to live. This is because laborers have only their ability to work to exchange for money that can then be used to purchase the goods necessary for their survival. However, the amount of wages paid is far exceeded by the profits reaped by those who control the productive forces. As a result, classes are pitted against each other in a struggle to control the means of production, the distribution of resources, and the profits.

For Marx, this class struggle is the catalyst for social change and the prime mover of history. This is because any mode of production based on private property (e.g., slavery, feudalism, capitalism) bears the seeds of its own destruction by igniting ongoing economic conflicts that inevitably will sweep away existing social arrangements and give birth to new classes of oppressors and the oppressed. Indeed, as Marx states in one of the most famous passages in *The Communist Manifesto,* "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978:473; see below).

Marx developed his theory in reaction to laissez-faire capitalism, an economic system based on individual competition for markets. It emerged out of the destruction of feudalism, in which peasant agricultural production was based on subsistence standards in the service to lords, and the collapse of merchant and craft guilds, where all aspects of commerce and industry were tightly controlled by monopolistic professional organizations. The basic premise behind this form of capitalism, as outlined by Adam Smith, is that any and all should be free to enter and compete in the marketplace of goods and services. Under the guiding force of the "invisible hand," the best products at the lowest prices will prevail, and a "universal opulence [will] extend itself to the lowest ranks of the people" (A. Smith [1776] 1990:6). Without the interference of regulations that artificially distort supply and demand and disturb the "natural" adjusting of prices, the economy will be controlled by those in the best position to dictate its course of development: consumers and producers. Exchanges between buyers and sellers are rooted not in appeals to the others' "humanity but to their self-love . . . [by showing] them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them" (ibid.:8). The potentially destructive drive for selfishly bettering one's lot is checked, however, by a rationally controlled competition for markets that discourages deceptive business practices, because whatever gains a seller can win through illicit means will be nullified as soon as the "market" uncovers them. According to Smith, a "system of perfect liberty" is thus created that both generates greater wealth for all and promotes the general well-being of society.

Marx shared much of Smith's analysis of economics. For instance, both viewed history as unfolding through evolutionary stages in economic organization and understood the central role of governments to be protecting the privilege of the wealthy through upholding the right to private property. Nevertheless, important differences separate the two theories. Most notable is Marx's insistence that, far from establishing a system of perfect liberty, private ownership of the means of production necessarily leads to the alienation of workers. They sell not only their labor power but also their souls. They have no control over the product they are producing, while their work is devoid of any redeeming human qualities. Although capitalism produces self-betterment for owners of capital, it necessarily prevents workers from realizing their essential human capacity to engage in creative labor.

Indeed, in highly mechanized factories, a worker's task might be so mundane and repetitive (e.g., "insert bolt A into widget B") that she seems to become part of the machine itself. For example, a student once said she worked in a job in which she had a scanner attached to her arm. Her job was simply to stand by a conveyer belt in which boxes of various sizes came by. She stuck her arm out and "read" the boxes with her scanner arm. Her individual human potential was completely irrelevant to her job. She was just

[5]Marx was not entirely consistent when discussing the number and types of classes that compose capitalist societies. Most often, however, he described such societies as consisting of two antagonistic classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

a "cog in a wheel" of mechanization. Marx maintained that when human actions are no different from those of a machine, the individual is dehumanized.

Moreover, according to Marx, capitalism is inherently exploitative. It is the labor power of workers that produces the products to be sold by the owners of businesses. Workers mine the raw materials, tend to the machines, and assemble the products. Yet, it is the owner who takes for himself the profits generated by the sale of goods. Meanwhile, workers' wages hover around subsistence levels, allowing them to purchase only the necessities—sold at a profit by capitalists to ensure their return to work the next day. One of Marx's near contemporaries, Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), an American sociologist and economist, held a similar view on the nature of the relationship between owners and workers. (See the Significant Others box that follows.)

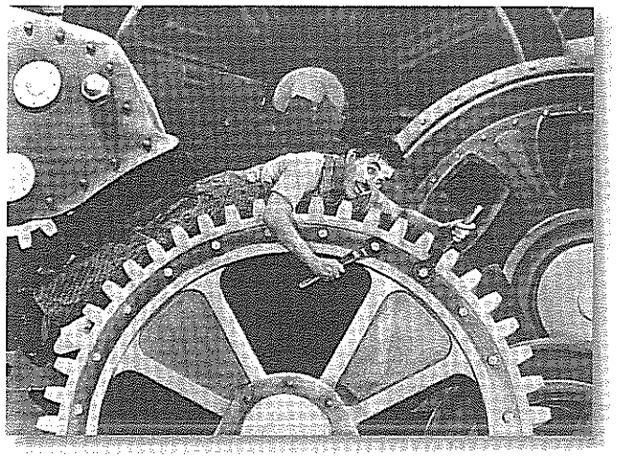


Photo 2.3 Many of Charlie Chaplin's silent films during the 1920s and 1930s offered a comedic—and quite critical—look at the industrial order. Here, in a scene from *Modern Times* (1936), Chaplin is literally a "cog in a machine."

From the point of view of the business owner, capitalism is a "dog-eat-dog" system in which business owners must always watch the "bottom line" in order to compete for market dominance. Business owners can never rest on their laurels—because someone can always come along and create either a better or newer product, or the same product at a lower price. Thus, a business owner must constantly think strategically and work to improve her product or reduce her costs, or both. Cutting costs can increase a business owner's profit either directly (as she keeps more money for herself) or indirectly (by enabling the business owner to lower the price and sell more of her products).

While competition between capitalists may lead to greater levels of productivity, it also results in a concentration of wealth into fewer and fewer hands. One of the basic truths of capitalism is that it takes money to make money, and the more money a business owner has at his or her disposal, the more ability the business owner has to generate profit-making schemes. For instance, a wealthy capitalist might temporarily underprice a product (i.e., sell it below the cost of its production) in order to force his or her competitors out of business. Once the competition is eliminated and a monopoly is established, the product can be priced as high as the market will bear.

Significant Others

Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929): The Leisure Class and Conspicuous Consumption

While Karl Marx's ideas would remain largely on the periphery of sociology until the 1960s, his ideas, nevertheless, inspired a legion of scholars even before his death. One early student of Marx's theories was Thorstein Veblen. Veblen was born in Wisconsin, the son of Norwegian immigrants. His parents, like so many others of that time and place, were poor tenant farmers who came to America seeking to better their lives. Fortunately, after a number of years of hardship and thrift, the Veblens were able to attain a modest lifestyle working as family farmers. Thorstein's humble upbringing, however, contrasted sharply with the vast fortunes being reaped by America's robber barons, who ruthlessly dominated the nation's budding industrial economy.

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Veblen's cognizance of the nation's gross inequities of wealth found expression in his writings, most notably *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) and *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904). As a sociologist and economist, Veblen, in his scholarly analyses, did not pretend to value the neutrality often associated with scientific endeavors. Instead, his work presents a highly critical picture of modern capitalism and the well-to-do, the "leisure class," who benefit most from the economic system built on "waste." Though the efficiency of mechanized production is capable of creating a surplus of goods that could in turn provide a decent standard of living for all, Veblen argued that "parasitic" business leaders "sabotaged" the industrial system in their quest for personal profit.

Though Veblen by no means embraced Marxist models of society and social change in their entirety, his work nevertheless contains important parallels with some of Marx's key ideas. For instance, his assertion that the state of a society's technological development forms the foundation for its "schemes of thought" bears a pronounced resemblance to Marx's distinction between the economic base and superstructure. Additionally, Veblen's analysis of the modern-day conflict between "business" (those who make money) and "industry" (those who make "things") recalls Marx's own two-class model of capitalist society and its attendant moral critique of the exploitation of workers and the clash between the forces and relations of production. However, it was his twin notions of "conspicuous consumption" and "conspicuous leisure" that would come to have the greatest impact on sociology.

Veblen here calls our attention to the "waste" of both money and time that individuals of all social classes engage in as a means for improving their self-esteem and elevating their status in the community. Whether it's purchasing expensive cars or clothes when inexpensive brands will suffice, or dedicating oneself to learning the finer points of golf or dining etiquette, such practices signal an underlying competitive attempt to best others and secure one's position in the status order.

The business owners who are unable to compete successfully for a share of the market find themselves joining the swelling ranks of propertyless wage earners: the **proletariat**. This adds to the revolutionary potential of the working-class movement in two ways. First, the proletariat is transformed into an overwhelming majority of the population, making its class interests an irresistible force for change. Second, as Marx points out, the former capitalists bring with them a level of education not possessed by the typical wage laborer. This breeds political consequences as the former members of the bourgeoisie translate their economic resentment into a radicalization of the proletariat by educating the workers with regard to both the nature of capitalist accumulation and the workers' essential role in overthrowing the system of their oppression.

This was precisely the purpose of Marx's political activities: He sought to generate **class consciousness**: an awareness on the part of the working class of its common relationship to the means of production. Marx believed that this awareness was a vital key for sparking a revolution that would create a "dictatorship of the proletariat," transforming it from a wage-earning, propertyless mass into the ruling class. Unlike all previous class-based revolutions, however, this one would be fought in the interests of a vast majority of the population and not for the benefit of a few as the particular class interests of the proletariat had come to represent the universal interests of humanity. The epoch of capitalism was a necessary stage in this evolution—and the last historical period rooted in class conflict (see Figure 2.1). Capitalism, with its unleashing of immense economic productivity, had created the capital and technology needed to sustain a communist society, the final stage of history.

Using the power of the state to abolish private ownership of the means of production, the proletariat would wrest control of society's productive forces from the hands of the bourgeoisie and create

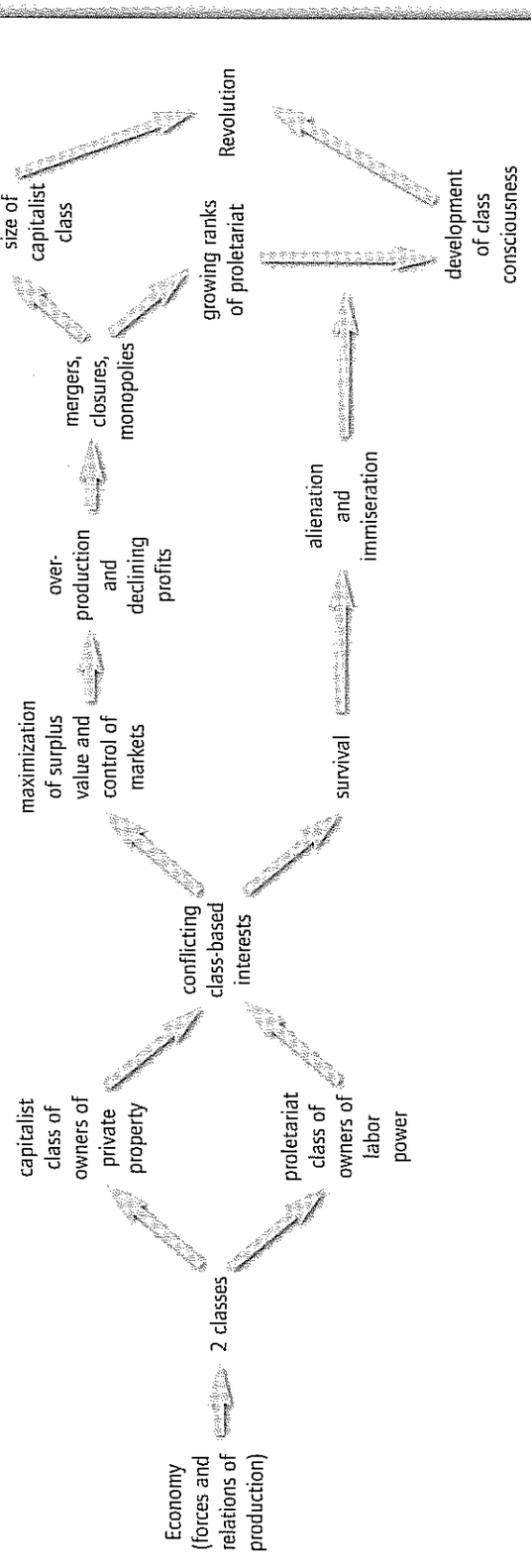


Figure 2.1 Marx's Model of Social Change: The Communist Revolution

a centralized, socialist economy. Socialism, however, would be but a temporary phase. Without private ownership of the means of production, society would no longer be divided along class lines; without antagonistic class interests, the social conditions that produce conflict, exploitation, and alienation would no longer exist. The disappearance of classes and class conflict would render obsolete the state whose primary charge is to secure the right to private property. Finally, without class conflict—the fuel that ignites social change—the dialectical progression of human history comes to a utopian end. With the production of goods controlled collectively and not by private business elites, individuals would be free to cultivate their natural talents and actualize their full potential.[6] (You will read more about this, in the excerpt from *The Communist Manifesto.*)

As indicated previously, this evolutionary type of thinking was typical of Enlightenment intellectuals. Today, however, many consider Marx's "end of prehistory" vision of communism as the least viable part of his theory. While the internal contradictions of capitalism are real, they have been checked by a number of practices, including ongoing government intervention in the economy, the continued expansion of markets (i.e., Western-dominated globalization), and cost-saving advances in production and organizational technologies.

Marx's Theoretical Orientation

In terms of our metatheoretical framework, Figure 2.2 illustrates how Marx's work is predominantly collectivist and rationalist in orientation. Of course, as discussed previously, the action/order dimensions are intended to serve as heuristic devices. Certainly, there are elements of Marx's theory that do not fit neatly into this particular "box." Nevertheless, Marx pursued themes that, taken as a whole, underscored his vision of a social order shaped by broad historical transitions and classes of actors (collectivist) pitted against one another in a struggle to realize their economic interests (rationalist).

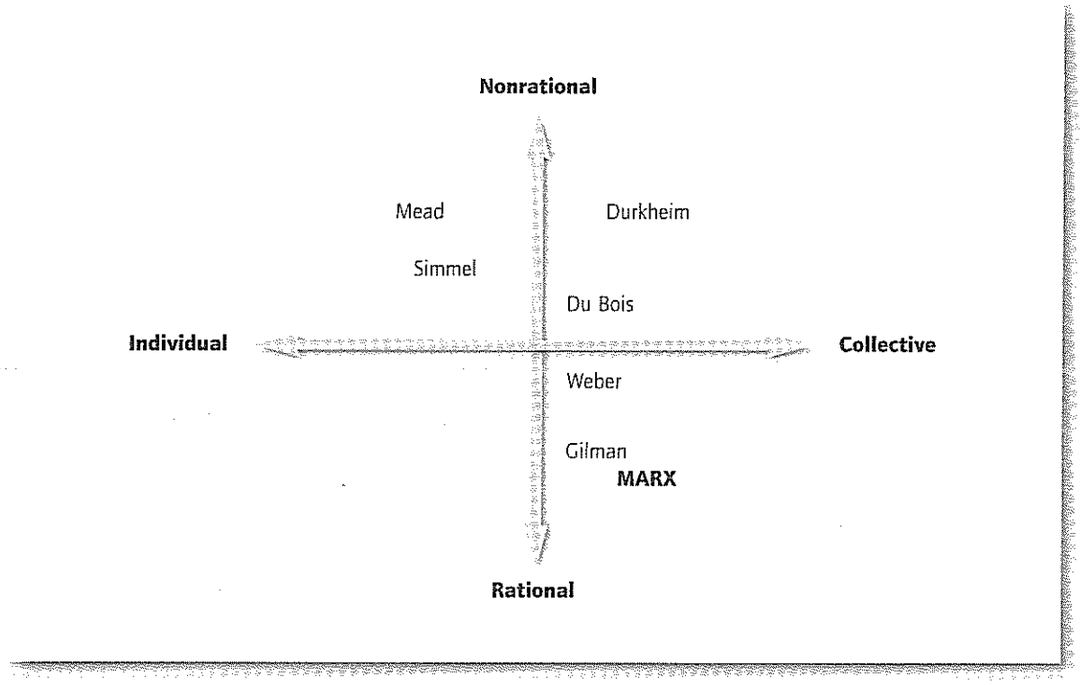
Regarding the question of order, Marx saw human societies as evolving toward an ultimate, utopian end—a process spurred by *class* conflict. It is the struggle to control the forces of production and the distribution of resources and profits they create that leads classes—not individuals—to become the prime movers of history.

Of course, one might counter that it is *individuals* who "make history." Is it not individuals who make up classes, join labor unions, manage factories, merge corporations, and devise industry strategies? Though this is perhaps true on one level, throughout his work Marx emphasized the structural parameters that inhibit and shape individual decisions and actions. On this point Marx stated in one of his most famous passages, although "men make their own history . . . they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx [1852] 1978:595).

The circumstance of greatest import in this regard is that individuals are born into societies where the **forces** and **relations of production** that make up "material life"—classes and property relations—are already established independent of their will. From this existing economic base is born a "superstructure" or "the social, political, and intellectual life processes in general" (Marx [1859] 1978:4). The superstructure, in short, consists of everything noneconomic in nature such as a society's legal, political, and educational systems, as well as its stock of commonsense knowledge. As a result, an individual's very consciousness—how she views the world, develops aspirations, and defines her interests—is not determined by the individual's own subjectivity. Instead, ideas about the world and one's place in it are structured by, or built into, the *objective* class position an individual occupies. And while there are capitalists and laborers who

[6]By no means have modern communist societies—for instance, the former Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam—resembled the type of free and creative society envisioned by Marx.

Figure 2.2 Marx's Basic Theoretical Orientation

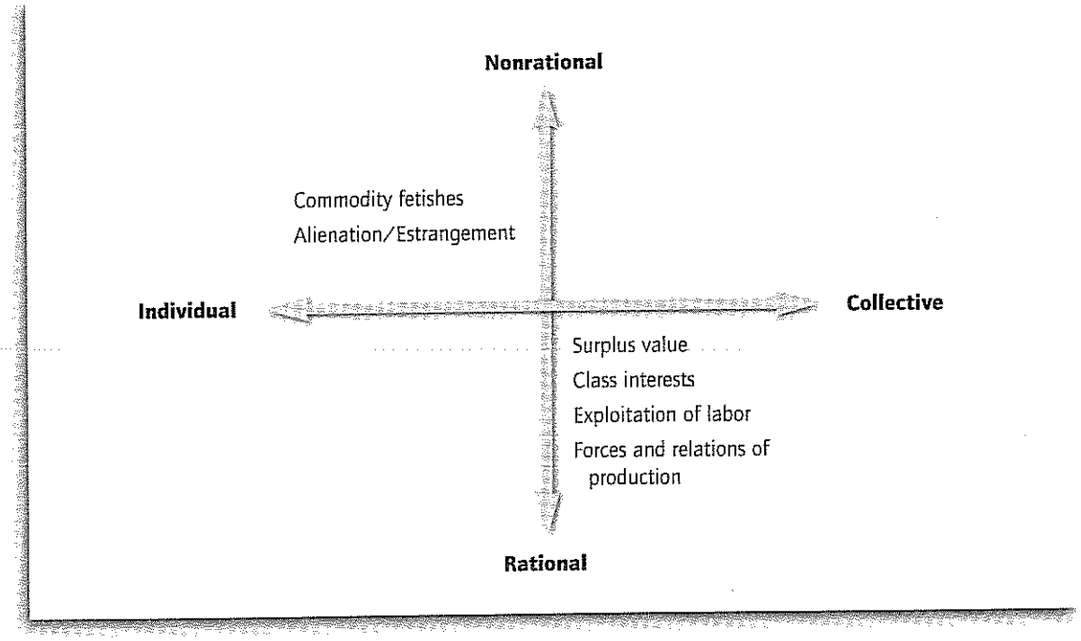


seemingly do not pursue their antagonistic class interests, such exceptions to the rule do not disprove it: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx [1859] 1978:4).

In terms of the motivation for action, Marx's work is primarily rationalist. This tendency is most clearly reflected in his emphasis on class-based *interests*. According to Marx, humans are separated from other animals due to our innate need to realize our full potential through engaging in creative labor. It is through freely developed "conscious life-activity" (Marx [1844] 1978:76) that women and men are able to develop their "true" selves and forge meaningful relationships with others. It is in the process of production and in the objects that result that women and men realize themselves and their significance in a world that they create. (The corruption of the link between labor and self-realization by capitalism is addressed most fully in the selection "Alienated Labour.")

Because self-fulfillment is derived through labor, it is in the individual's interest to control the production process that is so vital to meeting this most basic of human needs. The crucial arena of this struggle is the network of economic relationships: the manufacturing, distribution, and sale of goods, and the selling of one's labor. Even if individuals are unaware of their true class interests, they will still be moved by them. Recall that interests are a reflection of one's objective position in relation to the process of production; they are not spawned by one's subjective disposition. The essential point here is that Marx's model *presupposes* that our actions are driven by our attempts to maximize our interests. (See Figure 2.3.) Of course, whether we are truly as rationalistic as Marx maintains is a point of great theoretical debate.

Figure 2.3 Marx's Core Concepts



Significant Others

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937): Hegemony and the Ruling Ideas

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian philosopher, journalist, and political activist who spent much of his adult life ardently supporting the revolutionary cause of the working class. His foray into politics began in earnest in 1915 when he became a member of the Italian Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Italiano; PSI) and published critical essays in the Party's official paper, *L'Avanti.* In 1919, he cofounded the periodical *The New Order: A Weekly Review of Socialist Culture.* Covering political events across Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union, the paper was widely influential among Italy's radical Left. After a split within the PSI in 1921, Gramsci became a prominent member of the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano; PCI), serving first in the Party's central committee and then as a delegate to the Communist International in Moscow. He would go on to be elected to the Party's Chamber of Deputies and later rise to the position of general secretary.

Gramsci would pay a heavy cost for his political activism. His sympathies with the Bolshevik revolution and its leaders, and his alliance with his country's workers' movements, made him an enemy of Italy's newly formed fascist government. In 1926, Gramsci was arrested for his political activities and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He would serve only 11 years in prison, however, before dying of a brain hemorrhage in April 1937.

Despite the harsh conditions of his imprisonment and his fragile health, Gramsci produced 29 notebooks—some 3,000 pages—of political and philosophical analysis while serving his sentence. The notebooks were smuggled out, but none was published until several years after the end of World War II. It would be another 20 years before the notebooks were compiled and published in English, under the title *Prison Notebooks.* The notebooks reveal one of Gramsci's central concerns: to explain why Europe's working-class failed to spearhead a socialist revolution, and how, in Italy and elsewhere, it could act against its own class interests by supporting a fascist regime. In addressing these issues, Gramsci confronted an oft-noted weakness in Marx's historical materialism: the role of ideas in preventing or advancing revolutionary change. Asserting, "the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class," Marx nevertheless portended that the proletariat, with its numbers increasing, would come to recognize its class interests and unite to overthrow the bourgeoisie and the conditions of alienation and exploitation that serve its narrow ambitions for profit. Yet, despite the fact that the material or economic conditions were ripe for a revolutionary movement across much of Europe, no successful challenge to the ruling powers was mounted.

To account for the lack of revolutionary foment on the part of the working class, Gramsci emphasized the role of ideas in establishing "hegemony," or domination, over subaltern (oppressed) classes. For Gramsci, the bourgeoisie maintained its dominance not primarily through force or coercion, but through the willing, "spontaneous" consent of the ruled. This consent was the outgrowth of the proletariat adopting as its own the values, beliefs, and attitudes that serve the interests of the ruling class. In other words, the working class is socialized (particularly through the educational system) into accepting a bourgeois ideology as an unquestioned or commonsense view of the world and their place in it. As a result, the working class aligns itself with the status quo, thus granting legitimacy to social and economic arrangements that perpetuate their own exploitation.

Recognizing that economic crises alone could not spark a socialist revolution, Gramsci was convinced that in order for the proletariat to unmask the real sources of its oppression and generate a unified, popular revolt, it must first develop its own "organic" consciousness, or counter-hegemony. This counter hegemony would articulate the real interests and needs of the masses. Moreover, he insisted that this counter ideology must originate from within the masses; to be effective in provoking revolutionary change, it cannot be imposed on them by bourgeois "traditional" intellectuals who remain detached from the everyday realities of working-class life. Declaring, "all men are intellectuals," Gramsci sought to encourage the development of "organic" intellectuals from within the ranks of the working class through his political journalism and active participation in the workers' movement. Such individuals are intellectuals not in the sense of their profession or social function, but in terms of their "directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong" (Gramsci 1971:3). In this way, the factory worker and truck driver, the financial accountant and government bureaucrat, are all potential intellectuals. Indeed, the intellectuals most capable of contributing to progressive social change were not those of the "traditional" or professional type—writers, artists, scientists, philosophers—but rather those who engage in "praxis," connecting theoretical insights to an active attempt to fashion a more just society. For Gramsci, this was the "new intellectual" drawn from the working class:

> In the modern world, technical education, closely bound to industrial labour even at the most primitive and unqualified level, must form the basis of the new type of intellectual. The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator . . . One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals. (Gramsci 1971:10)

Readings

Marx's writings included here are divided into four sections. The first section centers on his "materialist conception of history," developed in reaction to the works of the German idealist philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831). The second section offers his critique of the human costs of capitalism. The third section contains Marx's call for the inevitable communist revolution that will usher in the "end of prehistory" and, with it, the end of alienation, private property, and oppressive government. In the fourth set of readings, we move from Marx's prophecy of emancipation to his theory of economics. Here you will read his analyses of the sources of value and the nature of commodities.

Introduction to *The German Ideology*

Written in 1845–1846, *The German Ideology* presents the most detailed account of Marx's theory of history. In it, Marx set out to reformulate the work of the eminent German philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel. In contrast to previous philosophers who focused on explaining the roots of stability in the physical and social worlds (i.e., why things seemingly stayed the same), Hegel saw change as the motor of history. For Hegel, change was driven by a dialectical process in which a given state of being or idea contains within it the seeds of an opposing state of being or opposing idea. The resolution of the conflict produces yet a new state of being or idea. This synthesis, in turn, forms the basis of a new contradiction, thus continuing the process of change.

As an example, consider the division of gender roles. Traditionally, women and the roles they perform have been devalued relative to the positions occupied by men. Thus, the notion that a "woman's place is in the home" serves as a justification for male dominance in economic and political affairs. Out of the ideas that sustained the oppression of women was born the opposing view that women are in fact superior to men. From this vantage, it is argued, for instance, that women's "innate" compassion or empathy better qualifies them for positions of leadership compared to the "innate" aggression said to characterize men. From the clash of these opposing ideas, a synthesis or state of being has evolved in which neither women nor men are considered superior to the other, but instead are viewed as equals. Thus, women have entered into roles formerly reserved for men, while men have begun to perform more traditionally "feminine" tasks.

Is society thus faced with a never-ending challenging of ideas as one "truth" replaces another in the evolution of history? Hegel's answer is a definitive "no." He expressed, instead, a belief in the ultimate perfectibility of the consciousness of humankind. Such perfection occurs through the progressive realization of "Absolute Idea" as revealed by God. In other words, every idea (thesis) is a distorted expression of an all-embracing "Spirit" or "Mind" (God) that produces an opposite idea (antithesis). The two contradictory ideas are unified to form a synthesis that in turn becomes the basis for a new idea (thesis). Progress and history itself come to an end as the contradictions between our ideas about reality and the "Truth" of reality as designed by God are finally resolved. In arguing that the evolution of human history proceeds purposively according to an immanent or predestined design, Hegel offers a teleological vision shared with both Christian theology and Enlightenment philosophy. (As you will read below, Marx, too, fashioned a teleological theory, but one that casts communism as the end toward which history progresses.)

If this seems abstract, it is because it is! Perhaps we can clarify Hegel's dialectic idealism a bit further. The essence of reality lies in thought or ideas because it is only in and through the concepts that order our experiences that experiences, as such, are known. Reality is a product of our conceptual categories or consciousness and thus has no existence independent of our own construction of it. As our ideas or knowledge changes, so does reality. The stages of history or reality are then defined by progressive stages in the

negation of the prevailing conceptual ordering of experience. The utopian aspect of this development is found in the assertion that humankind's knowledge will reach the perfected state of "Pure Reason" or "Absolute Idea" in which freedom takes the form of self-knowledge.

In contending that history is marked by a distortion of "Truth" or "Pure Reason," it follows that our consciousness is alienated from Spirit (God). The condition of alienation thus stems from a religiously grounded misunderstanding of reality. At its core, this misunderstanding comes from the failure to recognize that man and Spirit are one. Instead, man exists as an "unhappy soul," placing in God all that is good and righteous, while seeing in himself only that which is base and sinful. God becomes an alien, all-knowing, powerful force separated from ignorant, powerless man. Yet, as consciousness evolves through the historical dialectic, it advances closer to utopia in the form of an absolute self-knowledge that recognizes that reality is a product of the human spirit and not an alien force. No longer plagued by the irrationality that comes from a distorted view of the essence of mankind, man, in unity with Mind, can order the world in a rational way.[1]

The German Ideology reflects both Marx's indebtedness to and break from Hegel's philosophy. On one hand, akin to Hegel, Marx depicts the unfolding of history as a progressive, dialectical process that culminates in a utopia of freedom and self-realization. In other words, like Hegel, Marx argues that each successive period in societal evolution is a necessary consequence of the preceding stage; and Marx projects a millennial significance onto the process itself, claiming that social development ends in a "necessary" utopia free of conflict and exploitation.

However, Marx breaks decisively from Hegel by insisting that it is *material* existence—not consciousness—that fuels historical change. Thus, Marx sought to take Hegel's idealism, which had the evolution of history "standing on its head," and "turn it right side up" in order to discover the real basis of the progression of human societies. Theoretically, this inversion is of utmost significance because it reflects a shift from a nonrationalist to a rationalist theoretical orientation.

The German Ideology is a pivotal writing because it offers the fullest treatment of Marx's materialist conception of history. It is in Marx's theory of historical materialism that we find one of his most important philosophical contributions, namely his conviction that ideas or interests have no existence independent of physical reality. In numerous passages, you will see Marx's rejection of Hegel's notion that ideas determine experience in favor of the materialist view that experience determines ideas. For instance, Marx asserts, "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process" (Marx and Engels [1846] 1978:154). And again, "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (ibid.:155). In short, Marx argues that the essence of individuals, what they truly are and how they see the world, is determined by their material, economic conditions—"both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce"—in which they live out their very existence (ibid.:150; emphasis in original).

Moreover, to argue that experience determines consciousness yields a radical conclusion: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" (Marx and Engels [1846] 1978:172). In other words, Marx maintains that the dominant economic class controls not only a society's means of material production, but the production of ideas as well. To illustrate this point, consider, for instance, the *idea* of individual equality. From where did it spring? The notion of equality is by no means universal. Not only do some contemporary societies reject the concept of equality, but even those societies that do guarantee such rights (the United States, France, England, to name but a few) have not always done so. How are we then to account for the development of this principle? The answer, in short, lies in the development of capitalism. As an economic system, capitalism is based on the notion of "freedom"—workers are "free" to find work or to quit their job. Entrepreneurs are "free" to open or close their businesses. In order for

[1]Hegel's notion of alienation would play a central role in Marx's work. Marx, however, argued that alienation was not a consequence of distorted consciousness but, rather, that it resulted from the material conditions of production. Marx takes up this issue in his essay "Alienated Labour," the next excerpt.

competitive capitalism to develop to its fullest productive capacities, individuals must be able to move, work, and invest their capital freely. This ability is expressed through the idea of individual equality. Thus, the concept of equality is born out of the capitalist mode of production and the nature of the social relationships it demands. It is an idea advanced by the bourgeoisie to sanction individualism that, in turn, justifies and sustains the economic conditions in which they themselves are the dominant force. In short, it serves the economic and political interests of the ruling class.

The German Ideology (1845–1846)

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. The premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself—geological, orohydrographical, climatic and so on. The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production. . . .

The relations of different nations among themselves depend upon the extent to which each has developed its productive forces, the division of labour and internal intercourse. This statement is generally recognised. But not only the relation of one nation to others, but also the whole internal structure of the nation itself depends on the stage of development reached by its production and its internal and external intercourse. How far the productive forces of a nation are developed is shown most manifestly by the degree to which the division of labour has been carried. Each new productive force, insofar as it is not merely a quantitative of productive forces already known (for instance the bringing into cultivation of fresh land), causes a further development of the division of labour.

The division of labour inside a nation leads at first to the separation of industrial and commercial from agricultural labour, and hence to the separation of *town* and *country* and to the conflict of their interests. Its further development leads to the separation of commercial from industrial labour. At the same time through the division of labour inside these various branches there develop various divisions among the individuals co-operating in definite kinds of labour. The relative position of these individual groups is determined by the methods employed in agriculture, industry and commerce (patriarchalism, slavery, estates, classes). These same conditions are to be seen (given a more developed intercourse) in the relations of different nations to one another.

The various stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of ownership, i.e., the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument, and product of labour.

The first form of ownership is tribal [*Stammeigentum*] ownership. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture. In the latter case it pre-supposes a great mass of uncultivated stretches of land. The division of labour is at this stage still very elementary and is confined to a further extension of the natural division of labour existing in the family. The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family; patriarchal family chieftains, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter.

The second form is the ancient communal and State ownership which proceeds especially from the union of several tribes into a city by agreement or by conquest, and which is still accompanied by slavery. Beside communal ownership we already find movable, and later also immovable, private property developing, but as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership. The citizens hold power over their labouring slaves only in their community, and on this account alone, therefore, they are bound to the form of communal ownership. It is the communal private property which compels the active citizens to remain in this spontaneously derived form of association over against their slaves. For this reason the whole structure of society based on this communal ownership, and with it the power of the people, decays in the same measure as, in particular, immovable private property evolves. The division of labour is already more developed. We already find the antagonism of town and country; later the antagonism between those states which represent town interests and those which represent country interests, and inside the towns themselves the antagonism between industry and maritime commerce. The class relation between citizens and slaves is now completely developed. . . .

The third form of ownership is feudal or estate property. If antiquity started out from the town and its little territory, the Middle Ages started out from the *country*. This different starting-point was determined by the sparseness of the population at that time, which was scattered over a large area and which received no large increase from the conquerors. In contrast to Greece and Rome, feudal development at the outset, therefore, extends over a much wider territory, prepared by the Roman conquests and the spread of agriculture at first associated with them. The last centuries of the declining Roman Empire and its conquest by the barbarians destroyed a number of productive forces; agriculture had declined, industry had decayed for want of a market, trade had died out or been violently suspended, the rural and urban population had decreased. From these conditions and the mode of organisation of the conquest determined by them, feudal property developed under the influence of the Germanic military constitution. Like tribal and communal ownership, it is based again on a community; but the directly producing class standing over against it is not, as in the case of the ancient community, the slaves, but the enserfed small peasantry. As soon as feudalism is fully developed, there also arises antagonism to the towns. The hierarchical structure of landownership, and the armed bodies of retainers associated with it, gave the nobility power over the serfs. This feudal organisation was, just as much as the ancient communal ownership, an association against a subjected producing class; but the form of association and the relation to the direct producers were different because of the different conditions of production.

This feudal system of landownership had its counterpart in the *towns* in the shape of corporative property, the feudal organisation of trades. Here property consisted chiefly in the labour of each individual person. The necessity for association against the organised robber nobility, the need for communal covered markets in an age when the industrialist was at the same time a merchant, the growing competition of the escaped serfs swarming into the rising towns, the feudal structure of the whole country: these combined to bring about the *guilds*. The gradually accumulated small capital of individual craftsmen and their stable numbers, as against the growing population, evolved the relation of journeyman and apprentice, which brought into being in the towns a hierarchy similar to that in the country.

Thus the chief form of property during the feudal epoch consisted on the one hand of landed property with serf labour chained to it, and on the other of the labour of the individual with small capital commanding the labour of journeymen. The organisation of both was determined by the restricted conditions of production—the small-scale and primitive cultivation of the land, and the craft type of industry. There was little division of labour in the heyday of feudalism. Each country bore in itself the antithesis of town and country; the division

into estates was certainly strongly marked; but apart from the differentiation of princes, nobility, clergy and peasants in the country, and masters, journeymen, apprentices and soon also the rabble of casual labourers in the towns, no division of importance took place. In agriculture it was rendered difficult by the strip-system, beside which the cottage industry of the peasants themselves emerged. In industry there was no division of labour at all in the individual trades themselves, and very little between them. The separation of industry and commerce was found already in existence in older towns; in the newer it only developed later, when the towns entered into mutual relations. . . .

The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they *really* are; i.e., as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura,* this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as *their* consciousness. . . .

The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship. By social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a "productive force." Further, that the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society, hence, that the "history of humanity" must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange. . . . Thus it is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialistic connection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production, and which is as old as men themselves. This connection is ever taking on new forms, and thus presents a "history" independently of the existence of any political or religious nonsense which would especially hold men together.

Only now, after having considered four moments, four aspects of the primary historical relationships, do we find that man also possesses "consciousness";[i] but,

[i]Marginal note by Marx: "Men have history because they must produce their life, and because they must produce it moreover in a certain way: this is determined by their physical organisation: their consciousness is determined in just the same way."

even so, not inherent, not "pure" consciousness. From the start the "spirit" is afflicted with the curse of being "burdened" with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into *"relations"* with anything, it does not enter into any relation at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all. Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the *immediate* sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men's relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus a purely animal consciousness of nature (natural religion).

We see here immediately: this natural religion or this particular relation of men to nature is determined by the form of society and vice versa. Here, as everywhere, the identity of nature and man appears in such a way that 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 relation to nature, just because nature is as yet hardly modified historically; and, on the other hand, man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him is the beginning of the consciousness that he is living in society at all. This beginning is as animal as social life itself at this stage. It is mere herd-consciousness, and at this point man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one. This sheep-like or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and, what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these there develops the division of labour, which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act, then that division of labour which develops spontaneously or "naturally" by virtue of natural predisposition (e.g., physical strength), needs, accidents, etc., etc. Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears.[ii] From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. But even if this theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc., comes into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production. . . .

With the division of labour, in which all these contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, is given simultaneously the *distribution,* and indeed the *unequal* distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property: the nucleus, the first form, of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others. Division of labour and private property are, moreover, identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity.

Further, the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another. And indeed, this communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination, as the "general interest," but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided. And finally, the division of labour offers us the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man

[ii]Marginal note by Marx: "The first form of ideologists, priests, is concurrent."

has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood: while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.

And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community the latter takes an independent form as the *State,* divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration—such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests—and especially, as we shall enlarge upon later, on the classes, already determined by the division of labour, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others. It follows from this that all struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc., are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another. . . . Further, it follows that every class which is struggling for mastery, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, postulates the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination itself, must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest, which in the first moment it is forced to do. Just because individuals seek only their particular interest, which for them does not coincide with their communal interest (in fact the general is the illusory form of communal life), the latter will be imposed on them as an interest "alien" to them, and "independent" of them, as in its turn a particular, peculiar "general" interest; or they themselves must remain within this discord, as in democracy. On the other hand, too, the *practical* struggle of these particular interests, which constantly *really* run counter to the communal and illusory communal interests, makes *practical* intervention and control necessary through the illusory "general" interest in the form of the State. The social power, i.e., the multiplied productive force, which arises through the co-operation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since their co-operation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these.

This *"estrangement"* (to use a term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers) can, of course, only be abolished given two *practical* premises. For it to become an "intolerable" power, i.e., a power against which men make a revolution, it must necessarily have rendered the great mass of humanity "propertyless," and produced, at the same time, the contradiction of an existing world of wealth and culture, both of which conditions presuppose a great increase in productive power, a high degree of its development. And, on the other hand, this development of productive forces (which itself implies the actual empirical existence of men in their *world-historical,* instead of local, being) is an absolutely necessary practical premise because without it *want* is merely made general, and with *destitution* the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced; and furthermore, because only with this universal development of productive forces is a universal intercourse between men established, which produces in all nations simultaneously the phenomenon of the "propertyless" mass (universal competition), makes each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others, and finally has put *world-historical,* empirically universal individuals in place of local ones. Without this, (1) communism could only exist as a local event; (2) the *forces* of intercourse themselves could not have developed as *universal,* hence intolerable powers: they would have remained home-bred conditions surrounded by superstition; and (3) each extension of intercourse would abolish local communism. Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples "all at once" and simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with communism. How otherwise

could for instance property have had a history at all, have taken on different forms, and landed property, for example, according to the different premises given, have proceeded in France from parcellation to centralisation in the hands of a few, in England from centralisation in the hands of a few to parcellation, as is actually the case today? Or how does it happen that trade, which after all is nothing more than the exchange of products of various individuals and countries, rules the whole world through the relation of supply and demand—a relation which, as an English economist says, hovers over the earth like the fate of the ancients, and with invisible hand allots fortune and misfortune to men, sets up empires and overthrows empires, causes nations to rise and to disappear—while with the abolition of the basis of private property, with the communistic regulation of production (and, implicit in this, the destruction of the alien relation between men and what they themselves produce), the power of the relation of supply and demand is dissolved into nothing, and men get exchange, production, the mode of their mutual relation, under their own control again?

Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence. Moreover, the mass of *propertyless* workers—the utterly precarious position of labour-power on a mass scale cut off from capital or from even a limited satisfaction and, therefore, no longer merely temporarily deprived of work itself as a secure source of life—presupposes the *world market* through competition. The proletariat can thus only exist *world-historically,* just as communism, its activity, can only have a "world-historical" existence. World-historical existence of individuals, i.e., existence of individuals which is directly linked up with world history.

The form of intercourse determined by the existing productive forces at all previous historical stages, and in its turn determining these, is *civil society.* The latter, as is clear from what we have said above, has as its premises and basis the simple family and the multiple, the so-called tribe, and the more precise determinants of this society are enumerated in our remarks above. Already here we see how this civil society is the true source and theatre of all history, and how absurd is the conception of history held hitherto, which neglects the real relationships and confines itself to high-sounding dramas of princes and states.

Civil society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage and, insofar, transcends the State and the nation, though, on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality, and inwardly must organise itself as State. The term "civil society" [*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*][iii] emerged in the eighteenth century, when property relationships had already extricated themselves from the ancient and medieval communal society. Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie; the social organisation evolving directly out of production and commerce, which in all ages forms the basis of the State and of the rest of the idealistic superstructure, has, however, always been designated by the same name. . . .

This conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the material production of itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production (i.e., civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history; and to show it in its action as State, to explain all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc., etc., and trace their origins and growth from that basis; by which means, of course, the whole thing can be depicted in its totality (and therefore, too, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another). It has not, like the idealistic view of history, in every period to look for a category, but remains constantly on the real *ground* of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice; and accordingly it comes to the conclusion that all forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism, by resolution into "self-consciousness" or transformation into "apparitions," "spectres," "fancies," etc., but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gave rise to this idealistic humbug; that not criticism but revolution is the driving force of history, also of religion, of philosophy and all other types of theory. It shows that history does not end by being resolved into "self-consciousness" as "spirit of the spirit," but that in it at each stage there is found a

[iii]Burgerliche Gesellschaft can mean either "bourgeois society" or "civil society."

aterial result: a sum of productive forces, a historiılly created relation of individuals to nature and to one ıother, which is handed down to each generation from s predecessor; a mass of productive forces, capital ınds and conditions, which on the one hand, is indeed odified by the new generation, but also on the other escribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a efinite development, a special character. It shows that rcumstances make men just as much as men make rcumstances. This sum of productive forces, capital ınds and social forms of intercourse, which every indiidual and generation finds in existence as something iven, is the real basis of what the philosophers have onceived as "substance" and "essence of man," and hat they have deified and attacked: a real basis which not in the least disturbed, in its effect and influence n the development of men, by the fact that these phiosophers revolt against it as "self-consciousness" and ıe "Unique." These conditions of life, which different enerations find in existence, decide also whether or ot the periodically recurring revolutionary convulsion ill be strong enough to overthrow the basis of the ntire existing system. And if these material elements of complete revolution are not present (namely, on the ne hand the existing productive forces, on the other the ormation of a revolutionary mass, which revolts not nly against separate conditions of society up till then, ut against the very "production of life" till then, the total activity" on which it was based), then, as far as ractical development is concerned, it is absolutely nmaterial whether the idea of this revolution has been xpressed a hundred times already, as the history of ommunism proves. . . .

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the uling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* orce of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellecual* force. The class which has the means of material roduction at its disposal, has control at the same time ver the means of mental production, so that thereby, enerally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the neans of mental production are subject to it. The ruling deas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the lominant material relationships, the dominant material elationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationhips which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, is they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. For instance, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an "eternal law."

The division of labour, which we have already seen above as one of the chief forces of history up till now, manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labour, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), while the others' attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves. Within this class this cleavage can even develop into a certain opposition and hostility between the two parts, which, however, in the case of a practical collision, in which the class itself is endangered, automatically comes to nothing, in which case there also vanishes the semblance that the ruling ideas were not the ideas of the ruling class and had a power distinct from the power of this class. The existence of revolutionary ideas in a particular period presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class; about the premises for the latter sufficient has already been said above.

If now in considering the course of history we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence, if we confine ourselves to saying that these or those ideas were dominant at a given time, without bothering ourselves about the conditions of production and the producers of these ideas, if we thus ignore the individuals and world conditions which are the source of the ideas, we can say, for instance, that during the time that the aristocracy was dominant, the concepts honour, loyalty, etc., were dominant, during the dominance of the bourgeoisie the concepts freedom, equality, etc. The ruling class itself on the whole imagines this to be so. This conception of history, which is common to all historians, particularly since the eighteenth century, will necessarily come up against the phenomenon that increasingly abstract ideas hold sway, i.e., ideas which increasingly take on the form of universality. For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling

before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones. The class making a revolution appears from the very start, if only because it is opposed to a *class*, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society; it appears as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class.[iv] It can do this because, to start with, its interest really is more connected with the common interest of all other non-ruling classes, because under the pressure of hitherto existing conditions its interest has not yet been able to develop as the particular interest of a particular class. Its victory, therefore, benefits also many individuals of the other classes which are not winning a dominant position, but only insofar as it now puts these individuals in a position to raise themselves into the ruling class. When the French bourgeoisie overthrew the power of the aristocracy, it thereby made it possible for many proletarians to raise themselves above the proletariat, but only insofar as they became bourgeois. Every new class, therefore, achieves its hegemony only on a broader basis than that of the class ruling previously, whereas the opposition of the non-ruling class against the new ruling class later develops all the more sharply and profoundly. Both these things determine the fact that the struggle to be waged against this new ruling class, in its turn, aims at a more decided and radical negation of the previous conditions of society than could all previous classes which sought to rule.

This whole semblance, that the rule of a certain class is only the rule of certain ideas, comes to a natural end, of course, as soon as class rule in general ceases to be the form in which society is organised, that is to say, as soon as it is no longer necessary to represent a particular interest as general or the "general interest" as ruling.

Introduction to *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

In the essay "Alienated Labour" (taken from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*), Marx examines the condition of **alienation** or estrangement. For Marx, alienation is inherent in capitalism, because the process of production and the results of our labor confront us as a dominating power. It stems not from religiously rooted errors of consciousness, as Hegel argued, but from the material conditions in which we apply our essential productive capacities. For, contrary to Hegel's assertion, God does not create man and his ideas. Instead, it is man who creates the idea of God.

How is it that alienation is a necessary feature of capitalism? For the wage earner, work is alienating because it serves solely to provide the means (i.e., money) for maintaining her physical existence. Instead of labor representing an end in itself—an activity that expresses our capacity to shape our lives and our relationships with others—private ownership of the means of production reduces the role of the worker to that of a cog in a machine. The worker is an expendable object that performs routinized tasks. Put in another way, for Marx, working just for money—and not for the creative potential of labor itself—is akin to selling your soul.

The wage earner has little, if any, control over the production *process*. The types of materials or machines to be used, how to divide the necessary tasks, and the rate at which goods are to be manufactured are all determined by the owner of the factory or business. The worker is thus subject to the demands of the production process; it confronts her as an alienating power that controls her labor. Because the worker is alienated in her role as producer, she can only be but alienated from that which the process of her labor produces. In turn, the *product* opposes the worker as an object over which she has no control.

[iv] Marginal note by Marx: "Universality corresponds to (1) the class versus the estate, (2) the competition, world-wide intercourse, etc., (3) the great numerical strength of the ruling class, (4) the illusion of the common interests (in the beginning this illusion is true), (5) the delusion of the ideologists and the division of labour."

The questions of where and how it is sold and how much to charge are determined by the capitalist. More profoundly, the worker is dependent on the object for her very existence. It is only for her labor expended in producing the object that she earns a wage and is thus able to survive. If the object disappears—when the factory closes or technology renders the worker's labor obsolete—through no fault of her own she is left clinging to survival.

Because the worker is alienated from the process of production as well as the product of his labor, he becomes inescapably alienated from *himself.* The wage earner spends two-thirds of his waking hours engaged in a meaningless activity, save its providing him with the means of subsistence. Torn away from the object of his labor, he is unable to realize the essence of his creative nature or "species being" through his work. Finally, the worker is alienated from the rest of humanity, and becomes just another commodity to be bought and sold. To himself and others he is more like an animal or a machine than a human. Tragically, Marx asserts that the worker is free only in the performance of his "animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating . . . and in his human functions [labor] he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal" (Marx [1844] 1978:74).

In "The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society" (also taken from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*), Marx extends his critique of capitalist production to money itself. Here he describes how the possessor of money can be transformed into anything money can buy; how one's individuality is determined not by his own characteristics or capacities, but by the power of money to transform what he wants to be into what he *is.* Money is a medium capable of being exchanged not only for a specific good or service, but also for traits such as beauty, talent, or honesty. It is not simply something that we earn, spend, or save—rather, it *does* things, it makes us who and what we are. Money is "the alienating *ability of mankind*" (Marx [1844] 1978:104, emphasis in the original) that bonds us to life itself and to our relationships with others, not through our innate qualities, but through what we have the power to buy.

Significantly, this concern with the subjective consequences of the capitalist system reflects a nonrationalist dimension to Marx's argument that contrasts with his overall rationalist theoretical orientation. In "Alienated Labour," Marx does not focus on the nature of class interests and the struggle to realize them (though it certainly would be in our interest to reform, if not abolish, the productive arrangements he describes). Rather, he describes a "way of being," a sensibility imposed on workers and capitalists alike by the properties inherent to capitalism. Indeed, the nonrationalist logic of this essay is highlighted further by the fact that Marx is constructing a moral critique as much as a scientific argument concerning the degradation wreaked by capitalism.

Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844

Karl Marx

Alienated Labour

We have proceeded from the premises of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We presupposed private property, the separation of labour, capital and land, and of wages, profit of capital and rent of land—likewise division of labour, competition, the concept of exchange-value, etc. On the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus the restoration of monopoly in a more terrible form; that finally the distinction between capitalist and land-rentier, like that between the tiller of the soil and the factory-worker,

SOURCE: Excerpts from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,* first published in German, 1932, translated by Robert Tucker from *The Marx-Engels Reader,* Second Edition, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, edited by Robert C. Tucker.

disappears and that the whole of society must fall apart into the two classes—the property-*owners* and the propertyless *workers.* . . .

Now, therefore, we have to grasp the essential connection between private property, avarice, and the separation of labour, capital and landed property; between exchange and competition, value and the devaluation of men, monopoly and competition, etc.; the connection between this whole estrangement and the *money*-system.

Do not let us go back to a fictitious primordial condition as the political economist does, when he tries to explain. Such a primordial condition explains nothing. He merely pushes the question away into a grey nebulous distance. He assumes in the form of fact, of an event, what he is supposed to deduce—namely, the necessary relationship between two things—between, for example, division of labour and exchange. Theology in the same way explains the origin of evil by the fall of man: that is, it assumes as a fact, in historical form, what has to be explained.

We proceed from an *actual* economic fact.

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the *increasing value* of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the *devaluation* of the world of men. Labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity*—and does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally.

This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces—labour's product—confronts it as *something alien,* as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. Labour's realization is its objectification. In the conditions dealt with by political economy this realization of labour appears as *loss of reality* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object* and *object-bondage;* appropriation as *estrangement,* as *alienation.*

So much does labour's realization appear as loss of reality that the worker loses reality to the point of starving to death. So much does objectification appear as loss of the object that the worker is robbed of the objects most necessary not only for his life but for his work. Indeed, labour itself becomes an object which he can get hold of only with the greatest effort and with the most irregular interruptions. So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that the more objects the worker produces the fewer can he possess and the more he falls under the dominion of his product, capital.

All these consequences are contained in the definition that the worker is related to the *product of his labour* as to an *alien* object. For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful the alien objective world becomes which he creates over-against himself, the poorer he himself—his inner world—becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the greater is the worker's lack of objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore the greater this product, the less is he himself. The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him,* independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power of its own confronting him; it means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.

Let us now look more closely at the *objectification,* at the production of the worker; and therein at the *estrangement,* the *loss* of the object, his product.

The worker can create nothing without *nature,* without the *sensuous external world.* It is the material on which his labor is manifested, 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 labour cannot *live* without objects on which to operate, on the other hand, it also provides the *means of life* in the more restricted sense—i.e., the means for the physical subsistence of the *worker* himself.

Thus the more the worker by his labour *appropriates* the external world, sensuous nature, the more he deprives himself of *means of life* in the double respect: first, that the sensuous external world more and more ceases to be an object belonging to his labour—to be his labour's *means of life;* and secondly, that it more and more ceases to be *means of life* in the immediate sense, means for the physical subsistence of the worker.

Thus in this double respect the worker becomes a slave of his object, first, in that he receives an *object of labour,* i.e., in that he receives *work;* and secondly, in that he receives *means of subsistence.* Therefore, it enables him to exist, first, as a *worker;* and, second, as a *physical subject.* The extremity of this bondage is that it is only as a *worker* that he continues to maintain himself

as a *physical subject,* and that it is only as a *physical subject* that he is a worker.

(The laws of political economy express the estrangement of the worker in his object thus: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the mightier labour becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labour becomes, the duller becomes the worker and the more he becomes nature's bondsman.)

Political economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labour by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labour) *and production.* It is true that labour produces for the rich wonderful things—but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces—but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty—but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labour by machines—but some of the workers it throws back to a barbarous type of labour, and the other workers it turns into machines. It produces intelligence—but for the worker idiocy, cretinism.

The direct relationship of labour to its produce is the relationship of the worker to the objects of his production. The relationship of the man of means to the objects of production and to production itself is only a *consequence* of this first relationship—and confirms it. We shall consider this other aspect later.

When we ask, then, what is the essential relationship of labour we are asking about the relationship of the *worker* to production.

Till now we have been considering the estrangement, the alienation of the worker only in one of its aspects, i.e., the worker's *relationship to the products of his labour.* But the estrangement is manifested not only in the result but in the *act of production*—within the *producing activity* itself. How would the worker come to face the product of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was estranging himself from himself? The product is after all but the summary of the activity of production. If then the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. In the estrangement of the object of labour is merely summarized the estrangement, the alienation, in the activity of labour itself.

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?

First, the fact that labour is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labour.* It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a *means* to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Lastly, the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates independently of the individual—that is, operates on him as an alien, divine or diabolical activity—in the same way the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self.

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

Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But in the abstraction which separates them from the sphere of all other human activity and turns them into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal.

We have considered the act of estranging practical human activity, labour, in two of its aspects.

1. The relation of the worker to the *product of labour* as an alien object exercising power over him. This relation is at the same time the relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature as an alien world antagonistically opposed to him.

2. The relation of labour to the *act of production* within the *labour* process. This relation is the relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker's *own* physical and mental energy, his personal life or what is life other than activity—as an activity which is turned against him, neither depends on nor belongs to him. Here we have *self-estrangement,* as we had previously the estrangement of the *thing.*

We have yet a third aspect of *estranged labour* to deduce from the two already considered.

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

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

In estranging from man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active functions, his life-activity, estranged labour estranges the *species* from man. It turns for him the *life of the species* into a means of individual life. First it estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species, likewise in its abstract and estranged form.

For in the first place labour, *life-activity, productive life* itself, appears to man merely as a *means* of satisfying a need—the need to maintain the physical existence. Yet the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. 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. Life itself appears only as *a means to life.*

The animal is immediately identical 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 directly distinguishes man 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 labour reverses this 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 an *objective world* by his practical activity, in *working-up* inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as its own essential being, or that treats itself as a species being. 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 things in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty.

It is just in the working-up of the objective world, therefore, that man first really proves himself to be a *species being.* This production is his active species life. Through and because of this production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species life:* for

e duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, ıtellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore e contemplates himself in a world that he has created. ı tearing away from man the object of his production, ıerefore, estranged labour tears from him his *species fe,* his real species objectivity, and transforms his dvantage over animals into the disadvantage that his ıorganic body, nature, is taken from him.

Similarly, in degrading spontaneous activity, free ctivity, to a means, estranged labour makes man's spe- ies life a means to his physical existence.

The consciousness which man has of his species is ıus transformed by estrangement in such a way that the pecies life becomes for him a means.

Estranged labour turns thus:

3. *Man's species being,* both nature and his spiritual species property, into a being *alien* to him, into a *means* to his *individual existence.* It estranges man's own body from him, as it does external nature and his spiritual essence, his *human* being.

4. An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life-activity, from his species being is the *estrangement of man* from *man.* If a man is confronted by himself, he is confronted by the *other* man. What applies to a man's relation to his work, to the product of his labour and to himself, also holds of a man's relation to the other man, and to the other man's labour and object of labour.

In fact, the proposition that man's species nature is :stranged from him means that one man is estranged from he other, as each of them is from man's essential nature.

The estrangement of man, and in fact every relation- :hip in which man stands to himself, is first realized and :xpressed in the relationship in which a man stands to)ther men.

Hence within the relationship of estranged labour :ach man views the other in accordance with the stand- ırd and the position in which he finds himself as a worker.

We took our departure from a fact of political :conomy—the estrangement of the worker and his)roduction. We have formulated the concept of this fact—*estranged, alienated* labour. We have analysed :his concept—hence analysing merely a fact of politi- :al economy.

Let us now see, further, how in real life the concept of estranged, alienated labour must express and present itself.

If the product of labour is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom, then, does it belong?

If my own activity does not belong to me, if it is an alien, a coerced activity, to whom, then, does it belong?

To a being *other* than me.

Who is this being?

The *gods?* To be sure, in the earliest times the principal production (for example, the building of temples, etc., in Egypt, India and Mexico) appears to be in the service of the gods, and the product belongs to the gods. However, the gods on their own were never the lords of labour. No more was *nature.* And what a contradiction it would be if, the more man subjugated nature by his labour and the more the miracles of the gods were rendered superfluous by the miracles of industry, the more man were to renounce the joy of production and the enjoyment of the produce in favour of these powers.

The *alien* being, to whom labour and the produce of labour belongs, in whose service labour is done and for whose benefit the produce of labour is provided, can only be *man* himself.

If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, this can only be because it belongs to some *other man than the worker.* If the worker's activity is a torment to him, to another it must be *delight* and his life's joy. Not the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man.

We must bear in mind the above-stated proposition that man's relation to himself only becomes *objective* and *real* for him through his relation to the other man. Thus, if the product of his labour, his labour *objectified,* is for him an *alien,* hostile, powerful object independent of him, then his position towards it is such that someone else is master of this object, someone who is alien, hostile, powerful, and independent of him. If his own activity is to him an unfree activity, then he is treating it as activity performed in the service, under the dominion, the coercion and the yoke of another man.

Every self-estrangement of man from himself and from nature appears in the relation in which he places himself and nature to men other than and differentiated from himself. For this reason religious self-estrangement necessarily appears in the relationship of the layman to the priest, or again to a mediator, etc., since we are here dealing with the intellectual world. In the real practical world self-estrangement can only become manifest through the real practical relationship to other men. The medium through which estrangement takes place is itself *practical.* Thus through estranged labour man not only engenders his relationship to the object and to the act of production as to powers that are alien and hostile to him; he also engenders the relationship in which other men stand to his production and to his product, and the relationship in which he stands to these other men. Just as he begets his own production as the loss of his reality, as his punishment; just as he begets his own product as a loss, as a product not belonging to him; so he begets the dominion of the one who does not produce over production and over the product. Just as he estranges from himself his own activity, so he confers to the stranger activity which is not his own.

Till now we have only considered this relationship from the standpoint of the worker and later we shall be considering it also from the standpoint of the non-worker.

Through *estranged, alienated labour;* then, the worker produces the relationship to this labour of a man alien to labour and standing outside it. The relationship of the worker to labour engenders the relation to it of the capitalist, or whatever one chooses to call the master of labour. *Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of *alienated labour;* of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself.

Private property thus results by analysis from the concept of *alienated labour*—i.e., of *alienated man,* of estranged labour, of estranged life, of *estranged* man.

True, it is a result of the *movement of private property* that we have obtained the concept of *alienated labour (of alienated life)* from political economy. But on analysis of this concept it becomes clear that though private property appears to be the source, the cause of alienated labour, it is really its consequence, just as the gods *in the beginning* are not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion. Later this relationship becomes reciprocal.

Only at the very culmination of the development of private property does this, its secret, re-emerge, namely, that on the one hand it is the *product* of alienated labour, and that secondly it is the *means* by which labour alienates itself, the *realization of this alienation.*

This exposition immediately sheds light on various hitherto unsolved conflicts.

1. Political economy starts from labour as the real soul of production; yet to labour it gives nothing, and to private property everything. From this contradiction Proudhon has concluded in favour of labour and against private property. We understand, however, that this apparent contradiction is the contradiction of *estranged labour* with itself, and that political economy has merely formulated the laws of estranged labour.

We also understand, therefore, that *wages* and *private property* are identical: where the product, the object of labour pays for labour itself, the wage is but a necessary consequence of labour's estrangement, for after all in the wage of labour, labour does not appear as an end in itself but as the servant of the wage. We shall develop this point later, and meanwhile will only deduce some conclusions.

A *forcing-up of wages* (disregarding all other difficulties, including the fact that it would only be by force, too, that the higher wages, being an anomaly, could be maintained) would therefore be nothing but *better payment for the slave,* and would not conquer either for the worker or for labour their human status and dignity.

Indeed, even the *equality of wages* demanded by Proudhon only transforms the relationship of the present-day worker to his labour into the relationship of all men to labour. Society is then conceived as an abstract capitalist.

Wages are a direct consequence of estranged labour, and estranged labour is the direct cause of private property. The downfall of the one aspect must therefore mean the downfall of the other.

2. From the relationship of estranged labour to private property it further follows that the emancipation of society from private property, etc., from servitude, is expressed in the *political* form of the *emancipation of the workers;* not that *their* emancipation alone was at stake but because the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation—and it contains this, because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and every relation of servitude is but a modification and consequence of this relation. . . .

The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society

If man's *feelings,* passions, etc., are not merely anthropological phenomena in the [narrower] sense, but truly *ontological* affirmations of essential being (of nature), and if they are only really affirmed because their *object* exists for them as an object of *sense,* then it is clear:

1. That they have by no means merely one mode of affirmation, but rather that the distinctive character of their existence, of their life, is constituted by the distinctive mode of their affirmation. In what manner the object exists for them, is the characteristic mode of their *gratification.*

2. Whenever the sensuous affirmation is the direct annulment of the object in its independent form (as in eating, drinking, working up of the object, etc.), this is the affirmation of the object.

3. In so far as man, and hence also his feeling, etc., are *human,* the affirmation of the object by another is likewise his own enjoyment.

4. Only through developed industry—i.e., through the medium of private property—does the ontological essence of human passion come to be both in its totality and in its humanity; the science of man is therefore itself a product of man's establishment of himself by practical activity.

5. The meaning of private property—liberated from its estrangement—is the *existence of essential objects* for man, both as objects of enjoyment and as objects of activity.

By possessing the *property* of buying everything, y possessing the property of appropriating all ɔjects, *money* is thus the *object* of eminent possesɔn. The universality of its *property* is the omnipoɔnce of its being. It therefore functions as the mighty being. Money is the *pimp* between man's ɔed and the object, between his life and his means f life. But that which mediates *my* life for me, also *ediates* the existence of other people *for me.* For me is the *other* person.

"What, man! confound it, hands and feet
And head and backside, all are yours!
And what we take while life is sweet,
Is that to be declared not ours?
Six stallions, say, I can afford.
Is not their strength my property?
I tear along, a sporting lord,
As if their legs belonged to me."
(Mephistopheles, in *Faust*)[i]

Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens:*

"Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?
No, Gods, I am no idle votarist! . . .
Thus much of this will make black white, foul fair,
Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant.
. . . Why, this
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads:
This yellow *slave*
Will knit and break religions, bless the accursed;
Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves
And give them title, knee and approbation
With senators on the bench: This is it
That makes the wappen'd widow wed again;
She, whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices
To the April day again. . . . Damned earth,
Thou common whore of mankind, that putt'st odds
Among the rout of nations."[ii]

And also later:

"O thou sweet king-killer, and dear divorce
Twixt natural son and sire! thou bright defiler
Of Hymen's purest bed! thou valiant Mars!
Thou ever young, fresh, loved and delicate wooer,
Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow
That lies on Dian's lap! Thou *visible God!*
That solder'st *close impossibilities,*
And mak'st them kiss! That speak'st with every tongue,
To every purpose! O thou touch of hearts!
Think thy slave man rebels, and by thy virtue
Set them into confounding odds, that beasts
May have the world in empire!"[iii]

Shakespeare excellently depicts the real nature of *money.* To understand him, let us begin, first of all, by expounding the passage from Goethe.

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

If *money* is the bond binding me to *human* life, binding society to me, binding me and nature and man, is not money the bond of all *bonds?* Can it not dissolve and bind all ties? Is it not, therefore, the universal *agent of divorce?* It is the true *agent of divorce* as well as the true *binding agent*—the [universal][iv] *galvano-chemical* power of Society.

Shakespeare stresses especially two properties of money:

1. It is the visible divinity—the transformation of all human and natural properties into their contraries, the universal confounding and overturning of things: it makes brothers of impossibilities.

2. It is the common whore, the common pimp of people and nations.

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

That which I am unable to do as a *man,* and of which therefore all my individual essential powers are incapable, I am able to do by means of *money.* Money thus turns each of these powers into something which in itself it is not—turns it, that is, into its *contrary.*

If I long for a particular dish or want to take the mail-coach because I am not strong enough to go by foot, money fetches me the dish and the mail-coach: that is, it converts my wishes from something in the realm of imagination, translates them from their meditated, imagined or willed existence into their *sensuous, actual* existence—from imagination to life, from imagined being into real being. In effecting this mediation, money is the *truly creative* power.

No doubt *demand* also exists for him who has no money, but his demand is a mere thing of the imagination without effect or existence for me, for a third party, for the others, and which therefore remains for me *unreal* and *objectless.* The difference between effective demand based on money and ineffective demand based on my need, my passion, my wish, etc., is the difference between being and *thinking,* between the imagined which *exists* merely within me and the imagined as it is for me outside me as a *real object.*

If I have no money for travel, I have no *need*—that is, no real and self-realizing need—to travel. If I have the *vocation* for study but *no* money for it, I have no vocation for study—that is, no *effective,* no *true* vocation. On the other hand, if I have really *no* vocation for study but have the will *and* the money for it, I have an *effective* vocation for it. Being the external, common

ɔoethe, Faust (Part I–Faust's Study, III), translated by Philip Wayne (Penguin, 1949), p. 91.

ɔhakespeare, *Timon of Athens,* Act 4, Scene 3. Marx quotes the Schlegel-Tieck German translation. (Marx's emphasis.)

[iii]Ibid.

[iv]An end of the page is torn out of the manuscript [Trans.].

medium and *faculty* for turning an *image* into *reality* and *reality* into a mere *image* (a faculty not springing from man as man or from human society as society), *money* transforms the *real essential powers of man and nature* into what are merely abstract conceits and therefore *imperfections*—into tormenting chimeras—just as it transforms *real imperfections and chimeras*—essential powers which are really impotent, which exist only in the imagination of the individual—into *real powers* and *faculties*.

In the light of this characteristic alone, money is thus the general overturning of *individualities* which turns them into their contrary and adds contradictory attributes to their attributes.

Money, then, appears as this *overturning* power both against the individual and against the bonds of society, etc., which claim to be *essences* in themselves. It transforms fidelity into infidelity, love into hate, hate into love, virtue into vice, vice into virtue, servant into master, master into servant, idiocy into intelligence and intelligence into idiocy.

Since money, as the existing and active concept of value, confounds and exchanges all things, it is the general *confounding* and *compounding* of all things—the world upside-down—the confounding and compounding of all natural and human qualities.

He who can buy bravery is brave, though a coward. As money is not exchanged for any one specific quality, for any one specific thing, or for any particular human essential power, but for the entire objective world of man and nature, from the standpoint of its possessor it therefore serves to exchange every property for every other, even contradictory, property and object: it is the fraternization of impossibilities. It makes contradictions embrace.

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

Introduction to *The Communist Manifesto*

In 1847, the Communist League, an association formed by radical workers in 1836, commissioned Marx and Engels to write a political tract outlining the organization's program. The result was the now-famous *Communist Manifesto* (also called *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*). In contrast to other readings in this volume, the *Manifesto* is a deliberately adversarial work intended to inspire allegiance to the movement's cause. Though it had only modest impact at the time of its publication in 1848, shortly afterward workers and peasants staged revolts throughout much of Europe including France, Germany, and Italy.

Notwithstanding its origins as a political tract, *The Communist Manifesto* is of great theoretical significance. In it, you will again encounter Marx's theory of historical materialism and his inversion of Hegel's idealism. You will also see Marx's commitment to the Enlightenment belief in the perfectibility of humanity, which in his view will be realized through an inevitable communist revolution. The *Manifesto* also describes the economic processes that led to the ascendancy of the capitalist class and that eventually will produce to its own "grave-diggers"—a class-conscious proletariat.

Indeed, much of the *Manifesto* is a "scientific prophecy" detailing the downfall of the capitalist class and the rise of the proletariat. As such, it represents a penetrating theory of social change. The eventual collapse of capitalism will occur much in the way as previous economic systems: the social **relations of production** (how productive activity is organized and the laws governing property ownership) will become a "fetter" or obstacle to the continued development of the means of production (i.e., machinery, technology). The result is an "epidemic of overproduction" (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978:478) in which the bourgeoisie "chokes" on the overabundance of goods produced by ever-increasing industrial efficiency.

The final crisis of capitalism is thus a necessary consequence of the technological progress that was itself spurred by the capitalist class's private ownership of the means of production and the goods produced.

As an example of this process, consider the debates on music file sharing over the Internet. Though by no means spelling the doom of capitalism, the controversy nevertheless highlights the contradictions that arise between the forces and relations of production. Technology—the forces of production—advances more quickly than changes in the laws governing the relations of production—that is, ownership of property. Computer and communication technologies have been developed that enable a virtually infinite number of users to simultaneously share data stored on their hard drives. To avail themselves of this capability, users must first connect to a central terminal that serves as a temporary holding station. Napster was such a central terminal for sharing music files. The company itself did not own or control the files; it simply provided a conduit for the individuals who did. However, because the company provided a singular, "tangible" site for the free exchange of music, lawyers for the record companies were able to successfully argue that *Napster*—and not the individual users—circumvented copyright regulations despite the fact that it did not "steal" the files for its own use.

This advancement in computer technology undermines current laws governing copyright ownership and the rights that accompany proprietorship. Internet users can download and thus possess music with unparalleled ease and speed without having to pay for it, making it impossible for the owners of the copyrights to fully control the distribution of their property. (While cassette tapes and albums have been copied for decades, the convenience with which such "pirated" versions are made and the scope of their distribution pales in comparison to that of file sharing on the Internet.) This, of course, runs completely counter to a legal cornerstone of capitalism, namely, that owners must be compensated for the use of their "private" property. However, the social relations of production—the laws of ownership—do not prevent *individuals* from sharing the products that they have purchased and thus rightfully own, and someone at some point purchased the music that now is stored on their hard drive. However, to the extent that current laws are enforced or rewritten in an effort to combat the infringement of property rights, the social relations of production become a "fetter" to the full development of advances in technology.

Returning to our theoretical discussion of the dynamics of capitalism, capitalists must forever seek to eliminate their competitors, create new markets, destroy some of their products, or cut back their productive capacity in order to minimize the oversupply of goods that results from increasingly sophisticated means of production. If production is reduced, however, capitalists, in turn, will be forced to reduce their work force and, with it, their source of profit as well as the size of the market able to purchase their goods. Yet, the bourgeoisie is confronted not only with these economic realities of capitalism, but also with political consequences, as competition creates an obstacle to class unity and to the ability to implement coherent economic policies that will ensure its dominance. And so the cycle continues.

Meanwhile, factory conditions themselves facilitate the development of a revolutionary class consciousness through which workers come to realize the true source of their alienation and the possibility of breaking free from the chains of their enslavement. Placed side by side in their performance of tedious, monotonous tasks, the physical settings of factories increase the contact between the workers, making it easier to communicate and spread allegiance to the proletariat's cause. Urging "WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!" Marx warns that the Communists

> openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling class tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978:500)

Yet, the question remains: Why would the establishment of a communist economy create a more humane society? At the risk of oversimplifying the matter, the communist utopia hinges on the abolishment of private property. Marx maintains that once the means of production becomes collectively owned, exploitation of the worker is no longer possible. This is because the surplus value (i.e., profit) produced by the worker is not appropriated or siphoned off by an individual owner. Instead, it is distributed among the workers themselves.

Alienation is also ended because the worker, now a part owner of the enterprise, is able to direct the production process and maintain control over the products she creates. In turn, the worker is no longer estranged from herself and the species being. Finally, the competition for profit that characterizes bourgeois capitalism is brought to a close and, with it, recurring economic crises. Periods of "boom or bust" and their accompanying disruptions to employment are replaced by a more stable form of economic planning that produces according to the needs of the population and not the whims of an unpredictable market. "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978:491).

The economic crisis currently unfolding is a textbook example of the continuing relevance and prescience of Marx's ideas. Today's crisis is America's worst since the Great Depression. A record high of nearly 14 million workers are unemployed; those still employed are left with no choice but to accept steep cuts in pay and benefits. The United States, however, is by no means alone in experiencing the dramatic downturn. Just as Marx predicted, the spread of capitalism has ensured that the ever-worsening economic conditions cannot be confined to any one country's borders, but necessarily must reach across the entire globe. With sales of commodities plummeting worldwide, capitalists are beginning to "choke" on their supplies as warehouses are filling to capacity with unshipped goods. To compensate, stores are slashing prices—and losing profits—in order to sell their products. But what of the workers, the proletariat? Millions of people are looking for jobs, struggling to meet their basic needs (as are many millions of the employed). Nevertheless, production across all sectors of the economy is slowing to a virtual halt, but not because the machines are broken or somehow malfunctioning, or because there are not enough skilled laborers available to carry out the required tasks. Production has been stopped artificially by capitalists, and they must do so in order to prevent glutting the market with their goods while preserving whatever profits they are still able to earn. The relations of production—private ownership and its accompanying drive for private profit—have become a fetter to the forces of production, despite the fact that millions are living in increasingly desperate conditions.

While the causes of the current crisis are complex, many analysts have pointed to the dominant role played by the bundling of individual home loans into mortgage-backed securities that were then sold to investors. When the housing bubble that made investment in these financial instruments profitable burst, banks and investment companies around the world were left holding assets with rapidly declining values. However, the very corporations who invented and sold this new form of security are unable to root out the problems caused by these "troubled assets" because the originally bundled securities have been rebundled and traded so frequently that it has become impossible to determine the value of the securities as well as who actually owns a specific asset. Capitalists, like a "sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called upon by his spells" (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978:478), created a financial instrument that they are incapable of controlling and that has metastasized to the point where it threatens the stability of the global capitalist economy.

To stem the tide of the fallout, governments are intensifying their intervention in their respective economies. In the United States, intervention to this point has taken the form of giving billions of taxpayer dollars to the very financial institutions that are largely responsible for creating the crisis with little oversight or accountability for how the funds will be used. And should the government decide to use public funds to purchase the troubled assets from the banks and investment companies, it will be impossible for taxpayers to know whether or not they are paying a fair price for them, because the value of the assets cannot be determined. At the same time, the government has provided comparatively little funds for the increasingly distressed auto industry—one of the few remaining manufacturing industries in the country—prompting some observers to claim that the government is concerned only with the well-being of Wall Street and not Main Street. In rescuing the "moneyed interests" while letting drown those blue-collar workers who *make* things, a ring of truth is sounded in Marx's assertion, "The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx and Engels [1848] 1978:475). Yet, to avoid a complete economic collapse, the capitalists and the state have no choice but to appeal to the public—the proletariat—"to ask for its help, and thus drag it into the political arena" (ibid.:481), in turn supplying it with a political and intellectual education that will later be used as a weapon against them.

The Communist Manifesto (1848)

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.

Where is the party in opposition that has not been decried as communistic by its opponents in power? Where the opposition that has not hurled back the branding reproach of Communism, against the more advanced opposition parties, as well as against its reactionary adversaries?

Two things result from this fact.

I. Communism is already acknowledged by all European powers to be itself a power.

II. It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the spectre of communism with a manifesto of the party itself.

To this end, Communists of various nationalities have assembled in London, and sketched the following manifesto, to be published in the English, French, German, Italian, Flemish and Danish languages.

Bourgeois and Proletarians[i]

The history of all hitherto existing society[ii] is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master[iii] and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms: Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat.

From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed.

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie.

SOURCE: Marx/Engels Internet Archive.

[i]By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live. [Engels, English edition of 1888]

[ii]That is, all written history. In 1847, the pre-history of society, the social organisation existing previous to recorded history, was all but unknown. Since then, Haxthausen discovered common ownership of land in Russia, Maurer proved it to be the social foundation from which all Teutonic races started in history, and by and by village communities were found to be, or to have been the primitive form of society everywhere from India to Ireland. The inner organisation of this primitive Communistic society was laid bare, in its typical form, by Morgan's crowning discovery of the true nature of the gens and its relation to the tribe. With the dissolution of these primaeval communities society begins to be differentiated into separate and finally antagonistic classes. I have attempted to retrace this process of dissolution in: "Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigenthums und des Staats" [The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State], 2nd edition, Stuttgart 1886. [Engels, English edition of 1888]

[iii]Guild-master, that is, a full member of a guild, a master within, not a head of a guild. [Engels, English edition of 1888]

The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonisation of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

The feudal system of industry, in which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer suffices for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed aside by the manufacturing middle class; division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacturers no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of the whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Modern industry has established the world-market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commere, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages.

We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange.

Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance in that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the medieval commune;[iv] here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable "third estate" of the monarchy (as in France), afterward, in the period of manufacturing proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, corner-stone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative state, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors," and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment." It has drowned out the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-laborers.

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation into a mere money relation.

The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigour in the Middle Ages, which reactionaries so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former exoduses of nations and crusades.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby

[iv]"Commune" was the name taken, in France, by the nascent towns even before they had conquered from their feudal lords and masters local self-government and political rights as the "Third Estate." Generally speaking, for the economical development of the bourgeoisie, England is here taken as the typical country; for its political development, France. [Engels, English edition of 1888] This was the name given their urban communities by the townsmen of Italy and France, after they had purchased or wrested their initial rights of self-government from their feudal lords. [Engels, German edition of 1890]

the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real condition of life, and his relations with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, *i.e.,* to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.

The bourgeoisie keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralization. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier and one customs-tariff.

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?

We see then: the means of production and of exchange, on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder.

Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted in it, and the economic and political sway of the bourgeois class.

A similar movement is going on before our own eyes. Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeois and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that, by their periodical return, put the existence of the entire bourgeois society on its trial, each time more threateningly. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed. And why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians.

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, *i.e.*, capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed—a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell themselves piece-meal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to the division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and therefore also of labor,[v] is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases. What is more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labor increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by the increase of the work exacted in a given time or by increased speed of machinery, etc.

Modern Industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the over-looker, and, above all, in the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is.

The less the skill and exertion of strength implied in manual labor, in other words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labor of men superseded by that of women. Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labor, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex.

No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far, at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portion of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc.

The lower strata of the middle class—the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual laborers, then by the work of people of a factory, then by the operative of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois condition of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labor, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

At this stage the laborers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequence of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover yet, for a time, able to do so. At this stage, therefore, the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, the petty bourgeois. Thus the whole historical movement is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie; every victory so obtained is a victory for the bourgeoisie.

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labor, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The increasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (trade unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lie, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by Modern Industry and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. And that union, to attain which the burghers of the Middle Ages, with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletarians, thanks to railways, achieve in a few years.

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. It compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the Ten-Hours Bill in England was carried.

Altogether collisions between the classes of the old society further, in many ways, the course of development of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all time, with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

[v] Subsequently Marx pointed out that the worker sells not his labor but his labor power.

Further, as we have already seen, entire sections of the ling class are, by the advance of industry, precipitated to the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their con- tions of existence. These also supply the proletariat ith fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.

Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the ecisive hour, the progress of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of ld society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, hat a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, nd joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the uture in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier eriod, a section of the nobility went over to the bour- geoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a genuinely revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of Modern Industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.

The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revo- lutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reaction- ary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat, they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat.

The "dangerous class," the social scum, that pas- sively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.

In the condition of the proletariat, those of old soci- ety at large are already virtually swamped. The proletar- ian is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family-relations; modern industry labor, modern subjection to capital, the same in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has stripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, reli- gion, are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests.

All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their already acquired status by sub- jecting society at large to their conditions of appropria- tion. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mis- sion is to destroy all previous securities for, and insur- ances of, individual property.

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The prole- tarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stra- tum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air.

Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.

In depicting the most general phases of the develop- ment of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.

Hitherto, every form of society has been based, as we have already seen, on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence. The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petty bourgeois, under the yoke of the feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern laborer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the process of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incom- petent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie,

in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.

The essential conditions for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labor. Wage-labor rests exclusively on competi- tion between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by the revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bour- geoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

Proletarians and Communists

In what relation do the Communists stand to the prole- tarians as a whole?

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties.

They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.

The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: (1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common inter- ests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nation- ality. (2) In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the pro- letariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: Formation of the pro- letariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois suprem- acy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be uni- versal reformer.

They merely express, in general terms, actual rela- tions springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes. The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of communism.

All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions.

The French Revolution, for example, abolished feu- dal property in favor of bourgeois property.

The distinguishing feature of communism is not the abolition of property, but the abolition of bourgeois property generally, but modern bourgeois private prop- erty is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.

We Communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man's own labor, which prop- erty is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity and independence.

Hard-won, self-acquired, self-earned property! Do you mean the property of petty artisan and of the small peasant, a form of property that preceded the bourgeois form? There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it daily.

Or do you mean the modern bourgeois private property?

But does wage-labour create any property for the laborer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage-labor, and which cannot increase except upon conditions of begetting a new supply of wage-labor for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capi- tal and wage-labor. Let us examine both sides of this antagonism.

To be a capitalist, is to have not only a purely per- sonal, but a social *status* in production. Capital is a col- lective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion.

Capital is, therefore, not only personal; it is a social power.

When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class-character.

Let us now take wage-labor.

The average price of wage-labor is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence, which is absolutely requisite to keep the laborer in bare existence as a laborer. What, therefore, the wage-laborer appropriates by means of his labour, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labor, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labour of others. All that we want to do away with, is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the laborer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it.

In bourgeois society, living labor is but a means to increase accumulated labor. In communist society, accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer.

In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in communist society, the present dominates the past. In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.

And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at.

By freedom is meant, under the present bourgeois conditions of production, free trade, free selling and buying.

But if selling and buying disappears, free selling and buying disappears also. This talk about free selling and buying, and all the other "brave words" of our bourgeois about freedom in general, have a meaning, if any, only in contrast with restricted selling and buying, with the fettered traders of the Middle Ages, but have no meaning when opposed to the communistic abolition of buying and selling, or the bourgeois conditions of production, and of the bourgeoisie itself.

You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society.

In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

From the moment when labor can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolized, *i.e.*, from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment, you say, individuality vanishes.

You must, therefore, confess that by "individual" you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriation.

It has been objected that upon the abolition of private property all work will cease, and universal laziness will overtake us.

According to this, bourgeois society ought long ago to have gone to the dogs through sheer idleness; for those who acquire anything, do not work. The whole of this objection is but another expression of the tautology: There can no longer be any wage-labor when there is no longer any capital.

All objections urged against the communistic mode of producing and appropriating material products have, in the same way, been urged against the communistic modes of producing and appropriating intellectual products. Just as, to the bourgeois, the disappearance of class property is the disappearance of production itself, so the disappearance of class culture is to him identical with the disappearance of all culture.

That culture, the loss of which he laments, is, for the enormous majority, a mere training to act as a machine.

But don't wrangle with us so long as you apply, to our intended abolition of bourgeois property, the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc. Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will, whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class.

The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into eternal laws of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property—historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production—this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you. What you see clearly in the case of ancient property, what you admit in the case of feudal property, you are of course forbidden to admit in the case of your own bourgeois form of property.

Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists.

On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among proletarians, and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital.

Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.

But, you say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations, when we replace home education by social.

And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society, by means of schools, etc.? The Communists have not intended the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parents and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all the family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor.

But you Communists would introduce community of women, screams the bourgeoisie in chorus.

The bourgeois sees his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion [than] that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women.

He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our bourgeois at the community of women which, they pretend, is to be openly and officially established by the Communists. The Communists have no need to introduce free love; it has existed almost from time immemorial.

Our bourgeois, not content with having wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives.

Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalized system of free love. For the rest, it is self-evident that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of free love springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private.

The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality.

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of *the* nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.

National differences and antagonism between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world-market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.

The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another will also be put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.

The charges against communism made from a religious, a philosophical, and, generally, from an ideological standpoint, are not deserving of serious examination.

Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?

What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.

When people speak of the ideas that revolutionize society, they do but express that fact, that within the old society, the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence.

When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the eighteenth century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience merely gave expression to the sway of free competition within the domain of knowledge.

"Undoubtedly," it will be said, "religious, moral, philosophical and juridicial ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly survived this change."

"There are, besides, eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience."

What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that assumed different forms at different epochs.

But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, *viz.*, the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms.

The communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder that its development involved the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.

But let us have done with the bourgeois objections to communism.

We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, *i.e.*, of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production.

These measures will of course be different in different countries.

Nevertheless in most advanced countries, the following will be pretty generally applicable.

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly.
6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the banks of the state.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state; the bringing into cultivation of waste-lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal obligation of all to work. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of all the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the populace over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc.

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

Introduction to *Capital*

In this section, we turn to what many consider Marx's masterpiece of economic analysis: *Capital.* Here, we provide excerpts from two chapters: "Commodities" and "The General Formula for Capital."

In "Commodities," Marx explores the sources of "value" by asking what determines the worth or price of goods bought and sold on the market. In answering this question, Marx again borrowed from the work of Adam Smith to draw a distinction between "use-value" and "exchange-value." Use-value refers to the utility of a commodity or its ability to satisfy wants.[1] A commodity has use-value only if it is consumed or otherwise put to use. For instance, a one-legged stool cannot readily satisfy a person's desire to sit; therefore, it has no use-value for most individuals. The use-value of a commodity, however, does not determine its actual price; although the usefulness of a commodity may differ between individuals (maybe you really do prefer sitting on a one-legged stool), the cost of the good does not likewise change (we'll all pay the same price for it). Moreover, because use-value refers to the *qualities* of commodities—what they do—it cannot establish a *quantifiable* standard for measuring the price of goods. After all, how can one quantify and compare the usefulness of a lightbulb with that of a fork?

Exchange-value, on the other hand, does express equivalencies—how much of a given commodity (e.g., corn) it takes to equal the value of another commodity (e.g., iron). Because exchange-value is derived from trade, it cannot be a property inherent in the commodity itself. Instead, it is dependent on what goods are being exchanged. For instance, one DVD player might be exchanged fairly for one guitar, two jackets, or three CD burners. Thus, a DVD player has not one, but many exchange-values. But if different quantities of different commodities can nevertheless be equal in exchange-value, then the value of the commodities must be determined by something else separate from yet common to the commodities themselves.

[1]Marx explicitly excluded questions concerning the origins of "wants" as well as how commodities actually satisfied them. Some Marxist-inspired theorists, most notably those associated with the Frankfurt School, would later turn their attention to precisely such questions—that is, how the continued expansion of capitalism requires the production of "false" needs.

For Marx, this common "something else" is labor. In Marx's **labor theory of value** (which he appropriated from Adam Smith and David Ricardo), the value of an object is determined ultimately by the amount of labor time (hours, weeks, months, etc.) that it took to produce it. "Commodities, therefore, in which equal quantities of labour are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value. . . . As values, all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labour-time" (Marx [1867] 1978:306). By equating the value of goods with labor time, Marx not only outlined the economic principles that purportedly guide exchange; he also unmasked the root source of exploitation inherent in capitalist production.

In a capitalist economy, those who do not own the means of production have no choice but to sell their labor power in order to survive. The worker's labor power is thus treated as a commodity exchanged, in this case, for a wage. But at what rate is the worker paid? What determines the exchange-value of labor? Like all other commodities, the value of labor power is a function of the amount of labor time necessary to produce itself. In other words, the value of labor power is equivalent to the costs incurred by the worker for food, clothing, shelter, training, and other goods necessary to ensure both the survival of his family and his return to work the next day.

However, the length of the working day exceeds the time needed on the job in order for the worker to reproduce his labor power. Say, for instance, that in six hours of work a laborer is able to produce for the capitalist the equivalent value of what he needs in order to support his family and return to work. Because the worker's wage is equal to the value of the goods necessary for his family's survival, he is paid, in this case, for six hours worth of labor. Yet, the capitalist employs the worker for a longer duration, say 12 hours a day. During these additional six hours, the worker produces surplus value for the capitalist. **Surplus value** is the difference between what workers earn for their labor and the price or value of the goods that they produce. Surplus value is thus the source of the capitalist's profit: the capitalist pays the worker less than the value of what she actually produces. Human labor is thus the one commodity that is exchanged for its value while being capable of producing more than its value.

To illustrate this concept more clearly, consider a simplified example of a furniture manufacturing plant employing 100 workers. A worker paid $10.00 an hour to assemble tables would earn $400 for a 40-hour workweek. Annually, the worker would earn $20,800. This annual wage would barely keep a family of four out of poverty, to say nothing of attaining the "American Dream." On the other hand, let's assume the worker assembles 100 tables over the course of a year, each sold on the market for $300. The worker thus generates $30,000 for the owner of the plant. The nearly $10,000 difference between wages earned and money generated is appropriated by the capitalist both to reinvest in her business and to support her own family. While this may not seem like a significant difference, recall that the plant employs 100 workers, each of whose labor produces roughly $30,000 in sales. Now the owner is appropriating nearly $1 million in surplus value over the course of only one year, while the workers, whose labor produced the goods sold on the market for a profit, cling with their families to a near-poverty existence.

Additionally, private ownership of the means of the production allows the owner to control the production process and appropriate the products, thus enabling him to take this profit solely for himself. In turn, surplus value is also the source of the capitalists' **exploitation** of the worker because the worker gives more than is given in return without having any voice in this relationship of exchange.

In his effort to increase his profit and market share, the capitalist has two principal means at his disposal: increasing "absolute" or increasing "relative" surplus value. He can increase his *absolute surplus value* by extending the working day. The increase in hours on the job, in turn, increases the productivity of his workforce. With wages remaining constant, greater productivity yields higher profits for the capitalist. During Marx's time, 12- and 14-hour working days were not uncommon, and capitalists routinely opposed legislation aimed at reducing laborers' hours.

Capitalists can also increase their *relative surplus value.* This stems from increasing the productivity of labor by instituting timesaving procedures. With a decrease in the time and thus the cost of production, a capitalist is able to undersell competitors and capture a larger share of the market. For instance, production efficiency can be improved as capitalists specialize their labor force by reorganizing workers and the allocation of tasks. Specialization simplifies a worker's role in the production process so that, rather than performing a variety of tasks, his contribution is reduced to one or two operations. Often this entails adopting an assembly line system of manufacturing such as Henry Ford did when he revolutionized the automobile industry in the early twentieth century. However, although specialization increases efficiency by enabling more products to be produced in less time, it also leads to the routinization of labor and the workers' loss of self-fulfillment.

Similarly, in their competition for markets, capitalists can turn to more-sophisticated machines and technology to enable laborers to produce more goods in less time. To the extent that mechanized production decreases the necessary labor time, surplus value is increased, along with the level of worker alienation and exploitation.

Although a machine may be able to run 24 hours a day (and does not need insurance or bathroom breaks), mechanized production has its costs. In the short run, it can lead to a reduction in profits, despite the higher volume of productivity, as machines take the place of workers who are the capitalist's source of surplus value. Increasing productivity as a means for selling commodities more cheaply than one's competitors sell also *compels* a capitalist to sell more products and dominate a larger share of the market. Without selling more commodities, the capitalist cannot offset the lower selling price and the expense of adopting more costly machines, to say nothing of turning a profit. Moreover, as the capitalist's competitors begin to make use of the new technology, she is forced to seek—and pay for—ever-newer and more-efficient machines, lest she suffer the very fate she intends to inflict on others.

The competition for markets and the need to increase productivity bear long-run costs, as well. Specialization and mechanization force more workers into unstable employment and a marginal existence. Needed to perform only the most monotonous of unskilled tasks, workers become easily replaceable and expendable. Indeed, "it is the absolute interest of every capitalist to press a given quantity of labour out of a smaller, rather than a greater number of labourers," because doing so increases their relative surplus value and accumulation of capital (Marx [1867] 1978:425). As a result, an "industrial reserve army" of unemployed and underemployed laborers is created, the ranks of which swell as the employed segments of the proletariat are overworked. Thus, despite the increasing levels of productivity and growth in the amount of wealth controlled by the capitalists, the market for their products begins to shrink as a growing "relative surplus-population" of laborers is left unable to afford little more than the necessities for survival. At the same time, the increasing competition for jobs due to the expanding industrial reserve army combines with the marginalization of skills to decrease the wages of those fortunate enough to be employed. Meanwhile, competition between capitalists forever breeds greater specialization and mechanization, and all that follows in their wake. Recurring crises of overproduction and "boom or bust" are thus endemic to the capitalist system, while economic recessions and depressed wages become more severe.[2]

In this chapter, Marx also reworks his earlier analysis of alienation in the form of the "fetishism of commodities." Recall that alienation, according to Marx, is a dehumanizing consequence of the worker's estrangement or separation from the means of production and the goods produced (see our

[2]Though Marx contended that the continuing expansion of the industrial reserve army operates as "a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production" (Marx [1867] 1978:423), it is clear that rising rates of unemployment are not inevitable, nor are fluctuations in rates of unemployment due entirely to changing levels of production. Instead, unemployment rates are as much a product of government policy as they are of general economic conditions. Nevertheless, a recent (2006) report issued by the International Labour Organization revealed that the number of people unemployed worldwide reached an all-time high of 191.8 million in 2005, an increase of 34.4 million (21 percent) since 1995. Additionally, of the more than 2.8 billion workers in the world, 1.4 billion earned less than $2 dollars per day.

discussion of "Alienated Labour" earlier). Similarly, commodity fetishism refers to the distorted relationship existing between individuals and the production and consumption of goods. However, in fetishizing commodities, Marx argues that we treat the goods we buy as if they have "magical" powers. We lose sight of the fact that *we* create commodities and, in doing so, grant them a power over us that in reality they do not hold.

Perhaps you can think of how products directed at our personal appearance are marketed. Advertisements for shampoos, lotions, deodorants, toothpastes, and the like routinely convey the message that interpersonal "success" is dependent on our using these products. Boy gets girl because he buys a specific brand of mouthwash. Girl gets boy because she uses a toothpaste that "whitens" her teeth. Likewise, driving a particular type of car or drinking a particular brand of soft drink or beer magically transforms us into the "type" of person who uses the products. In each instance, our accomplishments and failures are derived not from who we are as individuals, but magically from what we buy as consumers. As a result, our social interactions as well as our sense of self are mediated through or steered by products, not by our individual qualities. When we fetishize commodities, we relate to things, not people. (Compare Marx's argument here with the one made earlier in the excerpt from "The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society.")

Not only are commodities fetishized, but so too is the process of commodity production. When we blame machines for our dissatisfaction, we endow them with human qualities of conscious intent or will. In turn, we fail to recognize that it is the owner of the means of production who is responsible for transforming the production process, not the machines. Thus, if the introduction of new technology increases the speed of the labor process or alters how that process is organized among workers, fetishizing commodity production prevents laborers from holding capitalists accountable for their growing dissatisfaction. Instead, workers will assign the source of their increasing exploitation not to the capitalists who benefit from it, but to the new technology. This carries with it important political consequences, because the intrinsically social nature of the production process is veiled, making workers less able to effectively press their class-based interests for change. The Luddites were one such group of handicraft workers who in early-nineteenth-century England destroyed the textile machines that rendered their skilled labor obsolete, displacing them with cheap, unskilled laborers. Their protests were met with repressive government actions that included hangings and imprisonment in exile.

Finally, in "The General Formula for Capital," Marx describes the cycle or circulation of commodities peculiar to capitalism. Unlike other economic arrangements, production under capitalism is driven by the quest for increasing profits and capital for reinvestment, not toward simply fulfilling needs or wants established through tradition. Guiding the profit motive is a cycle of exchange Marx labeled "M-C-M." By definition, the capitalist enters into economic exchange already possessing **capital** (raw materials, machinery for production) or, more generally, money (M). Seeking to expand her business and profits, the capitalist converts her money into a commodity (C) by purchasing additional machinery, raw materials, or labor. The capitalist then uses these commodities to produce other commodities that are then sold for money (M). Hence, the meaning of the slogan "It takes money to make money."

For the proletariat, the cycle of exchange takes an inverse path. Take a typical wage earner, for example. The worker enters into the labor market possessing only his labor power, which he sells as a commodity (C). His commodity, labor, is then exchanged for money (M) or a wage. The worker then takes the money and spends it on the commodities (C) necessary to his survival. The circulation of commodities here follows the pattern C-M-C. The worker sells his one commodity in order to purchase goods he does not otherwise possess. Such a pattern of exchange cannot generate a profit. Instead, it is a cycle of economic activity that provides solely for the satisfaction of basic needs and a subsistence level of existence. Moreover, this cycle must be repeated daily as the commodities bought by the worker—food, fuel, clothing, shelter—tied as they are to survival, are more or less immediately consumed or in need of continual replacement. Rent is paid not once, but monthly. Clothes are bought not once, but regularly, when worn out or outgrown.

Capital (1867)

Karl Marx

Commodities

The Two Factors of a Commodity: Use-Value and Value (The Substance of Value and the Magnitude of Value)

The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as "an immense accumulation of commodities," its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.

A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production.

Every useful thing, as iron, paper, etc., may be looked at from the two points of view of quality and quantity. It is an assemblage of many properties, and may therefore be of use in various ways. To discover the various uses of things is the work of history. So also is the establishment of socially recognized standards of measure for the quantities of these useful objects. The diversity of these measures has its origin partly in the diverse nature of the objects to be measured, partly in convention.

The utility of a thing makes it a use-value. But this utility is not a thing of air. Being limited by the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from that commodity. A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use-value, something useful. This property of a commodity is independent of the amount of labour required to appropriate its useful qualities. When treating of use-value, we always assume to be dealing with definite quantities, such as dozens of watches, yards of linen, or tons of iron. The use-values of commodities furnish the material for a special study, that of the commercial knowledge of commodities.[i] Use-values become a reality only by use or consumption: they also constitute the substance of all wealth, whatever may be the social form of that wealth. In the form of society we are about to consider, they are, in addition, the material depositories of exchange-value.

Exchange-value, at first sight, presents itself as a quantitative relation, as the proportion in which values in use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort, a relation constantly changing with time and place. Hence exchange-value appears to be something accidental and purely relative, and consequently an intrinsic value, *i.e.*, an exchange-value that is inseparably connected with, inherent in commodities, seems a contradiction in terms. Let us consider the matter a little more closely.

A given commodity, *e.g.*, a quarter of wheat is exchanged for x blacking, y silk, or z gold, etc.—in short, for other commodities in the most different proportions. Instead of one exchange-value, the wheat has, therefore, a great many. But since x blacking, y silk, or z gold, etc., each represent the exchange-value of one quarter of wheat, x blacking, y silk, z gold, etc., must, as exchange-values, be replaceable by each other, or equal to each other. Therefore, first: the valid exchange-values of a given commodity express something equal; secondly, exchange-value, generally, is only the mode of expression, the phenomenal form, of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it.

Let us take two commodities, *e.g.*, corn and iron. The proportions in which they are exchangeable, whatever those proportions may be, can always be represented by an equation in which a given quantity of corn is equated to some quantity of iron: *e.g.*, 1 quarter corn = x cwt. iron. What does this equation tell us? It tells us that in two different things—in 1 quarter of corn and x cwt. of iron, there exists in equal quantities something common to both. The two things must therefore be equal to a

SOURCE: Marx/Engels Internet Archive.

[i] In bourgeois societies the economic fictio juris prevails, that every one, as a buyer, possesses an encyclopaedic knowledge of commodities. [Marx]

third, which in itself is neither the one nor the other. Each of them, so far as it is exchange-value, must therefore be reducible to this third.

A simple geometrical illustration will make this clear. In order to calculate and compare the areas of rectilinear figures, we decompose them into triangles. But the area of the triangle itself is expressed by something totally different from its visible figure, namely, by half the product of the base multiplied by the altitude. In the same way the exchange-values of commodities must be capable of being expressed in terms of something common to them all, of which thing they represent a greater or less quantity.

This common "something" cannot be either a geometrical, a chemical, or any other natural property of commodities. Such properties claim our attention only in so far as they affect the utility of those commodities, make them use-values. But the exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterised by a total abstraction from use-value. Then one use-value is just as good as another, provided only it be present in sufficient quantity. Or, as old Barbon says, "one sort of wares are as good as another, if the values be equal. There is no difference or distinction in things of equal value. . . . An hundred pounds' worth of lead or iron, is of as great value as one hundred pounds' worth of silver or gold." As use-values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange-values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use-value.

If then we leave out of consideration the use-value of commodities, they have only one common property left, that of being products of labour. But even the product of labour itself has undergone a change in our hands. If we make abstraction from its use-value, we make abstraction at the same time from the material elements and shapes that make the product a use-value; we see in it no longer a table, a house, yarn, or any other useful thing. Its existence as a material thing is put out of sight. Neither can it any longer be regarded as the product of the labour of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or of any other definite kind of productive labour. Along with the useful qualities of the products themselves, we put out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labour embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labour; there is nothing left but what is common to them all: all are reduced to one and the same sort of labour, human labour in the abstract.

Let us now consider the residue of each of these products; it consists of the same unsubstantial reality in each, a mere congelation of homogeneous human labour, of labour-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure. All that these things now tell us is, that human labour-power has been expended in their production, that human labour is embodied in them. When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are—Values.

We have seen that when commodities are exchanged, their exchange-value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use-value. But if we abstract from their use-value, there remains their Value as defined above. Therefore, the common substance that manifests itself in the exchange-value of commodities, whenever they are exchanged, is their value. The progress of our investigation will show that exchange-value is the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed. For the present, however, we have to consider the nature of value independently of this, its form.

A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it. How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? Plainly, by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article. The quantity of labour, however, is measured by its duration, and labour-time in its turn finds its standard in weeks, days, and hours.

Some people might think that if the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labour spent on it, the more idle and unskilful the labourer, the more valuable would his commodity be, because more time would be required in its production. The labour, however, that forms the substance of value, is homogeneous human labour, expenditure of one uniform labour-power. The total labour-power of society, which is embodied in the sum total of the values of all commodities produced by that society, counts here as one homogeneous mass of human labour-power, composed though it be of innumerable individual units. Each of these units is the same as any other, so far as it has the character of the average labour-power of society, and takes effect as such; that is, so far as it requires for producing a commodity, no more time than is needed on an average, no more than is socially necessary. The labour-time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time. The introduction of power-looms into England probably reduced by one-half the labour required to weave a given quantity of yarn into cloth. The hand-loom weavers, as a matter of fact, continued to require the same time as before; but for all that, the product of one hour of their labour represented after the change only half an hour's social labour, and consequently fell to one-half its former value.

We see then that that which determines the magnitude of the value of any article is the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour-time socially necessary for its production. Each individual commodity, in this connexion, is to be considered as an average sample of its class. Commodities, therefore, in which equal quantities of labour are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value. The value of one commodity is to the value of any other, as the labour-time necessary for the production of the one is to that necessary for the production of the other. "As values, all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labour-time."

The value of a commodity would therefore remain constant, if the labour-time required for its production also remained constant. But the latter changes with every variation in the productiveness of labour. This productiveness is determined by various circumstances, amongst others, by the average amount of skill of the workmen, the state of science, and the degree of its practical application, the social organisation of production, the extent and capabilities of the means of production, and by physical conditions. For example, the same amount of labour in favourable seasons is embodied in 8 bushels of corn, and in unfavourable, only in four. The same labour extracts from rich mines more metal than from poor mines. Diamonds are of very rare occurrence on the earth's surface, and hence their discovery costs, on an average, a great deal of labour-time. Consequently much labour is represented in a small compass. Jacob doubts whether gold has ever been paid for at its full value. This applies still more to diamonds. According to Eschwege, the total produce of the Brazilian diamond mines for the eighty years, ending in 1823, had not realised the price of one-and-a-half years' average produce of the sugar and coffee plantations of the same country, although the diamonds cost much more labour, and therefore represented more value. With richer mines, the same quantity of labour would embody itself in more diamonds, and their value would fall. If we could succeed at a small expenditure of labour, in converting carbon into diamonds, their value might fall below that of bricks. In general, the greater the productiveness of labour, the less is the labour-time required for the production of an article, the less is the amount of labour crystallised in that article, and the less is its value; and *vice versa,* the less the productiveness of labour, the greater is the labour-time required for the production of an article, and the greater is its value. The value of a commodity, therefore, varies directly as the quantity, and inversely as the productiveness, of the labour incorporated in it.

A thing can be a use-value, without having value. This is the case whenever its utility to man is not due to labour. Such are air, virgin soil, natural meadows, etc. A thing can be useful, and the product of human labour, without being a commodity. Whoever directly satisfies his wants with the produce of his own labour, creates, indeed, use-values, but not commodities. In order to produce the latter, he must not only produce use-values, but use-values for others, social use-values. (And not only for others, without more. The medieval peasant produced quit-rent-corn for his feudal lord and tithe-corn for his parson. But neither the quit-rent-corn nor the tithe-corn became commodities by reason of the fact that they had been produced for others. To become a commodity a product must be transferred to another, whom it will serve as a use-value, by means of an exchange.)[ii] Lastly nothing can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value. . . .

The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labour. It is as clear as noon-day, that man, by his industry, changes the forms of the materials furnished by Nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, every-day thing, wood. But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than "table-turning" ever was.

[ii] I am inserting the parenthesis because its omission has often given rise to the misunderstanding that every product that is consumed by someone other than its producer is considered in Marx a commodity. [Engels, 4th German edition]

The mystical character of commodities does not originate, therefore, in their use-value. Just as little does it proceed from the nature of the determining factors of value. For, in the first place, however varied the useful kinds of labour, or productive activities, may be, it is a physiological fact, that they are functions of the human organism, and that each such function, whatever may be its nature or form, is essentially the expenditure of human brain, nerves, muscles, etc. Secondly, with regard to that which forms the groundwork for the quantitative determination of value, namely, the duration of that expenditure, or the quantity of labour, it is quite clear that there is a palpable difference between its quantity and quality. In all states of society, the labour-time that it costs to produce the means of subsistence, must necessarily be an object of interest to mankind, though not of equal interest in different stages of development. And lastly, from the moment that men in any way work for one another, their labour assumes a social form.

Whence, then, arises the enigmatical character of the product of labour, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities? Clearly from this form itself. The equality of all sorts of human labour is expressed objectively by their products all being equally values; the measure of the expenditure of labour-power by the duration of that expenditure, takes the form of the quantity of value of the products of labour; and finally, the mutual relations of the producers, within which the social character of their labour affirms itself, take the form of a social relation between the products.

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. In the same way the light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself. But, in the act of seeing, there is at all events, an actual passage of light from one thing to another, from the external object to the eye. There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. There, the existence of the things *quâ* commodities, and the value-relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.

This Fetishism of commodities has its origin, as the foregoing analysis has already shown, in the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them.

As a general rule, articles of utility become commodities, only because they are products of the labour of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work independently of each other. The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labour of society. Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers. To the latter, therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things. It is only by being exchanged that the products of labour acquire, as values, one uniform social status, distinct from their varied forms of existence as objects of utility. This division of a product into a useful thing and a value becomes practically important, only when exchange has acquired such an extension that useful articles are produced for the purpose of being exchanged, and their character as values has therefore to be taken into account, beforehand, during production. From this moment the labour of the individual producer acquires socially a two-fold character. On the one hand, it must, as a definite useful kind of labour, satisfy a definite social want, and thus hold its place as part and parcel of the collective labour of all, as a branch of a social division of labour that has sprung up spontaneously. On the other hand, it can satisfy the manifold wants of the individual producer himself, only in so far as the mutual exchangeability of all kinds of useful private labour is an established social fact, and therefore the private useful labour of each producer ranks on an equality with that of all others. The equalisation of the most different kinds of labour can be the result only of an abstraction from their inequalities, or of reducing them to their common denominator, viz., expenditure of human labour-power or human labour in the abstract. The two-fold social character of the labour of the individual appears to him, when reflected in his brain, only under those forms which are impressed upon that labour in every-day practice by the exchange of products. In this way, the character that his own labour possesses of being socially useful takes the form of the condition, that the product must be not only useful, but useful for others, and the social character that his particular labour has of being the equal of all other particular kinds of labour, takes the form that all the physically different articles that are the products of labour, have one common quality, viz., that of having value.

Hence, when we bring the products of our labour into relation with each other as values, it is not because we see in these articles the material receptacles of homogeneous human labour. Quite the contrary: whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended upon them. We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it. Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language. The recent scientific discovery, that the products of labour, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labour spent in their production, marks, indeed, an epoch in the history of the development of the human race, but, by no means, dissipates the mist through which the social character of labour appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves. The fact, that in the particular form of production with which we are dealing, viz., the production of commodities, the specific social character of private labour carried on independently, consists in the equality of every kind of that labour, by virtue of its being human labour, which character, therefore, assumes in the product the form of value—this fact appears to the producers, notwithstanding the discovery above referred to, to be just as real and final, as the fact, that, after the discovery by science of the component gases of air, the atmosphere itself remained unaltered.

What, first of all, practically concerns producers when they make an exchange, is the question, how much of some other product they get for their own? In what proportions the products are exchangeable? When these proportions have, by custom, attained a certain stability, they appear to result from the nature of the products, so that, for instance, one ton of iron and two ounces of gold appear as naturally to be of equal value as a pound of gold and a pound of iron in spite of their different physical and chemical qualities appear to be of equal weight. The character of having value, when once impressed upon products, obtains fixity only by reason of their acting and re-acting upon each other as quantities of value. These quantities vary continually, independently of the will, foresight and action of the producers. To them, their own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them. It requires a fully developed production of commodities before, from accumulated experience alone, the scientific conviction springs up, that all the different kinds of private labour, which are carried on independently of each other, and yet as spontaneously developed branches of the social division of labour, are continually being reduced to the quantitative proportions in which society requires them. And why? Because, in the midst of all the accidental and ever fluctuating exchange-relations between the products, the labour-time socially necessary for their production forcibly asserts itself like an over-riding law of Nature. The law of gravity thus asserts itself when a house falls about our ears. The determination of the magnitude of value by labour-time is therefore a secret, hidden under the apparent fluctuations in the relative values of commodities. Its discovery, while removing all appearance of mere accidentality from the determination of the magnitude of the values of products, yet in no way alters the mode in which that determination takes place.

Man's reflections on the forms of social life, and consequently, also, his scientific analysis of those forms, take a course directly opposite to that of their actual historical development. He begins, post festum, with the results of the process of development ready to hand before him. The characters that stamp products as commodities, and whose establishment is a necessary preliminary to the circulation of commodities, have already acquired the stability of natural, self-understood forms of social life, before man seeks to decipher, not their historical character, for in his eyes they are immutable,

but their meaning. Consequently it was the analysis of the prices of commodities that alone led to the determination of the magnitude of value, and it was the common expression of all commodities in money that alone led to the establishment of their characters as values. It is, however, just this ultimate money-form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers. When I state that coats or boots stand in a relation to linen, because it is the universal incarnation of abstract human labour, the absurdity of the statement is self-evident. Nevertheless, when the producers of coats and boots compare those articles with linen, or, what is the same thing, with gold or silver, as the universal equivalent, they express the relation between their own private labour and the collective labour of society in the same absurd form.

The categories of bourgeois economy consist of such like forms. They are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities. The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour as long as they take the form of commodities, vanishes therefore, so soon as we come to other forms of production. . . .

The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan. This, however, demands for society a certain material ground-work or set of conditions of existence which in their turn are the spontaneous product of a long and painful process of development.

Political Economy has indeed analysed, however incompletely, value and its magnitude, and has discovered what lies beneath these forms. But it has never once asked the question why labour is represented by the value of its product and labour-time by the magnitude of that value. These formulæ, which bear it stamped upon them in unmistakable letters that they belong to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him, such formulæ appear to the bourgeois intellect to be as much a self-evident necessity imposed by Nature as productive labour itself. Hence forms of social production that preceded the bourgeois form, are treated by the bourgeoisie in much the same way as the Fathers of the Church treated pre-Christian religions.

To what extent some economists are misled by the Fetishism inherent in commodities, or by the objective appearance of the social characteristics of labour, is shown, amongst other ways, by the dull and tedious quarrel over the part played by Nature in the formation of exchange-value. Since exchange-value is a definite social manner of expressing the amount of labour bestowed upon an object, Nature has no more to do with it, than it has in fixing the course of exchange.

The mode of production in which the product takes the form of a commodity, or is produced directly for exchange, is the most general and most embryonic form of bourgeois production. It therefore makes its appearance at an early date in history, though not in the same predominating and characteristic manner as now-a-days. Hence its Fetish character is comparatively easy to be seen through. But when we come to more concrete forms, even this appearance of simplicity vanishes. Whence arose the illusions of the monetary system? To it gold and silver, when serving as money, did not represent a social relation between producers but were natural objects with strange social properties. And modern economy, which looks down with such disdain on the monetary system, does not its superstition come out as clear as noon-day, whenever it treats of capital? How long is it since economy discarded the physiocratic illusion, that rents grow out of the soil and not out of society?

But not to anticipate, we will content ourselves with yet another example relating to the commodity-form. Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: Our use-value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects. What, however, does belong to us as objects, is our value. Our natural intercourse as commodities proves it. In the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange-values. Now listen how those commodities speak through the mouth of the economist. "Value"—(*i.e.,* exchange-value) "is a property of things, riches"—(*i.e.,* use-value) "of man. Value, in this sense, necessarily implies exchanges, riches do not." "Riches" (use-value) "are the attribute of men, value is the attribute of commodities. A man or a community is rich, a pearl or a diamond is valuable. . . . A pearl or a diamond is valuable" as a pearl or diamond. So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange-value either in a pearl or a diamond. The economic discoverers of this chemical element, who by-the-by lay special claim to critical acumen, find however that the use-value of objects belongs to them independently of their material properties, while their value, on the other hand, forms a part of them as objects. What confirms them in this view, is the peculiar circumstance that the use-value of objects is realised without exchange, by means of a direct relation between the objects and man, while, on the other hand, their value is realised only by exchange, that is, by means of a social process. Who fails here to call to mind our good friend, Dogberry, who informs neighbour Seacoal, that, "To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by Nature."

The General Formula for Capital

The circulation of commodities is the starting-point of capital. The production of commodities, their circulation, and that more developed form of their circulation called commerce, these form the historical ground-work from which it rises. The modern history of capital dates from the creation in the 16th century of a world-embracing commerce and a world-embracing market.

If we abstract from the material substance of the circulation of commodities, that is, from the exchange of the various use-values, and consider only the economic forms produced by this process of circulation, we find its final result to be money: this final product of the circulation of commodities is the first form in which capital appears.

As a matter of history, capital, as opposed to landed property, invariably takes the form at first of money; it appears as moneyed wealth, as the capital of the merchant and of the usurer. But we have no need to refer to the origin of capital in order to discover that the first form of appearance of capital is money. We can see it daily under our very eyes. All new capital, to commence with, comes on the stage, that is, on the market, whether of commodities, labour, or money, even in our days, in the shape of money that by a definite process has to be transformed into capital.

The first distinction we notice between money that is money only, and money that is capital, is nothing more than a difference in their form of circulation.

The simplest form of the circulation of commodities is C—M—C, the transformation of commodities into money, and the change of the money back again into commodities; or selling in order to buy. But alongside of this form we find another specifically different form: M—C—M, the transformation of money into commodities, and the change of commodities back again into money; or buying in order to sell. Money that circulates in the latter manner is thereby transformed into, becomes capital, and is already potentially capital.

Now let us examine the circuit M—C—M a little closer. It consists, like the other, of two antithetical phases. In the first phase, M—C, or the purchase, the money is changed into a commodity. In the second phase, C—M, or the sale, the commodity is changed back again into money. The combination of these two phases constitutes the single movement whereby money is exchanged for a commodity, and the same commodity is again exchanged for money; whereby a commodity is bought in order to be sold, or, neglecting the distinction in form between buying and selling, whereby a commodity is bought with a commodity. The result, in which the phases of the process vanish, is the exchange of money for money, M—M. If I purchase 2,000 lbs. of cotton for £100, and resell the 2,000 lbs. of cotton for £110, I have, in fact, exchanged £100 for £110, money for money.

Now it is evident that the circuit M—C—M would be absurd and without meaning if the intention were to exchange by this means two equal sums of money, £100 for £100. The miser's plan would be far simpler and surer; he sticks to his £100 instead of exposing it to the dangers of circulation. And yet, whether the merchant who has paid £100 for his cotton sells it for £110, or lets it go for £100, or even £50, his money has, at all events, gone through a characteristic and original movement, quite different in kind from that which it goes through in the hands of the peasant who sells corn, and with the money thus set free buys clothes. We have therefore to examine first the distinguishing characteristics of the forms of the circuits M—C—M and C—M—C, and in doing this the real difference that underlies the mere difference of form will reveal itself.

Let us see, in the first place, what the two forms have in common.

Both circuits are resolvable into the same two antithetical phases, C—M, a sale, and M—C, a purchase. In each of these phases the same material elements—a commodity, and money, and the same economic dramatis personae, a buyer and a seller—confront one another. Each circuit is the unity of the same two antithetical phases, and in each case this unity is brought about by the intervention of three contracting parties, of whom one only sells, another only buys, while the third both buys and sells.

What, however, first and foremost distinguishes the circuit C—M—C from the circuit M—C—M, is the inverted order of succession of the two phases. The simple circulation of commodities begins with a sale and ends with a purchase, while the circulation of money as capital begins with a purchase and ends with a sale. In the one case both the starting-point and the goal are commodities, in the other they are money. In the first form the movement is brought

bout by the intervention of money, in the second by
ıat of a commodity.

In the circulation C—M—C, the money is in the end
onverted into a commodity, that serves as a use-value;
: is spent once for all. In the inverted form, M—C—M,
n the contrary, the buyer lays out money in order that,
s a seller, he may recover money. By the purchase of
is commodity he throws money into circulation, in
rder to withdraw it again by the sale of the same com-
ıodity. He lets the money go, but only with the sly
ıtention of getting it back again. The money, therefore,
; not spent, it is merely advance.

In the circuit C—M—C, the same piece of money
hanges its place twice. The seller gets it from the buyer
nd pays it away to another seller. The complete circu-
ıtion, which begins with the receipt, concludes with
ıe payment, of money for commodities. It is the very
ontrary in the circuit M—C—M. Here it is not the piece
f money that changes its place twice, but the commod-
y. The buyer takes it from the hands of the seller and
asses it into the hands of another buyer. Just as in the
imple circulation of commodities the double change of
lace of the same piece of money effects its passage
rom one hand into another, so here the double change
f place of the same commodity brings about the reflux
f the money to its point of departure.

Such reflux is not dependent on the commodity
eing sold for more than was paid for it. This circum-
tance influences only the amount of the money that
omes back. The reflux itself takes place, so soon as the
urchased commodity is resold, in other words, so soon
s the circuit M—C—M is completed. We have here,
herefore, a palpable difference between the circulation
f money as capital, and its circulation as mere money.

The circuit C—M—C comes completely to an end,
o soon as the money brought in by the sale of one com-
ıodity is abstracted again by the purchase of another.

If, nevertheless, there follow a reflux of money to its
tarting-point, this can only happen through a renewal
r repetition of the operation. If I sell a quarter of corn
f £3, and with this £3 buy clothes, the money, so far as
am concerned, is spent and done with. It belongs to the
lothes merchant. If I now sell a second quarter of corn,
ıoney indeed flows back to me, not however as a sequel
o the first transaction, but in consequence of its repeti-
ion. The money again leaves me, so soon as I complete
his second transaction by a fresh purchase. Therefore,
n the circuit C—M—C, the expenditure of money has
ıothing to do with its reflux. On the other hand, in
M—C—M, the reflux of the money is conditioned by
he very mode of its expenditure. Without this reflux,
the operation fails, or the process is interrupted and incomplete, owing to the absence of its complementary and final phase, the sale.

The circuit C—M—C starts with one commodity, and finishes with another, which falls out of circulation and into consumption. Consumption, the satisfaction of wants, in one word, use-value, is its end and aim. The circuit M—C—M, on the contrary, commences with money and ends with money. Its leading motive, and the goal that attracts it, is therefore mere exchange-value.

In the simple circulation of commodities, the two extremes of the circuit have the same economic form. They are both commodities, and commodities of equal value. But they are also use-values differing in their qualities, as, for example, corn and clothes. The exchange of products, of the different materials in which the labour of society is embodied, forms here the basis of the movement. It is otherwise in the circulation M—C—M, which at first sight appears purposeless, because tautological. Both extremes have the same economic form. They are both money, and therefore are not qualitatively different use-values; for money is but the converted form of commodities, in which their particular use-values vanish. To exchange £100 for cotton, and then this same cotton again for £110, is merely is roundabout way of exchanging money for money, the same for the same, and appears to be an operation just as purposeless as it is absurd. One sum of money is distinguishable from another only by its amount. The character and tendency of the process M—C—M, is therefore not due to any qualitative difference between its extremes, both being money, but solely to their quantitative difference. More money is withdrawn from circulation at the finish than was thrown into it at the start. The cotton that was bought for £100 is perhaps resold for £100 + £10 or £110. The exact form of this process is therefore M—C—M', where M'+ VM = M the original sum advanced, plus an increment. This increment or excess over the original value I call "surplus-value." The value originally advanced, therefore, not only remains intact while in circulation, but adds to itself a surplus-value or expands itself. It is this movement that converts it into capital.

Of course, it is also possible, that in C—M—C, the two extremes C—C, say corn and clothes, may represent different quantities of value. The farmer may sell his corn above its value, or may buy the clothes at less than their value. He may, on the other hand, "be done" by the clothes merchant. Yet, in the form of circulation

now under consideration, such differences in value are purely accidental. The fact that the corn and the clothes are equivalents, does not deprive the process of all meaning, as it does in M—C—M. The equivalence of their values is rather a necessary condition to its normal course.

The repetition or renewal of the act of selling in order to buy, is kept within bounds by the very object it aims at, namely, consumption or the satisfaction of definite wants, an aim that lies altogether outside the sphere of circulation. But when we buy in order to sell, we, on the contrary, begin and end with the same thing, money, exchange-value; and thereby the movement becomes interminable. No doubt, M becomes M + VM, £100 become £110. But when viewed in their qualitative aspect alone, £110 are the same as £100, namely money; and considered quantitatively, £110 is, like £100, a sum of definite and limited value. If now, the £110 be spent as money, they cease to play their part. They are no longer capital. Withdrawn from circulation, they become petrified into a hoard, and though they remained in that state till doomsday, not a single farthing would accrue to them. If, then, the expansion of value is once aimed at, there is just the same inducement to augment the value of the £110 as that of the £100; for both are but limited expressions for exchange-value, and therefore both have the same vocation to approach, by quantitative increase, as near as possible to absolute wealth. Momentarily, indeed, the value originally advanced, the £100, is distinguishable from the surplus-value of £10 that is annexed to it during circulation; but the distinction vanishes immediately. At the end of the process, we do not receive with one hand the original £100, and with the other, the surplus-value of £10. We simply get a value of £110, which is in exactly the same condition and fitness for commencing the expanding process, as the original £100 was. Money ends the movement only to begin it again.[iii] Therefore, the final result of every separate circuit, in which a purchase and consequent sale are completed, forms of itself the starting-point of a new circuit. The simple circulation of commodities—selling in order to buy—is a means of carrying out a purpose unconnected with circulation, namely, the appropriation of use-values, the satisfaction of wants. The circulation of money as capital is, on the contrary, an end in itself, for the expansion of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The circulation of capital has therefore no limits.

As the conscious representative of this movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which the money starts and to which it returns. The expansion of value, which is the objective basis or main-spring of the circulation M—C—M, becomes his subjective aim, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more and more wealth in the abstract becomes the sole motive of his operations, that he functions as a capitalist, that is, as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will. Use-values must therefore never be looked upon as the real aim of the capitalist; neither must the profit on any single transaction. The restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at. This boundless greed after riches, this passionate chase after exchange-value, is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser. The never-ending augmentation of exchange-value, which the miser strives after, by seeking to save his money from circulation, is attained by the more acute capitalist, by constantly throwing it afresh into circulation.

The independent form, *i.e.*, the money-form, which the value of commodities assumes in the case of simple circulation, serves only one purpose, namely, their exchange, and vanishes in the final result of the movement. On the other hand, in the circulation M—C—M, both the money and the commodity represent only different modes of existence of value itself, the money its general mode, and the commodity its particular, or, so to say, disguised mode. It is constantly changing from one form to the other without thereby becoming lost, and thus assumes an automatically active character. If now we take in turn each of the two different forms which self-expanding value successively assumes in the course of its life, we then arrive at these two propositions: Capital is money: Capital is commodities. In truth, however, value is here the active factor in a process, in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it at the same time changes in magnitude, differentiates itself by throwing off surplus-value from itself; the original value, in other words, expands spontaneously. For the movement, in the course of which it adds surplus-value, is its own movement, its expansion, therefore, is automatic expansion. Because it

[iii] "Capital is divisible . . . into the original capital and the profit, the increment to the capital . . . although in practice this profit is immediately turned into capital, and set in motion with the original." (F. Engels, "Umrisse zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie, in the "Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher," edited by Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx." Paris, 1844, p. 99.) [Marx]

is value, it has acquired the occult quality of being able to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or, at the least, lays golden eggs.

Value, therefore, being the active factor in such a process, and assuming at one time the form of money, at another that of commodities, but through all these changes preserving itself and expanding, it requires some independent form, by means of which its identity may at any time be established. And this form it possesses only in the shape of money. It is under the form of money that value begins and ends, and begins again, every act of its own spontaneous generation. It began by being £100, it is now £110, and so on. But the money itself is only one of the two forms of value. Unless it takes the form of some commodity, it does not become capital. There is here no antagonism, as in the case of hoarding, between the money and commodities. The capitalist knows that all commodities, however scurvy they may look, or however badly they may smell, are in faith and in truth money, inwardly circumcised Jews, and what is more, a wonderful means whereby out of money to make more money.

In simple circulation, C—M—C, the value of commodities attained at the most a form independent of their use-values, i.e., the form of money; but that same value now in the circulation M—C—M, or the circulation of capital, suddenly presents itself as an independent substance, endowed with a motion of its own, passing through a life-process of its own, in which money and commodities are mere forms which it assumes and casts off in turn. Nay, more: instead of simply representing the relations of commodities, it enters now, so to say, into private relations with itself. It differentiates itself as original value from itself as surplus-value; as the father differentiates himself from himself quâ the son, yet both are one and of one age: for only by the surplus-value of £10 does the £100 originally advanced become capital, and so soon as this takes place, so soon as the son, and by the son, the father, is begotten, so soon does their difference vanish, and they again become one, £110.

Value therefore now becomes value in process, money in process, and, as such, capital. It comes out of circulation, enters into it again, preserves and multiplies itself within its circuit, comes back out of it with expanded bulk, and begins the same round ever afresh. M—M', money which begets money, such is the description of Capital from the mouths of its first interpreters, the Mercantilists.

Buying in order to sell, or, more accurately, buying in order to sell dearer, M—C—M', appears certainly to be a form peculiar to one kind of capital alone, namely merchants' capital. But industrial capital too is money, that is changed into commodities, and by the sale of these commodities, is re-converted into more money.

The events that take place outside the sphere of circulation, in the interval between the buying and selling, do not affect the form of this movement. Lastly, in the case of interest-bearing capital, the circulation M—C—M' appears abridged. We have its result without the intermediate stage, in the form M—M', "en style lapidaire" so to say, money that is worth more money, value that is greater than itself.

M—C—M' is therefore in reality the general formula of capital as it appears prima facie within the sphere of circulation.

Discussion Questions

1. According to Marx's materialist conception of history, what is the relationship between property or the division of labor and consciousness? How might property relations and ideas prevent or promote social change?

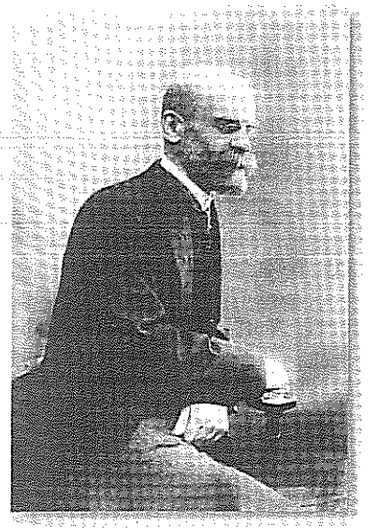
2. Do you think that truly communist societies have existed? Can they exist? What are some of the features that such a society must have in order for it to work?

3. What role does private property play in Marx's analysis of the inevitable communist revolution? In his emphasis on class, what factors might Marx have overlooked when accounting for revolutionary change or its absence?

4. Has the proletariat, or working class, sunk deeper and deeper with the advance of industry as Marx suggested? Why or why not? How prevalent is alienation in contemporary capitalist societies? Don't some people like their jobs? If so, have they been "fooled" somehow? Why or why not?

5. Discuss the prevalence of the fetishism of commodities in contemporary capitalist societies. What examples of commodity fetishism do you see in your own life and the lives of your family and friends?

3 Émile Durkheim (1858–1917)



Émile Durkheim

Key Concepts

- Social facts
- Social solidarity
  - Mechanical solidarity
  - Organic solidarity
- Anomie
- Collective conscience
- Ritual
- Symbol
- Collective representations
- Sacred and profane

There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which makes its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments.

—Durkheim ([1912] 1995:474–75)

Have you ever been to a professional sports event in a stadium full of fans? Or gone to a religious service and taken communion, or to a concert and danced in the aisles (or maybe a mosh pit)? How did these experiences make you feel? What do they have in common? Is it possible to have this same type of experience if/when you are alone? How so or why not?

These are the sorts of issues that intrigued Émile Durkheim. Above all, he sought to explain *what* held societies and social groups together—and *how*. In addressing these twin questions, Durkheim studied a wide variety of phenomena—from suicide and crime, to aboriginal religious totems and symbols. He was especially concerned about how modern, industrial societies can be held together when people don't even know each other and when their experiences and social positions are so varied. In other words, how can social ties, the very basis for society, be maintained in such an increasingly individualistic world?