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April 27, 1978

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MARX'S CATEGORY OF PRAXIS

BY

LAWRENCE KENNEDY SCHMIDT

B.A., Reed College, 1972

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Philosophy
in the Graduate School of
The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico
May 1978

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the category of praxis in Marx's philosophy. By means of this it is suggested that the category of praxis is the central category of Marx's philosophy and that it provides a means by which the development and unity of Marx's work may be analyzed. The method of exposition is to discuss the definition and subdivisions of this category as found in Marx's works.

In the first chapter it is demonstrated that the category of praxis results from Marx's synthesis of Hegel's idealism and French materialism. Praxis is defined as sensuous human activity. In the following chapter the category of praxis is defined through an analysis of human activity. The distinction of human activity from animal activity is shown to exist in both Marx's earlier and later writings.

In the third chapter, I develop three sub-categories of praxis, i.e. labor, consumption and useless activity. This sub-categorization is argued to be implicit in Marx. I argue that thinking was also considered by Marx to be a form of labor in this

general sense. In the fourth chapter the divisions of the category of praxis which exist in the capitalist epoch are discussed. The purpose is to demonstrate that these distinctions form the basis for Marx's understanding and his critique of capitalism.

In the fifth chapter the result of the category of praxis, revolutionary praxis, is discussed. The possibility of changing the world for humanity is grasped and a moral obligation noted. In the final chapter this discussion is reviewed to suggest possible further areas of investigation.

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Introduction

This thesis is an exploration of the category of praxis. As such it forms part of the discussion concerning the unity and development of Karl Marx's philosophy. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the category of praxis. By means of this analysis, it will be seen that the category of praxis is contained within Marx's thought and that it forms the central category of his philosophy.

If this thesis is successful, the category of praxis would provide a structure by which an analysis of the development and unity of Marx's work could be made. In outline this would be that Marx develops the category of praxis in his earlier writings and later develops the implications of this category both in terms of the revolution of society and the development of humanity as well as in the critique of the capitalist system. Once this is done, it would be possible to examine the historical developments since Marx to see in what ways the category of praxis could still serve as a philosophical basis for the understanding of reality. The criterion of truth,

which would be used, is itself contained in the category of praxis. This is the context within which this thesis is the attempt to establish the category of praxis and its meaning.

The problem of this thesis is that Marx never explicitly discusses the category of praxis either as his central category or in its divisions. That the concept of praxis is central to Marx's thought is accepted by many. However, its interpretation and exact divisions are disputed. This thesis is an attempt to discover and define the category of praxis implicit in Marx's work. As such it is an introduction to this interpretation of Marx's philosophy.

In outline this thesis will progress in the following way. In the first chapter it will be briefly demonstrated that the category of praxis developed from a synthesis by Marx of the idealist philosophy of Hegel, the French materialist philosophies, and the French and English political economies. Praxis is sensuous human activity. It is shown to be the result of a synthesis of the above philosophies. The implication of the category of praxis is seen to be revolutionary praxis.

In the second chapter Marx's distinction between human activity or praxis, and animal activity is analyzed to clearly define the category of praxis.

It will be seen that this distinction is contained in both the early and later works of Marx. Human rationality is seen to be the distinguishing feature of praxis. The interconnection of praxis and nature is discussed as well as the development of praxis in human history.

In the third chapter an attempt is made to develop three sub-categories of the category of praxis. These are labor, consumption, and useless human activity. This results from an extrapolation of the general definition Marx gives of labor, the role of consumption in the production process, and Marx's distinction of a useless commodity. In the discussion of labor I argue that thinking is a type of labor. This is important in understanding the unity of theory and praxis and is supported by Marx's discussion of the historical development of the divisions of labor.

In the fourth chapter the divisions of the category of praxis which exist in the capitalist epoch are discussed. The purpose is to demonstrate that the distinctions Marx makes in praxis form the basis of his understanding and critique of capitalist society. The division of capitalist society into two classes is seen to be based on each class's relationship to the means of production; the praxis

characteristic of each is different. The distinction between the two aspects of labor provides the basis for the labor theory of value. The surplus theory of value and the process of capital accumulation are seen to be based on the distinction between necessary and surplus labor. Wage labor as alienated labor is analyzed and demonstrates the human need to supersede this form of production. The discussion of the three major types of labor in the capitalist system clarifies the role of each in the process. The labor and alienation of the capitalist are discussed to show their role in society. Useless human activity in capitalism is shown to have specific characteristics in this society.

In the fifth chapter the result of the understanding of the category of praxis, revolutionary praxis, is discussed. The possibility of changing the world for humanity is grasped.

Chapter 1: The Category of Praxis

This thesis is an exploration of the category of praxis. This interpretation of the philosophy of Marx is based upon the idea that Marx developed a new philosophical Weltanschauung during his early life. The new philosophical basis was a result of Marx's conviction that the conditions in the world needed to be changed and made more human. In looking for the way to accomplish this Marx read the German philosophers (especially Hegel), the French materialist philosophers, and the political economists of France and England.

From these sources Marx developed his new philosophy. It was a synthesis of these different philosophies. Reality was the material, concrete, 'everyday' world. But not the world of the materialist, where the human was conceived as a machine¹ and everything functioned according to strictly deterministic

1. This refers to La Mettrie's work. See: Nathan Rotenstreich, Basic Problems of Marx's Philosophy (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 27ff.

laws of nature. Although Marx accepted this view of nature, he felt the human being, although a part of nature, was in him/herself not strictly determined by the laws of nature. The actions of individuals as well as the development of the human species could not be determined by an analysis of the laws of motion of natural bodies, but rather an analysis of human history and socio-economic conditions would provide a general answer. That humans were by means of their own labor in the process of creating themselves, a self-creation not strictly determined by nature, is the idea Marx adopts from the idealist philosophy of Hegel. For Hegel the spirit is "defined as spontaneous, as a free self-determination".² The free, self-determination of spirit was returned by Marx to the human beings. Marx rejects the abstract, ideal realm in which the idealist conceived the activity

2. ibid., p. 32, where Rotenstreich refers to Hegel's Encyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften: Sämtliche Werke, vol. 5, par. 383. Rotenstreich suggests this as one interpretation of the active side of praxis in the first thesis on Feuerbach. That the process of self-creation implies an indeterminism for Marx, I interpret from Marx's discussion concerning human activity (see chapter 2) and the theses on Feuerbach. It could be further supported by Engels' letters where he suggests that Marx had been too deterministically interpreted in his work on historical materialism. Also research might reveal a connection with Marx's doctoral dissertation which concerned determinism and his later adaptation of this part of Hegel's philosophy.

of man.

Marx succinctly presents this synthesis in the first thesis on Feuerbach:

The main problem of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach's) is that the object, the reality, sensuousness is grasped only in the form of the object or the perception (Anschauung); not, however, as sensuous human activity, praxis; not subjectively. Hence the active side was developed abstractly in opposition to materialism by idealism - which naturally does not know the real, sensuous activity as such. ... He ((Feuerbach)) does not, therefore, understand the meaning of 'revolutionary', 'practical-critical' activity.³

The active side of human labor in developing the real concrete world is introduced by Marx into the objective material universe of the materialists. The basic idea of materialism, that reality is material, objective and concrete, is correct, but this universe must essentially include the active subjective labor of humans in their interaction with nature. Labor is active by affecting that upon which it acts. It is subjective in being partially determined by the subject. Labor is the object of the will of the subject, where this will is not strictly determined

3. Karl Marx, Thesen ad Feuerbach, in Texte zu Methode und Praxis, II: Pariser Manuskripte 1844, ed. Gunther Hillmann (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968), pp. 190-192. All texts quoted often will be noted by a short abbreviation; a correlation of abbreviations and titles appears in Appendix I. This text will be TF followed by the number of the thesis. Normally a text abbreviation will be followed by the relevant page number. All translation from the German will be mine unless otherwise noted.

by natural laws but influenced by social, economic conditions. The process of reality is influenced by human activity which is an objective, real, concrete part of reality.

Praxis is sensuous human activity. Sensuous means concrete, material, as opposed to a supersensuous, other-worldly, or transcendent of the concrete, material world. The category of praxis⁴ is the category of human activity. Humans are material natural beings as is their activity material and objective. Praxis is, however, active. It affects the objective world actively in changing it. Although praxis must act within the bounds of natural laws, it is able to interact with nature subjectively.

On the other hand, human activity is not simply capricious. The human being is not an isolated individual, but an individual member of the human species, a member of society. Praxis is within the social context. Human history is the history of the development of praxis. The individuals act within the historical situation and are influenced by it (TF 3). There are laws of human history which are different from those of nature. The historical

4. The term praxis was not a technical term for Marx. It occurs rarely in his works and means, usually, simply human activity in the actual world. It has become a term with several meanings in later discussions of Marx's philosophy.

development of humanity is based upon the relationships among humans which are formed by their mode of production. That is, the productive capacity of praxis in producing their means of subsistence, their way of life, determines the social structure in which they act.

In the social production of their lives men enter into specific, necessary relations independent of their wills, namely relations of production, which reflect a particular stage of development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production build the economic structure of society, the real basis, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and which reflects a specific social form of consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and mental process of life. It is not the consciousness of men which determines their being, but, reversed, their social being determines their consciousness. At a certain stage in their development, the material powers of production of society come into a contradiction with the existing relations of production.⁵

The importance of the economic structure in understanding the reality in which humans act was the result of Marx's critical study of political economy. The structures of political economy are not eternal but in process. The process is dialectical; by means of the development of a contradiction a new social structure

5. Karl Marx, Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie, in Marx-Engels Werke, Band 13 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1961), p. 8-9. Hereafter K-PO.

emerges from the supersession of that contradiction. Marx incorporated this with the synthesis of materialism and idealism to form the basis of his philosophy. For Marx the answer to the question of how human development is to be understood, and how the general structure of society is to be comprehended lies in the economic process.

Praxis is active in developing new means of production and thereby new social structures. In the practical interaction with nature, in the development of new means of production, praxis is not strictly determined. Change in social reality is founded in the ability of humans in their praxis to develop new means of producing their means of life. In my interpretation of the problem of determinism, Marx sees the general laws of human development as determining laws. But within these social historical laws of development there is no strict determinism in the discoveries of new modes of production. What new modes of production will develop under a particular economic structure is not determined. Nor is it determined by whom or when these will be made. What is determined is the general dialectical process.

The implication of this philosophic foundation is expressed in the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, the point is to change it" (TF 11).

The philosophers to which Marx refers have been unable to actively change the world, primarily because they only interpreted the world, but did not act to change it; presumably because their philosophies either did not incorporate this possibility or the philosophy was a false interpretation of the world. Marx's philosophy allows for the changing of the world. Its possibility is inherent in the category of praxis. Not only is it possible to change the world, but to change it, improve it, is the point, the conclusion of Marx's philosophy. The way to change the world is through revolutionary, practical-critical activity, revolutionary praxis.

Chapter 2: Human Activity

Human activity is distinguished by Marx from those actions and reactions found in the rest of nature. The course of human activity is not established by nature but is open to control by human beings. The course of action in the rest of nature, whether the reactions of chemical elements or the movements of plants and animals, are determined by nature. Human activity, on the other hand, is not predetermined by the nature of the human being. This is not to say that human activity is in no way influenced by nature. There are natural conditions which do determine human activity in some ways. The important distinction is that in a significant way the activity of a human being is able to be determined by the choice of that being. The human may decide to act in this or that way, whereas this choice is not possible for the rest of the beings in nature. This difference is essential, for it allows for the possibility of the development of human activity in the individual and in the species. The development and perfection of humanity is not predetermined by nature

but must result from the active choice of the human individuals involved in this development, although this choice may not be consciously aimed at the human species development. This entails, where the human is conscious of his/her role in human history, that the human is responsible for his/her actions and the development of the species. The development of humanity itself is, however, a process of self-realization within the realm of nature.

The freedom of the human being from a determination by nature is an idea Marx inherited from his historical situation.¹ It found expression in his earliest writings. At the age of seventeen Marx wrote for the required Gymnasium German essay:

Nature itself set for the animal the range of influence in which it should move, and the animal peacefully completes this without attempting to go beyond this range, without even supposing there to be another one. The Godhead also gave man a general goal - to ennoble himself and it, but it left to man himself the choice of the means through which he would accomplish this.²

Humanity has a natural end which is the ennoblement or perfection of itself, but the way to this end must

1. See the introduction and first chapter of Isaiah Berlin's Karl Marx, His Life and Environment.

2. Karl Marx, Betrachtung eines Jünglings bei der Wahl eines Berufes, in Marx-Engels Werke: Ergänzungsband: Erster Teil (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1974), p. 591.

be developed by the human beings themselves. This basic idea remains in all of Marx's work, although many details are changed and developed. The good of humanity becomes the truly human society, the communist society. The path to this end is founded upon a scientific analysis of the conditions of historical change and the present stage. The immediate task is discovered to be the struggle for the proletarian revolution. Godhead and religion are dismissed; human beings have developed in nature.

In comparing the activity of animals with those of the human being, Marx develops this distinction. Taking the examples of spiders and bees, who in their particular activity are far superior to their human counterparts, the weaver and builder, Marx points out that what differentiates human activity is that there is a plan in the human mind which not only indicates the end of this activity but also the process through which the intended result will be achieved. Both the weaver and builder could explain what they intended to do and also change their intention if another, better way were shown them. The spiders and bees can only proceed according to their instincts, they cannot control their process or change it. Nature itself in its development could change these instincts but not the spider or bee. In the first volume of

Das Kapital, Marx makes this point within the discussion of the simple labor process which we will analyze in full later.

We presuppose labor in the form which belongs exclusively to man. The spider performs operations which are similar to those of the weaver, and the bee puts to shame through the building of its wax cells many a human builder. However, right at the beginning what distinguishes the worst builder from the best bee is that he had built the cell in his head, before he built it in wax. At the end of the labor process there appears a result which in the beginning was already in the imagination of the laborer, therefore already ideally there. Not that he just causes a change in form of the natural, he realizes in the natural at the same time his purpose, which he knows, which is conditioned by the ways and means of his action as laws, and which must be subordinated to his will. And this subordination is no singular act. Besides the exertion of the organs which work, the purposeful will, which expresses itself as attention, is needed for the total duration of the labor, and all the more, the less it carries the laborer away with itself by means of its own content and the ways and means of its execution, the less he enjoys it thereby as the play of his own bodily and mental forces.³

It should be noted that Marx's distinction is not based on either the quality of the product nor the efficiency of the productive process. In fact, the spider and bee were chosen by Marx precisely because they were more efficient in their work, with special

3. Karl Marx, Das Kapital Band 1, in Marx-Engels Werke, vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962), p. 193. Hereafter referred to as Kap I: Band 2 (vol. 24) as Kap II Band 3 (vol. 25) as Kap III.

organs and natural powers specific to their production, and because their products were more refined than those of many of their human counterparts.

The essential difference for Marx lies in human rationality. Only humans are able to imagine the results and the process of their activity before actually acting. The process was first run through by the mind in the imagination before the builder began to build or the weaver to weave. That human rationality plays an essential role in human activity, allows for the possibility of choice of means and ends, and so a choice of the way of life. Not only do we run through the activity first, we also decide whether or not we wish to do this. Does it fulfill our purpose? Not only can we change nature, but what is characteristic of human beings, is that we can reform nature in accordance with our desires or purposes. We may realize our purpose in nature.

Not only does consciousness play an important part before the activity begins to be realized, but it also continues to be actively involved during the process of realization. Thinking and acting are united in a continual process of information exchange and self correction. The more serious and difficult the task, the more intense the concentration. The less involved and self aware we are of our selves as creating, the more we need to concentrate in order not to make mistakes.

Marx assumes this in Das Kapital when he begins the discussion of the simple production process. It is an assumption upon which Marx elaborated in his unpublished manuscripts written in Paris in 1844. Here we find the philosophic basis for this assumption. In the following passage Marx uses the same distinction.

The animal is directly one with its life-activity. It does not differentiate itself from it. It is it. Man makes his life-activity itself an object of its will and consciousness. He has conscious life-activity. It is not a determination with which he directly comes together. The conscious life-activity differentiates man directly from the animal life-activity. Only by means of this is he a species-being. Or he is only a conscious being, i.e. his own life is for him an object, only because he is a species-being. Only by means of this is his activity free activity.⁴

The animal and its activity are one. The essence of a bee includes its activity of hive building. This activity is part of the nature of a bee established by nature. The bee is not conscious. It cannot have its activity as an object of its will. The human, on the other hand, can make his/her activity an object of consciousness, an object of will. That this is possible for human beings characterizes them as a

4. Karl Marx, Ökonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripte, in Günther Hillmann (ed.), Texte zu Methode und Praxis II (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968), p.57. Hereafter O-P MS.

species different from other species. The species-characteristic of the human being is its free, conscious activity (O-P MS 57). Human activity is said to be free because it can be changed by the human as a conscious agent. It is not established by nature, but by the human species itself. Marx continues the discussion:

The practical creation of an objective world, the reworking ((Bearbeitung)) of inorganic nature, is the verification of man as a conscious species-being i.e. as a being who relates to the species as his own being or to himself as a species-being. Certainly the animal also produces. It builds itself a nest, a house, as the bee, beaver, ant, etc. It produces only that which it directly needs for itself or its young ones; it produces one-sidedly, whereas man produces universally; it produces only under the rule of direct physical need, whereas man himself free from physical need produces and first truly produces in the freedom from these; it produces only itself, whereas man reproduces the whole of nature; its product belongs directly to its physical body, whereas man freely faces his product. The animal forms only in accordance with the standard and need of its species, whereas man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard of the object; man forms therefore also according to the laws of beauty (O-P MS 57).

It is not production itself which makes the difference but the method of production. Animal activity is established for the immediate needs of itself and its children, i.e. the species. It is a one-sided activity which is inherent in its nature. Human activity, although also conditioned by direct physical

needs, may transcend these and become free. Human needs transcend those required by the human as a physical organism and become universal. The human is capable of changing the natural environment in which he/she lives in accordance with his/her needs. Truly human production, that most characteristic of its essence, is production aimed to satisfy the desires and needs of humanity which transcend the realm of pure physical needs and are needs developed by and for humans. This is not possible in animal activity since animals are not able to divorce themselves from their activity and products. The animal acts in accordance with its species, that is, by those species instincts established by nature. The human may act in accordance with not only the direct species needs of man but also with the needs of all species, the inherent properties of the natural objects, and so the universals, e.g. beauty. Humans may discover from the rest of nature ways of acting and producing.

We may discover the beautiful and the good. In fact this is our historical task of self fulfillment - not only may we survive but we may live well.

The human being is a member of a historically developing species, a species and the only species in the historical process of self-development, self-realization. As such the human being is realizing its own activity, its way of life, by means of its

own activity. Human activity, therefore, is itself in the process of becoming its own true self. That is, human activity as truly human activity - the activity of the human who has realized his final species form - is not the same as human activity in this historical process. The process of the development of human activity itself becomes an object of human activity. Human activity in general is characterized by being free, conscious activity. Yet, both freedom and consciousness must be viewed as continua. It may be more or less free, more or less conscious. Moreover, the development of human activity is dialectical.

Human activity involves more than just the human. It necessarily involves nature. Nature is the object of human activity; it is that upon which the human acts. It is not possible that human activity not be based in nature, that it could be purely idea. Marx makes this clear in his criticism of Hegel where he states:

If the real, corporal man, standing on the solid well-rounded earth and breathing in and out all forces of nature, posits his real, objective forces of being by means of his expression as foreign objects, then the positing is not subject; it is the subjectivity of objective forces of being, whose action, therefore, must also be an objective one. An objective being effects objectively, and it would not effect objectively if objectivity did not lie in its essential character. It makes, posits only objects, because

it is posited by means of objects, because it is at home ((a part of)) in nature. In the act of positing it does not, therefore, precipitate out of its 'pure activity' a creation of objects, but its objective product verifies only its objective activity, its activity as the activity of an objective natural being (O-P MS 116-117).

Here Marx is criticizing Hegel's position that the human essence is self-consciousness, that it is this self-consciousness that 'posits' the objects of human activity outside man as objects, and that therefore the objects are not real, objective ones but subjective ones which appear as objective. For Marx, the human is a real material being whose objects are the results of real objective activity. The human is an objective being in nature, the human natural being. The act of positing does not prove the subjectivity of the objects but rather the objective nature of man as a natural, objective being, a being in the real, objective reality of nature. "As soon as I have an object, this object has me as an object. But a non-objective being is a non-real, non-sensible, only thought, i.e. only imagined being, a being of abstraction (O-P MS 118).

The human being as a natural being has natural powers which enable it to live. These natural powers enable the natural being to satisfy the needs which the being has, i.e. the need to appropriate a natural object. This is the case for all living beings.

The human, as a natural being, has natural powers

which he or she must use in order to appropriate those natural objects which it needs. These natural powers include such features as our muscular system, our specialized hand, the abilities of our sense organs, and especially the ability of our brain. By means of these we come in contact with natural objects and appropriate them for our own purposes. Because of this, that nature which exists outside of the subject is necessary for the subject. It is in this sense that Marx speaks of nature functioning as the inorganic body of the human. It is not part of the human organism, but its object, hence 'inorganic'. It is however necessary for the organism, hence 'body'. All natural beings live from nature, but the human more universally since the range of nature from which he lives is that much greater.

As plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc. build theoretically a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of science; partly as objects of art, - his mental (geistige) inorganic nature, mental means of life, which he must first prepare for enjoyment and digestion - so they also build practically a part of human life and human activity. Physically man lives only from these natural products, be they in the form of food, heating, clothes, houses, etc. The universality of man appears practically just in the universality which makes the whole of nature to be his inorganic body, in so far as they are 1) the direct means of life, and in as much as they are 2) the material, the object and the tool of his life activity (O-P MS 56).

In comparing human and animal activity, we see that both must act upon nature in order to live, but

the extent of nature which is available to each is different. Animal activity is set by nature through instincts, reflexes, etc., whereas human activity may develop to encompass so much more, for human activity, since conscious and free, may discover new objects in nature for its activity. Nature is the substance, the basis, for human life. Human activity, whether thought activity or physical activity, finds only those objects which exist in nature as the basis for its activity. Nature outside of the human exists for him/her as an inorganic body in two ways. Firstly, it is a direct means of life which allows the human organism to survive. Secondly, it is the basis for development of human activity. It provides the matter, objects, and tools for all activity. In this second form nature provides for the distinction between animal and human, since it opens to the human the possibility of being able to create in a great variety of ways. It allows the human to actualize him/herself by means of his/her activity in a universal way.

Man makes his own his all-sided being in an all-sided manner, therefore, as a total man. Each of his human relationships to nature, - seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, willing, being active, loving, in short, all organs of his individuality, as the organs which directly in their form are social organs, - are in their objective relation or in their relation to objects the appropriation (Aneignung) of them (O-P MS 78).

In Das Kapital Marx is referring to this relationship of nature as the means of life for the human in speaking of the simple labor process. In this passage (Kap I 57) Marx speaks of useful labor in generating use values as the condition for human existence independent of any particular social form and as an eternal natural necessity which makes possible human life by making possible the exchange of materials between man and nature. Although Marx is speaking of a type of human activity it is necessarily a process between man and nature wherein nature functions as the necessary means of life for man.

Another important aspect of Marx's characterization of human activity is that it is in a process of development and expansion. This is one fundamental contribution of Hegel's philosophy. Marx writes in 1844:

The importance of Hegel's Phänomenologie and its end result - the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle - is, therefore, first, that Hegel grasps the self-creation of humanity as a process, the objectification as opposed objectification, as opposed expression and as supersession of this opposed expression; that he, therefore, grasps the essence of labor, and understands the objective human, because a real human, as the result of its own labor (O-P MS 113).

The human being is not created by nature in its completeness but must create its own final being in the historical development of humanity. This process of human development is the development of human

activity. It is the development through human activity of humanity. This demands that human activity itself can expand in the realm of nature, which it appropriates, as well as in its own organization and method.⁵ This can only be a historical development of the species-powers in humanity, for the human being is not merely a member of the species but essentially a species-being, i.e. he/she can be human only by being part of humanity. An individual separated from his/her fellow beings cannot be a true human. Part of the essence of being human is being with other humans in a united whole. In being in society, the individual is conditioned by the particular social and natural conditions of that time and place. One lives within a Horizont and yet is not completely determined by it. The other important point Hegel makes is that this progression is a dialectical one. The progress to human self-realization goes through self-alienation and by its negation and positive supersession arrives

5. For Marx this expansion in the appropriation of nature is uncritically accepted. Today, we see the possibility of destroying nature itself through irrational expansion. It is, however, clear that Marx recognized the humans' dependence on nature; it is our inorganic body. Another form of appropriation which would not destroy nature, yet would also not serve humanity, i.e. wasteful appropriation of nature, could be considered under the sub-category of useless human activity (see chapter 3). The problem is in deciding what is useful, i.e. truly useful for humanity. This is further complicated, from Marx's perspective, by the fact that we are not yet truly human.

at its true self. It is the total alienation of human activity in the capitalist society which provides the basis for the supersession of alienated labor in the following historical epoch.

In Das Kapital (Kap I 392 n 89) Marx approves of Vico's (Giovanni Battista Vico, 1668-1744) distinction that human history is a product of humans whereas natural history is not. It is clear throughout Marx's work that he believed that there were natural laws which controlled natural history and human history in as much as these could not be changed by human activity. Human activity can only reform or recreate nature by beginning with nature and through activity change it according to the possibilities inherent within its laws. Man cannot create ex nihilo new nature or new natural laws. Hence Marx ridicules those idealists who thought this possible in the following allegory.

Once upon a time a valiant fellow had the idea that men were drowned in water only because they were possessed with the idea of gravity. If they were to knock this notion out of their heads, say by stating it to be a superstition, a religious concept, they would be sublimely proof against the illusion of gravity, of whose results all statistics brought him new and manifold evidence. This honest fellow was the type of the new revolutionary philosophers in Germany.⁶

6. Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, The German Ideology, ed. and trans. C. J. Arthur, (New York: International Pub. 1970), p. 37. Arthur's revised translation. Hereafter G-I.

Marx agrees with Benjamin Franklin's definition of man as a tool making animal (Kap I 194), not because rationality or human thought processes were not the distinguishing characteristic of human activity and so of man in general, but because the historical result of this human characteristic is that humans developed tools in order to improve their environment and their appropriation of nature. "Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence" (G-I 42). The difference is that human activity is distinguished from animal activity in being free, conscious activity, while human activity distinguishes itself from animal activity when it begins to produce the human's means of subsistence. To produce is opposed to a passive consumption of what is naturally available. The humans organize themselves in such a way as to produce and so to a greater extent control their means of subsistence. To do this, however, it is necessary that human activity be what it is, a conscious activity which allows for the development of a plan, etc. which would make new forms of production possible.

Another important point in this theory is that not only does the progress caused by human activity

change nature, it also changes the form of human life and the human being. "Production produces, therefore, not only an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object."⁷ "The education of the five senses is a labor of all previous world history " (O-P MS 81). Human activity creates a new environment through its production. This new environment induces new changes in the way we live and the needs and desires we feel. We live in a different world and perceive it from a different perspective. We have ourselves changed.

In summary, human activity is the distinguishing character of the human species. Human activity is free, conscious activity. It is praxis in the category of praxis. It is free in the sense of not being determined by nature but rather in part by the needs and desires of the human being. It is activity controlled in part by the choice of the human being. It is conscious activity in that the human being anticipates the manner and form which this activity will have. It is the expenditure of human energies, i.e. of the natural human forces. The substance of human activity is nature. Through this activity the human being actualizes him/herself in the real objective world. Human activity is also an historical

7. Karl Marx, Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1953), p. 6-9. Hereafter as Grund.

activity which develops and expands as the human being develops and changes. In its historical development, human activity contains the potentiality of realizing its final essential nature, in the realization of the truly human essence. Historically the development of praxis is dialectical. Although the productivity of labor increases, the expression of human activity becomes increasingly alienated. In the capitalist stage, the alienation of praxis has become so obvious that its supersession is desired. Human activity is always social, although in examining its characteristics it may be viewed as individual - it is the individual's expression of her or himself as a member of the human species, of their species-being.

Having distinguished human activity from animal activity, we can now discuss those acts of humans which are based on the fact that a human being is also a natural being and sometimes reacts as any other natural being, from those actions which are human activities. Marx does not make this distinction, I raise it as an area for further discussion concerning the category of praxis.

According to the definition elaborated above, these non-human activities of the human would be those established and controlled by nature instead of by the human. They are neither conscious nor free activities. Examples of these activities would include such acts

as the internal actions and reactions of the body, the autonomous nervous system, and reflex reactions. Another area would include what we call the human instincts, e.g. the survival instinct. The aging process might also be considered in this set.

The problem we face in this distinction is that human activity is itself in the process of development. What at one time was a natural activity of man as a natural being, may now or at some time in the future become a human activity by being the object of our conscious free intervention. Previously the heart's activity would have been characterized as a non-human activity beyond our sphere of influence, yet today we are able to make this activity an object of our wills by using certain machines. The choice of using these machines to prolong life is now our choice; we must responsibly decide what actions we wish to take. The question is then what actions of the human really lie beyond our eventual control?

With the historical development of human activity, we can see that in the beginning when the human first learned to produce its means of subsistence, much of the activity was still controlled by nature, i.e. the human was still an animal to a great extent. Yet this activity was potentially human activity. Human activity, as free, conscious activity, needs to be interpreted very broadly. The degree of consciousness

involved in human activity may vary greatly. Marx's example of the builder or weaver shows that what is important is some conscious planning in that production process at some point. The weaver does not have to plan ahead, to think out in advance, each time she or he sends the shuttle through the shed. There is just the intention to weave, this is not thought each minute. This activity has become so well known that it is routine. One knows how to do it, has learned how to do it, and now no longer needs the conscious concentration involved in the learning process. This shows that Marx meant to include all such activities as routine movements, habits, conditioned responses as human activities. They involve either in their learning or development consciousness, and later presuppose this stage. Socially conditioned behavior is an example on the social level.

Chapter 3: Labor, Consumption, and Useless Activity

In this chapter we shall distinguish three types of human activity.¹ Labor is human activity which produces a useful product. The labor process ends in a result useful to humans. Consumption is the human activity which consumes the product of human activity. If this is a useful product of labor, consumption is the satisfaction of the need or desire which led to its production. If the product is not useful the attempt to satisfy the desire will fail and consumption will not be a satisfaction. Consumption is for Marx a part of the labor process. Useless human activity is that activity which results in a useless product. In a sense it is a waste of human energy which indicates a failure in the human's attempt to produce something useful.

In the introduction to the Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie (Grund 6-9) Marx warns the reader that one cannot speak of production without

1. Although Marx does not explicitly make these distinctions, I shall attempt to demonstrate that they are implicit or congruous to his thought.

referring to the specific historical forms of production. Production and labor exist only within a particular historical stage of production. There is no existing labor-in-itself nor are all the characteristics of labor or production in one particular historical epoch true for all cases. Marx accuses the political economists of making the mistake of seeing the laws of capitalist production as eternal laws and not just applicable to this historical epoch. Thereby they are unable to understand the historical development of the production process (Grund 8-9). However, it is possible to speak of the general conditions of the labor process, i.e. those conditions found in all concrete cases. This is a useful abstraction to make in discussing the problem, yet it must be seen as an abstraction and not a particular concrete reality (Grund 9-10). In our present discussion we are discussing the types of human activity in this generalized sense. Later we shall examine the concrete forms of human activity in the capitalist epoch.

Labor

Marx characterizes labor in this general form, being independent of any particular social form, thusly:

Labor is then a process between man and nature, a process in which man effects, rules, and controls by means of his own action his material exchange with nature. He stands opposed to natural

matter as a natural power himself. He sets in motion the natural powers which belong to his body, - arms and legs, head and hand - in order to appropriate the natural matter in a form useful for his own life (Kap I 192).

Labor is a human activity. As such it is free conscious activity; in labor this aspect is seen in the laborer's control over his actions. The choice is made to interact with nature in certain ways using the natural powers inherent in the human. He or she sets in motion her/his hands and mind. Labor is essentially a process between the human and nature. Although involving in most cases more than just one person, the labor process is viewed in this discussion as a process between man and nature (Kap I 199).

What distinguishes labor from other human activities is that it is the appropriation of nature in a form useful for humans. It is an eternal, natural necessity of humans. The labor process is "purposive activity for the making of use values, the appropriation of the natural for human needs" (Kap I 198). The appropriation of nature is the making of nature one's own, in the sense of it becoming the means of life for the laborer, not only for the direct physical life, but also as that by means of which the laborer finds realization as the person he or she is. Labor is purposive activity in that the laborer works in order to produce something which he or she sees as the thing which will satisfy a need felt. The product or result

of labor is this value or useful thing.

"The simple moments of the labor process are the purposive activity or labor itself, its object, and its means" (Kap I 193). The objects of labor are separated into two groups. Those natural things which are found in nature without having been in any way changed by human activity are called objects of labor. These are, for example, fish, wild animals, the wood in natural forests, and ore in a vein. The other type of objects are called raw materials.² These are objects of labor which have already been prepared by means of human labor for use as objects in the labor process. These include the fish which have been caught and gutted, the wood from a cultivated forest, and the ore already separated from its vein.

A means of labor is defined as a thing or group of things which are used by the human between himself and the objects of labor as an extension of his natural powers. That is, some property of this means of labor is used to increase the laborer's own natural powers of action or the powers of a thing may be allowed to work for him/her. For example, the natural property of the hand is increased by the use

2. This is Marx's definition (Kap I 193); developed perhaps from the fact that most production processes begin with material already formed by human labor in some way.

of a pole with a cup on the end of it to pick fruit high in a tree. Marx quotes Hegel here (Kap I 194 n2) to show that reason's cunning lies in its ability to discover these means of production and put them to use. Not only does the earth provide many objects which may be used as means of production it also is a means of production in that man cultivates the soil to grow crops. Animals as 'beasts of burden' are similiarly means of production. All tools are as well. The means of production also include those things which provide for the place of the labor process. So the earth as a place to stand may be considered in this way as a means of labor. Marx also mentions buildings, canals, and streets as other means of production by providing the place for the labor process.

The labor process ends in a product.

The process ends in a product. His product is a use value, a natural material which has been appropriated for a human need by means of a change in form. Labor has combined itself with its object. It is objectified, and the object is worked upon. What appears on the side of the laborer in the form of unrest, appears now as a restful property, in the form of being, on the side of the product (Kap I 195).

The product of labor is the objectification of this human activity, human labor power. It is the realization of this human energy in a concrete thing. As a realization, it is a synthesis of this energy, the labor power, and the substance upon which it acts

using itself up in the process of reforming nature in a manner according to a plan for the satisfaction of a human desire or need. The product of labor is a useful objectification of human labor power in that this product is an object of need of the laborer, a useful form of being.

It should be noted that although the product of labor is usually thought of as a material object outside of the laborer, such as a desk, the product of labor may also include such things as are actualized during the process itself. Transportation is a labor activity whose product is the transporting of the objects themselves. The objects are changed in as much as their place is changed; this takes human energy and this energy is objectified in the new place of the object.³ In a similar case exercising is a labor activity which is realized during the process. The product is the improved condition of the body. This is, in most cases, the laborer's own body, although it could be that of another, say in a hospital where the body's subject is unable to exercise itself.

The labor process may also be viewed from the standpoint of its result. In this case the object of labor and the means of labor are called the means of

3. Marx's analysis of transportation will be discussed later.

production whereas labor itself is called productive labor,⁴ since it is labor which results in a product which satisfies human needs directly or indirectly. If directly, the product is subsequently consumed by the producer or another human in satisfying one of his needs. The product may indirectly satisfy a human need in that it is needed in another labor process which does produce a directly needed product. In this second process the product functions as a means of production. The production of tools is a good example of products which are indirectly useful. All raw materials of a labor process are also indirectly useful products of a former labor process. These may either form the substance of the later product or be used in part of the process without becoming part of the matter of the product.

Since a thing may have several properties which might be used in production, a particular product may function in several ways in later production processes or may itself be a final product. So grapes may be eaten, directly consumed to satisfy our need for food or desire for the taste of a grape, or they may be used in the process of producing wine. The product of a labor process, a use value, may be used

4. Marx uses 'productive' in two senses - here as simply productive of a use value, later he means specifically labor which produces capital. See Kap I 531 ff.

as a raw material, a means of production, or as a final product, the object of need or desire.

When the product of a former labor process functions as a means of production for a later process this product loses its character as a product and functions as an objective factor in a new process. In one sense it does not matter any more that it is a useful product of a former process, in as much as it functions. However, if it does not function properly it becomes quite clear that this product is the result of a labor process which was in some way faulty. Marx is indicating here the importance of the useful character of the product. If it does not function one sees that something was wrong in the labor process since its result turns out not to be useful. Only in its successful use in a labor process is the usefulness of the former product realized if not consumed directly. "A machine, which does not serve in a labor process, is useless" (Kap I 198). It is only living labor which can realize the use value or usefulness of a product which is not itself directly consumed as the satisfaction of a human need.

The product of all labor processes is a use value. All commodity production is a form of labor, though not all labor is commodity production, since all commodities must have not only a use value but a social use value, a use value for another. Engels clarifies

this in the fourth edition of Das Kapital by explaining that Marx meant by a social use value that the use value was exchanged with another use value of another person (Kap I 55n 11a). However, a thing may be a product of human labor yet not be a commodity. This is the case when the product satisfies a need of the producer and is consumed by her or him, or when it is, say, given away, etc., i.e. not exchanged. A thing may also be useful to humans, have a use value, yet not be the result of labor. These are objects of nature which involve no human activity in their production; nature produces them, for example, air. Therefore, that a thing has a use value does not necessarily indicate that it is the result of labor. On the other hand, labor can only result in a use value; labor is useful human activity. If the result of what appears to be labor is useless then this human activity is not labor (Kap I 55). This is useless human activity and will be discussed later.

Those examples of labor which are clearly contained in Marx's concept are those human activities which begin with some sensible natural thing and reform it by means of this laboring activity with the help of whatever tools, natural forces, etc. (means of labor) so as to end with some thing useful to human beings. For example, a woodsman who plans to build a sawhorse and has a plan in mind as to how to do

this, collects some branches, his objects of labor, which are useful yet provided by nature. He cuts them with a saw, a tool, a means of production, which is a result of another labor process. He bring them back to the place where he usually cuts wood. Here the branches may be said to function as the raw materials since they have been cut and transported, i.e. already combined with human labor, if one were to divide this process into several smaller processes. Then with another product of labor, another raw material, some rope, he lashes these cut branches into the form of a sawhorse. The sawhorse is the product of his labor; the objectification of his human energy in this form. Whether he uses it himself or gives it to another to use does not affect its character as a product of labor. What is important is that the sawhorse is used and usable in cutting lumber. If it is not used by any human to satisfy some need, then the energy expended by the woodsman does not constitute labor, but is useless human activity.

Although this is a relatively simple example in comparison to the labor processes which build cities, intricate machines, ships, etc., it involves, nevertheless, several other labor processes which resulted in the rope and saw. He could have 'cut' the branches by breaking them with his hands and knee, and found

some sort of vine to use to bind them to make this process very simple. Even these simple examples involve careful analysis. Was there a path in the woods which our woodsman used? Was it an animal path or one formed by humans for their use? Where was he working; did he have to clear a place in which to work? Of special importance is the question of where or how he came to have the plan for a sawhorse. Was he told by another? Did he see one in use?

In summary, labor is the human activity which results in a use value by means of the reformation of nature through the natural powers of the human, which may be augmented by the use of other powers in natural objects. Nature serves as the substance of labor. Labor is the objectification of the human energies expended in the labor process in a useful manner. The usefulness of the result of labor resides in its ability to satisfy a human need or desire either directly or indirectly.

The Thought Process

Let me digress at this point to consider whether and to what degree the thinking process of humans is a labor process. If it is we should be able to identify the characteristics of labor in it. The laborer is still the human being as subject, the thinker. The object of thought, the substance of the

thinking process is nature as before - "as plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc. build theoretically a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of science, partly as objects of art," (O-P MS 56).

Not only are these things the objects of thought, but also their qualities and interactions. Many objects of thought may be termed raw materials in that labor itself is already incorporated in them.

We live in a world which we have to some extent already produced. In reforming nature we create new objects for our senses and thought. As we thereby also change ourselves, we are the product of our own activity. The sawhorse is a human object and an object of thought; it may be thought about and improved. The thought process itself uses hands, head, muscles, nerves, etc. Not only does the thinker use his eyes, ears, etc., his natural powers, as natural means of production, but also he or she may use other tools developed by other labor processes, such as glasses, microscopes, counting machines, scales and so on, as further means of thought production.

Not only those objects which we term material entities are used as means of production in thinking, but also theoretical structures, the results of former thought processes, are used. Geometry, as a theoretical product, is used as a means of production of thoughts as well as in the process of building bridges. The

dialectic, itself, as a result of thinking, is used as a tool (we speak of theoretical tools) in many thought processes.

So we have identified the object of thinking labor as well as the means of thinking. Thinking itself is the expenditure of human natural energies. In fact it requires a good deal of energy to think. "Truly free labor, e.g. composing, is both most extreme seriousness and most intense effort" (Grund 505). Composing is a type of thinking whether it be musical or mathematical. If thinking is labor, what then is the result of this process? The result is a new thought or combination of thoughts, a new theory. This thought could be as simple as the idea that flint is better than granite for use as a spear point because one has realized in the unity of thinking and practice that flint has the property of being formable into sharper edges than granite. Or it may be as complex as Marx's thought that the whole of the previous human history is the history of class struggle.

At this point most disagreement begins. The question is whether or not the results of the thinking process fit the criteria for the results of a labor process. That is, are new ideas and thoughts the result of the reformation of natural objects, the objectification of human powers? Adolfo Sanchez

Vazquez argues in The Philosophy of Praxis⁵ that theoretical activity is not a form of praxis. He defines Marx's concept of praxis, in general as "human activity aimed at transforming nature and society" (SV 92). Human activity is characterized by the active intervention of consciousness which functions in planning the action to be taken (SV 150). "All praxis is activity, but not all activity is praxis" (SV 149), and this holds for human activity as well. Praxis is defined in this way:

What is distinctive about practical activity, however, is the real objective character of the material on which it is executed, as well as of its results or product. ... The product of his activity in this sense is a material object which subsists independently of the process of its gestation and whose own substantive character is affirmed in the eyes of the subject, ... it takes on an existence independent of the subjective activity that created it (SV 155).

For Sanchez Vazquez it is essential that the result of praxis be a material object separated from the process of its production and the producer. The sawhorse of our example is clearly one example of the independence and materiality of the result of labor or praxis. This is called productive praxis. It produces material objects by reforming natural

5. Aldofo Sanchez Vazquez, The Philosophy of Praxis, trans. Mike Gonzalez (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1977). Hereafter SV.

objects or other results of productive labor. The human element or society may also be the object of praxis (SV 156). In this case praxis is political or revolutionary praxis. This results in a change in society.

Sanchez Vazquez makes an important distinction for his discussion between cognitive and teleological activity. The former only explains the immediate reality while the latter refers to an as yet non-existent reality (SV 153). This is important in that cognitive activity cannot be considered as a reformation or production of something new whereas teleological activity, since it aims at something new, contains within itself a demand for concrete action. This can then be a form of praxis while the cognitive activity cannot.

Both in the formulation of ends and in the production of knowledge, consciousness is restricted to its own frontiers; its activity cannot materialize or become objective. Thus although both these aspects are types of activity, they are not in any sense, objective activity, or praxis (SV 155).

Although theoretical 'practice' may transform perceptions, representations and concepts, producing in this way specific products called hypotheses, theories, laws, etc. none of them can of themselves transform reality as they do not fulfil the practical conditions as far as the relation to matter, to activity, or to the results of activity are concerned. Theoretical praxis, in other words, has no material, objective aspect; thus to consider theory as praxis involves a contradiction (SV 162).

The real problem in thinking labor for Sanchez Vazquez is that the objects, material and results of the thinking process are not material, objective objects, but are rather only psychic objects (SV 162). For him there is no real reformation of natural objects. There is only ideal production, the production of non-objects, and no real existence in psychic objects.

Sanchez Vazquez considers, however, both artistic activity as well as experimental activity to be forms of praxis (SV 158-159). Artistic production is praxis since it has a material basis and the art object is a material object; it is formed and created. Although the need satisfied by the art object may not be a given need, it is considered useful in that it carries on the process of the humanization of matter. This is clearer than the case of scientific experimentation which is considered as praxis since it involves the production or rather reproduction of given material phenomena under special circumstances. This is supposed to satisfy the criterion for material objectivity in praxis. However, the results of experimentation are not material products in the sense used by Sanchez Vazquez. He writes that the object of experimental scientific activity "is to test and prove hypotheses and to satisfy the general needs of theoretical research (SV 159). To satisfy a text and to prove hypotheses are not material objective

results in the sense he used to discount thinking as a form of praxis. The thinker as we saw may well use material means in the production of thoughts; so this cannot be used as a criterion for the inclusion of experiments and the exclusion of thought.

The solution to this problem will be discovered in the analysis of thinking and the unity of theory and praxis. It seems that Sanchez Vazquez considers thinking as completely separated from its material basis, from the practical, historical environment which is its basis. For him thought is non-material, non-objective and ideal. This is what Marx does not accept.

The product of labor is labor which fixes itself in an object, has been made into a thing; it is the objectification (Vergegenständlichung) of labor. The realization of labor is its objectification (O-P MS 52).

Is the result of thinking found in an object, a Gegenstand? How is thinking objectified? Gegenstand is that which stands against or opposed to the subject. It is primarily used to refer to those real material things identified by the subject as existing outside of itself. Marx uses Gegenstand as meaning a real existing entity. However, we can see that one's own hand is also a Gegenstand, as well as oneself, as an existing concrete being (O-P 81). We saw that being human was to have oneself as an object as

well as one's activity (O-P MS 56). Pain and other sensations are also objects of our consciousness.

If a thought or theory is not a Gegenstand then what is it? Clearly a non-object. If one accepts the dichotomy of the subject and object, then the answer to the question is the 'subject'. But Marx did not accept this distinction made in some earlier philosophies and would agree with Hegel in claiming there is no real distinction. Marx differed from Hegel in resolving this dichotomy into real, concrete, sensuous being instead of into the pure subject as Hegel did. For Marx "a non-objective (ungegenständlich) being was a non-being (Unwesen)" (O-P MS 118). To be an objective being is to have one's object outside oneself and to be an object for a third being, besides the direct object. The human is an object for other humans and is for them and itself an objective being. One can also be one's own object.

The essential powers (Wesenskräfte) of the human are as real, as gegenständlich, as the light is a natural power of the sun (O-P MS 117). Thinking is one of the human's natural powers, its distinctive one, as well as seeing, hearing, etc., not to forget the powers of mobility and strength in our bodies.

Even when I am scientifically active, an activity which I can seldom perform in direct community with others, I am socially, because as man, active. Not only are the materials of my activity - as language itself, in which the

thinker is active - given to me as social products, my own being (Dasein) is social activity; therefore, that which I make out of myself, I make out of myself for the society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being (O-P MS 78).

It is first to be remarked that 'scientific' does not mean as it does today pertaining to those particular branches of thought whether the natural sciences or the social sciences. Science meant the study of what is knowable, including all forms of knowledge or understanding.

Although Marx is primarily concerned with the question of the social character of human activity, we can see that the thinking process, the activity which results in knowledge, the scientific activity, is a social activity and is carried on in social material, language. Language is a social product and as product a gegenständliches product (Grund 390). Social activity is meant clearly by Marx to be an objective activity, an activity among objective being.

Marx continues the discussion by pointing out that one's consciousness is the theoretical form of that whose living form is the communal essence. But, the communal essence is not an abstraction, the individual is the social essence (O-P MS 78). "As species-consciousness the human verifies his real social-life and only repeats his true being (Dasein) in thinking" (O-P MS 78). Consciousness is a reflection

of the real concrete life of humans as they perceive it, and not the other way around. "Thinking and Being (Sein) are, therefore, certainly different, but at the same time in a unity with one another" (O-P MS 79). The unity of thought and being is essential for Marx. Neither can exist, for us, without the other. Thought has being for its object and interacts with being. Being is what it is for humans as it is thought. This does not mean that either being controls thought, for thought may create new forms of being through the activity of humans, or that thought controls being, since thought depends on being for its basis and truth. They exist together in a unity of theory and praxis.

One sees how the solution of theoretical contradictions itself is only possible in a practical way, only by means of the practical energies of man, and their solution is therefore in no way only an exercise of cognition, but a true life exercise, which philosophy cannot solve, just because it grasps this only as theoretical exercise (O-P MS 82).

The solution of the contradictions experienced in life as reflected in consciousness are, therefore, clearly not solvable in only a purely conscious manner, i.e. as a theoretical exercise. This is so since they are clearly the result of the real concrete world. If philosophy comprehends these as only theoretical problems, then it seeks to resolve them in only a

theoretical way. However, when philosophy has become self-conscious of the real concrete basis for these contradictions and of the power of human activity, then, at this point, philosophy will understand that the solutions are only possible by means of both theoretical and practical work. It will understand the unity of theory and praxis.⁶

The question whether objective truth comes to ((is possible for)) human thought - is not a question of theory, but a practical question. In praxis man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thought. The disputes concerning the reality or non-reality of thought - which is isolated from praxis, - is a pure scholastic question (T-F 2).

The question concerning the truth of thoughts cannot be answered in just examining any particular theory of knowledge. The answer will only come from an examination of the practical interaction of humans and nature, i.e. the interaction of theory and praxis in the objective world. The truth of a thought can be proven only in the practical interaction of man with nature, it cannot be proven by a theory. The reality of thought is its correspondence to the objective, concrete reality of the universe.⁷

6. See Mao Tse-tung's analysis of this unity in "On Practice." in Four Essays on Philosophy, (Peking: Foreign Languages, 1965), pp. 1-23.

7. Marx's theory of knowledge is a form of the correspondence theory of knowledge.

The power of a thought is that in knowing this thought the human may interact with nature to reform it, consciously grounding his or her action on this thought. Ernst Bloch emphasizes that "for Marx a thought is not thereby true because it is useful, but since it is true, it is useful."⁸ The this-sidedness of thought is the range or sphere of that contained in the thought, i.e. it is of this objective world, as opposed to a that-sidedness which would be a fantasy or ideal world.

Therefore, the thought process must be in continual interaction with the objective world. This process is not simply based on nature as its object of labor, but must during the process itself return to a practical interaction with the range of nature with which it is concerned to check the development of the thought. The thinking process does not result in a subjective thought, but in an objective one. The result of the thinking process is itself expressed in an objective manner available to some other thinking being.

As we saw, the thinking process itself is a social process, since it uses the medium of language which is a social product. The result of the thinking

8. Ernst Bloch, Das Prinzip Hoffnung, Erster Band: (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1959), p. 321-322.

process is not just the objectification of labor in that thing, but this thing is useful, is an object for, an active subject. So, just as a dress becomes a true product when it is worn, the thought becomes a true product when it is used and to be used by another it must be communicated or expressed in language.⁹ The thought expressed in language is the product of the thinking process, the product of thinking labor. As such this product satisfies the conditions of a product of labor in being an objective concrete thing. The usefulness of the result of the thinking process, its power, is seen in the unity of theory and praxis, in the actions of humans. Just as the artist objectifies his or her human energy in the art object and the weaver in the woven product, so the thinker in the expressions of his or her thoughts, whether this be by the spoken or written word.

An objection might be raised against this analysis based on a passage in the Grundrisse where Marx is discussing the opposition between capital and labor in the capitalist system. In supporting his view that the use value of labor (labor power) is realized by capital only when this labor power is used, Marx writes: "It ((the use value of labor power) becomes first real, when it is solicited by capital, set in

9. Based on Grund 13, where the example of the dress is given.

movement, since activity without an object is nothing or at most thought activity, with which we are not here concerned" (Grund 178). That is, the use value of labor power does not exist in the mere being of labor power but in its useful consumption or in the production of a useful object. If it is not used in reforming nature and solidifying itself in an object, it has no existing use value. The only possible exception Marx sees is the useful activity of thinking which is useful even without an object. However, Marx uses the word, 'at most', which to me signifies that even in the case of thinking labor there could be an object. Important to note is that even without determining the object of thinking, it is recognized that thinking is a useful activity and has a use value in its consumption.

The strongest evidence for supporting the argument that Marx saw thinking as a form of labor in his discussions of the historical development of labor and the division of labor. Thinking or head labor began in its natural unity with hand labor.

In as much as the labor process is a pure individual process, the same laborer unites all the functions of this, which later are separated. In the individual appropriation of natural objects for his life-purposes, he controls this himself. Later he is controlled. The single man cannot effect nature without the use of his own muscles under the control of his own mind. As in the system of nature head and hand belong together.

the labor process unites head labor and hand labor. Later they separate themselves into an antagonistic opposition (Kap I 531).

Thinking and doing, the unity of theory and practice are naturally united in all labor. Each depends on the other. In as much as one person works in the appropriation of the natural for his or her own life needs and desires, this unity is preserved. However, in the development of the labor process with the introduction of a division of the labor process among more than one person the natural unity of theory and practice is separated into activities of the different participants. "Division of labor only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. (The first form of ideologists, priests, is concurrent)" (G-I 51). With the division of labor some of the laborers give up their thinking activity to another group of persons who thereafter think for them. In doing this the hand laborers give up their own natural power and this division develops to the point of an antagonistic conflict between the two groups. It is clear that all thinking cannot be given up. "The separation of the mental potencies of the labor process from the hand labor is completed, as pointed out earlier, in large industry which is built upon the basis of machines" (Kap I 446). With the development of machines the labor of the machine

operators has been divested of most of the thinking labor involved in the labor process. This thinking has been done by a special group of laborers who design the machines; furthermore the designers themselves have been told by another what to design etc. The ruling class, in the final analysis, controls the thinking labor of a society by means of its economic hold over those who perform thinking labor.

"Any development of the productive power leads back, in the last instance, to the social character of the labor used in activity; to the division of labor within society; to the development of mental labor, namely the natural sciences (Kap III 92). The development of the productive powers of labor lead in the end to dissolution of the social structure which provided the basis for this development. Through the ensuing conflict a new social structure is developed from the basis of the new productive powers of labor (Kap III 890-891). In the communist society the antagonistic opposition of thinking labor and hand labor will be overcome; the unity of thought and praxis will be realized in truly human production of human needs.

In a higher phase of the communist society, after the slavish subordination of the individual under the division of labor has disappeared, and thereby also the opposition of mental and bodily labor has disappeared; after labor has become no longer only a means for life, but itself has become the first life need; after the productive powers of the individuals with

their all-sided development have grown and all springs of communal riches flow fully, - only then can the narrow bourgeois horizon of law be completely superseded, and society can write on their flag: Each according to their ability, to each according to their needs!¹⁰

That Marx considered the thinking process to be a labor process is clear. What is important is to understand how this is. This we attempted to demonstrate in the discussion of the similarities of the thinking process to the clear examples of the production process. Not only are the objects, means and results of thinking the same as the labor process, but the results were seen to be useful and necessary to the development of humanity.

Consumption

If labor is defined as that human activity which produces use values by means of the objectification of human energies, then consumption is the human activity which realizes the use values produced by labor by using them. Consumption is the human activity which satisfies the need or desire of the humans in general which caused the production of this

10. Karl Marx, Kritik des Gothaer Programms, in Marx-Engels Ausgewählte Schriften, Band II: (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1952), pp. 7-28; p. 17. Hereafter as K-GP.

or that use value. Consumption is the realization of any use value (Grund 13).

In the introduction of the Grundrisse, Marx discusses the unity in the labor process between production on the one hand and distribution, exchange, and consumption on the other (Grund 5-21). Production is the useful employment of human natural power in appropriating nature in an object which will satisfy human needs. Production appears as the beginning of the labor process. It is controlled by natural laws in so far as they determine the possible effects human labor could have on natural objects.

Distribution is the means by which the results of production are allocated to the individuals of a society. This is determined by social laws or customs and is not set by natural laws. Exchange is the means by which the particular individual comes to obtain the particular product. Distribution and exchange form the middle part of the labor process.

Consumption is the actual using of a labor product. It forms the end of the labor process and for this purpose the product was produced. Consumption, however, influences production in developing in the human consumers new needs and desires.

Production is itself both subjective and objective consumption. The producer consumes his or her own powers, the labor power, in the act of production.

This is the subjective consumption in the labor process. In the labor process the means of labor are also consumed in production - objective consumption. Consumption, however, is at the same time production, since in consuming one is able to live - produces one's own life. Without production there can be no consumption, for there would be nothing to consume (excluding those products of nature which involve no labor). Without consumption there would be no production, since production would then be useless. Consumption produces production by realizing the product in its use and in creating new needs and desires in the human and thereby new production. Production produces consumption in producing the object of consumption, the means or manner of consumption, and subject of consumption. The unity of production and consumption is seen 1) in their immediate identity, each being the other as seen above; 2) in their each being the means for the other, the interdependence of both; and 3) in their each being in their realization the object of the other, - the result of consumption is not only the satisfaction of a desire but the development of new needs or desires, the basis for production, and the result of production is that object consumed.

The important point here is to bring out that, although one may observe production and con-

sumption as activities of a subject or many individuals, they appear nevertheless as moments of a process, in which production is the true beginning point and thereby, also, the encompassing moment. Consumption as necessary need, as need is itself an inner moment of productive activity (Grund 15).

Production and consumption as well as the internal activities of exchange and distribution form a totality which, because of the encompassing nature of production, is considered as the production process (Grund 20). The distinctions are important in understanding the totality, since the totality is made up of these differentiable moments and understanding of the totality is an understanding of the parts and their interaction which forms the totality. Both the parts and the totality must be grasped in understanding.

In consumption Marx differentiates between individual and productive consumption. Individual consumption is the consumption by the individual of a use value in the satisfaction of a need or desire which that individual has. This would include social consumption. Productive consumption is the consumption of products in a further labor process, i.e. where the use value of a product is consumed in the production of another product which in the end will serve individual consumption (Kap I 596-599).

We have differentiated human activity involved

in the production process into labor and consumption in order to emphasize that labor is that human activity which results in use values while consumption is the human activity which realizes this use value in satisfying human needs either directly or indirectly.

Useless Human Activity

Human activity which is objectified in a use value is labor; human activity which uses or realizes a use value is consumption. Both are useful human activities. Human activity, the expenditure of human energies, which is not useful to human beings is useless human activity. That is, human activity which is neither labor nor consumption is useless human activity. It is a waste of human energies, whether this is primarily a thinking activity or a doing activity. The human has consumed his or her own energy for no purpose. It has not lead to the satisfaction of a desire or need of the human or humanity. "Finally a thing cannot be of value without being an object of use. Is it useless, then so also is the labor contained within it useless, it does not count as labor and builds therefore no value" (Kap I 55).

Human energies used in the production of a product may be a useless expenditure of energy in two ways. The product may not be usable in the satisfaction

of a human need. On the other hand, the product might be useful yet not actually used. In not being used the energies of the producer or producers have been wasted. Here the failure of the production process is not in the production of a useless thing but in the non-use of a useful thing. This later case happens most often in the case where the product should be indirectly consumed and is not.

There are several important points to clarify with relation to this distinction of useless human activity. First, there is an assumption that there is no human activity which is neither labor nor consumption yet is worthwhile or valuable to the human being. This points to the broad usage of both labor and consumption. The question is whether there are any conscious expenditures of human energy which are not used in the satisfaction of any human desire or need, but which are somehow proper for the human being to perform. Marx seems to think that there are none. This does not mean that humans cannot be mistaken about the usefulness of their expenditure of energy. This clearly happens. The point is that one would not choose to do something for which he or she saw no value.

Another point is that the determination of the usefulness of human activity can only be finally made at the end of the production process or processes.

Only in the consumption of the labor product is its use value realized. If it is not realized this has been useless human activity. The problem faced daily by humans is that the results of the expenditure of their energies cannot be completely determined in advance. We can only predict with differing degrees of probability whether the production process will result in a useful and used product. We clearly make mistakes. It is in the practical attempt that we learn whether our energies have been usefully consumed. The interaction of theory and praxis forms the basis for our choices in the expenditure of our energies. Mistakes may in themselves be useful for the further determination of our acts. The problem is then whether or not this has been a useful expenditure of energy. In one sense Marx would say that this is useless; the production of a saw which does not cut would be an example. However what he would mean is that the product is useless and cannot have a use value. The process of discovering a mistake, however, is valuable and a necessary part of the development of humanity. The use value of a mistaken production process lies not in the product but in the realization of this mistake.

A final point concerns the needs and desires which are the motivating force behind production and satisfied in consumption. Both the real needs

of humans as well as their false needs are to be considered in the idea of usefulness.

A commodity is at first an external object, a thing, which by means of its properties satisfies a human need of any kind. The nature of this need, whether it comes from the stomach or the fantasy, changes nothing in this consideration (Kap I 49).

Human activity as labor is motivated by either a real human need or an imagined one. In both cases the product is said to be useful and the human energies involved in its production are usefully consumed, when the need is satisfied. An imagined need is one that is thought to be a real need. The question is how an imagined need is satisfied by the product of labor? Is it not much more the case that in the attempt to satisfy an imagined need we discover it not be a need at all? One may also speak of an imagined satisfaction, for this surely exists. We may discover only later that there was in fact no real satisfaction. What is important for Marx is that there is the attempt to satisfy the need whether real or not by the consumption of the product of labor. This itself completes the production process. If it turns out that there was either no real satisfaction or that the need was only imagined this does not effect the discussion of labor, although it is important in considering the development of humans and their needs.

Summary

Labor is that human activity which results in the objectification of this activity in the form of a use value or useful product. The labor process is an interaction of humans with nature, which begins with a natural object or raw material and, by means of the expenditure of human natural powers (which include the thinking power, the sense powers, and the bodily motive powers) with the added help of the means of production which have been developed, results in the product which is a useful object. As we argued labor includes the thinking process as well as the building process, head and hand labor, and that these are actually a combination of both differentiated only in the emphasis in each of thinking and doing. Hand labor involves the thinking process not only in the planning of the project but also during the process in the form of attention. Head labor involves the physical movements of the human in its collection of information and in checking it with reference to the actual world, not to mention in the expression of its results.

Labor, in this discussion, has been a generalization of those aspects which are present in every form of its concrete actuality. Labor includes the potentiality of its own historical development.

The needs of humans which are satisfied by the results of labor were seen to be both real and imaginary. The development of the human needs and desires is part of the historical development of humans and conditioned by the interaction of labor and its development - the satisfaction of some needs leading to the development of new needs.

Consumption is that human activity which uses the products of labor and is an integral part of the labor process. The consumption of a product is the realization of that product. Consumption is the attempt by humans to satisfy the needs and desires they feel which motivated the production of those products.

Useless human activity is the failure of the labor process to produce a use value, either directly or indirectly useful. A product was useless when it satisfied no human need, real or imagined, or if it could, it was not used for this.

Chapter 4: Praxis in Capitalism

We have discussed the category of praxis in its general, a-historical divisions of labor, consumption, and useless human activity. We shall now discuss the characterizations of praxis in the specific historical epoch of capitalism. It should be noted that this historical stage is a stage in the historical progression of human society. It developed from the earlier feudal stage and will develop into the future stage of socialism after the proletarian revolution. For this reason the distinctions we make in praxis for the capitalist period have historical roots in the previous stages and will exist in the future in their superseded form. The distinctions we make presuppose the capitalist system; they are not however eternal.

According to Marx's theory of historical development, the most important element in analyzing a particular social structure is the mode of production and production relationships in that historical period. A particular stage in the development of the productivity of labor establishes a particular mode of production. This mode functions as the foundation for the type of society characteristic of it. The super-structure

of society is developed from this basis (Kap III 891; K P-0 8-11).

The mode of production in capitalist society is the production, reproduction and increase of capital. Capital is accumulated abstract social labor. It is the exchange value inherent in the products of labor, dead objectified labor which needs living labor in order to increase itself (Kap I 247). It is increased by the surplus value created by living labor. The capitalist mode of production is characterized by the fact that capital itself controls the means of production - capital is one necessary prerequisite for its reproduction and an increase in capital is the total aim of the production process.¹ Since the capitalist mode of production is the result of an earlier mode of production, we can state other necessary requirements for it.

One is that the productivity of labor has increased to such an extent that labor itself produces more value than is required for the existence of the labor process, that is, a surplus of value is created. This surplus value forms capital itself. There must

1. See Ernest Mandel's concise discription of capitalism in: Ernest Mandel, An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970).

accordingly be a surplus product, that is the amount produced by labor is more than enough to allow for the existence of the needed members of society.

Another historical precondition of the capitalist mode of production is that the division of labor has developed to that stage where only some of the members of society are required in order to produce the surplus product and that some members of society, who could work, do not and are able to force the others to do this work. That is, there is a separation of the means of production from the control of the producers. The means of production have been concentrated and so monopolized by a certain class of society whereas another class of society has been forced economically, i.e. if they wish to survive, to exchange their only means of production, their labor power, for their means of existence.

"The history of all previous society is the history of class struggle".² In capitalist society there are two classes defined by the necessities of the capitalist mode of production, who are in conflict. One is the bourgeoisie or capitalist class³ who own

2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei, in Marx-Engels Ausgewählte Schriften Band I (Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1951), p. 26. Hereafter Man.

3. In Kap III 892, Marx speaks of three classes; here the landowners and capitalists are considered together.

the means of production. The other is the proletariat who do not own the means of production but are forced to work for the capitalist class if they wish to survive. The proletariat is forced to exchange its own natural power, the individual's labor power, for their means of existence, since they do not possess the means of production necessary for either the production of their own means of subsistence nor for the production of another use value which they could exchange for their means of subsistence. The struggle of the proletariat is with the capitalist class over the control of the means of production.

The capitalist class needs the living labor, the labor power of the proletariat, in order to exist, i.e. to obtain their means of subsistence, without themselves working in the production process. The capitalist class has two distinct advantages over the proletariat. One is that it has amassed enough capital or means of existing which allow them to wait out a crisis, when the proletariat does not work, until the proletariat, forced by impending starvation, goes back to work. The strike situation is an example. Secondly, the proletariat itself increases due to its natural increase and the addition to this class of members of the capitalist class who have been forced to abandon the means of production they once owned. Hence the competition among the proletariat

for the possibility to work divides them. The proletariat's advantages are their control of living labor and their large numbers. So, if united, they could stop production and seize the means of production.

In addition to this there is the economic instability of the total capitalist structure due to the conflict of the historically developing productivity of labor and the social (i.e. capitalist) structure founded upon this. This is the crisis of over-production.

Concrete and Abstract Labor

In the capitalist mode of production the labor process results in a commodity. A commodity is a thing which has a use value for another or social use value (Kap I 55). Every useful thing may be viewed as having a qualitative and a quantitative aspect. The qualitative aspect of a commodity is its natural properties and these are what make it useful to humans. Since these properties are useful to humans the commodity may be said to have a use value. The quantitative aspect of a commodity is an amount or quantity of itself, which is measured in some socially agreed upon scale which is different for various groups of things. The exchange value of a commodity is the amount of one commodity which is exchanged

or determined equivalent to a certain amount of another commodity (Kap I 50). For this to be possible, Marx says, there must be something which all commodities have in common which itself can be measured (Kap I 51).

It was Aristotle, Marx notes (Kap I 74), who saw that in the exchange relationship there must be an equality relationship; for this to be possible there must be something in each which is measurable. This something could not be any of the physical properties of commodities, since these were different in each. Each product, however, was the result of labor. The problem was that labor appears also to be different; different kinds of labor producing different products. What was seen to be the same in each type of labor was that it was the expenditure of human energies. But this was only a partial solution since the energies expended by different individuals appears as different, in terms of the productivity of that energy. The solution was found in abstracting from the individual to the social, that is the social average productivity of labor. This could be measured in terms of time and so satisfies the conditions for an exchange relationship between commodities.⁴

4. There is some discussion on whether Marx is successful in discovering an empirical, measurable quantity. This problem is further complicated by the distinction of simple and complex labor which I discuss next. For a positive discussion see the last chapter in Ernest Mandel's Marxist Economic Theory.

All labor is on the one hand, the expenditure of human labor power in a physiological sense, and it builds with this property of equal human or abstract human labor the value ((exchange value)) of the commodity. All labor, on the other hand, is the expenditure of human labor power in a specific purposeful form, and it builds with this property of concrete useful labor the use value of a commodity (Kap I 61).

All labor, therefore, is to be viewed as having two properties at the same time. One property of labor is called concrete useful labor. It is that specific form of labor which produces specific useful products, e.g. sawing, weaving, thinking. It is the type of work performed by the individual in making an exchangeable commodity. It produces the use value of a commodity. Since these are different they provide the reason for exchanging one use value for another, i.e. the need felt for a different useful thing.

The other property of all labor is called social abstract labor. All labor is the expenditure of a certain amount of human energy and taken socially this is the same in all forms of concrete labor. The amount of social abstract labor is measured in time. The same amount of social abstract labor produces the same amount of exchange value in the commodities produced (Kap I 61). The exchange value of two commodities is the same when the amount of social labor in each is the same. This allows for the exchange of commodities. The exchange of commodities is the exchange of different use values each of which has

the same exchange value.

Simple and Complex Labor

Marx makes an important distinction between simple and complex labor after discussing social abstract labor (K'P-O 19; Kap I 59). In establishing the concept of abstract labor, Marx remarks that he has only been considering simple labor, which "is the expenditure of simple labor power, which every normal person on the average, without special development, possesses in his bodily organism" (Kap I 59). This simple labor is different in different epochs and different cultures, but is the same in any given one. "More complex labor is only more powerful or rather multiplied simple labor" (Kap I 59). A smaller amount of complex labor produces an equal amount of exchange value as a greater amount of simple labor. The proportions for the reduction of different types of complex labor into simple labor are set by a social process; they are not eternal or natural. Some types of concrete labor are complex labor. Just as Marx uses the average socially necessary labor in establishing the exchange value of a product of simple labor, this process must also be used to establish the average socially necessary complex labor in a particular type of complex labor.

Marx mentions two different examples of complex labor later in Das Kapital. One is the labor of a jeweller.

Labor, which counts as a higher, more complicated labor, is the expression of a labor power which involves higher education costs, whose production costs more time, and which, therefore, has a higher value than simple labor (Kap I 212).

This passage is important in showing that what counts as complex labor is any labor which in its production costs more and takes more time; in this case the factor of educational or development costs are mentioned. The other example Marx notes is that of a Hindu weaver whose labor is considered complex since this weaver inherited a special talent or ability through the generations of weavers in his family. "And because of this, such an Indian weaver performs a very complex labor in comparison to the majority of manufactural laborers" (Kap I 360). Complex labor can be said to be those types of labor which involve a special training or educational process.⁵ It appears that the extra time involved in this process is what gives complex labor its higher value.

5. In this connection Marx uses the term Bildungskosten, which could mean specifically educational costs but also more generally the costs of producing. Natural abilities do not as such cost more, but the development of these surely do.

In the development of capitalism there is a tendency toward specialization and division of labor. This can be seen in part from the discussion of complex labor. In order to reduce the costs for the production of complex labor, the educational time needed is reduced by educating a person for a specific task. The labor process is subdivided so that as much of the work as possible can be done by simple labor. By using machines which involve only simple labor to operate yet perform a difficult task, production costs can be saved since no one need learn this more difficult work. With the specialization of labor, a person need only be trained for this one task and not for more, also saving educational costs. This is seen in our specialized educational structure. General mass education makes more people able to do more complex work, increases competition and since these people have fewer needs than the traditionally educated class they need less, i.e. cost less, in terms of wages (Kap III 311-312).

Wage Labor, Necessary Labor, and Surplus Labor

The characteristic form of labor in capitalism is wage labor.⁶ Wage labor is the historical form labor takes when the labor power of the laborers, their natural power, becomes a commodity in an exchange process between those who work, the proletariat, and those who own the means of production, the capitalists. Wage labor presupposes this division of society into these two classes. Labor power as a commodity is both useful and the result of human activity. It is useful and necessary for the owners of the means of production in order to produce; it is useful to capital as the only means whereby it may increase itself. The human labor involved in producing labor power is that activity of producing a human being capable of work and keeping him/her (that is, the class) alive. As the exchange value of all commodities is determined by the amount of

6. This is not to say that wage labor is the only form - it is the characteristic economic form. Two important exceptions can be mentioned. First is unproductive yet useful labor (discussed later), where there is often direct exchange and no wages involved. The other is the labor of the housewife in the typical family structure. In this case there are no wages; often the wife functions as a slave to the husband and as such receives a means of life. There are, of course, great variations in this situation which can not be analyzed here.

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social abstract labor necessary for its production, so the exchange value of labor power is determined. It is the basis of the wage paid to the laborer for his/her labor power, hence the term wage labor.

The essential feature of labor power in capitalism is that its exchange value is less than the amount of social abstract labor which it objectifies in the products it produces, i.e. the exchange value of the results of wage labor is greater than the exchange value of the labor power.

This fact is the basis for Marx's theory of surplus value. The difference between the exchange value of the laborer's labor power and the exchange value of the products produced by this labor power is surplus value. In any particular period of time, say a workday, the laborer, in working for a certain amount of time, produces the exchange value equivalent to the exchange value of his/her labor power. This occurs in a shorter period of time than the total workday because of the productivity of labor power. In this amount of time the laborer performs necessary labor. It is the amount of time the laborer must use his labor power in order to produce the exchange value of his labor power for that total workday.

The part of the workday therefore, in which this reproduction ((of the value of labor power)) happens, I call necessary labor time; the labor expended during the same time I

call necessary labor. Necessary for the laborer, because independent of the social form of his work. Necessary for capital and its world, because the continuing existence of the laborer, their basis (Kap I 230-231).

In as much as the laborer works for more than that necessary labor time, he or she produces a surplus value, i.e. more products whose exchange value constitutes the surplus value. This labor is surplus labor.

The second period of the labor process, where the laborer drudges on past the boundary of necessary labor, costs him certainly labor, the expenditure of labor power, but builds for him no value. It builds surplus value, which the capitalist smiles on with all the excitement of a creation out of nothing. This part of the workday I call surplus labor time, and the expended labor in it: Mehrarbeit (surplus labour) (Kap I 231).

The process of capital accumulation may be outlined in terms of the appropriation of surplus value by the capitalist. To begin this process the capitalist owns a certain amount of capital. Part is constant capital which is the proportional amount of the exchange value of the means of production needed in this production process. The other part is variable capital which is used to exchange for the laborers' labor power (Kap I 223-224). The process begins when the laborers start working. It ends when they stop and have produced a certain amount of products. During the time when the laborers work, their living

labor has two functions of importance in this discussion. As concrete labor this living labor transfers the exchange value of the means of production to the products produced. As social abstract labor, it creates new exchange value which is objectified in the products (Kap I 215). Since the exchange value produced by this abstract labor is greater than the variable capital (i.e. the exchange value for the laborer's labor power), there results a surplus value objectified in the products. So that when these products are exchanged by the capitalist, their exchange value is greater than the constant and variable capital which the capitalist advanced at the beginning of this process, i.e. the original amount of capital. The increase in capital is equal to the exchange value produced by surplus labor. This is the surplus value. This assumes that the capitalist does not appropriate any of this surplus value for his own uses, which, of course, he must in order to live, since he does not work.

Wage Labor as Alienated Labor

In the Ökonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripte Marx radically breaks off his discussion of the categories of national economy,⁷ to define and discuss the concept of alienated labor. Alienated labor is the form of labor found in the capitalist system as a result of examining the conditions of this system. Wage labor (Erwerbsarbeit)⁸ is alienated labor. Alienated labor is an alien or negative form of what labor could be. In doing alienating labor the laborer alienates him/herself in four specific ways.

In the first instance, the laborer is alienated from the product of his/her labor. The product of labor is the objectification of the laborer's human energy, labor power, which he used in the production of the product. The laborer puts his life into the product (O-P MS 53). The alienation of this product

The radical break in Marx's manuscript is seen in the format of this work. In discussing the three major categories of political economy, these were together on a page divided into three columns. With the beginning of this discussion Marx writes without such a division. See footnote 8, page 194-195, in Günther Hillmann.

8. More research is needed to establish the reason why Marx uses the term Erwerbsarbeit, in discussing Mill's work, instead of the term wage labor, which Marx uses later in his works. It is clear, however, that both terms refer to the same thing.

consists in the fact that the product does not belong to the laborer; he is not able to appropriate this product for himself. The laborer loses his product and they become a foreign power in opposition to him. This puts the laborer in an alienated relationship to not only the products of his labor but to all of nature which exists as a necessary means of life for the laborer. This alien relationship is seen in the fact that the laborer receives not only those objects of nature which enable him to exist as a physical subject, but the very means of production which allow him to work (O-P MS 53). The laborer is in a relationship of slave to ruler, the rule by his products or capital (O-P MS 52). The tragic height of this relationship is that the laborer can exist as a living being only as a laborer; so in order to exist at all must increase the power of his ruler.

In the second instance, the laborer is alienated from his/her productive activity, labor itself. The product of labor can only become alien to the laborer if the labor itself has become alien to him. Labor is alienated from the laborer in that it does not belong to his being. Alienated labor is forced labor, not freely done. The laborer must work in order to survive; it is a means to an end, instead of being the free choice of the laborer to develop and express

his or her own physical and mental energies. This can be seen in that labor is anathema to the worker. Not only does the labor not belong to the laborer, but it belongs to another, the capitalist. This deprives the laborer of any initiative in the labor process. He or she is directed and loses any sense of self-direction and creation. One loses the sense that one can decide and control in some measure one's own life.

We have considered the act of the alienation of practical human activity, labor, in two ways. 1) The relationship of the laborer to the product of labor as a foreign object with power over him. This relationship is at the same time the relationship to the sensible external world, to the objects of nature as a foreign world hostile to him. 2) the relation of labor to the act of production within labor. This relationship is the relationship of the laborer to his own activity as a foreign one not belonging to him... . Self-alienation as above the alienation of the thing (O-P MS 55).

In the third instance of alienation, the laborer is alienated from his or her species being. The laborer is a human being and as such has the species being as an object of his/her consciousness and activity, and relates to himself as a member of this species (O-P MS 56). That which characterizes the human species, its species characteristic, is free, conscious activity, i.e. human activity as we discussed earlier. The human can only realize his/her species

by means of free conscious activity in the formation of an objective world in accordance with the needs of the human species. These are not only the direct physical needs of the human, but essentially those human needs beyond the physical ones which must be developed in the historical development of the human species itself (O-P MS 57).

The human being as wage laborer is alienated from his/her species being, since the products of labor and the labor itself are alienated from the laborer, and thereby it is impossible for him to affirm himself freely and consciously. He has no choice in how or what he will produce; this is determined by another. What should be the laborer's species life, his free conscious creating of the world in which he wishes to live, becomes only a means for his individual life, his physical survival.

Alienated labor makes therefore:

3) the species being of man, as well as nature as his mental species-capacity, into a being foreign to him, into a means of his individual existence. It alienates from man his own body, as the nature outside of him, as his mental being, his human being.

4) A direct consequence of this, that man is alienated from the product of his labor, his life activity, his species being, is the alienation of man from man (O-P MS 58).

The fourth instance of alienation is the alienation of one person from another. One's relationships to

oneself, one's activity, and one's product is first objectified or made real in one's relationship to another and their activity and products. If one is to be alienated, one must have given one's own power to another. If the products of labor, labor itself, and one's own species being do not belong to oneself they can only belong to another person, for these can only belong to people (O-P MS 59). It is this other person who controls one's labor, owns one's products, and forces one to do what the other wishes. In capitalism this other person is the capitalist, the non-worker (O-P MS 60). The worker is actively alienated; the non-worker is in the condition of alienation (O-P MS 63).

Marx concludes this discussion by stating that although the concept of alienated labor has been discovered from examining the movement of private property as its result, alienated labor is actually the basis for private property. And with these two concepts, all other categories of the political economists can be explained.

After 1844 Marx rarely uses the term alienated labor to describe that form of labor typical of the capitalist system, rather he uses the more descriptive term wage labor, since it is labor done for wages which is the basis for capital accumulation and the alienation of the laborer. In Marx's own notes

on the topics he discusses in the Grundrisse, he characterizes one section as "the alienation of the working conditions of labor with the development of capital. (the turning around. ((Verkehrung)))" (Grund 715). Marx's discussion shows that the alienated condition of the laborer is the result of the historical conditions of production in the capitalist system whereby the laborer in working increases the power of capital, i.e. objectified, dead labor, over himself. This power is a foreign power belonging to the capitalist.

In Das Kapital, the four instances of alienation are present although discussed in different terms. The alienation of the laborer is discovered in the fetish character of commodities (Kap I 85ff). The fetish character of the commodity is seen as the power commodities have, as objectified labor, capital, over the laborers. This is the original power of the laborer given to the product of his labor which becomes his enslaving power as capital. Just as in religion, one's own power is alienated by being given to another (Kap I 86). The power of capital over the worker is the turning around (Verkehrung) of the relationship of the laborer to his product, activity, and himself (Kap III 55).

The laborer's activity becomes a means for obtaining existence not his expression of his own

being. The wage laborer must exchange his or her labor power with the owners of the means of production in order to survive. All control over one's life activity is given another as well as the control over the results of this labor. In so doing the laborer is alienated from his/her own species being.

The alienation of man from man, especially the laborer from the capitalist, is seen in the social relationships of the exchange process (Kap I 87). Humans now relate only as things and their relations are controlled by these things and their own movements (Kap I 89). Capital and capital's drive to increase itself, personified in the capitalist, control the social interactions of humans (Kap III 888).

Productive Labor

In the labor process generalized from specific historical situations, productive labor was what we have called labor, that is, the production of use values for humans. In the specific historical epoch of capitalism productive labor is defined as that labor which produces surplus value or capital.

On the other hand, however, the concept of productive labor is narrowed. Capitalist production is not only the production of commodities, it is essentially the production of surplus value. The laborer produces not for himself but for capital. It is no longer sufficient that he just produce. He must

produce surplus value. Only that laborer is productive who produces surplus value for the capitalist, or serves the self-utilization of capital (Kap I 532).

The productive laborer can only be a wage laborer who performs surplus labor as well as necessary labor, for only surplus labor produces the surplus value appropriated by the capitalist. The self-utilization of capital means the increase of capital. Capital increases only by adding surplus value to its previous amount; this can only be produced by surplus labor.

The lengthening of the workday beyond that point where the laborer would have produced the equivalent for the value of his labor power, and the appropriation of this surplus labor by means of capital - this is the production of absolute surplus value. It forms the general foundation of the capitalist system and the beginning point of the production of the relative surplus value (Kap I 532).

Productive labor exists only where there is surplus labor. In the Grundrisse (Grund 212-213), Marx discusses the definition of productive labor, with reference to the broader definition (i.e. labor). Productive labor produces capital. His example is of a piano builder who builds and sells pianos. The piano player, no matter how necessary he/she is in consuming the use value of the piano, i.e. by playing it, is not a productive laborer, since he or she produces no capital. What must be noted is

that the piano builder produces capital when he builds and exchanges the piano for more than his production costs. This can only happen if the piano builder performs surplus labor. The surplus labor creates capital. Just as in the example of a farmer (Kap III 882-883), the piano builder can function both as a capitalist increasing his capital and as a wage laborer, in as much as he will pay himself a wage based on the exchange value of his labor power, and then, as a capitalist, appropriate the surplus value created by his surplus labor in order to increase his capital. This new capital may be used to increase his constant capital by buying more tools etc., it may be used as variable capital in hiring another wage laborer, or it may be consumed by the builder to increase his life style. In the historical situation, he is, as a capitalist, in competition with other capitalists. If he is unable to keep up with the developing modes of production of pianos, he may find that his own labor no longer contains surplus labor, i.e. that in his total workday he is able to produce only an exchange value equivalent to the value of his labor power. At this point he will no longer be a productive laborer, but merely able to survive on his own labor.

In Das Kapital, Marx discusses another example of productive labor.

Since it is possible to choose an example outside the sphere of material production, so a school teacher is a productive laborer, if he not only works on children's heads, but also works himself down in order to enrich the employers. That the latter has invested his capital in the school factory instead of a sausage factory, does not change the relationship. The concept of the productive laborer encompasses not just a relationship between activity and useful effect, between laborer and the product of labor, but also a specific, social, historically developed production relationship, which stamps the laborer as a direct means for the self-utilization of capital (Kap I 532).

We see that the educational process, i.e. the labor that is expended in education, which clearly includes thinking labor, is not only a form of labor, but may be productive labor, if the school teacher performs surplus labor. The capitalist who owns the means of educational production appropriates the surplus value produced by the school teacher's surplus labor.

To be able to perform productive labor, the product of that labor must be useful and exchanged as a commodity. The exchange value of the teacher's labor activity, educating, must be lower than the exchange value of the products produced, education. Only in this way may the teacher produce surplus value. In this case the product is consumed during the process of production by the one who is being educated. He or she is useful in later production processes and transfers the value incorporated in her/him, as a specialized laborer, into another product.

We can see clearly today the trend towards specialization in education which is simply an attempt to produce the useful product as efficiently as possible, not wasting educational labor in over educating or educating too broadly, since the use value of the product is very specific due to the division of labor.

Transporting labor is another case of productive labor discussed by Marx. The labor of transporting, like other labors of communication, is labor although it produces no new objective product or commodity.

The result - whether men or commodities are transported - is their being in a changed place, ... What, however, is sold by the transportation industry, is the change of place itself. The produced useful effect is inseparably bound to the transporting process, i.e. the production process of the transportation industry. People or commodities travel with the means of transportation, and their travel, their spacial movement, is just the production process produced by it. The useful effect is only consumed during the process of production; it does not exist separated from this process as a useful thing, which functions first after its production as a trade article, as a circulating commodity. The exchange value of this useful effect is, however, determined as for any other commodity, by means of the value of the elements of production (labor power and means of production) used in it plus the surplus value, which the surplus labor of the laborer in the transportation industry has created (Kap II 60-61).

The labor power expended in transportation plays an essential role in commodity production in two ways. First, since the production process ends only with the consumption of the product, the products must be

transported to the consumer. Second, transportation functions within the production process itself in transferring partially completed products to the place where they may be completed and in bringing living labor and the means of production to the partially completed products (Kap II 151).

Transporting labor is productive labor since it adds exchange value to the product and the value added by the labor power of the transporter is greater than the exchange value of the transporter's labor power. The transporter performs surplus labor for the capitalist.

The productive capital invested in this ((process)), adds value to the transported products, partly by means of the carrying over of value in the means of transportation, partly by means of the value added by the transporting labor. This later addition of value is separable, as in all capitalist production, into the replacement of wages and into surplus value (Kap II 151).

The criteria for deciding whether labor is productive labor is that there is surplus labor within that labor, which creates surplus value appropriated by the capitalist.

Unproductive Yet Necessary Labor

Marx saw an important distinction between productive labor and unproductive yet necessary labor in the production processes of capitalism. Productive

labor functions with industrial capital to produce more capital. Unproductive yet necessary labor, termed commercial labor, functions with commercial capital but does not produce capital; it merely conserves capital.

The most basic labor in this area is the buying and selling of products. The commodity changes to and from its expression in exchange value, money. The commercial capitalist buys commodities with his capital and then sells these again. Since buying and selling are often acts of intrigue and deception, a fight between buyer and seller each trying to deceive the other, this process may take awhile, although the value of the products is not increased by this time.

The change in condition ((from commodity to money and money to commodity)) costs time and labor power, but not in order to create value, but in order to establish the change in value from one form into the other, whereby the attempt on both sides to appropriate a greater value changes nothing. This labor, made greater by the malicious intent on both sides, creates as little value as the labor, which takes place in the court process, increases the value of the contested objects (Kap II 131-132).

So although buying and selling take time and labor power this labor is not productive since it creates no new exchange value, but merely changes the condition of the product. For instance, the longer

a buyer spends in buying a product does not add to the value of the product. In fact, we see it as a waste of time.

The real problem arises in the fact that the sales persons, commercial laborens, live from their work, that the price of a product is increased by the sales person, i.e. he must sell the product for more than he or she buys it or else will not have anything to live on.

Marx discusses the example of a person who uses his labor power to buy and sell a commodity (Kap II 133-135). He lives from this work and works as everyone else. However necessary this labor is for the circulation process, he does not produce with his labor either a product nor exchange value. "His usefulness consists much more in that a smaller amount of the labor power and the labor time of the society is bound to this unproductive function" (Kap II 134). This is a necessary part of the complete production process and so the more labor power which can be spared in this function, the better. Sales people exist as a branch in the division of labor, since this allows a more economical (labor saving) method of accomplishing this necessary task. The money, exchange value, which pays for this task comes from the accumulated capital of the capitalist, who hires this sales person; it is part of his circulation costs

(Kap II 135).⁹ If the sales persons are wage laborers, they will be paid wages according to the exchange value of their sales labor power. If, however, the sales person works longer than the time necessary to pay his wage, which is calculated by not the value he produces but by the value he saves capital, this longer laboring does not produce surplus value but rather saves the capitalist this value (Kap II 134).

If, by means of the division of labor, a function which in and for itself is unproductive, but is a necessary moment of reproduction, changes from being a secondary task of many into the exclusive task of fewer, then the character of the function does not change itself. A salesman (here viewed as simply the agent of the form change of commodities, as simple buyer and seller) may shorten by means of his operation the buying and selling time of many producers. He is then to be considered as a machine, which lessens useless expenditure of energy and helps set free production time (Kap II 133).

What is an unproductive part of the labor process cannot be made productive by its separation from the productive labor process. The sales function was at first done by the capitalist, later this function was given to another and finally it has become a major 'industry' itself, since this separation and division of labor has been economical. It should

9. We will see later that this function originally was the main activity of the capitalists, and only with the development of capitalism has it been possible to transfer this activity to others.

also be clear that this labor cannot become productive by handling greater quantities of exchange value (Kap II 132).

In this section Marx discusses several other unproductive yet necessary forms of labor. Keeping books is one. This labor consumes other products of production, which as it grows stimulates this production and thereby causes an increase in productive labor in those other industries, yet in itself it is not productive labor, since it does not add value to the exchange value of its product and so also produces no surplus value. The development of book-keeping in its efficiency is still only savings for the capitalist in terms of his necessary expenditures. This is the case in production of money or whatever serves as the social medium of exchange.

Marx suggests as a general rule that all circulation costs which are based upon the change in the condition of the commodities do not add value to these commodities (Kap II 150). That is, the labor involved in the circulation of commodities, either in their packaging, storing, changing to money form, etc., do not constitute productive labor and add no value to the product. This has caused some problem in interpretation. Erenst Mandel¹⁰ uses the criteria of

10. Erenst Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory, trans. Brian Pearce, (New York: Monthly Review, 1968) I, 191-2.

what is technically indispensable for the realization of the use value to determine whether the labor involved in circulation is productive. So the labor involved in storage, which is due to speculation, is not part of productive labor, while labor involved in normal storage is part of productive labor. Most commercial packing for Mandel is not necessary and so the labor not productive, yet for liquids, since there must be some kind of container, its production is productive labor. Paul Sweezy claims that commerce and thereby unproductive labor is only the activities of buying and selling and it does not include storage, transportation, or packing.¹¹ All are agreed that commercial labor is unproductive labor and this means that no capital is produced. The problem is in distinguishing particular cases. Marx seems (Kap II 150) to imply that some storage and packing are not productive labor. Transportation clearly is productive labor (Kap II 150-153). Today, we seem to be paying more for the packing than the thing inside. In this case it seems that what we desire and exchange for is not only the product but also the packing, if this is the case the labor to produce

11. Paul Sweezy, The Theory of Capitalist Development, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 278.

the packing is productive labor. Individually we are forced into this exchange due to the lack of any alternative.

Marx distinguishes commercial capital from industrial or productive capital (Kap III 278ff). The latter is the result of the accumulation of surplus value from the production process. Commercial capital is taken from productive capital as capital necessary for the completion and reproduction of productive capital (Kap III 292, 309). Capital which enters the circulation process can not reproduce or increase itself since in this process no new value is created. However, the circulation process may take more or less time. In taking more time it prevents this capital from being used in the productive labor process, and so by decreasing the time involved capital may sooner become productive.

Commercial capital creates, therefore, neither value nor surplus value, i.e. not directly. In as much as it helps shorten the circulation time, it can indirectly help to increase the surplus value produced by industrial capital (Kap III 291).

So we can see that commercial capital cannot directly increase capital but may indirectly add in the faster accumulation of capital by industrial capital.

Commercial profit is the result of savings in time and costs (e.g. wages and means of production)

which the owner of commercial capital is able to make in relation to the capital advanced from productive capital. The commercial capitalist must average the same rate of profit as is possible with productive capital or else he or she would invest his/her capital in productive production. The capitalist class must make this possible since this is a necessary part of the total production process, and if not done the process would collapse (Kap III 295ff).

Unproductive Yet Useful Labor

In the example of the piano player and builder (Grund 212-213 n), Marx distinguishes the piano player's labor as unproductive yet useful. The piano player produces music which satisfies our sense of hearing. Music is the useful result of labor which satisfies our human need. However, it neither produces capital nor is it necessary in the production process as commercial labor was seen to be. This form of labor is called service labor.

Personal services include cooking, cleaning, sewing, garden work, etc. as well as the unproductive classes in society such as doctors, lawyers, state employees, etc. (Grund 372). These service laborers exchange their services for part of the surplus value which the capitalist has appropriated. In this way they share in part of the surplus value while the

capitalist reaps the fruit of his appropriation of surplus value by being able to exchange for these services. It is important that the exchange process is between surplus capital and the service, labor, performed. What is being exchanged is not labor power as such in its capacity to create value, but labor power in this or that concrete activity. Labor power is consumed in its concrete aspect as a particular use value not in its abstract form as exchange value producing (Grund 373).

With the increase in the productivity of labor in capitalism, there is an increase in the social surplus product and so an increase in service labor, which corresponds to the increase in needs.

Finally, the extremely increased productive power in the area of large industry, accompanied, as it is, by intensive and extensive mental exploitation of the labor power in all other spheres of production, allows for a continually larger part of the working class to become unproductive and thereby namely, to reproduce the old house slaves under the name of the 'serving class', as servants, maids, lackeys, etc. in continually larger numbers (Kap I 469).

It should be noted that there may develop a capitalization of services. This is possible after a point is reached where the needs for services have become so widespread that it becomes possible for an industry to develop based upon this need. That is, these needs begin to demand instruments not available

to all and so a concentration of the means of servicing may be possible. Here it is possible to enter into a wage-capital relation where the laborer in serving is repaid less than the amount of his/her labor produces and this surplus may be appropriated as capital and profit may be realized.

Unproductive yet useful labor is distinguished by neither producing capital nor being necessary for the production process. It is labor which produces something immediately useful to the person who exchanges for this service, and this use value is consumed and not exchanged for other products.

Labor of the Capitalist

A capitalist is the owner of the means of production, that is he/she possessed enough exchange value to have procured the means of production. The capitalist's activity, at first, must be the exchanging of his capital for the necessary means of production as well as the labor power necessary for the particular production process he/she will use to increase his capital. Not only is the capitalist's activity one of buying, it is also one of knowing what to buy and what production process will increase his capital. The capitalist is only a personification of capital (Kap I 247). The motive force which drives the capitalist is the desire to increase his own capital

by means of the surplus labor of the worker. Once the means of production have been collected the capitalist must consume these in order to produce new use values. He must organize the production process, his consumption, in the most economical way possible. He must be sure the labor process is orderly and that there is no waste or useless consumption either of materials, instruments or labor power (Kap I 328). During the production process itself the capitalist's activity is one of insuring the most efficient (economical) use of this process. The result of the production process, the products, belong to the capitalist (Kap I 199-200).

In order to realize the exchange value of the products produced, the capitalist must sell these. Only at this stage will the capitalist be able to retrieve the capital he has invested in the production process as well as the surplus value which increases his capital. The surplus value comes only from the surplus labor of the worker. The capitalist is driven to make the laborer perform as much surplus labor as is possible.

The capitalist's labor, as can be seen, is not exchanged during this process for an exchange value which would allow him/her to exchange this value for his/her means of subsistence. The capitalist can

only exchange the surplus value created during the labor process for his means of subsistence, if he is to remain a capitalist. That is, he may himself, in an earlier stage of the development of his production process, become a productive laborer creating his own exchange value. In this case he functions as any other productive laborer in that he performs necessary and surplus labor. The difference is that the exchange value created in his surplus labor belongs to himself as the capitalist instead of to another, as is the case with the wage laborer.

A certain advanced degree of capitalist production is needed in order that the capitalist could use the time during which he functions as a capitalist, i.e. as personified capital, for the appropriation and therefore the control of foreign labor and for the sale of the products of this labor (Kap I 326).

It is understood that a capitalist who cannot live from either the surplus value created or his own productive labor, if he works, will then have to use some of his capital and in so doing end the production process with less capital than in the beginning. In so doing, however, he will in a time be no longer a capitalist since his capital will disappear.

Not only must the production process supply the capitalist with enough surplus value which he can

exchange for his means of subsistence, but it must also include enough above this to increase his capital.

The capitalist as the personified form of capital lives under the drive of capital to increase itself.

A successful capitalist must increase his capital.

With the increased concentration of the means of production in the hands of the capitalist class and so the increase in the working class, more people are forced to exchange their labor power.

With the development of the productivity of labor, especially in the area of the means of subsistence, the difference between the exchange value of labor power and the value it creates increases. The surplus value in the production process greatly increases which allows those successful capitalists not only to greatly increase their capital, but also to increase the amount of this surplus value which they themselves consume. The capitalists, in truth, can be said to live off the labor of others, their surplus labor.

All direct social or communal labor on a large scale demand more or less a direction, which regulates the harmony of the individual activities and accomplishes the general functions, which arise from the movement of the productive total body in differentiation from the movement of its individual organs. ... This function of guidance, supervision, and regulation becomes the function of capital, as soon as the labor subordinate to it becomes cooperative. As a specific function of capital, the function of guidance receives specific characteristics (Kap I 350).

It should also be clear that with the continued growth of capital, the capitalists class can relegate its duties to others. The capitalist's labor, at some point too great for the individual and too much trouble for him, can be given to others. These people then exchange their labor power for part of the surplus value appropriated by the capitalist. These people include not only those involved in buying and selling, but also those people within the production process who make sure the productive labor is used most efficiently, such as foreman and managers (Kap I 351). Today most of the thinking labor of the capitalist has also been given to others, who work as wage laborers for the capitalists. Their wages are higher than normal not only due to the educational costs but also to insure their obedience to the capitalist. They are given a special share in the surplus value.

One can see that it is only the monopoly of the means of production which gives the capitalist class the power to enslave the proletariat. If the workers were able to unite and seize the means of production, they would destroy the power of the capitalists and of capital over themselves. Much of the capitalist's surplus value goes to prevent this possibility. The whole ideological superstructure and the state exist for this reason.

As we remarked earlier, in the capitalist system based upon alienated or wage labor, the capitalist him/herself is in the condition of alienation (O-P MS 63). The capitalist is alienated from the human species being. She or he is only the personification of capital, i.e. is consumed by the drive to increase his capital. His life has become a means of the alien yet embodied power of capital. He acts not freely or consciously as a human species being, but only for capital. He is himself deprived of creating by his own labor the world in which he wishes to live and allows another to create for him. He relates to his fellow human beings in the exchange process not as another member of the species, but as the ruler and controller. He does nothing for the worker; he only exploits him for his own and only aim - the increase of capital.

Useless Human Activity in Capitalism

In the earlier discussion of useless human activity, we saw that an activity could be useless in two ways - either in producing a useful product which was not used, or in producing a useless product, one which satisfied no human need or desire. In capitalism the situation is more complicated in that the production process ends in the sale of the products and not their personal consumption. The first case of useless

human activity is still basically the same. A product which is usable but not used in the production process, either by being exchanged and then not used or by not being exchanged in the first place, is the result of useless human activity.

The second case of useless human activity is somewhat more complicated. In the capitalist system commodities are exchanged on the basis of money as the universal equivalent. So, if a commodity can be exchanged and its exchange value realized this constitutes its consumption. If the commodity is in fact a useless commodity, not able to satisfy a human need, this will eventually become clear in its actual consumption or use. However, if the user exchanged for this commodity, the producer of this commodity will have been able to retrieve the capital invested in this production as well as appropriate the surplus value in that commodity. So for the capitalist the production process has been a success even though the product is useless to the consumer; it has been useful to the capitalist and is considered the result of productive labor. The consumer has lost. On the other hand if a capitalist produces a product which he is then unable to sell, regardless of how useful the product might be to a human being, he will have lost the capital he invested into its production. The labor involved in its production will have been

useless human activity. The laborer will, however, have received his/her wage and thereby exchanged to the capitalist his labor power, which was improperly used by the capitalist, for his 'proper' wage. In this case the capitalist has lost. This situation creates the greatest headaches for the capitalists, since the increase of their capital depends in the end on the sale of the products which they have had produced for them. This results in the great emphasis placed on advertising, which aims at selling the products regardless of their true usefulness to the consumer.

In capitalism there appear two ways in which one can characterize useless human activity. One is like the former general distinction. What is useless in the satisfaction of a human desire or need is the result of useless human activity. However, a second way of distinguishing useless human activity in capitalism is that activity which does not produce a commodity which is exchanged. Hence uselessness, in the first sense, can be made useful in capitalism if one can exchange this useless product for useful exchange value.

Chapter 5: Revolutionary Praxis

The result of Marx's philosophy is the aim to change the world (TF 11). The way to change the world is through revolutionary praxis. The category of praxis provides the backdrop for revolutionary praxis. Revolutionary praxis, revolutionary activity and practical-critical activity are synonymous (TF 1, 3). An understanding of the category of praxis reveals the possibility of revolutionary praxis in the capitalist epoch aimed towards the establishment of the communist society. Concrete human activity, praxis, is seen to be potentially free, conscious activity. It is free from a determination by nature and is an object of our wills. Human history is the history of the dialectical development of human activity. Although historically determined in general outline by the mode of production of society, this itself is determined by the development of the productivity of labor. The productivity of labor is the result of the interaction of theory and practice in the unity of human activity. The development of the productivity of labor is the development of praxis.

Praxis, when labor, is the conscious free activity of humans which effects a change in the material world through its process of reforming nature. Praxis becomes revolutionary when the human subject becomes self-conscious of the power of praxis and of his/her position in the historical development, and so, understands the need to change the world in that way which will further human development. It is the revolution of human activity in that human activity is now consciously aimed at the revolution of society - the radical changing of the world to make it the consciously planned environment for truly human activity. Revolutionary praxis is liberating labor, human activity aimed at the production of use values which will revolutionize human life by changing the world in such a way as to free humanity and establish the truly human society. It is labor consciously aimed at its own liberation.

Liberating labor demands, as all labor, the conscious plan of action. Its first task is the development of the consciousness of the proletariat concerning the possibility of liberation. At first this is consciousness of the alienated form of labor and human life, its economical and historical pro-

gression, and the factors condition this.¹ This is the function of revolutionary, as opposed to perceiving (Anschauung), philosophy (TF 1). It is the beginning of practical-critical activity, the philosophic foundation of which Marx established in the synthesis of materialism, idealism, and political economy. Marx writes in 1844 in the introduction to his critique of Hegel's philosophy of law, that the purpose philosophy, which is founded in the service of history, is to expose the alienation of humans in the real world after having shown the falsity of a heavenly world.² This analysis of the alienation of the practical, material world results in the understanding of the historical development of humanity in this world (TF 8). It discovers the proletarian class as the material basis, the actual force, for the liberation of humanity. The proletarian liberation is, however, itself based in the understanding of the real process of historical development. Revolutionary philosophy and proletarian action must be united in the liberation struggle.³

1. Marx indicates the importance of this understanding in the beginning of: Karl Marx, Lohnarbeit und Kapital, in Marx-Engels Ausgewählte Schriften, Band II, (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1952), p. 70.

2. Karl Marx, Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie, in Marx-Engels Werke, Band I (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956), p. 379.

3. *ibid.*, p. 391.

Karl Marx devoted his life to developing the basis for the liberation of humanity. This was the development of his philosophy and the application of this philosophy to the actual world. It is the unity of theory and practice in liberating labor or revolutionary praxis. By means of his critical examination of German philosophy, French materialism, and British and French political economy, Marx established his revolutionary philosophy. Friedrich Engels arrived in a similar position of understanding through his analysis of the working class in England. They joined forces in 1845, in order to develop and expand their revolutionary thinking and activity. Their joint effort, The German Ideology, was not only a critique of previous German philosophy, but a process whereby they clarified their own understanding of the basis for revolutionary praxis (K-PO 10).

An essential function of liberating labor is the development of the conscious awareness of the objective situation and its possibilities for revolutionary activity. This process of self-conscious development reveals within its analysis the need for the necessary conscious development of the revolutionary force, which will, by acting from this conscious understanding of its role in human development, change the world. Marx and Engels recognized this necessary aspect and

expressed it in their most important revolutionary work: The Manifesto of the Communist Party. The manifesto is a succinct exposition of the basic ideas developed by Marx and Engels which will form the self-conscious basis for the revolutionary proletariat.

The essential fact in history for revolutionary praxis, is that all previous history has been the history of class struggle (Man 26). In the capitalist epoch the struggle is between the capitalist and the proletariat classes. The proletariat, when united in the conscious effort to overcome the alienation they suffer, will destroy the class difference by overcoming the power of the capitalists, and thereby liberate themselves and humanity. To do this, however, it is necessary that the proletariat become conscious of their historical role and the means by which this may be effected. The task of liberating labor in this stage is to aid the self-education of the proletariat, to raise their consciousness of their situation so that they themselves become self-conscious of the purpose of their revolutionary struggle.

In this process of the development of the proletariat, other members of society will join in this struggle, having themselves realized the aims and means of the liberation of humanity (Man 35).

Revolutionary praxis although based in the

individual or rather the united individuals, is also based in a particular socio-historical epoch. Revolutionary praxis is only possible under certain historical conditions. These conditions have been developed by the capitalist mode of production. The bourgeoisie have produced their own destruction (Man 32). This is consistent with the dialectical progression of human history. In the contradiction between the new modes of production established by capitalism and the outmoded social relations of distribution or ownership, the possibility of revolutionary praxis becomes actual (Kap III 890-891; K-PO 9).

For this revolution to be possible at all there must be a revolutionary class which is alienated from its possible form of life realizable only through a revolution of society. The possible form of life is that life allowable by means of the productive powers possible for that stage of development (GI 56). The capitalist class produces both of these conditions for the proletariat revolution. It produces the proletariat class, as an alienated class, a class robbed of its surplus labor. A class which can survive only by increasing the power of the capitalist class (Man 32). Not only does the capitalist class produce the proletariat but also it produces the unity of the proletariat. It breaks down all previous barriers

which separated the proletariat. It unites the proletariat in forcing them to struggle against its own power (Man 34). The complete alienation and subjection of the proletariat by the capitalists produces the proletariat as the revolutionary class capable of freeing humanity, since the proletariat themselves have no special privileges or interests in society which they could preserve after the revolution and use as a means of subjecting others (Man 36).

In the place of the old bourgeoisie society with its classes and class contradictions, comes the association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all (Man 45).

In the capitalist mode of production, the productive powers of labor are greatly increased. This is due to the drive of capital to discover better means of production allowing for an increase in capital accumulation. That is, the capitalist which is able to discover, or have discovered for him, a new means of production - more productive - will be able to have his workers work at a level of productivity well above average and so be able to accumulate more surplus value, until the other capitalists in this area adopt his methods. And so, the drive to discover new methods of production is inherent within the capitalist system.

The impulse to discover greater productive powers has progressed to that level of productivity in capitalism which would allow the proletariat, if they controlled the means of production, to produce all the needs of society. This is essential for the revolution since it provides the basis for a classless society where no one class must exploit another in order to satisfy its needs, so the revolution does not result in just making want general (GI 56). This allows for the eventual completion of the proletarian revolution when it may be said: "Each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!" (E-GP 17).

This development Marx saw beginning with the introduction of machines. Machines allowed the freeing of much human labor, human energies, which could be used for the development of the individual's mental and physical life (Grund 593). With the increased use of machinery labor itself becomes an activity of watching and regulating the machine (Grund 592). Labor time eventually ceases to be the measure of value since the machines have taken over the production role of use values (Grund 593). This development begins in capitalist production. It is the contradiction of the mode of production with the economic relationships of wage labor and capital. However, it is itself not the end of

of exploitation, only its beginning.

Only the proletarian revolution, the seizure of the means of production and their control by the associated workers, allows for the appropriation of the use values created by the machines for humanity.

The proletarian revolution is an historical process which begins with the appropriation of the means of production by the working class. This is done by seizing the power in the state. It continues by developing the productive abilities of society. The reduction of the socially necessary labor time involved in the production of its needs leads to a growing time available to the individual to realize themselves (Grund 89).

Revolutionary praxis is human activity aimed at the transformation of society into the truly human society, the communist society. Individuals who have begun to understand this transition, and understand it better during the struggle, come to see revolutionary praxis as a task they perform for the betterment of human life. It becomes for them a moral obligation, the morality of which is the improvement of humanity.

Concluding Remarks

The project of this thesis was to discover the category of praxis within Marx's philosophy. This was accomplished by means of an analysis of the category, its definition and subdivisions, as supported by Marx's writings. To conclude let me recapitulate some points and suggest some considerations.

The first chapter was necessarily brief since the demonstration of Marx's central category would have extended beyond the bounds of this work. Our purpose was to explore the category of praxis. However, it was sufficiently noted that the category was the result of Marx's studies. The concept of praxis was seen to be the basis of Marx's philosophic synthesis of materialism and idealism. Reality is the material world. But the materialist conception of this world was faulty in seeing the human merely as a machine, i.e. like any other natural entity acting and reacting to the rest of nature in accordance with natural laws of matter. The role of humans and humanity's effect on the material world could not be explained, for Marx, by the materialistic philosophy. Humans were something special in the natural world.

For Marx, this special role of humans, the active side, was discovered by Hegel but only in its abstract, ideal form, i.e. its non-material form separated from concrete reality.

The category of praxis unites the material world with the active side of human activity. It provides the basis for Marx's Weltanschauung. Humans exist only within nature; they are a part of nature; however, they are different. Their course of actions and development are not determined by nature. They are also not completely indetermined; they are not free in an existential sense. The development of humanity and praxis is determined for Marx in as much as there is a dialectical, teleological progression. The basis of this development Marx discovers in political economy. The development of the modes of production is the catalytic force of human history. This establishes the basic structure of society and by means of its development the cause for social change.

The indeterminacy of praxis lies in this realm; however, much work is still needed to clarify this point. To what extent is the development of new modes of production determined? What are the horizons of an individual's genius? How do we develop new ways of thinking and acting?

For us, today, the basic position of the category of praxis is not foreign. In our everyday existence

we accept both the material reality and a sense of human freedom of action. Nature, excluding man, is thought to function according to natural laws. There is a harmony to nature. Humans, while within nature and a part of it, are thought of as different. What we do seems to us important. We are not part of a harmony and do not see ourselves living in harmony with nature. In fact, some of us are quite worried about the effects our actions have on nature. We also feel we have the possibility to control our actions. The real question is what to do!

The implication of the category of praxis is to change the world. This conception of reality allows for such a possibility. The problem again is to discover the correct basis for this action. The exploration of the category of praxis is a beginning. I suggest this is what Marx was trying to do in his work. For Marx, primarily an economic analysis of history and social structures would provide the basis for an answer.

In the second chapter, praxis or sensuous human activity is distinguished from animal activity. This distinction is shown to be made by Marx in both his earlier and later works. It suggests the pervasiveness of the category of praxis in Marx's work as the unity of his work. The essential characteristic of praxis is rationality. Rationality not in-itself,

but the rational aspect of praxis is the distinguishing character. This points to the unity of thought and action (theory and practice) in praxis. This is the human species characteristic. This unity forms the basis for discovering Marx's theory of knowledge, which I do not attempt to discuss here. The hermeneutic analysis of the problems in a theory of knowledge would be relevant to such a discussion which was based on the category of praxis. The species-character of humans is shown to be founded in the distinction of praxis, as well as the connection of praxis with nature. The development of praxis in history is briefly mentioned, although an extensive analysis of this is needed to understand Marx's conception of human history.

In the third chapter the category of praxis is divided into the three sub-categories of labor, consumption and useless human activity. Although I might be accused of forcing Marx into distinctions neither explicit nor implicit in his work, I attempt to demonstrate that these are implicit in or congruous with Marx's ideas. The importance of the distinctions is not just systematic. These are distinguished in terms of use value - labor produces them, consumption uses them, and useless human activity is the expenditure of human energies which result in neither production nor consumption of them. These are meant to exhaust

the possibilities of praxis. It is a stimulus to further thought and not meant to be dogmatic. What else do we do?

Labor is most clearly defined by Marx as the production of use values. Marx speaks of labor (Kap I 198) as the eternal, natural condition for human life, the universal condition for the metamorphosis of matter (Stoffwechsel) between man and nature. Marx asks, "What is life, except activity (labor)¹" (O-P MS 56). Because of these and other discussions of labor, I develop this sub-categorization. To this end I argue that thinking is a form of labor. Thinking is unified in praxis. They are distinguishable yet not separable. This is further supported by Marx's own discussion of the historical development of the division of labor. Here thinking is clearly a form of labor. The separation of thought from labor has led to many problems. Labor is then conceived as without thought and thought without action. The balance of thought and activity in their unity in praxis may be, in an historical situation, greatly disturbed, however, they are not completely disunited.

The major difficulty and important interest in this connection is the discovery of the true use values

1. Tätigkeit, in this quote, means primarily labor.

for humanity, a problem to which Herbert Marcuse has devoted much thought. However, its discussion exceeds our bounds. One comment - who is to determine this and on what criteria? Being not truly human how can we answer? Furthermore are there use values for all times - perhaps some, but surely not all things are always useful - and what of individual differences? On the other hand, some preliminary determination seems essential. And certainly we assume many without thought - often to our detriment, i.e. they were not truly useful.

In the fourth chapter the distinctions of various parts of the category of praxis are demonstrated as the basis of Marx's economic theory. The purpose was to show that the category of praxis forms the basis for his thought. Furthermore, the unity and development of Marx's work, if this is demonstrable using the category of praxis, depends on the demonstration that the category of praxis is the foundation of Marx's economic theory. In this connection the discussion of wage labor as alienated labor is essential in showing the unity of the earlier and later works. Further analysis may demonstrate this development in the corpus of Marx. As a preliminary suggestion, Marx develops the category of praxis early on. The attempt to understand reality, and in the category of praxis the development of humanity, was discovered

to be based in the development of the productivity of praxis. Society was founded on the economic structure. To realize the possibility of self-determination within praxis, the economic structure must be understood. It provides the parameters of possible action (not forgetting the parameters of nature). The demonstration of the validity of this economic analysis was essential for Marx's praxis.

The questions concerning the validity of this analysis, its possible positive reinterpretations, and the problems of misinterpretation fall well outside our discussion. What could be raised as a germane question would be whether the category of praxis provides or could provide a foundation for a correct economic analysis.

In the fifth chapter the concept of revolutionary praxis is discussed as the result of the category of praxis. Inherent in the category is the recognition of the power of praxis to change the world in which we live. The need to change the world is contained within the alien condition of praxis in our time and the continued development of praxis. The chapter discusses Marx's position on revolutionary praxis. It is a summary of an area of great importance. If the category of praxis provides an understanding of reality, the discussion of what forms of praxis,

at this point in time, will improve humanity - this is the goal - is vitally important. Such a discussion would involve an understanding of the present conditions in terms of praxis. The moral obligation explicit in Marx, to change the world, is mentioned only as a stimulus for further analysis, i.e. the development of the value structure of Marx and our own - an analysis however, within praxis.

If I have raised more questions than answered, this project may contribute to inquiry. If the category of praxis can form the basis for the answers to these questions, the project has been successful - a project in Sartre's sense.

Appendix I

In the text abbreviations were used to refer to texts often used. Below is a correlation of the abbreviations and the titles of the texts. For complete bibliographical information see the selected bibliography.

- G-I The German Ideology
 Grund ... Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie
 Kap I ... Das Kapital, Band 1
 Kap II .. Das Kapital, Band 2
 Kap III . Das Kapital, Band 3
 K-GP Kritik des Gothaer Programms
 K-PO Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie
 Man Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei
 O-P MS .. Ökonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripte
 SV The Philosophy of Praxis, by Sanchez Vazquez
 TF Thesen ad Feuerbach

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