

Marx on Dialectic

(3) The Method of Political Economy

When we consider a given country politico-economically, we begin with its population, its distribution among classes, town, country, the coast, the different branches of production, export and import, annual production and consumption, commodity prices etc.

It seems to be correct to begin with the real and the concrete, with the real precondition, thus to begin, in economics, with e.g. the population, which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production. However, on closer examination this proves false. The population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest. E.g. wage labour, capital, etc. These latter in turn presuppose exchange, division of labour, prices, etc. For example, capital is nothing without wage labour, without value, money, price etc. Thus, if I were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception [*Vorstellung*] of the whole, and I would then, by means of further determination, move analytically towards ever more simple concepts [*Begriff*], from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations. From there the journey would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations. The former is the path historically followed by economics at the time of its origins. The economists of the seventeenth century, e.g., always begin with the living whole, with population, nation, state, several states, etc.; but they always conclude by discovering through analysis a small number of determinant, abstract, general relations such as division of labour, money, value, etc. As soon as these individual moments had been more or less firmly established and abstracted, there began the economic systems, which ascended from the simple relations, such as labour, division of labour, need, exchange value, to the level of the state, exchange between nations and the world market. The latter is obviously the scientifically correct method. The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [*Anschauung*] and conception. Along the first path the full conception was evaporated to yield an abstract determination; along the second, the abstract determinations lead towards a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought. In this way Hegel fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself, whereas the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way in which thought appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as the concrete in the mind. But this is by no means the process by which the concrete itself comes into being. For example, the simplest economic category, say e.g. exchange value, presupposes population, moreover

a population producing in specific relations; as well as a certain kind of family, or commune, or state, etc. It can never exist other than as an abstract, one-sided relation within an already given, concrete, living whole. As a category, by contrast, exchange value leads an antediluvian existence. Therefore, to the kind of consciousness – and this is characteristic of the philosophical consciousness – for which conceptual thinking is the real human being, and for which the conceptual world as such is thus the only reality, the movement of the categories appears as the real act of production – which only, unfortunately, receives a jolt from the outside – whose product is the world; and – but this is again a tautology – this is correct in so far as the concrete totality is a totality of thoughts, concrete in thought, in fact a product of thinking and comprehending; but not in any way a product of the concept which thinks and generates itself outside or above observation and conception; a product, rather, of the working-up of observation and conception into concepts. The totality as it appears in the head, as a totality of thoughts, is a product of a thinking head, which appropriates the world in the only way it can, a way different from the artistic, religious, practical and mental appropriation of this world. The real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before; namely as long as the head's conduct is merely speculative, merely theoretical. Hence, in the theoretical method, too, the subject, society, must always be kept in mind as the presupposition.

But do not these simpler categories also have an independent historical or natural existence predating the more concrete ones? That depends. Hegel, for example, correctly begins the Philosophy of Right with possession, this being the subject's simplest juridical relation. But there is no possession preceding the family or master-servant relations, which are far more concrete relations. However, it would be correct to say that there are families or clan groups which still merely *possess*, but have no *property*. The simple category therefore appears in relation to property as a relation of simple families or clan groups. In the higher society it appears as the simpler relation of a developed organization. But the concrete substratum of which possession is a relation is always presupposed. One can imagine an individual savage as possessing something. But in that case possession is not a juridical relation. It is incorrect that possession develops historically into the family. Possession, rather, always presupposes this 'more concrete juridical category'. There would still always remain this much, however, namely that the simple categories are the expressions of relations within which the less developed concrete may have already realized itself before having posited the more many-sided connection or relation which is mentally expressed in the more concrete category; while the more developed concrete preserves the same category as a subordinate relation. Money may exist, and did exist historically, before capital existed, before banks existed, before wage labour existed, etc. Thus in this respect it may be said that the simpler category can express the dominant relations of a less developed whole, or else those subordinate relations of a more developed whole which already had a historic existence before this whole developed in the direction expressed by a more concrete category. To that extent the path of abstract thought, rising from the simple to the combined, would correspond to the real historical process.

It may be said on the other hand that there are very developed but nevertheless

historically less mature forms of society, in which the highest forms of economy, e.g. cooperation, a developed division of labour, etc., are found, even though there is no kind of money, e.g. Peru. Among the Slav communities also, money and the exchange which determines it play little or no role within the individual communities, but only on their boundaries, in traffic with others; it is simply wrong to place exchange at the center of communal society as the original, constituent element. It originally appears, rather, in the connection of the different communities with one another, not in the relations between the different members of a single community. Further, although money everywhere plays a role from very early on, it is nevertheless a predominant element, in antiquity, only within the confines of certain one-sidedly developed nations, trading nations. And even in the most advanced parts of the ancient world, among the Greeks and Romans, the full development of money, which is presupposed in modern bourgeois society, appears only in the period of their dissolution. This very simple category, then, makes a historic appearance in its full intensity only in the most developed conditions of society. By no means does it wade its way through all economic relations. For example, in the Roman Empire, at its highest point of development, the foundation remained taxes and payments in kind. The money system actually completely developed there only in the army. And it never took over the whole of labour. Thus, although the simpler category may have existed historically before the more concrete, it can achieve its full (intensive and extensive) development precisely in a combined form of society, while the more concrete category was more fully developed in a less developed form of society.

Labour seems a quite simple category. The conception of labour in this general form – as labour as such – is also immeasurably old. Nevertheless, when it is economically conceived in this simplicity, ‘labour’ is as modern a category as are the relations which create this simple abstraction. The Monetary System [19] for example, still locates wealth altogether objectively, as an external thing, in money. Compared with this standpoint, the commercial, or manufacture, system took a great step forward by locating the source of wealth not in the object but in a subjective activity – in commercial and manufacturing activity – even though it still always conceives this activity within narrow boundaries, as moneymaking. In contrast to this system, that of the Physiocrats posits a certain kind of labour – agriculture – as the creator of wealth, and the object itself no longer appears in a monetary disguise, but as the product in general, as the general result of labour. This product, as befits the narrowness of the activity, still always remains a naturally determined product – the product of agriculture, the product of the earth *par excellence*.

It was an immense step forward for Adam Smith to throw out every limiting specification of wealth-creating activity – not only manufacturing, or commercial or agricultural labour, but one as well as the others, labour in general. With the abstract universality of wealth-creating activity we now have the universality of the object defined as wealth, the product as such or again labour as such, but labour as past, objectified labour. How difficult and great was this transition may be seen from how Adam Smith himself from time to time still falls back into the Physiocratic system. Now, it might seem that all that had been achieved thereby was to discover the abstract expression for the simplest and most ancient relation in which human beings – in whatever form of society – play the role of producers. This is correct in one respect. Not in another.

Indifference towards any specific kind of labour presupposes a very developed totality of real kinds of labour, of which no single one is any longer predominant. As a rule, the most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete development, where one thing appears as common to many, to all. Then it ceases to be thinkable in a particular form alone. On the other side, this abstraction of labour as such is not merely the mental product of a concrete totality of labours. Indifference towards specific labours corresponds to a form of society in which individuals can with ease transfer from one labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence of indifference. Not only the category, labour, but labour in reality has here become the means of creating wealth in general, and has ceased to be organically linked with particular individuals in any specific form. Such a state of affairs is at its most developed in the most modern form of existence of bourgeois society – in the United States. Here, then, for the first time, the point of departure of modern economics, namely the abstraction of the category ‘labour’, ‘labour as such’, labour pure and simple, becomes true in practice. The simplest abstraction, then, which modern economics places at the head of its discussions, and which expresses an immeasurably ancient relation valid in all forms of society, nevertheless achieves practical truth as an abstraction only as a category of the most modern society. One could say that this indifference towards particular kinds of labour, which is a historic product in the United States, appears e.g. among the Russians as a spontaneous inclination. But there is a devil of a difference between barbarians who are fit by nature to be used for anything, and civilized people who apply themselves to everything. And then in practice the Russian indifference to the specific character of labour corresponds to being embedded by tradition within a very specific kind of labour, from which only external influences can jar them loose.

This example of labour shows strikingly how even the most abstract categories, despite their validity – precisely because of their abstractness – for all epochs, are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and within these relations.

Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it, etc. Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known. The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient, etc. But not at all in the manner of those economists who smudge over *all* historical differences and see bourgeois relations in all forms of society. One can understand tribute, tithe, etc., if one is acquainted with ground rent. But one must not identify them. Further, since bourgeois society is itself only a contradictory form of development, relations derived from earlier forms will often be found within it only in an entirely stunted form, or even travestied. For example, communal property. Although it is true, therefore, that the categories of bourgeois economics possess a truth for all other forms of society, this is to be taken only

with a grain of salt. They can contain them in a developed, or stunted, or caricatured form etc., but always with an essential difference. The so-called historical presentation of development is founded, as a rule, on the fact that the latest form regards the previous ones as steps leading up to itself, and, since it is only rarely and only under quite specific conditions able to criticize itself – leaving aside, of course, the historical periods which appear to themselves as times of decadence – it always conceives them one-sidedly. The Christian religion was able to be of assistance in reaching an objective understanding of earlier mythologies only when its own self-criticism had been accomplished to a certain degree, so to speak, *δυναμει*[13]. Likewise, bourgeois economics arrived at an understanding of feudal, ancient, oriental economics only after the self-criticism of bourgeois society had begun. In so far as the bourgeois economy did not mythologically identify itself altogether with the past, its critique of the previous economies, notably of feudalism, with which it was still engaged in direct struggle, resembled the critique which Christianity leveled against paganism, or also that of Protestantism against Catholicism.

In the succession of the economic categories, as in any other historical, social science, it must not be forgotten that their subject – here, modern bourgeois society – is always what is given, in the head as well as in reality, and that these categories therefore express the forms of being, the characteristics of existence, and often only individual sides of this specific society, this subject, and that therefore this society by no means begins only at the point where one can speak of it *as such*; this holds *for science as well*. This is to be kept in mind because it will shortly be decisive for the order and sequence of the categories. For example, nothing seems more natural than to begin with ground rent, with landed property, since this is bound up with the earth, the source of all production and of all being, and with the first form of production of all more or less settled societies – agriculture. But nothing would be more erroneous. In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it. For example, with pastoral peoples (mere hunting and fishing peoples lie outside the point where real development begins). Certain forms of tillage occur among them, sporadic ones. Landed property is determined by this. It is held in common, and retains this form to a greater or lesser degree according to the greater or lesser degree of attachment displayed by these peoples to their tradition, e.g. the communal property of the Slavs. Among peoples with a settled agriculture – this settling already a great step – where this predominates, as in antiquity and in the feudal order, even industry, together with its organization and the forms of property corresponding to it, has a more or less landed-proprietary character; is either completely dependent on it, as among the earlier Romans, or, as in the Middle Ages, imitates, within the city and its relations, the organization of the land. In the Middle Ages, capital itself – apart from pure money-capital – in the form of the traditional artisans' tools etc., has this landed-proprietary character. In bourgeois society it is the opposite. Agriculture more and more becomes merely a branch of industry, and is entirely dominated by capital. Ground rent likewise. In all forms where landed property rules, the natural relation still predominant. In those where capital rules, the social, historically created element. Ground rent cannot be understood without capital. But

capital can certainly be understood without ground rent. Capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society. It must form the starting-point as well as the finishing-point, and must be dealt with before landed property. After both have been examined in particular, their interrelation must be examined.

It would therefore be unfeasible and wrong to let the economic categories follow one another in the same sequence as that in which they were historically decisive. Their sequence is determined, rather, by their relation to one another in modern bourgeois society, which is precisely the opposite of that which seems to be their natural order or which corresponds to historical development. The point is not the historic position of the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society. Even less is it their sequence 'in the idea' (Proudhon) [21] (a muddy notion of historic movement). Rather, their order within modern bourgeois society.

The purity (abstract specificity) in which the trading peoples – Phoenicians, Carthaginians – appear in the old world is determined precisely by the predominance of the agricultural peoples. Capital, as trading-capital or as money-capital, appears in this abstraction precisely where capital is not yet the predominant element of societies. Lombards, Jews take up the same position towards the agricultural societies of the Middle Ages.

As a further example of the divergent positions which the same category can occupy in different social stages: one of the latest forms of bourgeois society, *joint-stock companies*. These also appear, however, at its beginning, in the great, privileged monopoly trading companies.

The concept of national wealth creeps into the work of the economists of the seventeenth century – continuing partly with those of the eighteenth – in the form of the notion that wealth is created only to enrich the state, and that its power is proportionate to this wealth. This was the still unconsciously hypocritical form in which wealth and the production of wealth proclaimed themselves as the purpose of modern states, and regarded these states henceforth only as means for the production of wealth.

The order obviously has to be (1) the general, abstract determinants which obtain in more or less all forms of society, but in the above-explained sense. (2) The categories which make up the inner structure of bourgeois society and on which the fundamental classes rest. Capital, wage labour, landed property. Their interrelation. Town and country. The three great social classes. Exchange between them. Circulation. Credit system (private). (3) Concentration of bourgeois society in the form of the state. Viewed in relation to itself. The 'unproductive' classes. Taxes. State debt. Public credit. The population. The colonies. Emigration. (4) The international relation of production. International division of labour. International exchange. Export and import. Rate of exchange. (5) The world market and crises.

Karl Marx Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844

Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in General

||XI| (6) This is perhaps the place at which, by way of explanation and justification, we might offer some considerations in regard to the Hegelian dialectic generally and especially its exposition in the *Phänomenologie* and *Logik* and also, lastly, the relation (to it) of the modern critical movement.[\[42\]](#)

So powerful was modern German criticism's preoccupation with the past – so completely was its development entangled with the subject-matter – that here prevailed a completely uncritical attitude to the method of criticising, together with a complete lack of awareness about the *apparently formal*, but really *vital* question: how do we now stand as regards the Hegelian *dialectic*? This lack of awareness about the relationship of modern criticism to the Hegelian philosophy as a whole and especially to the Hegelian dialectic has been so great that critics like *Strauss* and *Bruno Bauer* still remain within the confines of the Hegelian logic; the former completely so and the latter at least implicitly so in his *Synoptiker* (where, in opposition to Strauss, he replaces the substance of “abstract nature” by the “self-consciousness” of abstract man), and even in *Das entdeckte Christenthum*. Thus in *Das entdeckte Christenthum*, for example, you get:

“As though in positing the world, self-consciousness does not posit that which is different [from itself] and in what it is creating it does not create itself, since it in turn annuls the difference between what it has created and itself, since it itself has being only in creating and in the movement – as though its purpose were not this movement?” etc.; or again: “They” (the French materialists) “have not yet been able to see that it is only as the movement of self-consciousness that the movement of the universe has actually come to be for itself, and achieved unity with itself.” [Pp. 113, 114-15.]

Such expressions do not even show any verbal divergence from the Hegelian approach, but on the contrary repeat it word for word.

||XII| How little consciousness there was in relation to the Hegelian dialectic during the act of criticism (Bauer, the *Synoptiker*), and how little this consciousness came into being even after the act of material criticism, is proved by Bauer when, in his *Die gute Sache der Freiheit*, he dismisses the brash question put by Herr Gruppe – “What about logic now?” – by referring him to future critics.[\[43\]](#)

But even now – now that *Feuerbach* both in his *Thesen* in the *Anekdoten* and, in detail, in the *Philosophie der Zukunft* has in principle overthrown the old dialectic and

philosophy; now that that school of criticism, on the other hand, which was incapable of accomplishing this, has all the same seen it accomplished and has proclaimed itself pure, resolute, absolute criticism that has come into the clear with itself; now that this criticism, in its spiritual pride, has reduced the whole process of history to the relation between the rest of the world and itself (the rest of the world, in contrast to itself, falling under the category of “the masses”) and dissolved all dogmatic antitheses into the *single* dogmatic antithesis of its own cleverness and the stupidity of the world – the antithesis of the critical Christ and Mankind, the “*rabble*”; now that daily and hourly it has demonstrated its own excellence against the dullness of the masses; now, finally, that it has proclaimed the critical *Last Judgment* in the shape of an announcement that the day is approaching when the whole of decadent humanity will assemble before it and be sorted by it into groups, each particular mob receiving its *testimonium paupertatis*; now that it has made known in print its superiority to human feelings as well as its superiority to the world, over which it sits enthroned in sublime solitude, only letting fall from time to time from its sarcastic lips the ringing laughter of the Olympian Gods – even now, after all these delightful antics of idealism (i.e., of Young Hegelianism) expiring in the guise of criticism – even now it has not expressed the suspicion that the time was ripe for a critical settling of accounts with the mother of Young Hegelianism – the Hegelian dialectic – and even had nothing to say about its critical attitude towards the Feuerbachian dialectic. This shows a completely uncritical attitude to itself.

Feuerbach is the only one who has a *serious, critical* attitude to the Hegelian dialectic and who has made genuine discoveries in this field. He is in fact the true conqueror of the old philosophy. The extent of his achievement, and the unpretentious simplicity with which he, Feuerbach, gives it to the world, stand in striking contrast to the opposite attitude [of the others].

Feuerbach’s great achievement is:

- (1) The proof that philosophy is nothing else but religion rendered into thought and expounded by thought, i.e., another form and manner of existence of the estrangement of the essence of man; hence equally to be condemned;
- (2) The establishment of *true materialism* and of *real science*, by making the social relationship of “man to man” the basic principle of the theory;
- (3) His opposing to the negation of the negation, which claims to be the absolute positive, the self-supporting positive, positively based on itself.

Feuerbach explains the Hegelian dialectic (and thereby justifies starting out from the positive facts which we know by the senses) as follows:

Hegel sets out from the estrangement of substance (in logic, from the infinite, abstractly

universal) – from the absolute and fixed abstraction; which means, put popularly, that he sets out from religion and theology.

Secondly, he annuls the infinite, and posits the actual, sensuous, real, finite, particular (philosophy, annulment of religion and theology).

Thirdly, he again annuls the positive and restores the abstraction, the infinite – restoration of religion and theology.

Feuerbach thus conceives the negation of the negation *only* as a contradiction of philosophy with itself – as the philosophy which affirms theology (the transcendent, etc.) after having denied it, and which it therefore affirms in opposition to itself.

The positive position or self-affirmation and self-confirmation contained in the negation of the negation is taken to be a position which is not yet sure of itself, which is therefore burdened with its opposite, which is doubtful of itself and therefore in need of proof, and which, therefore, is not a position demonstrating itself by its existence – not an acknowledged ||XIII|| position; hence it is directly and immediately confronted by the position of sense-certainty based on itself. [Feuerbach also defines the negation of the negation, the definite concept, as thinking surpassing itself in thinking and as thinking wanting to be directly awareness, nature, reality. – *Note by Marx* [\[44\]](#)]

But because Hegel has conceived the negation of the negation, from the point of view of the positive relation inherent in it, as the true and only positive, and from the point of view of the negative relation inherent in it as the only true act and spontaneous activity of all being, he has only found the *abstract, logical, speculative* expression for the movement of history, which is not yet the *real* history of man as a given subject, but only the *act of creation*, the *history of the origin* of man.

We shall explain both the abstract form of this process and the difference between this process as it is in Hegel in contrast to modern criticism, in contrast to the same process in Feuerbach's *Wesen des Christenthums*, or rather the *critical* form of this in Hegel still uncritical process.

Let us take a look at the Hegelian system. One must begin with Hegel's *Phänomenologie*, the true point of origin and the secret of the Hegelian philosophy.

Phenomenology.

A. Self-consciousness.

I. *Consciousness.* (α) Certainty at the level of sense-experience; or the “this” and *meaning*. (β) *Perception*, or the thing with its properties, and *deception*. (γ) Force and

understanding, appearance and the supersensible world.

II. *Self-consciousness.* The truth of certainty of self. (a) Independence and dependence of self-consciousness; mastery and servitude. (b) Freedom of self-consciousness. Stoicism, scepticism, the unhappy consciousness.

III. *Reason.* Reason's certainty and reason's truth. (a) Observation as a process of reason. Observation of nature and of self-consciousness. (b) Realisation of rational self-consciousness through its own activity. Pleasure and necessity. The law of the heart and the insanity of self-conceit. Virtue and the course of the world. (c) The individuality which is real in and for itself. The spiritual animal kingdom and the deception or the real fact. Reason as lawgiver. Reason which tests laws.

B. *Mind.*

I. *True mind, ethics.* **II. Mind in self-estrangement, culture.** **III. Mind certain of itself, morality.**

C. *Religion.* *Natural religion; religion of art; revealed religion.*

D. *Absolute knowledge.*

Hegel's *Encyklopädie*, beginning as it does with logic, with *pure speculative thought*, and ending with *absolute knowledge* – with the self-conscious, self-comprehending philosophic or absolute (i.e., superhuman) abstract mind – is in its entirety nothing but the *display*, the self-objectification, of the *essence* of the philosophic mind, and the philosophic mind is nothing but the estranged mind of the world thinking within its self-estrangement – i.e., comprehending itself abstractly.

Logic – mind's *coin of the realm*, the speculative or *mental value* of man and nature – its essence which has grown totally indifferent to all real determinateness, and hence unreal – is *alienated thinking*, and therefore thinking which abstracts from nature and from real man: *abstract thinking*.

Then: *The externality of this abstract thinking ... nature*, as it is for this abstract thinking. Nature is external to it – its self-loss; and it apprehends nature also in an external fashion, as abstract thought, but as alienated abstract thinking. Finally, *mind*, this thinking returning home to its own point of origin – the thinking which as the anthropological, phenomenological, psychological, ethical, artistic and religious mind is not valid for itself, until ultimately it finds itself, and affirms itself, as *absolute knowledge* and hence absolute, i.e., abstract, mind, thus receiving its conscious embodiment in the mode of existence corresponding to it. For its real mode of existence is *abstraction*.

There is a double error in Hegel.

The **first** emerges most clearly in the *Phänomenologie*, the birth-place of the Hegelian philosophy. When, for instance, wealth, state-power, etc., are understood by Hegel as entities estranged from the *human* being, this only happens in their form as thoughts ... They are thought-entities, and therefore merely an estrangement of *pure*, i.e., abstract, philosophical thinking. The whole process therefore ends with absolute knowledge. It is precisely abstract thought from which these objects are estranged and which they confront with their presumption of reality. The *philosopher* – who is himself an abstract form of estranged man – takes himself as the *criterion* of the estranged world. The whole *history of the alienation process* [*Entäußerungsgeschichte*] and the whole *process of the retraction* of the alienation is therefore nothing but the *history of the production* of abstract (i.e., absolute) ||XVII|[45] thought – of logical, speculative thought. The *estrangement*, [*Entfremdung*] which therefore forms the real interest of the transcendence [*Aufhebung*] of this alienation [*Entäußerung*], is the opposition of *in itself* and *for itself*, of *consciousness and self-consciousness*, of *object and subject* – that is to say, it is the opposition between abstract thinking and sensuous reality or real sensuousness within thought itself. All other oppositions and movements of these oppositions are but the *semblance*, the *cloak*, the *exoteric* shape of these oppositions which alone matter, and which constitute the *meaning* of these other, profane oppositions. It is not the fact that the human being *objectifies himself inhumanly*, in opposition to himself, but the fact that he *objectifies himself* [*selbst sich vergegenständlicht*] in *distinction* from and in *opposition* to abstract thinking, that constitutes the posited essence of the estrangement [*Entfremdung*] and the thing to be superseded [*aufzuhebende*].

||XVIII| The appropriation of man's essential powers, which have become objects – indeed, alien objects – is thus in the *first place* only an *appropriation* occurring in *consciousness*, in *pure thought*, i.e., in *abstraction*: it is the appropriation of these objects as *thoughts* and as *movements of thought*. Consequently, despite its thoroughly negative and critical appearance and despite the genuine criticism contained in it, which often anticipates far later development, there is already latent in the *Phänomenologie* as a germ, a potentiality, a secret, the uncritical positivism and the equally uncritical idealism of Hegel's later works – that philosophic dissolution and restoration of the existing empirical world.

In the second place: the vindication of the objective world for man – for example, the realisation that *sensuous* consciousness is not an *abstractly* sensuous consciousness but a *humanly* sensuous consciousness, that religion, wealth, etc., are but the estranged world of *human* objectification, of *man's* essential powers put to work and that they are therefore but the *path* to the true *human* world – this appropriation or the insight into this process appears in Hegel therefore in this form, that *sense*, *religion*, state power, etc., are *spiritual* entities; for only *mind* is the *true* essence of man, and the true form of mind is thinking mind, theological, speculative mind.

The *human character* of nature and of the nature created by history – man's products – appears in the form that they are *products* of abstract mind and as such, therefore,

phases of *mind* – *thought-entities*. The *Phänomenologie* is, therefore, a hidden, mystifying and still uncertain criticism; but inasmuch as it depicts man's *estrangement*, even though man appears only as mind, there lie concealed in it *all* the elements of criticism, already *prepared* and *elaborated* in a manner often rising far above the Hegelian standpoint. The "unhappy consciousness", the "honest consciousness", the struggle of the "noble and base consciousness", etc., etc. – these separate sections contain, but still in an estranged form, the *critical* elements of whole spheres such as religion, the state, civil life, etc. Just as *entities, objects*, appear as thought-entities, so the *subject* is always *consciousness* or *self-consciousness*; or rather the object appears only as *abstract* consciousness, man only as *self-consciousness*: the distinct forms of estrangement which make their appearance are, therefore, only various forms of consciousness and self-consciousness. Just as *in itself* abstract consciousness (the form in which the object is conceived) is merely a moment of distinction of self-consciousness, what appears as the result of the movement is the identity of self-consciousness with consciousness – absolute knowledge – the movement of abstract thought no longer directed outwards but proceeding now only within its own self: that is to say, the dialectic of pure thought is the result. [XVIII]

[XXIII] [46] The outstanding achievement of Hegel's *Phänomenologie* and of its final outcome, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle, is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of *labour* and comprehends objective man – true, because real man – as the outcome of man's *own labour*. The *real, active* orientation of man to himself as a species-being, or his manifestation as a real species-being (i.e., as a human being), is only possible if he really brings out all his *species-powers* – something which in turn is only possible through the cooperative action of all of mankind, only as the result of history – and treats these powers as objects: and this, to begin with, is again only possible in the form of estrangement.

We shall now demonstrate in detail Hegel's one-sidedness and limitations as they are displayed in the final chapter of the *Phänomenologie*, "Absolute Knowledge" – a chapter which contains the condensed spirit of the *Phänomenologie*, the relationship of the *Phänomenologie* to speculative dialectic, and also Hegel's *consciousness* concerning both and their relationship to one another.

Let us provisionally say just this much in advance: Hegel's standpoint is that of modern political economy. [47] He grasps *labour* as the *essence* of man – as man's essence which stands the test: he sees only the positive, not the negative side of labour. Labour is *man's coming-to-be* for *himself* within *alienation*, or as *alienated* man. The only labour which Hegel knows and recognises is *abstractly mental* labour. Therefore, that which constitutes the *essence* of philosophy – the *alienation of man who knows himself*, or *alienated science thinking itself* – Hegel grasps as its essence; and in contradistinction to previous philosophy he is therefore able to combine its separate

aspects, and to present his philosophy as *the* philosophy. What the other philosophers did – that they grasped separate phases of nature and of abstract self-consciousness, namely, of human life as phases of self-consciousness – is *known* to Hegel as the *doings* of philosophy. Hence his science is absolute.

Let us now turn to our subject.

“*Absolute Knowledge*”. The last chapter of the “*Phänomenologie*”.

The main point is that the *object of consciousness* is nothing else but *self-consciousness*, or that the object is only *objectified self-consciousness* – self-consciousness as object. (Positing of man = self-consciousness).

The issue, therefore, is to surmount the *object of consciousness*. *Objectivity* as such is regarded as an *estranged* human relationship which does not correspond to the *essence of man*, to self-consciousness. The *reappropriation* of the objective essence of man, produced within the orbit of estrangement as something alien, therefore denotes not only the annulment of *estrangement*, but of *objectivity* as well. Man, that is to say, is regarded as a *non-objective, spiritual* being.

The movement of *surmounting the object of consciousness* is now described by Hegel in the following way:

The *object* reveals itself not merely as *returning* into the *self* – this is according to Hegel the *one-sided* way of apprehending this movement, the grasping of only one side. Man is equated with self. The self, however, is only the *abstractly* conceived man – man created by abstraction. Man *is* selfish. His eye, his ear, etc., are *selfish*. In him every one of his essential powers has the quality of *selfhood*. But it is quite false to say on that account “*self-consciousness* has eyes, ears, essential powers”. *Self-consciousness* is rather a quality of human nature, of the human eye, etc.; it is not human nature that is a quality of ||XXIV| *self-consciousness*.

The self-abstracted entity, fixed for itself, is man as *abstract egoist* – *egoism* raised in its pure abstraction to the level of thought. (We shall return to this point later.)

For Hegel the *human being* – *man* – equals *self-consciousness*. All estrangement of the human being is therefore *nothing* but *estrangement of self-consciousness*. The estrangement of self-consciousness is not regarded as an *expression* – reflected in the realm of knowledge and thought – of the *real* estrangement of the human being. Instead, the *actual* estrangement – that which appears real – is according to its *innermost*, hidden nature (which is only brought to light by philosophy) nothing but the *manifestation* of the estrangement of the real human essence, of *self-consciousness*. The science which comprehends this is therefore called *phenomenology*. All reappropriation of the estranged

objective essence appears therefore, as incorporation into self-consciousness: The man who takes hold of his essential being is *merely* the self-consciousness which takes hold of objective essences. Return of the object into the self is therefore the reappropriation of the object.

Expressed in *all its aspects*, the *surmounting of the object of consciousness* means:

- (1) That the object as such presents itself to consciousness as something vanishing.
- (2) That it is the alienation of self-consciousness which posits thinghood.[\[48\]](#)
- (3) That this alienation has, not merely a *negative* but a *positive* significance
- (4) That it has this meaning not merely *for us* or intrinsically, but *for self-consciousness itself*.
- (5) *For self-consciousness*, the negative of the object, or its annulling of itself, has *positive* significance – or it *knows* this futility of the object – because of the fact that it alienates itself, for in this alienation it posits *itself* as object, or, for the sake of the indivisible unity of *being-for-self*, posits the object as itself.
- (6) On the other hand, this contains likewise the other moment, that self-consciousness has also just as much superseded this alienation and objectivity and resumed them into itself, being thus *at home* in its other-being *as such*.
- (7) This is the movement of consciousness and this is therefore the totality of its moments.
- (8) Consciousness must similarly be related to the object in the totality of its determinations and have comprehended it in terms of each of them. This totality of its determinations makes the object *intrinsically a spiritual being*; and it becomes so in truth for consciousness through the apprehending of each one of the determinations as *self*, or through what was called above the *spiritual* attitude to them. [\[49\]](#)

As to (1): That the object as such presents itself to consciousness as something vanishing – this is the above-mentioned *return of the object into the self*.

As to (2): The *alienation of self-consciousness* posits *thinghood*. Because man equals self-consciousness, his alienated, objective essence, or *thinghood*, equals *alienated self-consciousness*, and *thinghood* is thus posited through this alienation (thinghood being *that* which is an *object for man* and an object for him is really only *that* which is to him an essential object, therefore his *objective* essence. And since it is not *real man*, nor therefore *nature* – man being *human nature* – who as such is made the subject, but only

the abstraction of man – self-consciousness – thinghood cannot be anything but alienated self-consciousness). It is only to be expected that a living, natural being equipped and endowed with objective (i.e., material) essential powers should have real natural objects of his essence; and that his self-alienation should lead to the positing of a *real*, objective world, but within the framework of *externality*, and, therefore, an overwhelming world not belonging to his own essential being. There is nothing incomprehensible or mysterious in this. It would be mysterious, rather, if it were otherwise. But it is equally clear that a *self-consciousness* by its alienation can posit only *thinghood*, i.e., only an abstract thing, a thing of abstraction and not a *real* thing. It is ||XXVI| [50] clear, further, that thinghood is therefore utterly without any *independence*, any *essentiality* vis-à-vis self-consciousness; that on the contrary it is a mere creature – something *posited* by self-consciousness. And what is posited, instead of confirming itself, is but confirmation of the act of positing which for a moment fixes its energy as the product, and gives it the *semblance* – but only for a moment – of an independent, real substance.

|| Whenever real, corporeal *man*, man with his feet firmly on the solid ground, man exhaling and inhaling all the forces of nature, *posits* his real, objective *essential powers* as alien objects by his externalisation, it is not the *act of positing* which is the subject in this process: it is the subjectivity of *objective* essential powers, whose action, therefore, must also be something objective. An objective being acts objectively, and he would not act objectively if the objective did not reside in the very nature of his being. He only creates or posits objects, because he is posited by objects – because at bottom he is *nature*. In the act of positing, therefore, this objective being does not fall from his state of “pure activity” into a *creating of the object*; on the contrary, his *objective* product only confirms his *objective* activity, his activity as the activity of an objective, natural being.

Here we see how consistent naturalism or humanism is distinct from both idealism and materialism, and constitutes at the same time the unifying truth of both. We see also how only naturalism is capable of comprehending the action of world history.

<Man is directly a *natural being*. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with *natural powers*, *vital powers* – he is an *active* natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities – as *instincts*. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the *objects* of his instincts exist outside him, as *objects* independent of him; yet these objects are *objects* that he *needs* – essential *objects*, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers. To say that man is a *corporeal*, living, real, sensuous, objective being full of natural vigour is to say that he has *real, sensuous objects* as the object of his being or of his life, or that he can only *express* his life in real, sensuous objects. *To be* objective, natural and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing.>

Hunger is a natural *need*; it therefore needs a *nature* outside itself, an *object* outside itself, in order to satisfy itself, to be stilled. Hunger is an acknowledged need of my body

for an *object* existing outside it, indispensable to its integration and to the expression of its essential being. The sun is the *object* of the plant – an indispensable object to it, confirming its life – just as the plant is an object of the sun, being an *expression* of the life-awakening power of the sun, of the sun's *objective essential* power.

A being which does not have its nature outside itself is not a *natural* being, and plays no part in the system of nature. A being which has no object outside itself is not an objective being. A being which is not itself an object for some third being has no being for its *object*; i.e., it is not objectively related. Its being is not objective.

||XXVII| A non-objective being is a *non-being*.

Suppose a being which is neither an object itself, nor has an object. Such a being, in the first place, would be the *unique* being: there would exist no being outside it – it would exist solitary and alone. For as soon as there are objects outside me, as soon as I am not *alone*, I am *another* – *another reality* than the object outside me. For this third object I am thus a *different reality* than itself; that is, I am *its* object. Thus, to suppose a being which is not the object of another being is to presuppose that *no* objective being exists. As soon as I have an object, this object has me for an object. But a *non-objective* being is an unreal, non-sensuous thing – a product of mere thought (i.e., of mere imagination) – an abstraction. To be *sensuous*, that is, to be really existing, means to be an object of sense, to be a *sensuous* object, to have sensuous objects outside oneself – objects of one's sensuousness. To be sensuous is to *suffer*.

Man as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a *suffering* being – and because he feels that he suffers, a *passionate* being. Passion is the essential power of man energetically bent on its object.

<But man is not merely a natural being: he is a *human* natural being. That is to say, he is a being for himself. Therefore he is a *species-being*, and has to confirm and manifest himself as such both in his being and in his knowing. Therefore, *human* objects are not natural objects as they immediately present themselves, and neither is *human sense* as it immediately *is* – as it is objectively – *human* sensibility, human objectivity. Neither nature objectively nor nature subjectively is directly given in a form adequate to the *human* being.> And as everything natural has to *come into being*, *man* too has his act of origin – *history* – which, however, is for him a known history, and hence as an act of origin it is a conscious self-transcending act of origin. History is the true natural history of man (on which more later).

Thirdly, because this positing of thinghood is itself only an illusion, an act contradicting the nature of pure activity, it has to be cancelled again and thinghood denied.

Re 3, 4, 5 and 6. (3) This externalisation [*Entäußerung*] of consciousness has not merely a *negative* but a *positive* significance, and (4) it has this meaning not merely *for us* or intrinsically, but for consciousness itself. *For consciousness* the negative of the object, its

annulling of itself, has *positive* significance – i.e., consciousness *knows* this nullity of the object – because it alienates *itself*; for, in this alienation it *knows* itself as object, or, for the sake of the indivisible unity of *being-for-itself*, the object as itself. (6) On the other hand, there is also this other moment in the process, that consciousness has also just as much superseded this alienation and objectivity and resumed them into itself, being thus *at home* in its *other-being as such*.

As we have already seen, the appropriation of what is estranged and objective, or the annulling of objectivity in the form of *estrangement* (which has to advance from indifferent strangeness to real, antagonistic estrangement), means likewise or even primarily for Hegel that it is *objectivity* which is to be annulled, because it is not the *determinate* character of the object, but rather its *objective* character that is offensive and constitutes estrangement for self-consciousness. The object is therefore something negative, self-annulling – a *nullity*. This nullity of the object has not only a negative but a *positive* meaning for consciousness, since this nullity of the object is precisely the *self-confirmation* of the non-objectivity, of the ||XXVIII| *abstraction* of itself. For *consciousness itself* the nullity of the object has a positive meaning because it *knows* this nullity, the objective being, as *its self-alienation*; because it knows that it exists only as a result of its own self-alienation....

The way in which consciousness is, and in which something is for it, is *knowing*. Knowing is its sole act. Something therefore comes to be for consciousness insofar as the latter *knows* this *something*. Knowing is its sole objective relation.

It ,consciousness, then, knows the nullity of the object (i.e., knows the non-existence of the distinction between the object and itself, the non-existence of the object for it) because it knows the object as its *self-alienation*; that is, it knows itself – knows knowing as object – because the object is only the *semblance* of an object, a piece of mystification, which in its essence, however, is nothing else but knowing itself, which has confronted itself with itself and hence has confronted itself with a *nullity* – a something which has *no* objectivity outside the knowing. Or: knowing knows that in relating itself to an object it is only *outside* itself – that it only externalises itself; that *it itself* only *appears* to itself as an object – or that that which appears to it as an object is only itself.

On the other hand, says Hegel, there is here at the same time this other moment, that consciousness has just as much annulled and reabsorbed this externalisation and objectivity, being thus *at home* in its *other-being as such*.

In this discussion all the illusions of speculation are brought together.

First of all: consciousness, self-consciousness, is *at home* in its *other-being as such*. It is

therefore – or if we here abstract from the Hegelian abstraction and put the self-consciousness of man instead of self-consciousness – it is *at home* in its *other being as such*. This implies, for one thing, that consciousness (knowing as knowing, thinking as thinking) pretends to be directly the *other* of itself – to be the world of sense, the real world, life – thought surpassing itself in thought (Feuerbach).^[51] This aspect is contained herein, inasmuch as consciousness as mere consciousness takes offence not at estranged objectivity, but at *objectivity as such*.

Secondly, this implies that self-conscious man, insofar as he has recognised and superseded the spiritual world (or his world's spiritual, general mode of being) as self-alienation, nevertheless again confirms it in this alienated shape and passes it off as his true mode of being – re-establishes it, and pretends to be *at home in his other-being as such*. Thus, for instance, after superseding religion, after recognising religion to be a product of self-alienation he yet finds confirmation of himself in *religion as religion*. Here is the root of Hegel's *false* positivism, or of his merely *apparent* criticism: this is what Feuerbach designated as [the positing, negating and re-establishing of religion or theology](#) – but it has to be expressed in more general terms. Thus reason is at home in unreason as unreason. The man who has recognised that he is leading an alienated life in law, politics, etc., is leading his true human life in this alienated life as such. Self-affirmation, self-confirmation *in contradiction* with itself – in contradiction both with the knowledge of and with the essential being of the object – is thus true *knowledge and life*.

There can therefore no longer be any question about an act of accommodation on Hegel's part *vis-à-vis* religion, the state, etc., since this lie is the lie of his principle.

||XXIX| If I *know* religion as *alienated* human self-consciousness, then what I know in it as religion is not my self-consciousness, but my alienated self-consciousness confirmed in it. I therefore know my self-consciousness that belongs to itself, to its very nature, confirmed not in *religion* but rather in *annihilated* and *superseded* religion.

In Hegel, therefore, the negation of the negation is not the confirmation of the true essence, effected precisely through negation of the pseudo-essence. With him the negation of the negation is the confirmation of the pseudo-essence, or of the self-estranged essence in its denial; or it is the denial of this pseudo-essence as an objective being dwelling outside man and independent of him, and its transformation into the subject.

A peculiar role, therefore, is played by the act of *superseding* in which denial and preservation, i.e., affirmation, are bound together.

Thus, for example, in Hegel's philosophy of law, *civil law* superseded equals *morality*, morality superseded equals the *family*, the family superseded equals *civil society*, civil society superseded equals the *state*, the state superseded equals *world history*. In the *actual world* civil law, morality, the family, civil society, the state, etc., remain in existence, only they have become *moments* – states of the existence and being

of man – which have no validity in isolation, but dissolve and engender one another, etc. They have become *moments of motion*.

In their actual existence this *mobile* nature of theirs is hidden. It appears and is made manifest only in thought, in philosophy. Hence my true religious existence is my existence in the *philosophy of religion*; my true political existence is my existence in the *philosophy of law*; my true natural existence, existence in the *philosophy of nature*; my true artistic existence, existence in the *philosophy of art*; my true *human* existence, my *existence in philosophy*. Likewise the true existence of religion, the state, nature, art, is the *philosophy* of religion, of nature, of the state and of art. If, however, the philosophy of religion, etc., is for me the sole true existence of religion then, too, it is only as a *philosopher of religion* that I am truly religious, and so I deny *real* religious sentiment and the really *religious* man. But at the same time I *assert* them, in part within my own existence or within the alien existence which I oppose to them – for this *is* only their *philosophic* expression – and in part I assert them in their distinct original shape, since for me they represent merely the *apparent* other-being, allegories, forms of their own true existence (i.e., of my *philosophical* existence) hidden under sensuous disguises.

In just the same way, *quality* superseded equals *quantity*, quantity superseded equals *measure*, measure superseded equals *essence*, essence superseded equals *appearance*, appearance superseded equals *actuality*, actuality superseded equals the *concept*, the concept superseded equals *objectivity*, objectivity superseded equals the *absolute idea*, the absolute idea superseded equals *nature*, nature superseded equals *subjective* mind, subjective mind superseded equals *ethical* objective mind, ethical mind superseded equals *art*, art superseded equals *religion*, religion superseded equals *absolute knowledge*.^[52]

On the one hand, this act of superseding is a transcending of a conceptual entity; thus, private property *as a concept* is transcended in the *concept* of morality. And because thought imagines itself to be directly the other of itself, to be *sensuous reality* – and therefore takes its own action for *sensuous, real* action – this superseding in thought, which leaves its object in existence in the real world, believes that it has really overcome it. On the other hand, because the object has now become for it a moment of thought, thought takes it in its reality too to be self-confirmation of itself – of self-consciousness, of abstraction.

||XXX| From the one point of view the entity which Hegel *supersedes* in philosophy is therefore not *real* religion, the *real* state, or *real* nature, but religion itself already as an object of knowledge, i.e., *dogmatics*; the same with *jurisprudence*, *political science* and *natural science*. From the one point of view, therefore, he stands in opposition both to the *real* thing and to immediate, unphilosophic *science* or the unphilosophic *conceptions* of this thing. He therefore contradicts their conventional conceptions. [The conventional conception of theology, jurisprudence, political science, natural science, etc. - Ed.]

On the other hand, the religious, etc., man can find in Hegel his final confirmation.

It is now time to formulate the *positive* aspects of the Hegelian dialectic within the realm of estrangement.

(a) *Supersession* as an objective movement of *retracting* the alienation *into self*. This is the insight, expressed within the estrangement, concerning the *appropriation* of the objective essence through the supersession of its estrangement; it is the estranged insight into the *real objectification* of man, into the real appropriation of his objective essence through the annihilation of the *estranged* character of the objective world, through the supersession of the objective world in its estranged mode of being. In the same way atheism, being the supersession of God, is the advent of theoretic humanism, and communism, as the supersession of private property, is the vindication of real human life as man's possession and thus the advent of practical humanism, or atheism is humanism mediated with itself through the supersession of religion, whilst communism is humanism mediated with itself through the supersession of private property. Only through the supersession of this mediation – which is itself, however, a necessary premise – does positively self-deriving humanism, *positive* humanism, come into being.

But atheism and communism are no flight, no abstraction, no loss of the objective world created by man – of man's essential powers born to the realm of objectivity; they are not a returning in poverty to unnatural, primitive simplicity. On the contrary, they are but the first real emergence, the actual realisation for man of man's essence and of his essence as something real.

Thus, by grasping the *positive* meaning of self-referred negation (although again in estranged fashion) Hegel grasps man's self-estrangement, the alienation of man's essence, man's loss of objectivity and his loss of realness as self-discovery, manifestation of his nature, objectification and realisation. <In short, within the sphere of abstraction, Hegel conceives labour as man's act of *self-genesis* – conceives man's relation to himself as an alien being and the manifestation of himself as an alien being to be the emergence of *species-consciousness* and *species-life*.>

(b) However, apart from, or rather in consequence of, the referral already described, this act appears in Hegel:

First as a *merely formal*, because abstract, act, because the human being itself is taken to be only an *abstract, thinking being*, conceived merely as self-consciousness. And,

Secondly, because the exposition is *formal* and *abstract*, the supersession of the alienation becomes a confirmation of the alienation; or for Hegel this movement of *self-genesis* and *self-objectification* in the form of *self-alienation* and *self-estrangement* is the *absolute*, and hence final, *expression of human life* – of life with itself as its aim, of life at peace with itself, and in unity with its essence.

This movement, in its abstract ||XXXI| form as dialectic, is therefore regarded as *truly human life*, and because it is nevertheless an abstraction – an estrangement of human life

– it is regarded as a *divine process*, but as the divine process of man, a process traversed by man's abstract, pure, absolute essence that is distinct from himself.

Thirdly, this process must have a bearer, a subject. But the subject only comes into being as a result. This result – the subject knowing itself as absolute self-consciousness – is therefore *God, absolute Spirit, the self-knowing and self-manifesting idea*. Real man and real nature become mere predicates – symbols of this hidden, unreal man and of this unreal nature. Subject and predicate are therefore related to each other in absolute reversal – a *mystical subject-object* or a *subjectivity reaching beyond the object* – the *absolute subject* as a *process*, as *subject alienating* itself and returning from alienation into itself, but at the same time retracting this alienation into itself, and the subject as this process; a pure, *incessant* revolving within itself.

First. Formal and abstract conception of man's act of self-creation or self-objectification.

Hegel having posited man as equivalent to self-consciousness, the estranged object – the estranged essential reality of man – is nothing but *consciousness*, the thought of estrangement merely – estrangement's *abstract* and therefore empty and unreal expression, *negation*. The supersession of the alienation is therefore likewise nothing but an abstract, empty supersession of that empty abstraction – the *negation of the negation*. The rich, living, sensuous, concrete activity of self-objectification is therefore reduced to its mere abstraction, *absolute negativity* – an abstraction which is again fixed as such and considered as an independent activity – as sheer activity. Because this so-called negativity is nothing but the *abstract, empty* form of that real living act, its content can in consequence be merely a *formal* content produced by abstraction from all content. As a result therefore one gets general, abstract *forms of abstraction* pertaining to every content and on that account indifferent to, and, consequently, valid for, all content – the thought-forms or logical categories torn from *real* mind and from *real* nature. (We shall unfold the *logical* content of absolute negativity further on.)

| Hegel's positive achievement here, in his speculative logic, is that the *definite concepts*, the universal *fixed thought-forms* in their independence *vis-à-vis* nature and mind are a necessary result of the general estrangement of the human being and therefore also of a human thought, and that Hegel has therefore brought these together and presented them as moments of the abstraction-process. For example, superseded being is essence, superseded essence is concept, the concept superseded is ... absolute idea. But what, then, is the absolute idea? It supersedes its own self again, if it does not want to traverse once more from the beginning the whole act of abstraction, and to satisfy itself with being a totality of abstractions or the self-comprehending abstraction. But abstraction comprehending itself as abstraction knows itself to be nothing: it must abandon itself – abandon abstraction – and so it arrives at an entity which is its exact opposite – at *nature*. Thus, the entire logic is the demonstration that abstract thought is nothing in itself; that the absolute idea is nothing for itself; that only *nature* is something.

||XXXII| The absolute idea, the abstract idea, which

“considered with regard to its unity with itself is *intuiting* (*Logic* § 244), and which (*loc. cit.*) “in its own absolute truth *resolves* to let the moment of its particularity or of initial characterisation and other-being, the *immediate idea*, as its reflection, *go forth* freely from itself as nature” (*loc. cit.*),

this whole idea which behaves in such a strange and bizarre way, and which has given the Hegelians such terrible headaches, is from beginning to end nothing else but *abstraction* (i.e., the abstract thinker), which, made wise by experience and enlightened concerning its truth, resolves under various (false and themselves still abstract) conditions to *abandon itself* and to replace its self-absorption, nothingness, generality and indeterminateness by its other-being, the particular, and the determinate; resolves to let *nature*, which it held hidden in itself only as an abstraction, as a thought-entity, *go forth freely from itself*; that is to say, this idea resolves to forsake abstraction and to have a look at nature *free* of abstraction. The abstract idea, which without mediation becomes *intuiting*, is indeed nothing else but abstract thinking that gives itself up and resolves on *intuition*. This entire transition from logic to natural philosophy is nothing else but the transition – so difficult to effect for the abstract thinker, who therefore describes it in such an adventurous way – from *abstracting* to *intuiting*. The *mystical* feeling which drives the philosopher forward from abstract thinking to intuiting is *boredom* – the longing for content.

(The man estranged from himself is also the thinker estranged from his *essence* – that is, from the natural and human essence. His thoughts are therefore fixed mental forms dwelling outside nature and man. Hegel has locked up all these fixed mental forms together in his logic, interpreting each of them first as negation – that is, as an *alienation* of *human* thought – and then as negation of the negation – that is, as a superseding of this alienation, as a *real* expression of human thought. But as this still takes place within the confines of the estrangement, this negation of the negation is in part the restoring of these fixed forms in their estrangement; in part a stopping at the last act – the act of self-reference in alienation – as the true mode of being of these fixed mental forms; * –

[* (This means that what Hegel does is to put in place of these fixed abstractions the act of abstraction which revolves in its own circle. We must therefore give him the credit for having indicated the source of all these inappropriate concepts which originally appertained to particular philosophers; for having brought them together; and for having created the entire compass of abstraction as the object of criticism, instead of some specific abstraction.) (Why Hegel separates thought from the *subject* we shall see later; at this stage it is already clear, however, that when man is not, his characteristic expression cannot be human either, and so neither could thought be grasped as an expression of man as a human and natural subject endowed with eyes, ears, etc., and living in society, in the world, and in nature.) – Note by Marx]

– and in part, to the extent that this abstraction apprehends itself and experiences an infinite weariness with itself, there makes its appearance in Hegel, in the form of the resolution to recognise *nature* as the essential being and to go over to intuition, the abandonment of abstract thought – the abandonment of thought revolving solely within

the orbit of thought, of thought *sans* eyes, *sans* teeth, *sans* ears, *sans* everything.)

[XXXIII] But *nature* too, taken abstractly, for itself – nature fixed in isolation from man – is *nothing* for man. It goes without saying that the abstract thinker who has committed himself to intuiting, intuits nature abstractly. Just as nature lay enclosed in the thinker in the form of the absolute idea, in the form of a thought-entity – in a shape which was obscure and enigmatic even to him – so by letting it emerge from himself he has really let emerge only this *abstract nature*, only nature as a *thought-entity* – but now with the significance that it is the other-being of thought, that it is real, intuited nature – nature distinguished from abstract thought. Or, to talk in human language, the abstract thinker learns in his intuition of nature that the entities which he thought to create from nothing, from pure abstraction – the entities he believed he was producing in the divine dialectic as pure products of the labour of thought, for ever shuttling back and forth in itself and never looking outward into reality – are nothing else but *abstractions* from *characteristics of nature*. To him, therefore, the whole of nature merely repeats the logical abstractions in a sensuous, external form. He once more *resolves* nature into these abstractions. Thus, his intuition of nature is only the act of confirming his abstraction from the intuition of nature [~~Let us consider for a moment Hegel's characteristics of nature and the transition from nature to the mind. Nature has resulted as the idea in the form of the other-being. Since the id ...~~] – is only the conscious repetition by him of the process of creating his abstraction. Thus, for example, time equals negativity referred to itself (Hegel, *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*. p. 238). To the superseded becoming as being there corresponds, in natural form, superseded movement as matter. Light is *reflection-in-itself*, the *natural* form. Body as *moon* and *comet* is the *natural* form of the *antithesis* which according to logic is on the one side the *positive resting on itself* and on the other side the *negative* resting on itself. The earth is the *natural* form of the logical *ground*, as the negative unity of the antithesis, etc.

Nature as nature – that is to say, insofar as it is still sensuously distinguished from that secret sense hidden within it – nature isolated, distinguished from these abstractions is *nothing* – a *nothing proving itself to be nothing* – is *devoid of sense*, or has only the sense of being an externality which has to be annulled.

“In the finite-*teleological* position is to be found the correct premise that nature does not contain within itself the absolute purpose.” [§245].

Its purpose is the confirmation of abstraction.

“Nature has shown itself to be the idea in the *form of other-being*. Since the *idea* is in this form the negative of itself or *external to itself*, nature is not just relatively external *vis-à-vis* this idea, but *externality* constitutes the form in which it exists as nature.” [§ 247].

Externality here is not to be understood as the *world of sense* which *manifests itself* and is accessible to the light, to the man endowed with senses. It is to be taken here in the sense of alienation, of a mistake, a defect, which ought not to be. For what is true is still the idea. Nature is only the *form* of the idea's *other-being*. And since abstract thought is

the *essence*, that which is external to it is by its essence something merely *external*. The abstract thinker recognises at the same time that *sensuousness* – *externality* in contrast to thought shuttling back and forth *within itself* – is the essence of nature. But he expresses this contrast in such a way as to make this *externality of nature*, its *contrast* to thought, its *defect*, so that inasmuch as it is distinguished from abstraction, nature is something defective.

||XXXIV| An entity which is defective not merely for me or in my eyes but in itself – intrinsically – has something outside itself which it lacks. That is, its essence is different from it itself. Nature has therefore to supersede itself for the abstract thinker, for it is already posited by him as a potentially *superseded* being.

“For us, mind has *nature* for its *premise*, being nature’s *truth* and for that reason its *absolute prius*. In this truth nature *has vanished*, and mind has resulted as the idea arrived at being-for-itself, the *object* of which, as well as the *subject*, is the *concept*. This identity is *absolute negativity*, for whereas in nature the concept has its perfect external objectivity, this its alienation has been superseded, and in this alienation the concept has become identical with itself. But it is this identity therefore, only in being a return out of nature.” [§ 381].

“As the *abstract* idea, *revelation* is unmediated transition to, the *coming-to-be* of, nature; as the revelation of the mind, which is free, it is the *positing* of nature as the *mind’s* world – a positing which, being reflection, is at the same time, a *presupposing* of the world as independently existing nature. Revelation in conception is the creation of nature as the mind’s being, in which the mind procures the *affirmation* and the *truth* of its freedom.” “*The absolute is mind*. This is the highest definition of the absolute.” [§ 384.] ||XXXIV||

Karl Marx Capital Volume One

1873 Afterword to the Second German Edition

...

That the method employed in “Das Kapital” has been little understood, is shown by the various conceptions, contradictory one to another, that have been formed of it.

Thus the *Paris Revue Positiviste* reproaches me in that, on the one hand, I treat economics metaphysically, and on the other hand — imagine! — confine myself to the mere critical analysis of actual facts, instead of writing receipts [4] (Comtist ones?) for the cook-shops of the future. In answer to the reproach in re metaphysics, Professor Sieber has it:

“In so far as it deals with actual theory, the method of Marx is the deductive method of the whole English school, a school whose failings and virtues are common to the best theoretic economists.”

M. Block — “Les Théoriciens du Socialisme en Allemagne. Extrait du Journal des Economistes, Juillet et Août 1872” — makes the discovery that my method is analytic and says: “Par cet ouvrage M. Marx se classe parmi les esprits analytiques les plus éminents.” German reviews, of course, shriek out at “Hegelian sophistries.” The *European Messenger* of St. Petersburg in an article dealing exclusively with the method of “Das Kapital” (May number, 1872, pp. 427-436), finds my method of inquiry severely realistic, but my method of presentation, unfortunately, German-dialectical. It says:

“At first sight, if the judgment is based on the external form of the presentation of the subject, Marx is the most ideal of ideal philosophers, always in the German, i.e., the bad sense of the word. But in point of fact he is infinitely more realistic than all his forerunners in the work of economic criticism. He can in no sense be called an idealist.”

I cannot answer the writer better than by aid of a few extracts from his own criticism, which may interest some of my readers to whom the Russian original is inaccessible.

After a quotation from the preface to my “Criticism of Political Economy,” Berlin, 1859, pp. IV-VII, where I discuss the materialistic basis of my method, the writer goes on:

“The one thing which is of moment to Marx, is to find the law of the phenomena with whose investigation he is concerned; and not only is that law of moment to him, which governs these phenomena, in so far as they have a definite form and mutual connexion within a given historical period. Of still greater moment to him is the law of their variation, of their development, i.e., of their transition from one form into another, from one series of connexions into a different one. This law once discovered, he investigates in detail the effects in which it manifests itself in social life. Consequently, Marx only troubles himself about one thing: to show, by rigid scientific investigation, the necessity of successive determinate orders of social conditions, and to establish, as impartially as possible, the facts that serve him for fundamental starting-points. For this it is quite enough, if he proves, at the same time, both the necessity of the present order of things, and the necessity of another order into which the first must inevitably pass over; and this all the same, whether men believe or do not believe it, whether they are conscious or unconscious of it. Marx treats the social movement as a process of natural history, governed by laws not only independent of human will, consciousness and intelligence, but rather, on the contrary, determining that will, consciousness and intelligence. ... If in the history of civilisation the conscious element plays a part so subordinate, then it is self-evident that a critical inquiry whose subject-matter is civilisation, can, less than anything else, have for its basis any form of, or any result of, consciousness. That is to say, that not the idea, but the material phenomenon alone can serve as its starting-point. Such an inquiry will confine itself to the confrontation and the comparison of a fact, not with ideas, but with another fact. For this inquiry, the one thing of moment is, that both facts

be investigated as accurately as possible, and that they actually form, each with respect to the other, different momenta of an evolution; but most important of all is the rigid analysis of the series of successions, of the sequences and concatenations in which the different stages of such an evolution present themselves. But it will be said, the general laws of economic life are one and the same, no matter whether they are applied to the present or the past. This Marx directly denies. According to him, such abstract laws do not exist. On the contrary, in his opinion every historical period has laws of its own. ... As soon as society has outlived a given period of development, and is passing over from one given stage to another, it begins to be subject also to other laws. In a word, economic life offers us a phenomenon analogous to the history of evolution in other branches of biology. The old economists misunderstood the nature of economic laws when they likened them to the laws of physics and chemistry. A more thorough analysis of phenomena shows that social organisms differ among themselves as fundamentally as plants or animals. Nay, one and the same phenomenon falls under quite different laws in consequence of the different structure of those organisms as a whole, of the variations of their individual organs, of the different conditions in which those organs function, &c. Marx, e.g., denies that the law of population is the same at all times and in all places. He asserts, on the contrary, that every stage of development has its own law of population. ... With the varying degree of development of productive power, social conditions and the laws governing them vary too. Whilst Marx sets himself the task of following and explaining from this point of view the economic system established by the sway of capital, he is only formulating, in a strictly scientific manner, the aim that every accurate investigation into economic life must have. The scientific value of such an inquiry lies in the disclosing of the special laws that regulate the origin, existence, development, death of a given social organism and its replacement by another and higher one. And it is this value that, in point of fact, Marx's book has."

Whilst the writer pictures what he takes to be actually my method, in this striking and [as far as concerns my own application of it] generous way, what else is he picturing but the dialectic method?

Of course the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyse its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connexion. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described. If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is ideally reflected as in a mirror, then it may appear as if we had before us a mere a priori construction.

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.

The mystifying side of Hegelian dialectic I criticised nearly thirty years ago, at a time

when it was still the fashion. But just as I was working at the first volume of “Das Kapital,” it was the good pleasure of the peevish, arrogant, mediocre Επιδρομοι [Epigones – Büchner, Dühring and others] who now talk large in cultured Germany, to treat Hegel in same way as the brave Moses Mendelssohn in Lessing’s time treated Spinoza, i.e., as a “dead dog.” I therefore openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even here and there, in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with the modes of expression peculiar to him. The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.

In its mystified form, dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things. In its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.

The contradictions inherent in the movement of capitalist society impress themselves upon the practical bourgeois most strikingly in the changes of the periodic cycle, through which modern industry runs, and whose crowning point is the universal crisis. That crisis is once again approaching, although as yet but in its preliminary stage; and by the universality of its theatre and the intensity of its action it will drum dialectics even into the heads of the mushroom-upstarts of the new, holy Prusso-German empire.

Karl Marx □ *London* □ *January 24, 1873*

Marx To Ferdinand Lassalle In Berlin

Source: MECW Volume 40, p. 321; **First published:** abridged in *F Lassalle. Nachgelassene Briefe und Schriften*, Berlin, 1922.

London, 31 May 1858 9 Grafton Terrace, Maitland Park, Haverstock Hill

During this time of tribulation I carefully perused your *Heraclitus*. Your reconstruction of the system from the scattered fragments I regard as brilliant, nor was I any less impressed by the perspicacity of your polemic. In so far as I have any fault to find, it is largely formal. I believe your exposé could have been rather more condensed without in any way jeopardising the import. I should, moreover, have liked to find in the text proper some critical indications as to your attitude to Hegelian dialectic. This dialectic is, to be sure, the ultimate word in philosophy and hence there is all the more need to divest it of the mystical aura given it by Hegel. Finally, there are some details upon which I do not agree with you; e.g. your interpretation of Democritus' natural philosophy. These, however, are all minor points. I am all the more aware of the difficulties you had to surmount in this work in that **about** 18 years ago I myself attempted a similar work on a far easier philosopher, Epicurus — namely the portrayal of a complete system from fragments, a system which I am convinced, by the by, was — as with Heraclitus — only *implicitly* present in his work, not consciously as a system. Even in the case of philosophers who give systematic form to their work, Spinoza for instance, the true inner structure of the system is quite unlike the form in which it was consciously presented by him. It is incomprehensible to me, by the by, how you found the time in the midst of all your other work to acquire so much Greek philology...

...

All things being reduced to a logical category, and every movement, every act of production, to method, it follows naturally that every aggregate of products and production, of objects and of movement, can be reduced to a form of applied metaphysics. What Hegel has done for religion, law, etc., M. Proudhon seeks to do for political economy.

So what is this absolute method? The abstraction of movement. What is the abstraction of movement? Movement in abstract condition. What is movement in abstract condition? The purely logical formula of movement or the movement of pure reason. Wherein does the movement of pure reason consist? In posing itself, opposing itself, composing itself; in formulating itself as thesis, antithesis, synthesis; or, yet, in affirming itself, negating itself, and negating its negation.

How does reason manage to affirm itself, to pose itself in a definite category? That is the business of reason itself and of its apologists.

But once it has managed to pose itself as a thesis, this thesis, this thought, opposed to itself, splits up into two contradictory thoughts – the positive and the negative, the yes and no. The struggle between these two antagonistic elements comprised in the antithesis constitutes the dialectical movement. The yes becoming no, the no becoming yes, the yes

becoming both yes and no, the no becoming both no and yes, the contraries balance, neutralize, paralyze each other. The fusion of these two contradictory thoughts constitutes a new thought, which is the synthesis of them. This thought splits up once again into two contradictory thoughts, which in turn fuse into a new synthesis. Of this travail is born a group of thoughts. This group of thoughts follows the same dialectic movement as the simple category, and has a contradictory group as antithesis. Of these two groups of thoughts is born a new group of thoughts, which is the antithesis of them.

Just as from the dialectic movement of the simple categories is born the group, so from the dialectic movement of the groups is born the series, and from the dialectic movement of the series is born the entire system.

Apply this method to the categories of political economy and you have the logic and metaphysics of political economy, or, in other words, you have the economic categories that everybody knows, translated into a little-known language which makes them look as if they had never blossomed forth in an intellect of pure reason; so much do these categories seem to engender one another, to be linked up and intertwined with one another by the very working of the dialectic movement. The reader must not get alarmed at these metaphysics with all their scaffolding of categories, groups, series, and systems. M. Proudhon, in spite of all the trouble he has taken to scale the heights of the system of contradictions, has never been able to raise himself above the first two rungs of simple thesis and antithesis; and even these he has mounted only twice, and on one of these two occasions he fell over backwards.

Up to now we have expounded only the dialectics of Hegel. We shall see later how M. Proudhon has succeeded in reducing it to the meanest proportions. Thus, for Hegel, all that has happened and is still happening is only just what is happening in his own mind. Thus the philosophy of history is nothing but the history of philosophy, of his own philosophy. There is no longer a "history according to the order in time," there is only "the sequence of ideas in the understanding." He thinks he is constructing the world by the movement of thought, whereas he is merely reconstructing systematically and classifying by the absolute method of thoughts which are in the minds of all.

...

Let us for a moment consider M. Proudhon himself as a category. Let us examine his good and bad side, his advantages and his drawbacks.

If he has the advantage over Hegel of setting problems which he reserves the right of solving for the greater good of humanity, he has the drawback of being stricken with sterility when it is a question of engendering a new category by dialectical birth-throes. What constitutes dialectical movement is the coexistence of two contradictory sides, their conflict and their fusion into a new category. The very setting of the problem of eliminating the bad side cuts short the dialectic movement. It is not the category which is posed and opposed to itself, by its contradictory nature, it is M. Proudhon who gets excited, perplexed and frets and fumes between the two sides of the category.

...

The Grundrisse NOTEBOOK I October 1857

The Chapter on Money(Part II)

...

We see, then, how it is an inherent property of money to fulfill its purposes by simultaneously negating them; to achieve independence from commodities; to be a means which becomes an end; to realize the exchange value of commodities by separating them from it; to facilitate exchange by splitting it; to overcome the difficulties of the direct exchange of commodities by generalizing them; to make exchange independent of the producers in the same measure as the producers become dependent on exchange.

(It will be necessary later, before this question is dropped, to correct the idealist manner of the presentation, which makes it seem as if it were merely a matter of conceptual determinations and of the dialectic of these concepts. Above all in the case of the phrase: product (or activity) becomes commodity; commodity, exchange value; exchange value, money.) ...

Marx's Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy [Sixth Notebook]

[Lucretius On the Nature of Things]

...

This positive interpretation of the Absolute and its mythical-allegorical attire is the fountain-head, the heartbeat of the philosophy of transcendence, a transcendence which at the same time has an essential relation to immanence, just as it essentially breaks through the latter. Here we have, of course, a kinship of Platonic philosophy with every positive religion, and primarily with the Christian religion, which is the consummate philosophy of transcendence. Here we have therefore also one of the viewpoints from which a more profound relationship can be established between historical Christianity and the history of ardent philosophy. It is in connection with this positive interpretation of the Absolute that Plato saw in an individual as such, Socrates, the mirror, so to speak, the mythical expression of wisdom, and called him the philosopher of death and of love. That does not mean that Plato negated the historical Socrates; the positive interpretation of the Absolute is connected with the subjective character of Greek philosophy, with the definition of the

wise man.

Death and love are the myth of negative dialectic, for dialectic is the inner, simple light, the piercing eye of love, the inner soul which is not crushed by the body of material division, the inner abode of the spirit. Thus the myth of it is love, but dialectic is also the torrent which smashes the many and their bounds, which tears down the independent forms, sinking everything in the one sea of eternity. The myth of it is therefore death.

Thus dialectic is death, but at the same time the vehicle of vitality, the efflorescence in the gardens of the spirit, the foaming in the bubbling goblet of the tiny seeds out of which the flower of the single flame of the spirit bursts forth. Plotinus therefore calls it the means of the soul's απλωση. [simplification] of its direct union with God, an expression in which death and love and at the same time Aristotle's θεωρια, [theory] are united with Plato's dialectic. But as these determinations in Plato and Aristotle are, as it were, presupposed, not developed out of immanent necessity, their submergence in the empirical individual consciousness in Plotinus appears as a condition, the condition of *ecstasy*.

...

Karl Marx. Capital Volume One

Chapter Twenty-Four: Conversion of Surplus-Value into Capital

...

In so far as the surplus-value, of which the additional capital, No. 1, consists, is the result of the purchase of labour-power with part of the original capital, a purchase that conformed to the laws of the exchange of commodities, and that, from a legal standpoint, presupposes nothing beyond the free disposal, on the part of the labourer, of his own capacities, and on the part of the owner of money or commodities, of the values that belong to him; in so far as the additional capital, No. 2, &c., is the mere result of No. 1, and, therefore, a consequence of the above conditions; in so far as each single transaction invariably conforms to the laws of the exchange of commodities, the capitalist buying labour-power, the labourer selling it, and we will assume at its real value; in so far as all this is true, it is evident that the laws of appropriation or of private property, laws that are based on the production and circulation of commodities, become by their own inner and inexorable dialectic changed into their very opposite. The exchange of equivalents, the original operation with which we started, has now become turned round in such a way that there is only an apparent exchange. This is owing to the fact, first, that the capital which is exchanged for labour-power is itself but a portion of the product of others' labour appropriated without an equivalent; and, secondly, that this capital must not only be replaced by its producer, but replaced together with an added surplus. The relation of exchange subsisting between capitalist and labourer becomes a mere semblance appertaining to the process of circulation, a mere form, foreign to the real nature of the

transaction, and only mystifying it. The ever repeated purchase and sale of labour-power is now the mere form; what really takes place is this — the capitalist again and again appropriates, without equivalent, a portion of the previously materialised labour of others, and exchanges it for a greater quantity of living labour. At first the rights of property seemed to us to be based on a man's own labour. At least, some such assumption was necessary since only commodity-owners with equal rights confronted each other, and the sole means by which a man could become possessed of the commodities of others, was by alienating his own commodities; and these could be replaced by labour alone. Now, however, property turns out to be the right, on the part of the capitalist, to appropriate the unpaid labour of others or its product, and to be the impossibility, on the part of the labourer, of appropriating his own product. The separation of property from labour has become the necessary consequence of a law that apparently originated in their identity. [6]

...

6. The property of the capitalist in the product of the labour of others “is a strict consequence of the law of appropriation, the fundamental principle of which was, on the contrary, the exclusive title of every labourer to the product of his own labour.” (Cherbuliez, “Richesse ou Pauvreté,” Paris, 1841, p. 58, where, however, the dialectical reversal is not properly developed.)

...

28. (Senior, “Principes fondamentaux de l’Écon. Pol.” trad. Arrivabene. Paris, 1836, p. 308.) This was rather too much for the adherents of the old classical school. “Mr. Senior has substituted for it” (the expression, labour and profit) “the expression labour and Abstinence. He who converts his revenue abstains from the enjoyment which its expenditure would afford him. It is not the capital, but the use of the capital productively, which is the cause of profits.” (John Cazenove, l. c., p. 130, Note.) John St. Mill, on the contrary, accepts on the one hand Ricardo's theory of profit, and annexes on the other hand Senior's “remuneration of abstinence.” He is as much at home in absurd contradictions, as he feels at sea in the Hegelian contradiction, the source of all dialectic. It has never occurred to the vulgar economist to make the simple reflexion, that every human action may be viewed, as “abstinence” from its opposite. Eating is abstinence from fasting, walking, abstinence from standing still, working, abstinence from idling, idling, abstinence from working, &c. These gentlemen would do well, to ponder, once in a while, over Spinoza's: “Determinatio est Negatio.”

...

Marx-Engels Correspondence 1868
Marx To Engels In Manchester

Source: *MECW*, Volume 42, p. 519; **First published:** abridged in *Der Briefwechsel zwischen F. Engels und K. Marx* Stuttgart, 1913 and in full in *MEGA*, Berlin, 1931.

[London,] 11 January 1868

...

At the museum, where I did nothing but leaf through catalogues, I also noted that *Dühring* is a great philosopher. For he has written a *Natürliche Dialektik* against Hegel's 'un-natural' one. *Hinc inae lacrimae*. [Hence these tears!] The gentlemen in Germany (with the exception of theological reactionaries) believe Hegel's dialectic to be a 'dead dog'. Feuerbach has much on his conscience in this respect.

...

The Grundrisse
NOTEBOOK V 22 January 1858 - Beginning of February 1858,
continued

**Exchange of labour for labour rests on the worker's
propertylessness**

<But one more remark on the topic above: The exchange of equivalents, which seems to presuppose ownership of the products of one's own labour -- hence seems to posit as identical: *appropriation through labour*, the real economic process of making something one's own [*Zueigen-Machen*], and *ownership of objectified labour*; what appeared previously as a real process is here recognized as a legal relation, i.e. as a general condition of production, and therefore recognized by law, posited as an expression of the general will -- turns into, reveals itself through a necessary dialectic as absolute divorce of labour and property, and appropriation of alien labour without exchange, without equivalent. Production based on exchange value, on whose surface this free and equal exchange of equivalents proceeds, is at its base the exchange of *objectified labour* as exchange value for living labour as use value, or, to express this in another way, the relating of labour to its objective conditions -- and hence to the objectivity created by

itself -- as alien property: *alienation* [Entäusserung] of labour. At the same time, the condition of exchange value is its measurement by labour time, and hence living labour -- not its value -- as measure of values. The notion that production and hence society depended in all states of production on the *exchange of mere labour for labour* is a delusion. In the various forms in which labour relates to the conditions of production as its own property, the reproduction of the worker is by no means posited through *mere labour*, for his property relation is not the result but the presupposition of his labour. In landed property this is clear; it must also become clear in the guild system that the particular kind of property which labour creates does not rest on labour alone or on the exchange of labour, but on an objective connection between the worker and a community and conditions which are there before him, which he takes as his basis. These too are products of labour, of the labour of world history; of the labour of the community -- of its historic development, which does not proceed from the labour of individuals nor from the exchange of their labours. Therefore, mere labour is also not the presupposition of realization [Verwertung]. A situation in which labour is merely exchanged for labour -- whether in the direct, living form, or in the form of the product -- presupposes the separation of labour from its original intertwinement with its objective conditions, which is why it appears as mere labour on one side, while on the other side its product, as objectified labour, has an entirely independent existence as value opposite it. *The exchange of labour for labour -- seemingly the condition of the worker's property -- rests on the foundation of the worker's propertylessness.*>

Marx-Engels Correspondence 1868
Marx To Ludwig Kugelmann In Hanover

Source: *MECW*, Volume 43, p. 3; **First published:** abridged in *Die Neue Zeit*, Stuttgart, 1901-1902 and in full in Marx and Engels, *Works*, Second Russian Edition, Moscow, 1964.

London, 6 April 1868

...

Liebknicht's paper is much too narrow-mindedly 'southern'. (He has not enough dialectic to strike out on two sides at once.)

...

Works of Karl Marx 1857-58
Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations

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The Asiatic form necessarily survives the longest and most stubbornly. This is due to the fundamental principle on which it is based — that is, that the individual does not become independent of the community; that the circle of production is self-sustaining, unity of agriculture and craft manufacture, etc. If the individual changes his relation to the community, he modifies and undermines both the community and its economic premise; conversely, the modification of this economic premise — produced by its own dialectic, pauperization, etc. Note especially the influence of warfare and conquest. While, e.g., in Rome this is an essential part of the economic condition of the community itself, it breaks the real bond on which the community rests.

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The Grundrisse
NOTEBOOK III 29 November - c. mid-December 1857

The Chapter on Capital (continuation)

(Labour power as capital!)—*Wages not productive*

The exchange between capital and labour belongs within simple circulation, does not enrich the worker.—Separation of labour and property the precondition of this exchange.— Labour as object absolute poverty, labour as subject general possibility of wealth.—Labour without particular specificity confronts capital

It may seem peculiar, in this relation between labour and capital, and already in this first relation of exchange between the two, that the worker here buys the exchange value and the capitalist the use value, in that labour confronts capital not as *a* use value, but as *the* use value pure and simple, but that the capitalist should obtain wealth, and the worker merely a use value which ends with consumption. (In so far as this concerns the capitalist, to be developed only with the second process.) This appears as a dialectic

which produces precisely the opposite of what was to be expected. However, regarded more precisely, it becomes clear that the worker who exchanges his commodity goes through the form C-M-M-C in the exchange process. If the point of departure in circulation is the commodity, use value, as the principle of exchange, then we necessarily arrive back at the commodity, since money appears only as coin and, as medium of exchange, is only a vanishing mediation; while the commodity as such, after having described its circle, is consumed as the direct object of need. On the other hand, capital represents M-C-C-M, the antithetical moment.

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To the extent that we are considering it here, as a relation distinct from that of value and money, capital is *capital in general*, i.e. the incarnation of the qualities which distinguish value as capital from value as pure value or as money. Value, money, circulation etc., prices etc. are presupposed, as is labour etc. But we are still concerned neither with a *particular* form of capital, nor with an *individual* capital as distinct from other individual capitals etc. We are present at the process of its becoming. This dialectical process of its becoming is only the ideal expression of the real movement through which capital comes into being. The later relations are to be regarded as developments coming out of this germ. But it is necessary to establish the specific form in which it is posited at a *certain* point. Otherwise confusion arises.

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<It is important to note that wealth as such, i.e. bourgeois wealth, is always expressed to the highest power as exchange value, where it is posited as *mediator*, as the mediation of the extremes of exchange value and use value themselves. This intermediary situation [*Mitte*] always appears as the *economic* relation in its completeness, because it comprises the opposed poles, and ultimately always appears as a one-sidedly higher power *vis-à-vis* the extremes themselves; because the movement, or the relation, which *originally* appears as mediatory between the extremes necessarily develops dialectically to where it appears as mediation with itself, as the subject [*Subjekt*] for whom the extremes are merely its moments, whose autonomous presupposition it suspends in order to posit itself, through their suspension, as that which alone is autonomous. Thus, in the religious sphere, Christ, the mediator between God and humanity—a mere instrument of circulation between the two—becomes their unity, God-man, and, as such, becomes more important than God; the saints more important than Christ; the popes more important than the saints. Where it is posited as middle link, exchange value is always the total economic expression, itself one-sided against the extremes; e.g. money in simple circulation; capital itself as mediator between production and circulation. Within capital itself, one form of it in turn takes up the position of use value against the other as exchange value. Thus e.g. does industrial capital appear as producer as against the merchant, who appears as circulation. Thus the former represents the material [*stofflich*], the latter the formal side, i.e. wealth as wealth. At the same time, mercantile capital is itself in turn the mediator between production (industrial capital) and circulation (the consuming public) or between exchange value and use value, where both sides are posited alternately, production as

money and circulation as use value (consuming public) or the former as use value (product) and the latter as exchange value (money). Similarly within commerce itself: the wholesaler as mediator between manufacturer and retailer, or between manufacturer and agriculturalist, or between different manufacturers; he is the same mediator at a higher level. And in turn, in the same way, the commodity brokers as against the wholesalers. Then the banker as against the industrialists and merchants; the joint-stock company as against simple production; the financier as mediator between the state and bourgeois society, on the highest level. *Wealth as such* presents itself more distinctly and broadly the further it is removed from direct production and is itself mediated between poles, each of which, considered for itself, is already posited as economic form. Money becomes an end rather than a means; and the higher form of mediation, as capital, everywhere posits the lower as itself, in turn, labour, as merely a source of surplus value. For example, the bill-broker, banker etc. as against the manufacturers and farmers, which are posited in relation to him in the role of labour (of use value); while he posits himself toward them as capital, extraction of surplus value; the wildest form of this, the financier.>

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The Grundrisse

NOTEBOOK IV mid-December 1857- 22 January 1858, continued

But now let us think of this surplus capital as having been thrown back into the production process, as realizing its surplus value anew in exchange, and as appearing anew as new surplus capital at the beginning of a third production process. This, *surplus capital II*, has different presuppositions from surplus capital I. The presupposition of surplus capital I was the existence of values belonging to the capitalist and thrown by him into circulation, or, more exactly, into the exchange with living labour capacity. The presupposition of surplus capital II is nothing more than the existence of surplus capital I; i.e. in other words, the presupposition that the capitalist has already appropriated alien labour without exchange. This puts him into a position where he is able to begin the process again and again. True, in order to create surplus capital II, he had to exchange a part of the value of surplus capital I in the form of means of subsistence for living labour capacity, but the values he gave in that exchange were not values which he originally put into circulation out of his own funds; they were, rather, objectified alien labour which he appropriated without giving any equivalent whatever, and which he now re-exchanges for alien living labour; in the same way, moreover, as the material etc. in which this new labour realizes itself and in which it creates surplus value have come into his hands without exchange, by mere appropriation. *The previous appropriation of alien labour now appears as the simple precondition for the new appropriation of alien labour*; or, his ownership of alien labour in objective (material) form, in the form of existing values, appears as the condition of his ability to appropriate new alien *living* labour capacity, hence surplus labour, labour without equivalent. The fact that he has previously confronted living labour as capital appears as the only condition required in order that he

may not only maintain himself as capital, but also, as a growing capital, increasingly *appropriate* alien labour without equivalent; or, that he may extend his power, his existence as capital opposite living labour capacity, and on the other side constantly posit living labour capacity anew in its subjective, insubstantial penury as living labour capacity. Property -- previous, or objectified, alien labour -- appears as the only condition for further appropriation of present or living alien labour. In so far as surplus capital I was created by means of a simple exchange between objectified labour and living labour capacity -- an exchange entirely based on the laws of the exchange of equivalents as measured by the quantity of labour or labour time contained in them -- and *in so far as* the legal expression of this exchange presupposed nothing other than everyone's right of property over his own products, and of free disposition over them -- but in so far as the relation of surplus capital II to I is therefore a consequence of this first relation -- we see that, by a peculiar logic, the right of property undergoes a dialectical inversion [*dialektischer Umschlag*], so that on the side of capital it becomes the right to an alien product, or the right of property over alien labour, the right to appropriate alien labour without an equivalent, and, on the side of labour capacity, it becomes the duty to relate to one's own labour or to one's own product as to *alien property*. The right of property is inverted, to become, on the one side, the right to appropriate alien labour, and, on the other, the duty of respecting the product of one's own labour, and one's own labour itself, as values belonging to others. The exchange of equivalents, however, which appeared as the original operation, an operation to which the right of property gave legal expression, has become turned round in such a way that the exchange by one side is now only illusory, since the part of capital which is exchanged for living labour capacity, firstly, is itself *alien labour*, appropriated without equivalent, and, secondly, *has to be replaced with a surplus by living labour capacity*, is thus in fact not consigned away, but merely changed from one form into another. The relation of exchange has thus dropped away entirely, or is a *mere semblance*. Furthermore, the right of property originally appeared to be based on one's own labour. Property now appears as the right to alien labour, and as 'the impossibility of labour appropriating its own product. The complete separation between property, and, even more so, wealth, and labour, now appears as a consequence of the law which began with their identity.

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The main point here is this: In all these forms -- in which landed property and agriculture form the basis of the economic order, and where the economic aim is hence the production of use values, i.e. the *reproduction of the individual* within the specific relation to the commune in which he is its basis -- there is to be found: (1) Appropriation not through labour, but presupposed to labour; appropriation of the natural conditions of labour, of the *earth* as the original instrument of labour as well as its workshop and repository of raw materials. The individual relates simply to the objective conditions of labour as being his; [relates] to them as the inorganic nature of his subjectivity, in which the latter realizes itself; the chief objective condition of labour does not itself appear as a *product* of labour, but is already there as *nature*; on one side the living individual, on the other the earth, as the objective condition of his reproduction; (2) but this *relation* to land and soil, to the earth, as the property of the labouring individual -- who thus appears from

the outset not merely as labouring individual, in this abstraction, but who has an *objective mode of existence* in his ownership of the land, an existence *presupposed* to his activity, and not merely as a result of it, a presupposition of his activity just like his skin, his sense organs, which of course he also reproduces and develops etc. in the life process, but which are nevertheless presuppositions of this process of his reproduction -- is instantly mediated by the naturally arisen, spontaneous, more or less historically developed and modified presence of the individual as *member of a commune* -- his naturally arisen presence as member of a tribe etc. An isolated individual could no more have property in land and soil than he could speak. He could, of course, live off it as substance, as do the animals. The relation to the earth as property is always mediated through the occupation of the land and soil, peacefully or violently, by the tribe, the commune, in some more or less naturally arisen or already historically developed form. The individual can never appear here in the dot-like isolation [*Punktualität*] in which he appears as mere free worker. If the objective conditions of his labour are presupposed as belonging to him, then he himself is subjectively presupposed as member of a commune, through which his relation to land and soil is mediated. His relation to the objective conditions of labour is mediated through his presence as member of the commune; at the same time, the real presence of the commune is determined by the specific form of the individual's property in the objective conditions of labour. Whether this property mediated by commune-membership appears as *communal property*, where the individual is merely the possessor and there is no private property in land and soil -- or whether property appears in the double form of state and private property alongside one another, but so that the latter appears as posited by the former, so that only the citizen is and must be a private proprietor, while his property as citizen has a separate, particular existence at the same time -- or whether, finally, the communal property appears only as a complement to individual property, with the latter as the base, while the commune has no existence for-itself except in the *assembly* of the commune members, their coming-together for common purposes -- these different forms of the commune or tribe members' relation to the tribe's land and soil -- to the earth where it has settled -- depend partly on the natural inclinations of the tribe, and partly on the economic conditions in which it relates as proprietor to the land and soil in reality, i.e. in which it appropriates its fruits through labour, and the latter will itself depend on climate, physical make-up of the land and soil, the physically determined mode of its exploitation, the relation with hostile tribes or neighbor tribes, and the modifications which migrations, historic experiences etc. introduce. The survival of the commune as such in the old mode requires the reproduction of its members in the presupposed objective conditions. Production itself, the advance of population (this too belongs with production), necessarily suspends these conditions little by little; destroys them instead of reproducing them etc., and, with that, the communal system declines and falls, together with the property relations on which it was based. The Asiatic form necessarily hangs on most tenaciously and for the longest time. This is due to its presupposition that the individual does not become independent *vis-à-vis* the commune; that there is a self-sustaining circle of production, unity of agriculture and manufactures, etc. If the individual changes his relation to the commune, he thereby changes and acts destructively upon the commune; as on its economic presupposition; on the other side, the alteration of this economic presupposition brought about by its own dialectic -- impoverishment etc. In particular, the influence of warfare

and of conquest, which e.g. in Rome belonged to the essential conditions of the commune itself, suspends the real bond on which it rests. In all these forms, the *reproduction of presupposed* relations -- more or less naturally arisen or historic as well, but become traditional -- of the individual to his commune, together with a *specific, objective* existence, *predetermined* for the individual, of his relations both to the conditions of labour and to his co-workers, fellow tribesmen etc. -- are the foundation of development, which is therefore from the outset *restricted*, but which signifies decay, decline and fall once this barrier is suspended. Thus among the Romans, the development of slavery, the concentration of land possession, exchange, the money system, conquest etc., although all these elements up to a certain point seemed compatible with the foundation, and in part appeared merely as innocent extensions of it, partly grew out of it as mere abuses. Great developments can take place here within a specific sphere. The individuals may appear great. But there can be no conception here of a free and full development either of the individual or of the society, since such development stands in contradiction to the original relation.

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With regard to the development of the *form of value*, I have both followed and *not* followed your advice, thus striking a dialectical attitude in this matter, too. That is to say, 1. I have written an *appendix* in which I set out *the same subject* again as simply and as much in the manner of a school text-book as possible, and 2. I have divided each successive proposition into paras. etc., *each with its own heading*, as you advised. In the *Preface* I then tell the '*non-dialectical*' reader to skip page x-y and instead read the appendix. It is not only the philistines that I have in mind here, but young people, etc., who are thirsting for knowledge. Anyway, the issue is crucial for the whole book. The economists have hitherto overlooked the very simple fact that the equation *20 yards of linen = 1 coat* is but the primitive form of *20 yards of linen = £2*, and thus that the *simplest form of a commodity*, in which its value is not yet expressed in its relation to all other commodities but only as something *differentiated* from its own natural form, embodies the *whole secret of the money form* and thereby, *in nuce* [in embryo], of all bourgeois forms of the product of labour. In my first presentation [*Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*] (Duncker), I avoided the difficulty of the development by not actually analysing the *way value is expressed* until it appears as its developed form, as expressed in money.

You are quite right about Hofmann. Incidentally, you will see from the conclusion to my Chapter III, where I outline the transformation of the master of a trade into a capitalist — as a result of purely *quantitative* changes — that *in the text* there I quote Hegel's discovery of the *law of the transformation of a merely quantitative change into a qualitative one* as being attested by history and natural science alike [See [Capital, Chapter XI](#)]. In the *note* to the text (I was as it happened attending Hofmann's lectures at that time) I mention the *molecular theory*, but not Hofmann, who has discovered *nothing* in the matter except contributing general direction; instead I do mention Laurent, Gerhardt and Wurtz, the latter being *the real man*. Your letter struck a faint chord in my memory, and I therefore looked up my manuscript.

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Marx-Engels Correspondence 1870
Marx To Ludwig Kugelmann In Hanover

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And what this Lange has to say about the Hegelian method and my application of the same is simply childish. First, he understands *rien* [nothing] about Hegel's method and, therefore, second, still less about my critical manner of applying it. In one respect he reminds me of Moses Mendelssohn. That prototype of a windbag once wrote to Lessing asking how he could possibly take 'that dead dog Spinoza' *au sérieux*! In the same way, Mr Lange expresses surprise that Engels, I, etc., take *au sérieux* the dead dog Hegel, after Büchner, Lange, Dr Dühring, Fechner, etc., had long agreed that they — **poor dear** — had long since buried him. Lange is naïve enough to say that I 'move with rare freedom' in empirical matter. He has not the slightest idea that this 'free movement in matter' is nothing but a paraphrase for the *method* of dealing with matter — that is, the *dialectical method*.

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Marx-Engels Correspondence 1861
Marx To Engels In Manchester

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I agree with your **strictures** on Izzy (who writes from Florence to say he 'has had a very interesting meeting' with Garibaldi, etc.). The 2nd volume is more interesting, if only by reason of the Latin quotations. Ideologism permeates everything, and the dialectical method is *wrongly* applied. Hegel never described as dialectics the subsumption of vast numbers of **cases under a general principle**.

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Marx-Engels Correspondence 1858
Marx To Engels In Manchester

Source: MECW Volume 40, p. 296; **First published:** in *Der Briefwechsel zwischen F. Engels und K. Marx*, Stuttgart, 1913.

[London,] 2 April 1858

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The following is a **short outline of the first part**. The whole thing is to be divided into 6 books: 1. On Capital. 2. Landed Property. 3. Wage Labour. 4. State. 5. International Trade. 6. World Market.

1. *Capital* falls into 4 sections. a) Capital *en général* (*This is the substance of the first instalment*) b) *Competition* or the interaction of many capitals. c) *Credit* where capital, as against individual capitals, is shown to be a universal element. d) *Share capital* as the most perfected form (turning into communism) together with all its contradictions. The transition from capital to landed property is also historical, since landed property in its modern form is a product of the action of capital on feudal, etc., landed property. In the same way, the transition of landed property to wage labour is not only dialectical but historical, since the last product of modern landed property is the general introduction of wage labour, which then appears as the basis of the whole business.

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Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Marx 1852

Notes

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65. Hegel expressed this idea in his work *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (its first edition came out in Berlin in 1837). In the third part of this work, at the end of Section 2, entitled “Vom der zweiten punischen Krieg bis zum Kaiserthum,” Hegel wrote in particular that “A coup d’état is sanctioned as it were in the opinion of people if it is repeated. Thus, Napoleon was defeated twice and twice the Bourbons were driven out. Through repetition, what at the beginning seemed to be merely accidental and possible becomes real and established.” Hegel also repeatedly expressed the idea that in the process of dialectical development there is bound to be a transition from the stage of formation and efflorescence to that of disintegration and ruin (see, in particular, G.W.F.Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Th. 3, Abt. 3, §347). Developing this thought and Hegel’s idea about the recurrence of historical phenomena Marx wrote in his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right. Introduction* (end of 1843-beginning of 1844): “History is thorough and goes through many phases when carrying an old form to the grave. The last phase of a world-historical form is its *comedy*.” A similar interpretation of Hegel’s idea, albeit in the form of a vague hint, can be found in Marx’s article “The Deeds of the Hohenzollern Dynasty” written in 1849.

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B. Bauer's Pamphlets on the Collision with Russia

Source: MECW, Volume 15, p. 181; **Written:** by Marx in January 1857; **First published:** in Russian, in *Letopisi marksizma*, 1928.

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“The drama being performed by Europe is *truly* **and** *in every respect* a constitutional one!”

Truly and in every respect! Does the “in every respect” add anything new to the “truly”? It vitiates and trivialises. That is all. But the floridity of the style, the “truly and in every respect”, simply betray the same perplexed ineptitude as previously the unfortunate “*as late as*”. In the proposition advanced in April, firstly, the “passive resistance” of the national assemblies of 1848 and after was erroneously equated with “constitutional practice” and, secondly, the clash in the East was transformed into a “constitutional” drama in which, because of their “passive resistance”, the western powers are compared with the national assemblies of 1848 and after and Russia with the coup d'état-perpetrating governments. This was not, in fact, a constitutional drama, since constitutionalism was confined solely to the national assemblies, whereas the governments were concerned solely with overthrowing constitutions. Now, however, when Russia has received a drubbing, her armed aggression having been repelled by force of arms, and has adopted a “parliamentary” tack, now the drama, formerly constitutional only in an “unreal” sense, has become “truly” and “in every respect constitutional”. But the moment the government becomes “constitutional”, as in England or Belgium or the France of Louis Philippe, it ceases to resemble the national assemblies of 1848 and after or the governments opposing them. Nor is that all. While Russia has begun to dally with “parliamentarianism” and hence, according to B.B., to assume the role of a “constitutional government”, the western powers have, for their part, ceased to offer “passive resistance” and turned to active hostility, to an invasion. If, prior to this, the term “constitutional” was [not] applicable to Russia, it is no longer applicable to the western powers. And this Criticism describes as the “full realisation” of its proposition advanced in April! Nevertheless, there still remains the matter of the “realisation” of the term “constitutional” contained in the proposition advanced in April. Criticism’s predictions, it is clear, are as ambiguous as those of the ancient oracles. If its propositions seem to have been controverted by events, then it merely seems so. As soon as the opposite happens, it transpires that, in point of fact, the original critical dictum meant the “opposite” of what it said and that events have simply revealed its dialectical nature. Thanks to this sort of dialectics which proves a prognostication to have been fulfilled by the occurrence of its opposite, Criticism’s prophecies are, in all circumstances, proof against attack. Urquhart adopts a different method. If his prophecies come to pass, their truth is confirmed by their having come to pass. If they do not come to pass, this is because the mere statement of what was bound to happen has prevented their fulfilment. In the first case the theoretical truth, and in the second the practical purpose, of the

prediction has been fulfilled.

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Second Draft of Critique of Political Economy. 1858 [Chapter Two, Money]

Source: *MECW* Volume 29, pp. 430-507. **Written:** Marx August-October 1858.

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The condition for the transformation of money into capital is that the *owner* of the money (-air exchange money for the alien labour capacity as a commodity. In other words, that within circulation the labour capacity is offered as a commodity for sale, since within the simple circulation the exchangers confront each other only as buyers and sellers. The condition is, therefore, that the worker offers for sale his labour capacity as a to-be-used commodity and, so, is a free worker. The condition is that the worker, first, disposes of his labour capacity as a free proprietor, and treats it as a commodity; to do so he must be a free proprietor of his labour capacity. And second, that he must exchange his labour no longer in the form of another commodity, of objectified labour, but so that the only commodity he has to offer, to sell, is his own living labour capacity contained in his living corporeality, and that, consequently, the conditions for the objectification of his labour, the reified conditions of his labour exist on the other side of circulation as alien property, as commodities located beyond his own self.

That the possessor of money-or money, since the former is for its so far only its personification in the economic process *itself-finds the* labour capacity on the market, within the limits of circulation, as a commodity,, this premiss from which we here proceed and from which the bourgeois society proceeds in its production process is evidently the result of long historical development, the outcome of many economic upheavals, and implies the decline of other modes of production (other social relationships of production) and a determined development of the productive forces of social labour. The determined past historical process contained in that premiss will be formulated even more determinately in the subsequent examination of this relationship. But this historical stage in the development of economic production-whose product itself is already *the free worker* – is the premiss for the emergence and even more so for the

being of capital as such. Its existence is the result of a lengthy historical process in the economic formation of the society.

It is made quite definite at this point that the dialectical form of presentation is right only when it knows its own limits. The examination of the simple circulation shows us the general concept of capital, because within the bourgeois mode of production the simple circulation itself exists only as preposited by capital and as prepositing it. The exposition of the general concept of capital does not make it an incarnation of some eternal idea, but shows how in actual reality, merely as a *necessary* form, it has yet [B"-19] to flow into the labour creating exchange value, into production resting on exchange value.

It is essentially important to establish the point that the relationship, which here takes place as a simple relationship of circulation (initially still entirely belonging to it and going beyond the limits of the simple circulation only, through the specific use-value of the exchanged commodity), is only a relationship of money and commodity, equivalents in the form of both opposite poles as they appear in the simple circulation, within circulation, and that the exchange between capital and labour, once it itself exists as the simple relationship of circulation, is not the exchange between money and labour, but the exchange between *money* and *living labour capacity*.

As use value, the labour capacity is realised only in the activity of labour itself, but in much the same way as with a bottle of wine which is bought and whose use value is realised only in the drinking of the wine. Labour itself falls as little within the simple circulation process as does the drinking. The wine as a capacity, *δυναμει*, is something drinkable, and the buying of the wine is appropriation of the drinkable. So is the buying of the labour capacity the appropriation of the ability to dispose over the labour.

Since the labour capacity exists in the vitality of the subject itself and manifests itself only as his own expression of life, the buying of the labour capacity, the appropriation of the title to its use naturally places the buyer and the seller in the act of its use in another relationship to each other than that in the buying of objectified labour existing as an object outside the producer. This does not affect the simple relationship of exchange. It is only the specific nature of the use value bought with the money—namely, that its consumption, the consumption of the labour capacity, is production, labour time which objectifies, consumption which posits exchange value; that its real being as use value is creation of exchange value—that makes the exchange between money and labour the specific exchange $M—C—M$ in which the exchange value itself is posited as the aim of the exchange, and *the bought use value is immediate use value for the exchange value, i.e. is value-positing use value*.

It does not matter whether money is considered here as simple means of circulation (means of purchase) or as means of payment. In so far as someone selling me, for instance, the 12-hour use value of his labour capacity, his labour capacity for 12 hours, will in fact sell it to me only when, if I so insist, he has worked off 12 hours, i.e. has delivered his labour capacity sold for 12 hours at the end of the 12 hours, it is in the

nature of this relationship that money here appears as means of payment; the buying and selling are not realised at once, simultaneously, by both sides. What is here important is only *that the means of payment is the universal means of payment, money*, and that for this reason the worker does not enter with the buyer-as a result of some particular primitive way of payment-into other relationships than those of circulation. He transforms his labour capacity immediately into the universal equivalent, and as its possessor maintains the same relationship- within the scope of its value magnitude-the same relationship in the general circulation as any other; similarly, the aim of his sale is universal wealth, wealth in its universal social form and as a possibility of all gratification.

[At this point, the manuscript breaks off. Written on the following page is only this title: – *Productive and Unproductive Labour*. – The final pages of this notebook are taken up by the subsequently written *References to My Own Notebooks*. – Ed.]

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Grundrisse

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The opponents of the political economists—whether inside or outside its realm—who accuse them of barbarically tearing apart things which belong together, stand either on the same ground as they, or beneath them. Nothing is more common than the reproach that the political economists view production too much as an end in itself, that distribution is just as important. This accusation is based precisely on the economic notion that the spheres of distribution and of production are independent, autonomous neighbours. Or that these moments were not grasped in their unity. As if this rupture had made its way not from reality into the textbooks, but rather from the textbooks into reality, and as if the task were the dialectic balancing of concepts, and not the grasping of real relations!

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To the extent that we are considering it here, as a relation distinct from that of value and money, capital is *capital in general*, i.e. the incarnation of the qualities which distinguish value as capital from value as pure value or as money. Value, money, circulation etc., prices etc. are presupposed, as is labour etc. But we are still concerned neither with a *particular* form of capital, nor with an *individual* capital as distinct from other individual capitals etc. We are present at the process of its becoming. This dialectical process of its becoming is only the ideal expression of the real movement through which capital comes into being. The later relations are to be regarded as developments coming out of this germ. But it is necessary to establish the specific form in which it is posited at a *certain* point. Otherwise confusion arises.

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exchange value (money). Similarly within commerce itself: the wholesaler as mediator between manufacturer and retailer, or between manufacturer and agriculturalist, or between different manufacturers; he is the same mediator at a higher level. And in turn, in the same way, the commodity brokers as against the wholesalers. Then the banker as against the industrialists and merchants; the joint-stock company as against simple production; the financier as mediator between the state and bourgeois society, on the highest level. *Wealth as such* presents itself more distinctly and broadly the further it is removed from direct production and is itself mediated between poles, each of which, considered for itself, is already posited as economic form. Money becomes an end rather than a means; and the higher form of mediation, as capital, everywhere posits the lower as itself, in turn, labour, as merely a source of surplus value. For example, the bill-broker, banker etc. as against the manufacturers and farmers, which are posited in relation to him in the role of labour (of use value); while he posits himself toward them as capital, extraction of surplus value; the wildest form of this, the financier.>

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Introduction to Critique of Political Economy

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(3) The Method of Political Economy

When we consider a given country politico-economically, we begin with its population, its distribution among classes, town, country, the coast, the different branches of production, export and import, annual production and consumption, commodity prices etc.

It seems to be correct to begin with the real and the concrete, with the real precondition, thus to begin, in economics, with e.g. the population, which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production. However, on closer examination this proves false. The population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest. E.g. wage labour, capital, etc. These latter in turn presuppose exchange, division of labour, prices, etc. For example, capital is nothing without wage labour, without value, money, price etc. Thus, if I were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception [*Vorstellung*] of the whole, and I would then, by means of further determination, move analytically towards ever more simple concepts [*Begriff*], from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations. From there the journey would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations. The former is the path historically followed by economics at the time of its origins. The economists of the seventeenth century, e.g., always begin with the living whole, with population, nation, state, several states, etc.; but they always conclude by discovering through analysis a small number of determinant, abstract, general relations such as division of labour, money, value, etc. As soon as these individual moments had been more or less firmly established and abstracted, there began the economic systems, which ascended from the simple relations, such as labour, division of labour, need, exchange value, to the level of the state, exchange between nations and the world market. The latter is obviously the scientifically correct method. The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [*Anschauung*] and conception. Along the first path the full conception was evaporated to yield an abstract determination; along the second, the abstract determinations lead towards a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought. In this way Hegel fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself, whereas the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is only the way in which

thought appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as the concrete in the mind. But this is by no means the process by which the concrete itself comes into being. For example, the simplest economic category, say e.g. exchange value, presupposes population, moreover a population producing in specific relations; as well as a certain kind of family, or commune, or state, etc. It can never exist other than as an abstract, one-sided relation within an already given, concrete, living whole. As a category, by contrast, exchange value leads an antediluvian existence. Therefore, to the kind of consciousness – and this is characteristic of the philosophical consciousness – for which conceptual thinking is the real human being, and for which the conceptual world as such is thus the only reality, the movement of the categories appears as the real act of production – which only, unfortunately, receives a jolt from the outside – whose product is the world; and – but this is again a tautology – this is correct in so far as the concrete totality is a totality of thoughts, concrete in thought, in fact a product of thinking and comprehending; but not in any way a product of the concept which thinks and generates itself outside or above observation and conception; a product, rather, of the working-up of observation and conception into concepts. The totality as it appears in the head, as a totality of thoughts, is a product of a thinking head, which appropriates the world in the only way it can, a way different from the artistic, religious, practical and mental appropriation of this world. The real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before; namely as long as the head's conduct is merely speculative, merely theoretical. Hence, in the theoretical method, too, the subject, society, must always be kept in mind as the presupposition.

But do not these simpler categories also have an independent historical or natural existence predating the more concrete ones? That depends. Hegel, for example, correctly begins the Philosophy of Right with possession, this being the subject's simplest juridical relation. But there is no possession preceding the family or master-servant relations, which are far more concrete relations. However, it would be correct to say that there are families or clan groups which still merely *possess*, but have no *property*. The simple category therefore appears in relation to property as a relation of simple families or clan groups. In the higher society it appears as the simpler relation of a developed organization. But the concrete substratum of which possession is a relation is always presupposed. One can imagine an individual savage as possessing something. But in that case possession is not a juridical relation. It is incorrect that possession develops historically into the family. Possession, rather, always presupposes this 'more concrete juridical category'. There would still always remain this much, however, namely that the simple categories are the expressions of relations within which the less developed concrete may have already realized itself before having posited the more many-sided connection or relation which is mentally expressed in the more concrete category; while the more developed concrete preserves the same category as a subordinate relation. Money may exist, and did exist historically, before capital existed, before banks existed, before wage labour existed, etc. Thus in this respect it may be said that the simpler category can express the dominant relations of a less developed whole, or else those subordinate relations of a more developed whole which already had a historic existence before this whole developed in the direction expressed by a more concrete category. To that extent the path of abstract thought, rising from the simple to the combined, would

correspond to the real historical process.

It may be said on the other hand that there are very developed but nevertheless historically less mature forms of society, in which the highest forms of economy, e.g. cooperation, a developed division of labour, etc., are found, even though there is no kind of money, e.g. Peru. Among the Slav communities also, money and the exchange which determines it play little or no role within the individual communities, but only on their boundaries, in traffic with others; it is simply wrong to place exchange at the center of communal society as the original, constituent element. It originally appears, rather, in the connection of the different communities with one another, not in the relations between the different members of a single community. Further, although money everywhere plays a role from very early on, it is nevertheless a predominant element, in antiquity, only within the confines of certain one-sidedly developed nations, trading nations. And even in the most advanced parts of the ancient world, among the Greeks and Romans, the full development of money, which is presupposed in modern bourgeois society, appears only in the period of their dissolution. This very simple category, then, makes a historic appearance in its full intensity only in the most developed conditions of society. By no means does it wade its way through all economic relations. For example, in the Roman Empire, at its highest point of development, the foundation remained taxes and payments in kind. The money system actually completely developed there only in the army. And it never took over the whole of labour. Thus, although the simpler category may have existed historically before the more concrete, it can achieve its full (intensive and extensive) development precisely in a combined form of society, while the more concrete category was more fully developed in a less developed form of society.

Labour seems a quite simple category. The conception of labour in this general form – as labour as such – is also immeasurably old. Nevertheless, when it is economically conceived in this simplicity, ‘labour’ is as modern a category as are the relations which create this simple abstraction. The Monetary System [\[19\]](#) for example, still locates wealth altogether objectively, as an external thing, in money. Compared with this standpoint, the commercial, or manufacture, system took a great step forward by locating the source of wealth not in the object but in a subjective activity – in commercial and manufacturing activity – even though it still always conceives this activity within narrow boundaries, as moneymaking. In contrast to this system, that of the Physiocrats posits a certain kind of labour – agriculture – as the creator of wealth, and the object itself no longer appears in a monetary disguise, but as the product in general, as the general result of labour. This product, as befits the narrowness of the activity, still always remains a naturally determined product – the product of agriculture, the product of the earth *par excellence*.

It was an immense step forward for Adam Smith to throw out every limiting specification of wealth-creating activity – not only manufacturing, or commercial or agricultural labour, but one as well as the others, labour in general. With the abstract universality of wealth-creating activity we now have the universality of the object defined as wealth, the product as such or again labour as such, but labour as past, objectified labour. How difficult and great was this transition may be seen from how Adam Smith himself from time to time still falls back into the Physiocratic system. Now, it might

seem that all that had been achieved thereby was to discover the abstract expression for the simplest and most ancient relation in which human beings – in whatever form of society – play the role of producers. This is correct in one respect. Not in another. Indifference towards any specific kind of labour presupposes a very developed totality of real kinds of labour, of which no single one is any longer predominant. As a rule, the most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete development, where one thing appears as common to many, to all. Then it ceases to be thinkable in a particular form alone. On the other side, this abstraction of labour as such is not merely the mental product of a concrete totality of labours. Indifference towards specific labours corresponds to a form of society in which individuals can with ease transfer from one labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence of indifference. Not only the category, labour, but labour in reality has here become the means of creating wealth in general, and has ceased to be organically linked with particular individuals in any specific form. Such a state of affairs is at its most developed in the most modern form of existence of bourgeois society – in the United States. Here, then, for the first time, the point of departure of modern economics, namely the abstraction of the category ‘labour’, ‘labour as such’, labour pure and simple, becomes true in practice. The simplest abstraction, then, which modern economics places at the head of its discussions, and which expresses an immeasurably ancient relation valid in all forms of society, nevertheless achieves practical truth as an abstraction only as a category of the most modern society. One could say that this indifference towards particular kinds of labour, which is a historic product in the United States, appears e.g. among the Russians as a spontaneous inclination. But there is a devil of a difference between barbarians who are fit by nature to be used for anything, and civilized people who apply themselves to everything. And then in practice the Russian indifference to the specific character of labour corresponds to being embedded by tradition within a very specific kind of labour, from which only external influences can jar them loose.

This example of labour shows strikingly how even the most abstract categories, despite their validity – precisely because of their abstractness – for all epochs, are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and within these relations.

Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it, etc. Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known. The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient, etc. But not at all in the manner of those economists who smudge over *all* historical differences and see bourgeois relations in all forms of society. One can understand tribute, tithe, etc., if one is acquainted with ground rent. But one must not identify them. Further, since bourgeois society is itself only a contradictory form of development, relations derived from earlier

forms will often be found within it only in an entirely stunted form, or even travestied. For example, communal property. Although it is true, therefore, that the categories of bourgeois economics possess a truth for all other forms of society, this is to be taken only with a grain of salt. They can contain them in a developed, or stunted, or caricatured form etc., but always with an essential difference. The so-called historical presentation of development is founded, as a rule, on the fact that the latest form regards the previous ones as steps leading up to itself, and, since it is only rarely and only under quite specific conditions able to criticize itself – leaving aside, of course, the historical periods which appear to themselves as times of decadence – it always conceives them one-sidedly. The Christian religion was able to be of assistance in reaching an objective understanding of earlier mythologies only when its own self-criticism had been accomplished to a certain degree, so to speak, *δυναμει* [13]. Likewise, bourgeois economics arrived at an understanding of feudal, ancient, oriental economics only after the self-criticism of bourgeois society had begun. In so far as the bourgeois economy did not mythologically identify itself altogether with the past, its critique of the previous economies, notably of feudalism, with which it was still engaged in direct struggle, resembled the critique which Christianity leveled against paganism, or also that of Protestantism against Catholicism.

In the succession of the economic categories, as in any other historical, social science, it must not be forgotten that their subject – here, modern bourgeois society – is always what is given, in the head as well as in reality, and that these categories therefore express the forms of being, the characteristics of existence, and often only individual sides of this specific society, this subject, and that therefore this society by no means begins only at the point where one can speak of it *as such*; this holds *for science as well*. This is to be kept in mind because it will shortly be decisive for the order and sequence of the categories. For example, nothing seems more natural than to begin with ground rent, with landed property, since this is bound up with the earth, the source of all production and of all being, and with the first form of production of all more or less settled societies – agriculture. But nothing would be more erroneous. In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it. For example, with pastoral peoples (mere hunting and fishing peoples lie outside the point where real development begins). Certain forms of tillage occur among them, sporadic ones. Landed property is determined by this. It is held in common, and retains this form to a greater or lesser degree according to the greater or lesser degree of attachment displayed by these peoples to their tradition, e.g. the communal property of the Slavs. Among peoples with a settled agriculture – this settling already a great step – where this predominates, as in antiquity and in the feudal order, even industry, together with its organization and the forms of property corresponding to it, has a more or less landed-proprietary character; is either completely dependent on it, as among the earlier Romans, or, as in the Middle Ages, imitates, within the city and its relations, the organization of the land. In the Middle Ages, capital itself – apart from pure money-capital – in the form of the traditional artisans' tools etc., has this landed-proprietary character. In bourgeois society it is the opposite. Agriculture more and more becomes merely a branch of industry, and is

entirely dominated by capital. Ground rent likewise. In all forms where landed property rules, the natural relation still predominant. In those where capital rules, the social, historically created element. Ground rent cannot be understood without capital. But capital can certainly be understood without ground rent. Capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society. It must form the starting-point as well as the finishing-point, and must be dealt with before landed property. After both have been examined in particular, their interrelation must be examined.

It would therefore be unfeasible and wrong to let the economic categories follow one another in the same sequence as that in which they were historically decisive. Their sequence is determined, rather, by their relation to one another in modern bourgeois society, which is precisely the opposite of that which seems to be their natural order or which corresponds to historical development. The point is not the historic position of the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society. Even less is it their sequence 'in the idea' (Proudhon) [21] (a muddy notion of historic movement). Rather, their order within modern bourgeois society.

The purity (abstract specificity) in which the trading peoples – Phoenicians, Carthaginians – appear in the old world is determined precisely by the predominance of the agricultural peoples. Capital, as trading-capital or as money-capital, appears in this abstraction precisely where capital is not yet the predominant element of societies. Lombards, Jews take up the same position towards the agricultural societies of the Middle Ages.

As a further example of the divergent positions which the same category can occupy in different social stages: one of the latest forms of bourgeois society, *joint-stock companies*. These also appear, however, at its beginning, in the great, privileged monopoly trading companies.

The concept of national wealth creeps into the work of the economists of the seventeenth century – continuing partly with those of the eighteenth – in the form of the notion that wealth is created only to enrich the state, and that its power is proportionate to this wealth. This was the still unconsciously hypocritical form in which wealth and the production of wealth proclaimed themselves as the purpose of modern states, and regarded these states henceforth only as means for the production of wealth.

The order obviously has to be (1) the general, abstract determinants which obtain in more or less all forms of society, but in the above-explained sense. (2) The categories which make up the inner structure of bourgeois society and on which the fundamental classes rest. Capital, wage labour, landed property. Their interrelation. Town and country. The three great social classes. Exchange between them. Circulation. Credit system (private). (3) Concentration of bourgeois society in the form of the state. Viewed in relation to itself. The 'unproductive' classes. Taxes. State debt. Public credit. The population. The colonies. Emigration. (4) The international relation of production. International division of labour. International exchange. Export and import. Rate of exchange. (5) The world market and crises.

