

From ECONOMICO-PHILOSOPHICAL
MANUSCRIPTS OF 1844

*FROM THE FIRST MANUSCRIPT:
'ALIENATED LABOUR'*

We have set out from the presuppositions of political economy. We have accepted its terminology and its laws. We presupposed private property; the separation of labor, capital and land and therefore of wages, profit of capital and rent of land; the division of labor; competition, the concept of exchange value, etc. From political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and, indeed, of the most miserable commodity; that the worker's misery is inversely proportional to the power and scope of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands and thus the most frightful restoration of monopoly; and finally, that the distinction between the capitalist and the land owner, like that between agricultural laborer and industrial worker, disappears and the whole of society must fall apart into two classes—those of property *owners* and of propertyless *workers*.

Political economy proceeds from the fact of private property. It does not explain private property. It expresses the *material* process through which private property actually passes in general abstract formulas and then takes these formulas to be *laws*. It does not *comprehend* these laws, i.e. it does not show how they arise from the very

nature of private property. Political economy does not show us the source of the division between labor and capital, and between capital and land. When it determines the relationship of wages to profit, for example, its final principle of explanation is the interest of the capitalist, i.e. it assumes what it is supposed to explain. Similarly, competition is referred to at every point and explained in terms of external conditions. Political economy tells us nothing about the extent to which these external, apparently accidental conditions are simply the expression of a necessary development. We have seen how political economy regards exchange itself as an accidental fact. The only wheels which political economy sets in motion are *greed* and the *war among the greedy—competition*.

Precisely because political economy does not grasp the interconnections within the movement, it could oppose, for instance, the doctrine of competition to the doctrine of monopoly, the doctrine of the freedom of the crafts to the doctrine of the guild, the doctrine of the division of landed property to the doctrine of the big estate. Competition, freedom of the crafts and division of landed property were explained and conceived only as accidental, deliberate, violent consequences of monopoly, of the guild system, and of feudal property, not as their necessary, inevitable, natural consequences.

We now, therefore, have to grasp the real connection between private property, greed, the division of labor, capital and land ownership, and the connection between exchange and competition, between value and the devaluation of men, between monopoly and competition etc.—the connection between all of this alienation and the system of money.

Let us not go back to a fictitious primordial state, as the political economist does when he tries to explain. Such a primordial state explains nothing. It only pushes the issue back into a grey, nebulous distance. It asserts as a fact, as an event, what it should deduce, namely the necessary re-

lation between two things—between, for example, division of labor and exchange. Theology explains the origin of evil in this manner, by means of the fall of man; i.e., it assumes as a fact, it presents as history, what has to be explained.

We proceed from an economic, *contemporary* fact.

The more wealth the worker produces, the more his production increases in power and scope, the poorer he becomes. The more commodities the worker produces, the cheaper a commodity he becomes. The *extinction of value* from the world of things is directly proportional to the *devaluation* of the world of men. Labor does not only produce commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity* and it does so to the same extent as it produces commodities in general.

This fact expresses nothing but this: the object which labor produces—the product of labor—confronts it as an *alien being*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor embodied and made material in a thing; it is the *objectification* of labor. The realization of labor is its objectification. Within political economy, this realization of labor appears as the *loss of reality* of the worker, objectification appears as the *loss of the object* and *bondage to it*; appropriation appears as *alienation* [*Entfremdung*], as *externalization* [*Entäusserung*].

The realization of labor appears as the loss of reality by the worker to such an extent that he loses reality to the point of starvation. Objectification appears as loss of the object to such an extent that the worker is robbed of the most essential objects, not only for life but also for work. Indeed, work itself becomes an object which he can obtain only with the greatest effort and with the most unpredictable interruptions. The appropriation of the object appears as alienation to such an extent that the more objects the worker produces the fewer he can own and the more he falls under the domination of his product, capital.

All these consequences are contained in the fact that the

worker is related to the *product of his labor* as to an *alien* object. For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker exhausts himself, the more powerful the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself becomes, the poorer he and his inner world become, the less there is that belongs to him as his own. The same is true in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; but now it no longer belongs to him, it belongs to the object. The greater this activity, therefore, the greater the worker's lack of objects. What the product of his work is, he is not. The greater the product, therefore, the less is he himself. The *externalization* of the worker into his product does not only mean that his work becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him* independently, as something alien to him, as confronting him as an autonomous power. It means that the life which he has given to the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.

Let us now look more closely at *objectification*, at the worker's production and at the *alienation*, the *loss* of the object, of the product, within it.

The worker cannot create anything without *nature*, without the *external world of the senses*. It is the material in which his labor realizes itself, in which it is active, out of which and by means of which it produces.

But just as nature furnishes labor with the *means of life* in the sense that labor cannot *live* without objects on which to operate, so, on the other hand, nature also furnishes the *means of life* in the narrower sense, i.e. the means for the physical subsistence of the *worker* himself.

The more therefore, the worker *appropriates* the external world and hence sensuous nature through his labor, the more he deprives himself of the *means of life* in two respects: first, in that the external world of the senses more and more ceases to be an object belonging to his labor, a *means of life* of his work; second, in that it more

and more ceases to be a *means of life* in the direct sense, a means of physical subsistence for the worker.

In these two respects, therefore, the worker becomes a slave to his object: first, in that he receives an *object of labor*, that is, he receives *labor*, and second, in that he receives the *means of subsistence*. The first, therefore, enables him to exist as a *worker* and the second as a *physical subject*. The high point of this bondage lies in the fact that he can maintain himself as a *physical subject* only in so far as he is a *worker* and that only as a *physical subject* is he a worker.

(The alienation of the worker in his object is expressed within the laws of political economy thus: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the less value, the less dignity, he has; the better shaped his product, the more mis-shapen the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbaric the worker; the more powerful the work, the more powerless the worker; the more intelligent the work, the more witless the worker, the more he becomes a slave of nature.)

Political economy conceals the alienation inherent in the nature of labor by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labor) and production. To be sure, labor produces marvels for the rich but it produces deprivation for the worker. It produces palaces, but hovels for the worker. It produces beauty, but deformity for the worker. It replaces labor by machines, but it throws one section of the workers back to barbaric labor, and it turns the remainder into machines. It produces intelligence, but imbecility and cretinism for the worker.

The direct relationship of labor to its product is the relationship of the worker to the objects of his production. The relationship of the man of means to the objects of production and to production itself is only a *consequence* of this first relationship and confirms it. We shall consider this latter aspect below.

When we ask 'What is the essential relationship of labor', then we ask about the relationship of the *worker* to production.

So far we have considered the worker's alienation, externalization, only from one side: his *relationship to the products of his work*. But alienation manifests itself not only in the result, but in the *act of production*, in the *producing activity* itself. How could the worker confront the product of his activity as an alien if he did not alienate himself from himself in the very act of production? The product is after all only the résumé of the activity of production. If the product of labor is externalization, then production itself must be active externalization, the externalization of activity, the activity of externalization. The alienation of the object of labor merely recapitulates the alienation, the externalization, in the activity of labor itself.

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labor?

First, in the fact that labor is *external* to the worker, that is, that it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel well but unhappy, does not freely develop his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker, therefore, feels himself only outside his work, and feels beside himself in his work. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His work therefore is not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labor*. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need, but only a *means* for satisfying needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that labor is shunned like the plague as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion. External labor, labor in which man is externalized, is labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Finally, the external nature of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in that labor he does not belong to himself but to

someone else. Just as in religion, the spontaneous activity of human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates independently of the individual, i.e. as an alien divine or diabolical activity, so the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self.

The result, therefore, is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his shelter and his finery—while in his human functions he feels himself nothing more than an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.

Eating, drinking, procreating, etc. are, of course, also genuinely human functions. But taken in abstraction, separated from the remaining sphere of human activities and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal.

We have considered labor, the act of alienation of practical human activity, in two aspects: (1) the relation of the worker to the *product of labor* as an alien object that dominates him. This relationship is at the same time the relation to the sensuous external world, to natural objects as an alien world confronting him in a hostile way. (2) The relation of labor to the *act of production* within labor. This relation is the relationship of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity that does not belong to him; activity as suffering, strength as weakness, procreation as emasculation, the worker's *own* physical and spiritual energy, his personal life—for what is life but activity—as an activity turned against him, independent of him, and not belonging to him. Here we have *self-alienation*, as above we had the alienation of the *thing*.

We have now only to infer a third aspect of *alienated labor* from the two previous ones.

Man is a species-being, not only in that practically and theoretically he makes his own species as well as that of other things into his object, but—and this is only another way of putting the same thing—also in that he treats him-

self as the actual, living species, treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being.

The life of the species, in man as in animals, physically consists in the fact that man (like the animal) lives on inorganic nature; and the more universal man is in comparison with an animal, the more universal the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives. Just as plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc. on the theoretical side form part of human consciousness, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art, just as they are his spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare for enjoyment and digestion, so they also form a part of human life and of human activity on the practical side. Physically man lives only by these products of nature, whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothing, housing, etc. The universality of man appears in practice precisely in that universality which makes the whole of nature his *inorganic* body, insofar as nature is (1) a direct means to life, and (2) the material, object and instrument of his life activity. Nature is man's *inorganic* body,—nature, i.e., in so far as it is not the human body. Man *lives* by nature. This means that nature is his *body*, with which he must constantly remain in step if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is tied to nature means no more than that nature is tied to itself, for man is a part of nature.

In alienating (1) nature and (2) man himself, his own active function, his life activity, from man, alienated labor alienates the *species* from man. It converts the *life of the species*, for him, into a means of individual life. First, it alienates the species—life and the individual life and secondly it makes the individual life, in its abstract form, the purpose of the species-life, also in abstract and alienated form.

Labor, *life activity* and *productive life*, indeed, first appear to man only as a *means* to satisfy a need, the need of

maintaining physical existence. Productive life, however, is species-life. It is life-begetting life. The whole character of a species—its species-character—is contained in the character of its life activity; and free conscious activity is the species-character of man. Life itself appears only as a *means* to life.

The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. The animal is *its life activity*. Man makes his life activity itself into an object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he merges directly. Conscious life activity distinguishes man directly from the life activity of the animal. It is only thereby that he is a species-being. Or rather he is only a conscious being—that is, his own life is an object for him—precisely because he is a species-being. Only for that reason is his activity free activity. Alienated labor reverses this relationship in such a way that man, just because he is a conscious being, makes his life activity, his *essence*, a mere means for his *existence*.

His creation, in practice, of an *objective world*, his *working upon* inorganic nature, is the proof that man is a conscious species-being, that is a being which is related to the species as its own essence or to itself as a species-being. To be sure, animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwelling places, as the bees, beavers, ants, etc. do. But the animal produces what it needs directly for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, while man produces universally. It produces under the domination of direct physical need while man produces even when he is free from physical need and produces truly, indeed, only in freedom from such need. The animal produces only itself, while man reproduces the whole of nature. The animal's product is directly part of its physical body, while man steps out freely to confront his product. The animal builds only according to the standard

and the need of the species to which it belongs, while man knows how to produce according to the standard of every species and always knows how to apply the intrinsic standard to the object. Man, therefore, creates according to the laws of beauty.

It is precisely in his working over of the objective world, therefore, that man proves himself to be really a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. In and through such production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labor, therefore, is the *objectification* of the species-life of man: for man duplicates himself not only intellectually, as in consciousness, but also actively, in reality, and therefore contemplates himself in a world that he has created. In so far as alienated labor tears the object of his production away from man, therefore, it tears away from him his *species-life*, his actual objectivity as a member of the species and transforms his advantage over the animal into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken away from him.

Similarly, in degrading spontaneous activity, free activity, to the level of a means, alienated labor makes man's species-life a means for his physical existence.

Alienation thus transforms the consciousness which man has of his species, in such a way, that the species-life becomes a means for man.

Alienated labor therefore makes:

(3) *man's species-being*, his nature as well as his generic intellectual ability, into an existence *alien* to him, into a *means* to his *individual existence*. It alienates from man his own body, as well as nature outside him, as well as his spiritual being, his *human* being.

(4) A direct consequence of man's alienation from the product of his labor, from his life activity, from his species-being, is the *alienation of man from man*. When man confronts himself, he confronts *another* man. What is true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work, and to himself, is also true of man's relationship to

the other man, and to that man's labor and the object of his labor.

Generally, the proposition that man's species-being is alienated from him means that one man is alienated from another, just as each of them is alienated from human nature.

The alienation of man, indeed every relationship in which man stands to himself, is realized and expressed only in the relationship in which man stands to other men.

In the relationship of alienated labor, therefore, every man sees others in accordance with the standard and the relationship in which he finds himself as a worker.

We began with an economic fact, the alienation of the worker and of his production. We have formulated the concept of this fact: *alienated, externalized* labor. We have analyzed this concept, that is we have analyzed a mere fact of political economy.

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

If the product of labor is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom then does it belong? If my own activity does not belong to me, if it is an alien, a forced activity, to whom, then, does it belong?

To a being *other* than me.

Who is this being?

The *gods*??? To be sure, in earliest times, the principal production (for example the building of temples, etc., in Egypt, India, Mexico) appears to be in the service of the gods, and the product belongs to the gods. But the gods themselves were never the lords of labor. Neither was *nature*. And what a contradiction it would be if the more man subjugated nature through his labor and the more the miracles of the gods were rendered superfluous by the marvels of industry, the more man were to renounce his joy in production and the enjoyment of the product in favor of these powers.

The *alien* being to whom labor and the product of labor belong, whom labor serves and for whose satisfaction the product of labor is provided, can only be *man* himself.

If the product of labor does not belong to the worker, if it is an alien power that confronts him, then this is possible only because it belongs to a *man other than the worker*. If the worker's activity is torment for him, it must be *pleasure* and a joy of life for another. Neither the gods, nor nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man.

We must remember the proposition previously put forward, that man's relationship to himself only becomes *objective* and *actual* for him through his relationship to the other man.

If he relates himself to the product of his labor, to his objectified labor, as to an *alien*, hostile, powerful object independent of him, then his position toward it is such that someone else is master of this object, someone who is alien, hostile, powerful and independent of him. If he treats his own activity as an unfree one, then he treats it as an activity performed in the service, under the domination, coercion and yoke of another man.

Every self-alienation of man from himself and from nature appears in the relationship in which he places himself and nature toward other men, men distinguished from him.... In the real practical world self-alienation can become manifest only through the real practical relationship to other men. The means whereby alienation takes place is itself *practical*. Through alienated labor man creates not only his relationship to the object and to the act of production as to an alien and hostile man, he also creates the relation in which other men stand to his production and to his product, and the relationship in which he stands to these other men. Just as he creates his own production as a loss of his own reality, as his punishment; just as he creates his own product as a loss, as a product not belonging to him; so he creates the domination of the non-

producer over production and over the product. Just as he alienates his own activity from himself, so he confers upon the stranger an activity which is not his own.

Up to now, we have looked at this relationship only from the standpoint of the worker and we shall later look at it also from the standpoint of the non-worker.

Through *alienated, externalized labor*, then, the worker creates the relationship to this work of a man alien to work and standing outside it. The relation of the worker to labor produces the relation of the capitalist (or whatever one chooses to call the master of labor) to labor. *Private property* is therefore the product, the result, the necessary consequence of *externalized labor*, of the worker's external relation to nature and to himself.

Private property is thus arrived at through analysis of the concept of *externalized labor*, that is of *externalized man*, of alienated labor, of alienated life, and of *alienated man*.

True, it is as a result of the *movement of private property* that we have obtained the concept of *externalized labor* (*externalized life*) from political economy. But analysis of this concept shows that although private property appears to be the basis, the cause of externalized labor, it is rather its consequence, just as the gods are *originally* not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion. Later this relationship becomes reciprocal.

Only when the development of private property reaches its final, culminating point does this, its secret, appear again—namely, that it is the *product* of externalized labor on the one hand and that it is, on the other, the *means* by which labor externalizes itself, that it is the *realization* of this externalization.

This account at the same time throws light on several conflicts hitherto unresolved.

(1) Political economy takes its departure from labor as the real soul of production; yet it gives nothing to labor and everything to private property. Proudhon, faced by this contradiction, has decided in favor of labor against

private property. We, however, recognize that this apparent contradiction is the contradiction of *alienated labor* with itself and that political economy has merely given expression to the laws of alienated labor.

We also recognize, therefore, that *wages* and *private property* are identical: for wages, like the product, the object of labor, labor itself remunerated, are but a necessary consequence of the alienation of labor. After all, in wages labor does not appear as an end in itself, but as the servant of wages. We shall develop this point later and meanwhile only bring out some of its consequences.

An enforced *increase of wages* (disregarding all the other difficulties, including the fact that such an anomaly could only be maintained by force) would therefore be nothing but *better remuneration for the slaves*, and would have won, neither for the worker nor for labor, their human significance and worth.

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

Wages are a direct result of alienated labor, and alienated labor is the direct cause of private property. If one falls therefore, the other must fall.

(2) From the relationship of alienated labor to private property it further follows that the emancipation of society from private property etc., from servitude, expresses itself *politically* as the *emancipation of the workers*; not that *their* emancipation alone is at stake, but because the emancipation of the workers contains within it universal human emancipation. Such human emancipation is contained within it, because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production and every relation of servitude is only a modification and consequence of this relation.

Just as we have arrived at the concept of *private property* by an *analysis* of the concept of *alienated labor* so

with the help of these two factors we can arrive at the *categories* of political economy, and in every category, e.g. trade, competition, capital, money, we shall find only *particular* and *developed* expression of these first elements.

Before considering this structure, however, let us seek to solve two problems.

(1) To determine the general nature of *private property* as it has resulted from alienated labor in its relationship to *genuine human and social property*.

(2) We have taken the *alienation of labor* as a fact and analyzed it. How does it happen, we ask now, that *man alienates his labor*? How is this alienation grounded in the nature of human development? We have already come a considerable way toward the solution in so far as we have *transformed* the question regarding *origin of private property* into a question regarding the relationship between alienated labor and the process of development of mankind. For when one speaks of private property one believes oneself to be dealing with something external to mankind. But when one speaks of labor one deals directly with mankind itself. This new formulation of the problem already contains its solution.

Ad (1): The general nature of private property and its relationship to truly human property.

Alienated labor has resolved itself for us into two elements which mutually determine one another, or which are but different expressions of one and the same relationship. *Appropriation* appears as *alienation* and *alienation* appears as *appropriation*. Alienation appears as the true induction into civil life.

We have considered one aspect—*alienated labor* in relation to the *worker* himself, i.e., the *relation of alienated labor to itself*. We have found the *property relation of the non-worker to the worker and to labor* to be the product, the necessary consequence of this relationship. *Private property*, as the material, summarized expression of alienated labor, embraces both relations—the *relation of*

the worker to labor, to the product of his labor and to the non-worker, and the relation of the non-worker to the worker and to the product of the latter's labor.

We have already seen that in relation to the worker who appropriates nature by means of his labor, this appropriation appears as alienation; the worker's spontaneous activity appears as activity for another and as the activity of another, living appears as a sacrifice of life, production of the object as loss of the object to an alien power, to an alien person. Let us now consider the relation to the worker, to labor and to its object of this person, alien to labor and the worker.

It should be noted first that everything which appears in the worker as an *activity of alienation, of externalization*, appears in the non-worker as a *state of alienation, of externalization*.

Secondly, that the *real, practical attitude* (as a state of mind) of the worker in production and to the product appears in the non-worker who confronts him as a *theoretical attitude*.

Thirdly, the non-worker does everything against the worker which the worker does against himself; but he does not do against himself what he does against the worker.

Let us examine these three relations more closely.

[At this point the first manuscript breaks off unfinished.]

MEGA I, 3, 81-94; MEW *Ergänzungsbd* I, 510-22.

FROM THE THIRD MANUSCRIPT: 'PRIVATE PROPERTY AND COMMUNISM'

... The supersession of self-estrangement follows the same course as self-estrangement. *Private property* is first considered only from its objective aspect, but with labor

conceived as its essence. Its mode of existence is, therefore, *capital* which it is necessary to abolish "as such" (Proudhon). Or else the *specific form* of labor (labor which is brought to a common level, subdivided, and thus unfree) is regarded as the source of the *harmfulness* of private property and of its existence alienated from man. Fourier, in accord with the Physiocrats, regards *agricultural labor* as being at least the exemplary kind of labor. Saint-Simon asserts on the contrary that *industrial labor* as such is the essence of labor, and consequently he desires the *exclusive* rule of the industrialists and an amelioration of the condition of the workers. Finally, *communism* is the positive expression of the abolition of private property, and in the first place of universal private property. In taking this relation in its *universal aspect* communism is, in its first form, only the generalization and fulfilment of the relation. As such it appears in a double form; the domination of material property looms so large that it aims to destroy everything which is incapable of being possessed by everyone as private property. It wishes to eliminate talent, etc. by *force*. Immediate physical possession seems to it the unique goal of life and existence. The role of *worker* is not abolished, but is extended to all men. The relation of private property remains the relation of the community to the world of things. Finally, this tendency to oppose general private property to private property is expressed in an animal form; *marriage* (which is incontestably a form of *exclusive private property*) is contrasted with the community of women, in which women become communal and common property. One may say that this idea of the *community of women* is the *open secret* of this entirely crude and unreflective communism. Just as women are to pass from marriage to universal prostitution, so the whole world of wealth (i.e. the objective being of man) is to pass from the relation of exclusive marriage with the private owner to the relation of universal prostitution with the community. This communism, which negates the *per-*