

## 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO MARX'S THEORY OF ALIENATION

*Karl Marx's theory of alienation describes the estrangement (Entfremdung) of people from aspects of their Gattungswesen ("species-essence") as a consequence of living in a society of stratified social classes. The alienation from the self is a consequence of being a mechanistic part of a social class, the condition of which estranges a person.*

The Writings of Bertell Ollman *Alienation: Brought under the same rubric are the links between one man, his activity and products, his fellows, inanimate nature and the species. For purposes of discussing alienation, the following points, made early in Part I and illustrated in subsequent chapters, will serve as my philosophical character: Alienation can only be grasped as the absence of unalienation, each state serving as a point of reference for the other. And, for Marx, unalienation is the life man leads in communism. Without some knowledge of the future millennium, alienation remains a reproach that can never be clarified. This is because we ordinarily conceive of health and disease as internally related, the absence of one being a necessary element in the measuring of the other. Similarly, it is because Marx posits an internal relation between the states of alienation and unalienation that we cannot regard his remarks as evaluations. In such cases, other classes are included in the reference in so far as they share with the proletariat the qualities or conditions which are being commented on. By adding a special chapter on the peculiar alienation of capitalists, I hope to dispel whatever confusion this may cause. It is also a new focal point from which to view human beings and hence to speak of them, one which stresses the fact of segmentation or practical breakdown of the interconnected elements in their definition. All those traits, grasped by Marx as relations, which mark man out from other living creatures have altered, have become something else. What requires explanation is not the unity of living and active human beings with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolism, with nature, and therefore their appropriation of nature; nor is this the result of a historical process. What we must explain is the separation of these inorganic conditions of human existence from this active existence, a separation which is only fully completed in the relation between wage-labor and capital. From evident expressions of his distinctive character, the relations between man and the external world have become means to dissimulate this character behind each of the various elements over which he has lost control. The theory of alienation focuses on the presumed independence of these elements. The distortion in what Marx takes to be human nature is generally referred to in language which suggests that an essential tie has been cut in the middle. In each instance, a relation that distinguishes the human species has disappeared and its constituent elements have been reorganized to appear as something else. What is left of the individual after all these cleavages have occurred is a mere rump, a lowest common denominator attained by lopping off all those qualities on which is based his claim to recognition as a man. As we saw, this is a broader term Marx uses to refer to any factor which appears isolated from the social whole. Its opposite is a set of meaningful particulars by which people know something to be one of a kind. Given that these particulars involve internal relations with other factors, any factor is recognized as one of a kind to the degree that the social whole finds expression in it. And it is on the basis of these similarities, generalized as classes of one sort or another, that alienated men set out to understand their world. In this manner is intelligence misdirected into classification. Alienated man is an abstraction because he has lost touch with all human specificity. He has been reduced to performing undifferentiated work on humanly indistinguishable objects among people deprived of their human variety and compassion. There is little that remains of his relations to his activity, product and fellows which enables us to grasp the peculiar qualities of his species. At the same time that the individual is degenerating into an abstraction, those parts of his being which have been split off which are no longer under his control are undergoing their own transformation. In each instance, the other half of a severed relation, carried by a social dynamic of its own, progresses through a series of forms in a direction away from its beginning in man. It is this process which largely accounts for the power that money has in capitalist societies, the buying of objects which could never have been sold had they remained integral components of their producer. This is the essence of alienation, whether the part under examination is man, his activity, his product or his ideas. The same separation and distortion is evident in each. If alienation is the splintering of human nature into a number*

of misbegotten parts, we would expect communism to be presented as a kind of reunification. And this is just what we find. Many of the characteristics ascribed to full communism, such as the end of the division of labor each person is engaged in a variety of tasks and the erasure of social classes, are clear instances of this unification process at work. In the remainder of this study, I will be mainly concerned to show the evidence of segmentation that required such a remedy. Only because he is aware, however imprecisely, of their opposites. That communism is the yardstick by which Marx ascribes alienation in the present emerges clearly from the following: The community from which his own labor separates him, is life itself, physical and intellectual life, human morality, human activity, human enjoyment, human essence. George Lichtheim, *Marxism* London, , p. The difference in emphasis which is sometimes suggested by these terms will only become clearer in the course of the following discussion. *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, pp. *The German Ideology*, p. *The Holy Family*, p. His thoughts are therefore fixed mental shapes or ghosts dwelling outside nature and man.

## 2: Marx theory of alienation critique essay

*When Marx's key work on alienation, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, was eventually published in , it had a dramatic impact on the tradition known as 'Western Marxism', which included writers like Herbert Marcuse and John Paul Sartre. 67 However, in the hands of the Western Marxists, the theory of alienation became intermingled.*

Among the most important of these categories are need and power. In the Manuscripts Marx writes: As a natural being and as a living natural being man is on the one hand endowed with natural powers of life 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 they are the objects that he needs--essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers. Marx In this passage Marx not only emphasizes the centrality of the categories of need and power, but also emphasizes that human beings are beings who are in the natural world and that human needs can only be satisfied through the transformation of the natural world by human powers. This activity of transformation is called appropriation and is another general category that can be used in describing human experiences in any historical era. Marx emphasizes that human beings have bodies which determine a great deal about the general nature of their needs and manners of fulfilling needs. For example, our bodies determine our needs for specific kinds of nourishment, and our bodies determine that we fulfill these needs through our powers of tasting, chewing, etc. Marx also emphasizes that human beings always live in specific societies during specific historical eras and that the mode of production of a given society determines a good deal about the specific form that needs will take and will be satisfied in. For example, a need for bread can only occur within a society where bread is produced, and the power to make bread is dependent upon a certain level of development of agriculture. Finally, Marx emphasizes that in order to satisfy their needs, human beings act upon the world and that this activity and the subsequent satisfaction changes them their needs and powers and changes the world. This means that an activity such as agriculture concretely changes the natural world and the human beings who engage in it, because it removes old limitations and imposes new limitations. In discussing needs and powers, Marx distinguishes between natural needs and species needs, between natural powers and species powers. Natural needs and powers are those that form the natural foundation earlier referred to. In their natural needs and powers, human beings resemble other animals in that they have definite and relatively unchanging need for food, oxygen, etc. But human beings differ from other animals in that they create their lives through productive activity. Human beings do not live through an unchanged pattern from generation to generation as do insects, birds, and even other primates. Because of human productive activity, human life and human beings differ from society to society and from age to age. The needs and powers associated with this specifically human self-creation that is, the self-transformation of the human species are what Marx terms species needs and species powers. Marx seems to suggest that the most important of species needs and powers are the need for engaging in and appreciating the results of creative labor and the corresponding power to create and the need for expressing and receiving love and the corresponding power to love. It is important to understand the relationship between natural functions and species functions. Species needs and powers often grow directly out of natural needs and powers, and natural functions such as eating and procreating that are necessary for survival can take on specifically human forms such that human beings engage in them for purposes other than mere survival. For example, there is a great difference between eating as an animal and eating elaborately prepared food in a social context as a human being. Likewise, there is a marked difference between the simple act of procreating and the complex act of making love. Marx clearly assumes that to be a human being is fundamentally different than to be an animal, and he wants natural functions transformed into species functions. Marx expresses this sentiment when he writes: Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc. But, abstractly, taken, separated from the sphere of all other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions. Marx Marx claims that the species life of human beings is characterized by sociability, consciousness, and freedom and that this species life best expresses

itself through production in accordance with standards of beauty. Marx argues that sociability, consciousness, and freedom are related in such a way that one cannot occur in isolation from the other two. When Marx talks about freedom he is not talking about a metaphysical postulate. Marx claims that human productive activity is characterized by freedom in three ways. First of all, the animal "produces only under the domination of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom. It is important to note that Marx regards freedom as a characteristic of productive activity. This would be somewhat limited except for the fact that Marx conceives of thinking, appreciating, and loving as activities, as types of production. Working in a factory even involves producing without the dominion of immediate physical need in a very weak sense in that workers are not directly producing their food, shelter, etc. As will soon become evident, Marx clearly values those activities characterized by a greater degree of freedom very highly. To value freedom is not unusual. However, for Marx genuine freedom involves creation without the compulsion of need, without any type of social coercion, and in accordance with standards of beauty which are themselves a complex creation. To value this type of freedom and to suggest that human fulfillment involves its realization is very unusual. But this is not the case. Marx believes that a human being needs other human beings not just as objects but as human beings. Marx also thinks that a human being becomes human only in the context of a society for several reasons. One reason that freedom can only be realized within a society is that freedom cannot be realized without the humanization of nature which involves the development of social organization and technology such that natural needs and conditions lose their oppressive character and numerous possibilities for creative activity become concretely available. For example, even working for oneself involves a very limited amount of freedom if natural conditions and needs determine that one must work in the fields twelve hours a day in order to survive. Likewise, freedom is limited insofar as access to experiences and materials is limited; the members of many societies are not free to build large buildings, take pictures, or write novels. Other reasons that freedom can be realized only within a society include the fact that a standard of beauty in accordance with which someone creates or appreciates is a social product and is necessary in order to give free activity meaning even when further creation or appreciation transforms the original standard. Given these relationships between freedom, sociability, and consciousness, the value Marx places on freedom seems more reasonable. However, a detailed development of the specific ethical implications of these relationships can not be offered on the basis of the Manuscripts alone and thus must wait until a later chapter. Marx emphasizes that human needs and powers determine that human beings are human beings only insofar as they are part of a world--both a natural world and a social world. Although Marx emphasizes again and again that human beings have bodies, he does not think that human beings are bodies or are merely the sum of their observable behavior. He thinks that human beings are human not because of mere biological structure, but because they have certain kinds of bodies related in definite ways to the natural world, because they engage in certain sorts of productive activity, because they maintain certain sorts of social relationships, and because they have a history--a past and a future without reference to which their present is incomprehensible. Sometimes Marx expresses this by making somewhat metaphorical statements such as: The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body--both inasmuch as nature is 1 his direct means of life, and 2 the material, the object, and the instrument of life activity. This is a way of saying that there are infinite possibilities for human beings and that human beings determine which of these possibilities will be realized through their activity although not necessarily through their choice. By saying that human beings have such possibilities Marx is making a definite claim about human beings, but this claim is so different from the claims of traditional theories of human nature that it does violence to our understanding of Marxism to say that it includes a theory of human nature.

### Capitalism and Human Degradation

The theory of alienation as presented in the Manuscripts deals with the experiences of workers under capitalism and not with the experiences of human beings in general. Marx indicates that the concept of alienation is theoretically powerful enough to describe the experiences of capitalists as he begins to do just as the manuscript on estranged labor breaks off and perhaps the experiences of members of various classes under other economic systems such as feudalism. However, these groups are alienated in different ways, and one description could not possibly accommodate

their diverse experiences. Also, although Marx indicates that the concept of alienation is useful in describing the production of the state, the family, morality, religion, and culture, the theory of alienation as systematically presented in the Manuscripts relates mainly to industrial production. The word alienation refers to a separation--a taking away of human beings from themselves and from their potentialities. Therefore, the coherent use of the concept of alienation depends upon a prior conception of human possibilities. The concept of alienation is theoretically powerful, because it facilitates the description of the degradation of human life without allowing the assumption that this degradation is natural or inevitable. In describing the experience of workers under capitalism, Marx isolates six different aspects of alienation in their productive activity. These six aspects are closely related and can be said to imply one another. And beyond this, the alienated product actually serves to further dominate the worker in that the more the capitalist accumulates, the more powerful and able to dominate the worker the capitalist becomes. The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. Marx Why does this constitute an injury? This constitutes an injury, because, as emphasized before, the product is part of the worker. It seems reasonable to claim that a painting an artist has worked on for years is an extension of himself or herself and that to destroy or steal this painting is to injure the artist. This may seem less clear in the case of an assembly line worker helping to construct a car. But the very degradation of the labor process which will be described next accounts in part for our failure to be able to view the product of the assembly line worker as an extension of himself or herself. Of course, when Marx condemns the product being taken away from the worker, he is not suggesting that the desirable situation would involve the worker retaining his or her product. Rather, Marx is concerned with the question of control. Just as the artist will not want to store his or her paintings in the basement but will want their disposal to be part of how he or she relates to other people, Marx is concerned that workers in general control the disposal of their products. Marx expresses it thusly: Marx Also, because the product is not for the worker, the activity which creates this product is under the supervision of and done to the specifications of the capitalist, and the control of his or her activity is thus alienated from the worker. The full significance of this aspect of alienation is apparent when the emphasis that Marx places on human beings creating themselves through their work is remembered. Thus the more tile worker by his labor alienates the external world, hence sensuous nature, the more he deprives himself of means of life in a double manner: Marx Here Marx is claiming that nature in the form of raw materials is not directly available to the worker. Raw materials and the means of production are owned by someone else. In order to survive, the worker seeks employment. Ironically enough, the more the worker produces, the more he or she uses up raw materials and the more he or she strengthens the means of production which confront him or her as an alien force. Also, the worker uses up the resources that are necessary for his or her physical survival--the production of air pollution being an obvious example. Marx elaborated on this by emphasizing that If the product of labor does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, then this can only be because it belongs to some other man than the worker. Not the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man. Marx In other words, the relationship between the worker and the capitalist is such that they cannot confront each other as human beings, and the worker is thus alienated from fellow human beings insofar as he or she is alienated from tile capitalist. The basic relationship leads to further types of alienation from other human beings. For example, since workers must compete with one another for jobs, they cannot always confront one another as human beings, and workers are thus alienated from one another and so from fellow human beings. More generally, it can be said that the capitalist system defines much of the content of human relationships; thus, the human beings involved in the relationships do not freely define their content. The nature of this forced and supervised productive activity and of the deformed human relationships it necessarily involves dictates that the worker is alienated from his or her species being. He or she is not freely productive in accordance with a standard of beauty in a human context. Marx describes the degradation of needs with reference to the situation in Ireland. It is not only that man has no human needs--even his animal needs cease to exist. The Irishman no longer knows any need now but the need to eat, and indeed only the need to eat potatoes--and scabby potatoes at that, the worst kind of potatoes. Marx Marx also describes the

manipulation of needs in a way that calls to mind contemporary American advertising: Every person speculates on creating a new need in another, so as to drive him to a fresh sacrifice, to place him in a new dependence and to seduce him into a new mode of gratification and hence economic ruin

## 3: Alienation: Definition, Nature, Marx Theory of Alienation and Other Details

*Alienation is an idea developed by the young Marx in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts and later developed in his critique of political economy in Capital. Marx developed the idea out of his study of Hegel.*

Alienation can be seen as a foundational claim in Marxist theory. Hegel described a succession of historic stages in the human Geist or Spirit, by which that Spirit progresses towards perfect self-understanding and away from ignorance. In other words, Marx seems to think that, while humans do have a need for self-activity self-actualisation, the opposite of alienation, this will be of secondary historical relevance. The work of Raya Dunayevskaya and others in the tradition of Marxist humanism drew attention to manifestations of the desire for self-activity even among workers struggling for more basic goals. Alienation and class Edit In this passage, from The Holy Family, Marx says that capitalists and proletarians are equally alienated, but experience their alienation in different ways: The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-estrangement. But the former class feels at ease and strengthened in this self-estrangement, it recognizes estrangement as its own power and has in it the semblance of a human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in estrangement; it sees in it its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence. It is, to use an expression of Hegel, in its abasement the indignation at that abasement, an indignation to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human nature and its condition of life, which is the outright, resolute and comprehensive negation of that nature. Within this antithesis the private property-owner is therefore the conservative side, the proletarian the destructive side. From the former arises the action of preserving the antithesis, from the latter the action of annihilating it. Secondary literature Introductory article on alienation - from the Encyclopaedia of the Marxists Internet Archive. Short article on alienation - drawing mainly on the earlier works from Lewis A. Coser, Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context, 2nd Ed. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. Cohen discusses alienation and fetishism in Ch. Alienation of Karl Marx by Allen W. Wood in the Arguments of the Philosophers series provides a good introduction to this concept. Why Read Marx Today? It is especially clear differentiating the various types of alienation which Marx discusses. Marx and human nature: Selected chapters can be read online [2]. Ludwig Feuerbach at www.

## 4: Karl Marx (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

*In a nutshell Marx's Theory of Alienation is the contention that in modern industrial production under capitalist conditions workers will inevitably lose control of their lives by losing control over their work.*

A precocious schoolchild, Marx studied law in Bonn and Berlin, and then wrote a PhD thesis in Philosophy, comparing the views of Democritus and Epicurus. On completion of his doctorate in Marx hoped for an academic job, but he had already fallen in with too radical a group of thinkers and there was no real prospect. Turning to journalism, Marx rapidly became involved in political and social issues, and soon found himself having to consider communist theory. Of his many early writings, four, in particular, stand out. The German Ideology, co-written with Engels in , was also unpublished but this is where we see Marx beginning to develop his theory of history. This was again jointly written with Engels and published with a great sense of excitement as Marx returned to Germany from exile to take part in the revolution of . With the failure of the revolution Marx moved to London where he remained for the rest of his life. He now concentrated on the study of economics, producing, in , his Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy. In what follows, I shall concentrate on those texts and issues that have been given the greatest attention within the Anglo-American philosophical literature. Bauer had recently written against Jewish emancipation, from an atheist perspective, arguing that the religion of both Jews and Christians was a barrier to emancipation. In responding to Bauer, Marx makes one of the most enduring arguments from his early writings, by means of introducing a distinction between political emancipation – essentially the grant of liberal rights and liberties – and human emancipation. However, pushing matters deeper, in an argument reinvented by innumerable critics of liberalism, Marx argues that not only is political emancipation insufficient to bring about human emancipation, it is in some sense also a barrier. Liberal rights and ideas of justice are premised on the idea that each of us needs protection from other human beings who are a threat to our liberty and security. Therefore liberal rights are rights of separation, designed to protect us from such perceived threats. Freedom on such a view, is freedom from interference. What this view overlooks is the possibility – for Marx, the fact – that real freedom is to be found positively in our relations with other people. It is to be found in human community, not in isolation. Accordingly, insisting on a regime of rights encourages us to view each other in ways that undermine the possibility of the real freedom we may find in human emancipation. Now we should be clear that Marx does not oppose political emancipation, for he sees that liberalism is a great improvement on the systems of feudalism and religious prejudice and discrimination which existed in the Germany of his day. Nevertheless, such politically emancipated liberalism must be transcended on the route to genuine human emancipation. Unfortunately, Marx never tells us what human emancipation is, although it is clear that it is closely related to the idea of non-alienated labour, which we will explore below. Just as importantly Marx here also considers the question of how revolution might be achieved in Germany, and sets out the role of the proletariat in bringing about the emancipation of society as a whole. Precisely what it is about material life that creates religion is not set out with complete clarity. However, it seems that at least two aspects of alienation are responsible. One is alienated labour, which will be explored shortly. A second is the need for human beings to assert their communal essence. Whether or not we explicitly recognize it, human beings exist as a community, and what makes human life possible is our mutual dependence on the vast network of social and economic relations which engulf us all, even though this is rarely acknowledged in our day-to-day life. After the post-Reformation fragmentation of religion, where religion is no longer able to play the role even of a fake community of equals, the state fills this need by offering us the illusion of a community of citizens, all equal in the eyes of the law. Interestingly, the political liberal state, which is needed to manage the politics of religious diversity, takes on the role offered by religion in earlier times of providing a form of illusory community. But the state and religion will both be transcended when a genuine community of social and economic equals is created. Of course we are owed an answer to the question how such a society could be created. It is interesting to read Marx here in the light of his third Thesis on Feuerbach where he criticises an alternative theory. The crude materialism of Robert Owen and others assumes that human beings are fully

determined by their material circumstances, and therefore to bring about an emancipated society it is necessary and sufficient to make the right changes to those material circumstances. However, how are those circumstances to be changed? By an enlightened philanthropist like Owen who can miraculously break through the chain of determination which ties down everyone else? Indeed if they do not create the revolution for themselves – in alliance, of course, with the philosopher – they will not be fit to receive it. However, the manuscripts are best known for their account of alienated labour. Here Marx famously depicts the worker under capitalism as suffering from four types of alienated labour. First, from the product, which as soon as it is created is taken away from its producer. Second, in productive activity work which is experienced as a torment. Third, from species-being, for humans produce blindly and not in accordance with their truly human powers. Finally, from other human beings, where the relation of exchange replaces the satisfaction of mutual need. Essentially he attempts to apply a Hegelian deduction of categories to economics, trying to demonstrate that all the categories of bourgeois economics – wages, rent, exchange, profit, etc. Consequently each category of alienated labour is supposed to be deducible from the previous one. However, Marx gets no further than deducing categories of alienated labour from each other. Quite possibly in the course of writing he came to understand that a different methodology is required for approaching economic issues. Nevertheless we are left with a very rich text on the nature of alienated labour. Both sides of our species essence are revealed here: It is important to understand that for Marx alienation is not merely a matter of subjective feeling, or confusion. In our daily lives we take decisions that have unintended consequences, which then combine to create large-scale social forces which may have an utterly unpredicted, and highly damaging, effect. For example, for as long as a capitalist intends to stay in business he must exploit his workers to the legal limit. Whether or not wracked by guilt the capitalist must act as a ruthless exploiter. Similarly the worker must take the best job on offer; there is simply no other sane option. But by doing this we reinforce the very structures that oppress us. Several of these have been touched on already for example, the discussions of religion in theses 4, 6 and 7, and revolution in thesis 3 so here I will concentrate only on the first, most overtly philosophical, thesis. Materialism is complimented for understanding the physical reality of the world, but is criticised for ignoring the active role of the human subject in creating the world we perceive. Idealism, at least as developed by Hegel, understands the active nature of the human subject, but confines it to thought or contemplation: Marx combines the insights of both traditions to propose a view in which human beings do indeed create – or at least transform – the world they find themselves in, but this transformation happens not in thought but through actual material activity; not through the imposition of sublime concepts but through the sweat of their brow, with picks and shovels. Economics Capital Volume 1 begins with an analysis of the idea of commodity production. A commodity is defined as a useful external object, produced for exchange on a market. Thus two necessary conditions for commodity production are the existence of a market, in which exchange can take place, and a social division of labour, in which different people produce different products, without which there would be no motivation for exchange. Marx suggests that commodities have both use-value – a use, in other words – and an exchange-value – initially to be understood as their price. Use value can easily be understood, so Marx says, but he insists that exchange value is a puzzling phenomenon, and relative exchange values need to be explained. Why does a quantity of one commodity exchange for a given quantity of another commodity? His explanation is in terms of the labour input required to produce the commodity, or rather, the socially necessary labour, which is labour exerted at the average level of intensity and productivity for that branch of activity within the economy. Thus the labour theory of value asserts that the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of socially necessary labour time required to produce it. Marx provides a two stage argument for the labour theory of value. As commodities can be exchanged against each other, there must, Marx argues, be a third thing that they have in common. Both steps of the argument are, of course, highly contestable. Capitalism is distinctive, Marx argues, in that it involves not merely the exchange of commodities, but the advancement of capital, in the form of money, with the purpose of generating profit through the purchase of commodities and their transformation into other commodities which can command a higher price, and thus yield a profit. Marx claims that no previous theorist has been able adequately to explain how capitalism as a whole can make a profit. The cost of this commodity is determined in the same way as the

cost of every other; i. Suppose that such commodities take four hours to produce. Thus the first four hours of the working day is spent on producing value equivalent to the value of the wages the worker will be paid. This is known as necessary labour. Any work the worker does above this is known as surplus labour, producing surplus value for the capitalist. Surplus value, according to Marx, is the source of all profit. Other commodities simply pass their value on to the finished commodities, but do not create any extra value. They are known as constant capital. Profit, then, is the result of the labour performed by the worker beyond that necessary to create the value of his or her wages. This is the surplus value theory of profit. It appears to follow from this analysis that as industry becomes more mechanised, using more constant capital and less variable capital, the rate of profit ought to fall. For as a proportion less capital will be advanced on labour, and only labour can create value. In Capital Volume 3 Marx does indeed make the prediction that the rate of profit will fall over time, and this is one of the factors which leads to the downfall of capitalism. A further consequence of this analysis is a difficulty for the theory that Marx did recognise, and tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to meet also in Capital Volume 3. It follows from the analysis so far that labour intensive industries ought to have a higher rate of profit than those which use less labour. Not only is this empirically false, it is theoretically unacceptable. Accordingly, Marx argued that in real economic life prices vary in a systematic way from values. Although there are known techniques for solving this problem now albeit with unwelcome side consequences, we should recall that the labour theory of value was initially motivated as an intuitively plausible theory of price. But when the connection between price and value is rendered as indirect as it is in the final theory, the intuitive motivation of the theory drains away. Any commodity can be picked to play a similar role. Consequently with equal justification one could set out a corn theory of value, arguing that corn has the unique power of creating more value than it costs. Formally this would be identical to the labour theory of value. Nevertheless, the claims that somehow labour is responsible for the creation of value, and that profit is the consequence of exploitation, remain intuitively powerful, even if they are difficult to establish in detail. However, even if the labour theory of value is considered discredited, there are elements of his theory that remain of worth. Both provide a salutary corrective to aspects of orthodox economic theory. Theory of History Marx did not set out his theory of history in great detail. Accordingly, it has to be constructed from a variety of texts, both those where he attempts to apply a theoretical analysis to past and future historical events, and those of a more purely theoretical nature. However, *The German Ideology*, co-written with Engels in 1845, is a vital early source in which Marx first sets out the basics of the outlook of historical materialism.

*Birth of Alienation Theory. Developed by Karl Marx, the Theory of Alienation or 'Entfremdung' posits that capitalism has distorted the human relations that are not controlled by the participants themselves.*

In the "Comment on James Mill" , Marx explained alienation thus: Let us suppose that we had carried out production as human beings. Each of us would have, in two ways, affirmed himself, and the other person. Aside from the workers having no control over the design-and-production protocol, alienation Entfremdung broadly describes the conversion of labour work as an activity , which is performed to generate a use value the product , into a commodity, whichâ€™like productsâ€™can be assigned an exchange value. That is, the capitalist gains control of the manual and intellectual workers and the benefits of their labour, with a system of industrial production that converts said labour into concrete products goods and services that benefit the consumer. Furthermore, with such a reified system of industrial production, the profit exchange value generated by the sale of the goods and services products that could be paid to the workers is instead paid to the capitalist classes: In the capitalist mode of production , the manual labour of the employed carpenter yields wages, but not profits or losses In the capitalist mode of production, the intellectual labour of the employed engineer yields a salary, but not profits or losses Strikers confronted by soldiers during the textile factory strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, United States called when owners reduced wages after a state law reduced the work week from 56 to 54 hours Alienation of the worker from the act of production[ edit ] In the capitalist mode of production , the generation of products goods and services is accomplished with an endless sequence of discrete, repetitive motions that offer the worker little psychological satisfaction for "a job well done". By means of commodification , the labor power of the worker is reduced to wages an exchange value ; the psychological estrangement Entfremdung of the worker results from the unmediated relation between his productive labor and the wages paid to him for the labor. The worker is alienated from the means of production via two forms; wage compulsion and the imposed production content. The worker is bound to unwanted labour as a means of survival, labour is not "voluntary but coerced" forced labor. The worker is only able to reject wage compulsion at the expense of their life and that of their family. The distribution of private property in the hands of wealth owners, combined with government enforced taxes compel workers to labor. In a capitalist world, our means of survival is based on monetary exchange, therefore we have no other choice than to sell our labour power and consequently be bound to the demands of the capitalist. The worker "[d]oes not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself"; "[l]abor is external to the worker" p. During work, the worker is miserable, unhappy and drained of their energy, work "mortifies his body and ruins his mind". The production content, direction and form are imposed by the capitalist. The worker is being controlled and told what to do since they do not own the means of production they have no say in production, "labor is external to the worker, i. Alienation of the worker from their Gattungswesen species-essence [ edit ] The Gattungswesen species-essence , human nature of individuals is not discrete separate and apart from their activity as a worker and as such species-essence also comprises all of innate human potential as a person. Conceptually, in the term "species-essence" the word "species" describes the intrinsic human mental essence that is characterized by a "plurality of interests" and "psychological dynamism", whereby every individual has the desire and the tendency to engage in the many activities that promote mutual human survival and psychological well-being, by means of emotional connections with other people, with society. The psychic value of a human consists in being able to conceive think of the ends of their actions as purposeful ideas, which are distinct from the actions required to realize a given idea. That is, humans are able to objectify their intentions by means of an idea of themselves as "the subject" and an idea of the thing that they produce, "the object". Conversely, unlike a human being an animal does not objectify itself as "the subject" nor its products as ideas, "the object", because an animal engages in directly self-sustaining actions that have neither a future intention, nor a conscious intention. In the course of history, to ensure individual survival societies have organized themselves into groups who have different,

basic relationships to the means of production. One societal group class owned and controlled the means of production while another societal class worked the means of production and in the relations of production of that status quo the goal of the owner-class was to economically benefit as much as possible from the labour of the working class. In the course of economic development when a new type of economy displaced an old type of economy—agrarian feudalism superseded by mercantilism, in turn superseded by the Industrial Revolution—the rearranged economic order of the social classes favored the social class who controlled the technologies the means of production that made possible the change in the relations of production. Likewise, there occurred a corresponding rearrangement of the human nature *Gattungswesen* and the system of values of the owner-class and of the working-class, which allowed each group of people to accept and to function in the rearranged status quo of production-relations. Despite the ideological promise of industrialization—that the mechanization of industrial production would raise the mass of the workers from a brutish life of subsistence existence to honorable work—the division of labour inherent to the capitalist mode of production thwarted the human nature *Gattungswesen* of the worker and so rendered each individual into a mechanistic part of an industrialized system of production, from being a person capable of defining their value through direct, purposeful activity. Moreover, the near-total mechanization and automation of the industrial production system would allow the newly dominant bourgeois capitalist social class to exploit the working class to the degree that the value obtained from their labour would diminish the ability of the worker to materially survive. Hence, when the proletarian working-class become a sufficiently developed political force, they will effect a revolution and re-orient the relations of production to the means of production—from a capitalist mode of production to a communist mode of production. In the communist socio-economic organization, the relations of production would operate the mode of production and employ each worker according to their abilities and benefit each worker according to their needs. Hence, each worker could direct their labour to productive work suitable to their own innate abilities, rather than be forced into a narrowly defined, minimal-wage "job" meant to extract maximal profit from individual labour as determined by and dictated under the capitalist mode of production. In the classless, collectively-managed communist society, the exchange of value between the objectified productive labour of one worker and the consumption benefit derived from that production will not be determined by or directed to the narrow interests of a bourgeois capitalist class, but instead will be directed to meet the needs of each producer and consumer. Under the collective ownership of the means of production, the relation of each worker to the mode of production will be identical and will assume the character that corresponds to the universal interests of the communist society. The direct distribution of the fruits of the labour of each worker to fulfill the interests of the working class—and thus to an individual's own interest and benefit—will constitute an un-alienated state of labour conditions, which restores to the worker the fullest exercise and determination of their human nature. Alienation of the worker from other workers[ edit ] Capitalism reduces the labour of the worker to a commercial commodity that can be traded in the competitive labour-market, rather than as a constructive socio-economic activity that is part of the collective common effort performed for personal survival and the betterment of society. In a capitalist economy, the businesses who own the means of production establish a competitive labour-market meant to extract from the worker as much labour value as possible in the form of capital. Furthermore, in the capitalist mode of production the philosophic collusion of religion in justifying the relations of production facilitates the realization and then worsens the alienation *Entfremdung* of the worker from their humanity; it is a socio-economic role independent of religion being "the opiate of the masses". For Hegel, the unhappy consciousness is divided against itself, separated from its "essence", which it has placed in a "beyond". *Entfremdung* and the theory of history[ edit ] See also: Things have now come to such a pass that the individuals must appropriate the existing totality of productive forces, not only to achieve self-activity, but also, merely, to safeguard their very existence. Yet, social alienation remains a practical concern, especially among the contemporary philosophers of Marxist humanism. In *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, Raya Dunayevskaya discussed and described the existence of the desire for self-activity and self-actualisation among wage-labour workers struggling to achieve the elementary goals of material life in a capitalist economy. *Entfremdung* and social class[ edit ] In Chapter 4 of *The Holy Family*, Marx said that capitalists and proletarians are equally alienated,

but that each social class experiences alienation in a different form: The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-estrangement. But the former class feels at ease and strengthened in this self-estrangement, it recognizes estrangement as its own power, and has in it the semblance of a human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated, this means that they cease to exist in estrangement; it sees in it its own powerlessness and in the reality of an inhuman existence. It is, to use an expression of Hegel, in its abasement, the indignation at that abasement, an indignation to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human nature and its condition of life, which is the outright, resolute and comprehensive negation of that nature. Within this antithesis, the private property-owner is therefore the conservative side, and the proletarian the destructive side. From the former arises the action of preserving the antithesis, from the latter the action of annihilating it.

## 6: Marxist Theory of Alienation

*Marx intended to emphasize that alienation is the primary cause of dehumanisation and both alienation and dehumanisation are curse of a bourgeois society. Meszaros in his noted work Marx's Theory of Alienation explains the concept in the following way: "Alienation is an eminently historical concept."*

Read this essay to learn about Alienation. After reading this essay you will learn about: Definition and Nature of Alienation 2. Rise and Development of Alienation 3. The German Ideology 5. Definition and Nature of Alienation: According to COD alienation is the state or experience of being alienated. A state of depersonalisation or loss of identity in which the self seems unreal. Alienate means cause to feel isolated. Lose or destroy the support or sympathy. But the dictionary meaning of alienation though paves the path for better understanding of the concept; it is not enough for forming a comprehensive idea. Rousseau and Marx used the concept in their political philosophies and in the twentieth century this has been widely analysed by a good number of thinkers. In this analysis we shall primarily confine ourselves within the Marxian sense. But before him Rousseau developed the idea in his mind. Thus conceived alienation is always self-alienation i. Alienation has another manifestation. It is not simply a concept but a real picture of a capitalist society. If it is so then we may treat it as an appeal for a revolutionary change of society. Marx intended to emphasize that alienation is the primary cause of dehumanisation and both alienation and dehumanisation are curse of a bourgeois society. Meszaros calls it a historical idea or concept because it did not arise all on a sudden. In a capitalist society the system of production and the nature of the economy created an atmosphere which ultimately resulted in alienation. Alienation is not a negligible aspect of a bourgeois society. Its tentacles spread almost every part of society and in that sense it is general. It is said that: What is of importance is that there are foot-prints of alienation in every nook and corner of a capitalist society. In his Economic and Philosophic Manuscript , Marx made the following remark: Man is estranged from the product which he produces with his own labour, with his own intelligence and physical capacity. He becomes, due to the curse of alienation, simply a machine. Rise and Development of Alienation: In this critique Hegel rejects as dead those human relationships or institutions in which persons give only an outward and constrained conformity, but concerning which they lack a freely given inward conviction. The spiritual world is a world of corruption and slavery. It is uncontrolled absolutely by few churchmen. Ordinary people are deprived of unhindered access to the temple of God. Naturally the church or temple or any holy place is alien to them. Neither protestation nor grumbling has any effect. Common people have no feeling for the world they live in. It is alien to them. This is the picture of alienation generally found in religious world. Rousseau is the real progenitor of Marx so far as the idea of alienation is concerned, because he spoke of this concept in the most unequivocal terms. He started in Social Contract with the famous declaration: One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. Man is born in a society and then he is alienated from it. This alienation is to be removed through the formation of a new society whose mechanism is social contract. A new body formed on the basis of certain principles can destroy the possibility of alienation. The formation of body politic alone cannot remove alienation. The whole body politic will be administered by the principle of general will and this general will is the sovereign. In other words, introduction of direct democracy is the only way out from the menace of alienation. This led Rousseau to revolt against reason and progress of science and civilization. In this connection I quote a beautiful remark of J. Rousseau speaks of alienation from nature. He is of opinion that when a good thing is out of hands of God it finally comes to be vicious. Degeneration in all its forms steals the virtue of goodness and man comes to be its victim. Finally civilization comes to be the victim of this degeneration. Man is separated from his near and dear ones, from his environment. In the state of nature there was no existence of alienation. For that reason he suggested to build up a new society which would facilitate the revival of old state of nature and at the same time destroy alienation. The exorbitant love for money leads him to earn more and more money and this is a vital factor of the rise of alienation. We think that Rousseau rightly diagnosed the cause of alienation. Ludwig Feuerbach threw sufficient light on the concept of alienation and Marx agreed with most of the views of Feuerbach. He is estranged from man and Feurbach calls it

alienation. Naturally if man wants to make him alienation-free, the best way is de-alienation. Feuerbach confined himself within the religious alienation and Marx did not agree with this, because he was of opinion that alienation was of more than one form. This was first pointed out by Hess. Marx also agreed with Hess and this he noted in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. In the Paris Manuscripts Marx has used the term alienation of labour or alienated labour. What did Marx actually mean by alienation or alienated labour? We shall quote a lengthy passage from his Paris Manuscripts. The object he produces does not belong to him, dominates him and only serves in the long run to increase his poverty. Secondly, alienation appears not only in the result, but also in the process of production and productive activity itself. It is an activity directed against himself, that is, independent of him, and does not belong to him. Thirdly, alienated labour succeeds in alienating man from his species. Finally, nature itself is alienated from man, who thus loses his own inorganic body. The alienation, he describes, is primarily the product of capitalist system of economy. But if the capitalism is in its childhood stage the alienation does-not seem to be its basic characteristic. When it sufficiently develops the alienation surfaces prominently. In other words, the worker works hard and this he does not for his own satisfaction or benefits but for the benefits of the capitalist. He grumbles, he remains dissatisfied. But he is helpless. Marx has also said: Marx draws our attention to this point. He says that the working class alone is not the victim of alienation. The entire capitalist society comes under the evil influence of alienation. In the Holy Family he writes: But the former feels comfortable and confirmed in the self-alienation knowing that this alienation is its own power and possessing its semblance of human existence. Alienation produces double effects. The working class is alienated but is the victim of poverty and exploitation. There is hardly any good relation or coordination between the two classes though both are indispensable for production. The German Ideology and Alienation: In the German Ideology Marx and Engels have discussed the alienation. According to Marx-Engels one of the basic characteristics of capitalist society is the division of labour and within this there lie numerous contradictions. The worker is separated from family. But normally this should not happen. Again, in a capitalist society, families are opposed to each other. The produce is not properly distributed, that is, there is unequal distribution of commodities. This is also a type of contradiction and leads to alienation. The conditions in the family, relations that grow within the family and other related matter are also the product of capitalist system. These are the potential sources of alienation. None gets rid of it because everything is inextricably related with capitalism. Marx-Engels write in the German Ideology:

## 7: Marx's theory of alienation - Wikipedia

*Karl Marx's theory of alienation was postulated in the nineteenth century which was characterized by the rise of capitalism. Industrialization had swept the developed world along with other phenomenon like urbanization, immigration, and capitalism.*

Yet never before have we felt so helpless in the face of the forces we ourselves have created. Never before have the fruits of our labour threatened our very existence: For the first time in history we can produce enough to satisfy the needs of everyone on the planet. Yet millions of lives are stunted by poverty and destroyed by disease. Despite our power to control the natural world, our society is dominated by insecurity, as economic recession and military conflict devastate lives with the apparently irresistible power of natural disasters. The more densely populated our cities become, the more our lives are characterised by feelings of isolation and loneliness. To Karl Marx these contradictions were apparent when the system was still young. On the one hand, there have started into life industrial and scientific forces, which no epoch of the former human history had ever suspected. On the other hand, there exist symptoms of decay, far surpassing the horrors of the Roman Empire. In our days everything seems pregnant with its contrary. Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening and fructifying human labour, we behold starving and overworking it. The new-fangled sources of wealth, by some strange weird spell, are turned into sources of want. The victories of art seem bought by loss of character. He showed how, although aspects of the society we live in appear natural and independent of us, they are the results of past human actions. For Marx, alienation was not rooted in the mind or in religion, as it was for his predecessors Hegel and Feuerbach. Instead Marx understood alienation as something rooted in the material world. Alienation meant loss of control, specifically the loss of control over labour. Marx opposed the common sense idea that humans have a fixed nature which exists independently of the society they live in. He demonstrated that many of the features attributed to unchanging human nature in fact vary enormously in different societies. However, Marx did not reject the idea of human nature itself. The labour of humans, however, was distinguished from that of animals because human beings developed consciousness. Marx gave a famous description of this at the beginning of *Capital*: A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He explained how, because we act on nature consciously, we build on our successes and develop new ways of producing the things we need. This means that we have a history, whereas animals do not: Marx frequently reinforced this idea, as in the following quote from *Capital*: He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway. Our species being is also a social being, as Marx explained in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx emphasised the point: What happens to the process of work, therefore, has a decisive influence on the whole of society. Our ability to work, to improve how we work and build on our successes, has tended to result in the cumulative development of the productive forces. One such development gave rise to class society. When society became capable of producing a surplus, it also became possible for a class to emerge which was liberated from the need to directly produce and could live from its control over the labour of others. This process was necessary in order to develop and direct the productive forces, but it also meant that the majority of society, the producers, lost control of their labour. Thus, the alienation of labour arose with class society, and Ernst Fischer has given a brilliant description of how it reversed the limitless potential of labour: The first tool contains within it all the potential future ones. The first recognition of the fact that the world can be changed by conscious activity contains all future, as yet unknown, but inevitable change. A living being which has once begun to make nature his own through the work of his hands, his intellect, and his imagination, will never stop. Every achievement opens the door to unconquered territory. However, alienation is not an unalterable human condition which exists unchanged in every class society. Marx described this in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*: In feudal landownership we already find the domination of the

earth as of an alien power over men. The serf is an appurtenance of the land. Similarly the heir through primogeniture, the first born son, belongs to the land. The rule of private property begins with property in land which is its basis. On the one hand, the low level of the productive forces meant constant labour for the peasants, while on the other, the feudal lords and the church officials took what they wanted from the peasants by force. Thus alienation arose from the low level of the productive forces, from human subordination to the land and from the domination of the feudal ruling class. However, there were limits to these forms of alienation. The peasants worked their own land and produced most of the things they needed in their own independent family units. The bourgeoisie wanted a society in which everything could be bought and sold for money: This meant that, for the first time, the majority in society were denied direct access to the means of production and subsistence, thus creating a class of landless labourers who had to submit to a new form of exploitation, wage labour, in order to survive. Peter Linebaugh in his history of 18th century London, *The London Hanged*, explained that workers considered themselves masters of what they produced. During the 18th century most workers were not paid exclusively in money. This meant labour was now a commodity, sold on the market. Capitalists and workers were formally independent of each other, but in reality inextricably connected. Production no longer took place in the home, but in factories where new systems of discipline operated. In handicrafts and manufacture, the workman makes use of a tool, in the factory, the machine makes use of him. There the movements of the instrument of labour proceed from him, here it is the movements of the machines that he must follow. In manufacture the workmen are parts of a living mechanism. In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman, who becomes a mere living appendage. Prior to capitalism there had been a social division of labour, with different people involved in different branches of production or crafts. With capitalism there arose the detailed division of labour within each branch of production. This division of labour meant that workers had to specialise in particular tasks, a series of atomised activities, which realised only one or two aspects of their human powers at the expense of all the others. Harry Braverman pointed out the consequences of this division: In this system workers become increasingly dependent on the capitalists who own the means of production. Without work, if capital ceases to exist for him, Marx argued the worker might as well bury himself alive: Therefore labour became forced labour; you could not choose not to work, you could not choose what you made, and you could not choose how you made it. The fact that labour is external to the worker, does not belong to his essential being; that he therefore does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind. Hence the worker feels himself only when he is not working; when he is working he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working. His labour is therefore not voluntary but forced, it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need, but a mere means to satisfy need outside itself. Its alien character is clearly demonstrated by the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists it is shunned like the plague. Four aspects of alienation The development of capitalism proved irresistible and it brought alienation on a scale previously unimaginable. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* also known as the *Paris Manuscripts* Marx identified four specific ways in which alienation pervades capitalist society. The product of labour: The worker is alienated from the object he produces because it is owned and disposed of by another, the capitalist. In all societies people use their creative abilities to produce objects which they use, exchange or sell. Marx argued that the alienation of the worker from what he produces is intensified because the products of labour actually begin to dominate the labourer. Firstly, the worker is paid less than the value he creates. A proportion of what he produces is appropriated by his boss; the worker is, therefore, exploited. Qualitatively, he also puts creative labour into the object he produces, but he cannot be given creative labour to replace it. In previous societies those who work harder could usually be expected to have more to consume. Under capitalism, those who work harder increase the power of a hostile system over them. They themselves, and their inner worlds, become poorer. The second element of alienation Marx identified is a lack of control over the process of production. We have no say over the conditions in which we work and how our work is organised, and how it affects us physically and mentally. The resulting rigidly repetitive process buries the individual talents or skills of the worker, as Marx described: Factory work

exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity. The special skill of each individual insignificant factory operative vanishes as an infinitesimal quantity before the science, the gigantic physical forces, and mass of labour that are embodied in the factory mechanism and, together, with that mechanism, constitute the power of the master. The organisation of modern production is still based on the methods of the assembly line. Scientific research is used to break the production process down into its component parts. This has led, firstly, to the deskilling of white collar jobs and to a situation where managers have a monopoly of control over the production process: In consequence of the rationalisation of the work-process the human qualities and idiosyncrasies of the worker appear increasingly as mere sources of error when contrasted with these abstract special laws functioning according to rational predictions. Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of this process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient, it functions independently of him and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not. Thirdly, we are alienated from our fellow human beings.

## 8: DIALECTICAL MARXISM: The Writings of Bertell Ollman

*Marx's Theory of Alienation is a book about Karl Marx's theory of alienation by the philosopher István Ájn. www.enganchecubano.com work has received a mixture of praise and criticism from scholars.*

Nicholas Woode-Smith 15 Comments Alienation , communism , Karl Marx , Philosophy Marxism is often used as a punching bag here, and not without good reason. It has inspired ideologies which have led to millions dead , created untold misery for many more and has ultimately failed as an ideology. But this may be uncharitable to the original premises of Marxism. Marx was not a socialist or a Communist. In fact, there is a school of thought that argues, convincingly, that Marx may not have been promoting his system at all, but rather writing a mere prediction. This is an unpopular view, however, and cannot really be confirmed, as Marx is not really around to confirm it. What this article hopes to accomplish is to refute one of the premises of Marxism – rather than attacking its bastard children. Through this, we can establish that not only are the crude misunderstandings of Marxism wrong, but so to the father. Are humans living the way we should and is it unjust if we are not? To Marx, the alienation of labour is one of the prime causes of misery on Earth. Under this view, man exists as a slave, alienated from himself and others, until such time as he overcomes alienation in a state of Communism. This will be accomplished through asking three questions of each form of alienation: In regards to the latter point, if alienation cannot be overcome, due to the aspect being a necessity, then we may need to return to the first question. The four forms that will be examined will be alienation of our species-being, alienation from the work process, alienation from our products and alienation in worker relations. This species-being is described as humans being uniquely capable of freely, creatively and socially producing. To Marx, the essence of humanity is found in its capacity to produce even if there is no need. Production must be an end in itself for humans to fulfil their species-being. Capitalism, Marx argued, alienates humans from their species-being, as they are made to produce for reasons other than the fulfilment of creative, social production. The pursuit of money was seen as fundamentally alienating, as workers were producing to amass wealth and not for the sake of production itself. Additionally, Marx argued that Capitalism shifted the feeling of accomplishment to be innate in money and not in the individual themselves – alienating the individual from their capacity to produce their own ends. As Kymlicka argues, the fact that it seems that animals do not partake in rationality in the Aristotelian view or production in the Marxist view does not necessarily make it our species-being. We can see that many people who do not partake in the Marxist conception of production can live seemingly fulfilling lives. People do want the option to do other things with their time, and perfectionist views are arrogant to presume that these individuals know less about their own lives than the critic. For example, family-life is not unique to humans, but can be fulfilling to many individuals. People have their own views and factors that contribute to their own individual sense of fulfilment. Finally, production is not meant to be intrinsically fulfilling. One can treat it as an end in itself individually but, fundamentally, production is a means to an end. We produce to survive, to fulfil desires, to create the means to other ends. Marx wants the carpenter to produce for the sake of it while the fact of life is that he is producing because he wants a chair or a table. Production is simply a means – only an ends in as much as the individual enjoys work for the sake of it. Alienation from the Work Process Marx argued that the Capitalist work process alienated workers from their species-being by making work unfulfilling, deskilling and in service to another. We have already established, with the previous section, that production and work is not our species-being so, while the work process may be unpleasant, it is not necessarily alienating. Alienation implies a genuine togetherness that has come apart, but if something is not meant to be together, then it cannot be alienated. Intrinsically fulfilling work is supererogatory, not a base human necessity. Work is simply a means in itself and working under any conditions does not imply a sense of togetherness or alienation. An additional critique of the Capitalist work process is that it is deskilling and unpleasant. While this may be unfortunate, if it is true, it is not necessarily alienating, for the aforementioned reasons. Many Marxists have since argued that the work process is unpleasant for empirical reasons and that the affluence of Capitalism only masks the destitution required to produce it. This is not an argument of alienation, however. Poverty is

something we want to alleviate, but not because we necessarily feel that it alienates a person from wealth they deserve. A poor person may not deserve help, but we help them nonetheless. In this way, working conditions should improve because we want our fellow humans to be comfortable or for a reason other than alienation – for there is no compelling argument to state that humans intrinsically should have fulfilling and pleasant work. Alienation from the Product Marx saw alienation of the product of our labour in a variety of forms: The simplest form is that workers have a claim over the product of their labour and that the Capitalist is taking that product out of their possession. This implies a total ownership of the product by the worker, however. It is true that the worker is using their labour to produce a product, but this view ignores the fact that other aspects are needed to create a product. In the context of a factory, the Capitalist has to provide the capital to purchase the raw materials, the machinery, the venue and, effectively, the very means to allow the worker to produce said product. A worker voluntarily adds their labour to the means of production to create a product. They enter into this arrangement, willing to exchange their labour for remuneration that they will use as a means to other ends. Therefore, the entire product is not genuinely owned by the worker and the worker has voluntarily given up their share of the product for something they want. Marx also argues that money itself was a product that alienates us. Money causes workers to externalise their own accomplishments into an alien entity. But that is not what money is. Money is a representation of value contributed. It is a physical manifestation of our accomplishment. Rather than enslaving us, money allows us to exchange our accomplishment for the things we desire or need – which may even lead to our fulfilment. Market-forces, Marx argued, are a human creation that humans have become mystified by and have become slaves under. He argues that we created it, but have become dominated by it through its externalisation. This shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the market. Marx argues that we should not be dominated by the market, but this would imply that we can truly divorce ourselves from being affected by other humans and nature itself. It implies that humans can ascend to godliness, whereby they can never clash, or work together in tandem so effectively that individual action becomes impossible. The market is natural and, while it may seem alien, it is rather a process where we, as humans, come together and affect one another. If anything, the market brings us together, leading onto the final form of alienation. Alienation from Relations Capitalism puts workers in competition with one another, while money drives us apart. Additionally, the desire and need to amass capital put people into conflict. Humans should be united in their fulfilment of their species-being. But are humans supposed to be permanently united? Humans are not a hive-mind. We have separate agencies and, as a result of the nature of our different lives, we are going to come to disagree with one another. But this itself would be alienating from our true selves, which are naturally and genuinely separate. Even with post-scarcity, we may still clash in the way we view the world, our principles, our lot in life; humans are naturally competitive and any view that claims that this is wrong misunderstands human nature or seeks to change it in such a way that it becomes inhuman. If we are not fundamentally socially, creative, productive beings, then we cannot be alienated by the work process or the estrangement of our products. Humans are simply too complex to relegate to a singular purpose. From this, this essay has also shown that the work process is not intrinsically alienating as work is not meant to be fulfilling for its own sake. The products of our labour are not necessarily wholly ours and workers voluntarily give up their shares of their product for remuneration. It has also shown that we are not alienated by market-forces, as we are not its sole creators. Finally, we are not alienated from our fellow workers through Capitalism, but rather through the metaphysical nature of our separate agencies. We are simply different people and we will come to conflict regardless of money, capitalism or scarcity. Ultimately, Marxism seems more valuable as a concept of personal fulfilment that some individuals can adopt as their own conception of the good. Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx. Why read Marx today?

## 9: Marx Theory of Alienation | Sociology Learners

*1 In general, Marx's theory of alienation belongs to his earlier philosophy (the chapter "Estranged Labor" in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of , an unfinished work that was unpublished at the time of his death), and his theory of exploitation belongs to his later philosophy (in Capital). It is a matter of scholarly debate.*

Alienation Alienation is the process whereby people become foreign to the world they are living in. The concept of alienation is deeply embedded in all the great religions and social and political theories of the civilised epoch, namely, the idea that some time in the past people lived in harmony, and then there was some kind of rupture which left people feeling like foreigners in the world, but some time in the future this alienation would be overcome and humanity would again live in harmony with itself and Nature. Marx had a specific understanding of the very sharp experience of alienation which is found in modern bourgeois society. Marx developed this understanding through his critique of Hegel. According to Hegel, through their activity, people created a culture which then confronted them as an alien force. But for Hegel human activity was itself but the expression of the Spirit or *Zeitgeist* which acted through people. In the first place, Marx insisted that it was human labour which created culture and history, not the other way around; in other words spirit was a human product, not the other way around. Instead of considering them to be predicates of their subjects, Hegel makes the predicates independent and then lets them be subsequently and mysteriously converted into their subjects. Hegel makes the predicates, the object, independent, but independent as separated from their real independence, their subject. Subsequently, and because of this, the real subject appears to be the result; whereas one has to start from the real subject and examine its objectification. The mystical substance becomes the real subject and the real subject appears to be something else, namely a moment of the mystical substance. Precisely because Hegel starts from the predicates of universal determination instead of from the real subject, and because there must be a bearer of this determination, the mystical idea becomes this bearer. But if the workers related to their product as an expression of their own essence and recognised themselves in their product and were recognised by others in their work, then this was not the basis for alienation; on the contrary, this was the only genuinely human relation. Each of us would have in two ways affirmed himself and the other person. Our products would be so many mirrors in which we saw reflected our essential nature. My work would be a free manifestation of life, hence an enjoyment of life. Presupposing private property, my work is an alienation of life, for I work in order to live, in order to obtain for myself the means of life. My work is not my life. It is not her product but the product of the capitalist. The worker makes a rod for her own back. Once a product enters the market, no-one has any control of it, and it sets off on a course which appears to be governed by supra-human laws. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. This Fetishism of commodities has its origin, as the foregoing analysis has already shown, in the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them.

Alliance Politics Alliance politics is the left political terrain characterised by the coming-together of disparate interest groups to pursue a common cause, while retaining their own independence. Alliances have been around a long time Thomas Paine first used the term in to describe the relations between the States of America, but as the dominant feature of left politics it is quite new. Alliance politics began to replace identity politics on one side, and left sectarian politics on the other side beginning in the early s. Throughout the post-war period when a series of social movements dominated the left political landscape, any number of political parties and interest groups would be found within any social movement usually engaged in a struggle over program and leadership within the movement. This was because the social movements themselves were poles of attraction, and parties and interest groups adapted themselves to this terrain by working within social movements. This is not the same as alliance politics, where the fragmentary effect of the identity politics which grew up within the social movements is such that no social movement is

any longer a sufficiently powerful pole of attraction to be able to build sufficient social force to achieve its own ends; consequently, the various interest groups form alliances in which each participant brings to the alliance its own resources, with the aim of concentrating sufficient weight to achieve the agreed common program. These local-action movements emphasised the development of community as opposed to identity politics, and developed the ideas of alliance politics which were to become the sine qua non of protest and community action by the s. As a stage of development of a social or political movement however, an alliance is very important, since it allows people with different ideas and theories to engage in collective practice, and it is this collective practice which forms a concrete basis for the development of a new principle which can be embraced by all the participants. It should be self-evident however, that until this movement has an alternative to a world run by transnational capitalist organisations it cannot constitute any fundamental threat; but as soon as the movement agrees on an alternative vision, it is no longer alliance politics.

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