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KARL MARX

LIFE AND TIMES

In 1817, the year before Karl Marx (1818-1883) was born to Heinrich and Henrietta Marx, his father had joined the Lutheran Church of Prussia. Coming from a long line of rabbis, Heinrich Marx, a lawyer and head of the bar in Trier, in Germany, found it necessary to seek refuge in the liberal Protestant body. This was due to the increased pressure and persecution of the Jews under the newly established Prussian regime following the fall of the more lenient Napoleonic government. Henrietta, a rabbi's daughter from Holland, gave birth to Karl Marx on the 5th of May, 1818, and though she herself does not seem to have a great influence on him, his father Heinrich most definitely did. Born in a bourgeois household and brought up by a highly educated lawyer, a disciple of the Enlightenment and a student of Leibniz and Voltaire, Kant and Lessing, Marx naturally thought of pursuing an advanced university education upon completing his early studies at the Trier gymnasium. At age 17, in 1835, Karl Marx entered the university of Bonn to study law. The following year, unlike most German students who attend several universities before sitting for the university degree-examinations, he journeyed to Berlin to study on the university faculty. Though Hegel had died in 1831, the university was still very much under the spell of his theory of history. Quickly succumbing to Hegelianism, he joined a rather loosely knit band of young radicals marginally affiliated with the university, who called themselves unabashedly the *Doktorclub*.

Law was abandoned, and joining these Young Hegelians,

Marx took up the study of philosophy. Marx was inclined to frequent expensive taverns and restaurants, invariably joining in an Hegelian-feat with kindred minds. Finally, in 1841 at the age of twenty-three, he received the doctorate degree from the University of Jena for his thesis, entitled, "On the Differences between the Natural Philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus." Having destroyed his chances at a university teaching career due to his radical and outspoken views, shortly after completing his studies, he began writing for a radical, left-wing paper in Cologne, *Rheinische Zeitung*, and became its editor in 1842. Following the forced closure of the paper by the government because of a series of radically controversial articles by Marx on social conditions, Marx travelled to Paris, the then gathering place for European political refugees and the politically left-wing emigre community. Feeling ideologically at home in Paris among socialists from all over Europe, and being himself technically a former "Young Hegelian," Marx continued to write extensively upon the Hegelian themes of "alienation," "estrangement" and "loss of being" confronting modern industrial man. These *Paris Manuscripts* were destined to become major papers in his posthumous legacy to western culture.

Before leaving for Paris, Marx had married Jenny von Westphalen, a childhood girlfriend of a higher social class, precipitating a barrage of criticism and hostility from her family and friends. The Paris years, 1843 to 1845, proved determinative in Marx's intellectual ferment comparable to his German years among the Hegelians. And most significantly, he met Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) there, and the friendship was immediate and eternal. The political atmosphere and the radical colleagues with whom Marx associated created just the right alchemy for creative productivity. Particularly the friendship with Engels affected Marx's political and economic theories. His movement away from Hegelian historicism towards a developing socialism accelerated in the Parisian milieu. But, as in Germany two years before, the governmental authorities, this time of Guizot in Paris, expelled Marx and many of his associates. Moving to Brussels, he re-established contact with like-minded German refugees there, especially a socialist organization called the German Workers' Educational Association. This organization interestingly had headquarters in London and was federated with the

Communist League of Europe. With a draft from Engels, and under commission from the G.W.E.A., Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* which was sent on to London headquarters in 1848.

Under what appeared to be favorable but later proved unfavorable circumstances, Marx and Engels returned to Paris following the outbreak of revolution in Germany, assuming the editorship of the radical paper, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. Failing to work out a working-class/bourgeoisie alliance against the feudal government, Marx was presented an ultimatum by the government in August, 1849, of retiring to the French hinterlands or leaving the country. Opting for the latter, Marx migrated to London where he established permanent residence. The first few years in London proved productive, intellectually and literally, producing such works as *The Class Struggles in France* (1850), *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), and *Contributions to a Critique of Political Economy* (1859). During these years, Marx also spent a great deal of time researching for his major work, the three-volume *Capital*. In 1867, the first volume appeared but the other two could not be published until after his death, Engels bringing them out in 1885 and 1894. Arriving in London in 1849 at the age of thirty one, Marx's life was just half over—a refugee thrice, twice exiled as an editor of a radical political paper, and once as the author of *The Communist Manifesto*, it would appear he had much to live and hope for. But in London, he withdrew with Engels into a close-knit circle composed of his family and a select few devoted disciples. This self-enforced isolation continued throughout the remainder of his life. After securing an admission card to the British Museum's reading room, much of the remainder of his active life centered around the analysis and the criticism of the industrial capitalism of the day. During this period, he was desperately impoverished, and save for the loyal assistance of Engels, all might have been lost. Three children died in the Marx household owing to malnutrition and impoverishment during the time he was completing the first volume of *Das Kapital*. Except for the one pound sterling he received for each article he wrote for the *New York Daily Tribune*, he had nothing. For a brief time, Marx came out of seclusion and was saved from continued poverty due to the appearance of and subsequent leadership offered by him to *The*

International, an international federation of European and English workers committed to altering the present economic system. Marx produced the inaugural address at the London Exhibition of Modern Industry and took over the world-wide leadership until its final decline, and termination in Philadelphia in 1876. Marx, now wrecked by illness and broken health due to early poverty, and unfulfilled dreams, produced little during his last remaining years. Though a little comfortable towards the end of his life financially, and a distinct celebrity, for socialist leaders from all over the world came to visit him in London, he sustained two blows—the deaths of his eldest daughter and wife—from which he never recovered. Marx died on March 14, 1883.

DIALECTICS AND METHODOLOGY

Dialectical Materialism ✓

As we have already indicated earlier, Marx was not satisfied with Hegelian idealism but Hegel's use of the dialectical methodology did grab Marx's imagination. By turning from idealism to materialism (i.e., inverting Hegel), Marx was able to make good use of the dialectic in what came to be called "dialectical materialism" or "historical materialism." Marx drew heavily from Hegel in terms of his "manner of approach" to social phenomena and his analysis of it. However, Hegel was an idealist who asserted the primacy of "mind," whereas Marx was a "materialist" who asserted the primacy of "matter." "To Marx," explains Larson, "matter is not a product of mind; on the contrary mind is simply the most advanced product of matter. Though Marx rejected Hegel's content orientation, he retained his dialectical structure."⁸ Marx was quick to give Hegel the credit for what he owed him, but became very hostile when accused of merely taking over the Hegelian methodology without significantly modifying or improving it. "My dialectic method," Marx burst out in his early writ-

ings in defence of his system, "is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the idea', he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demi-urge of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the idea'. With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought."⁹ Hegel's passion was for the Absolute Idea and his system concentrated its developmental tasks there; Marx's singularity of concern was the creation of an interpretative and analytical methodology which would account for the dynamics of human social activity, thinking and action.

Larson has very nicely outlined the basic postulates of Marxian dialectical method as follows. "(1) all the phenomena of nature are part of an integrated whole; (2) nature is in a continuous state of movement and change; (3) the developmental process is a product of quantitative advances which culminate in abrupt qualitative changes; and (4) contradictions are inherent in all realms of nature—but particularly human society."¹⁰ This methodology perceived history as a series of stages based on a particular mode of production and characterized by a particular type of economic organization. Because of the inherent contradictions, each stage contained the seeds of its own destruction. And in the words of Stalin, "the dialectical method holds that the process of development should be understood not as movement in a circle, not as a simple repetition of what has already occurred, but as an onward and upward movement, as transition from an old qualitative state to a new qualitative state, from the lower to the higher."¹¹

Marx believed that no matter how well a society functions in terms of its own order and structure, it was destined to turmoil and revolution until the final breakdown of all class divisions. Even when a society exemplifies the best that mankind can establish in terms of harmony and cooperation, "in time", Timasheff explains, "the established order becomes an obstacle to progress, and a new order (the antithesis) begins to arise. A struggle ensues between the class representing the old order and the class representing the new order. The emerging class is eventually victorious, creating a new order of production that is a synthesis of the old

and the new. This new order, however, contains the seeds of its eventual destruction and the dialectical process continues."²¹ The inevitability of the continuing struggle is related to the emergence of the division of labor within society, for it is this phenomenon of labour differentiation which forms antagonistic classes that in turn become the centre of competition and struggle against nature as well as against other elements within society.

The use of the dialectic in the analysis of society and history became a major characteristic of Marxism. It was Lenin who was to appropriate the Marxist view of the world and turn it to practical consequences. He has said of Marx's methodology that "materialism in general recognizes objectively real being (matter) as independent of consciousness, sensation, experience ... Consciousness is only the reflection of being, at best, an approximately true (adequate, ideal) reflection of it."¹³ And if this statement isn't sufficiently anti-idealistic and positively materialistic, then we find a further clarification from Stalin again on materialism. "Marx's philosophical materialism," Stalin explains, "holds the world is by its very nature material, that the multi-fold phenomena of the world constitute different forms of matter in motion, that interconnection and interdependence of phenomena, as established by the dialectical method, are a law of the development of moving matter, and that the world develops in accordance with the laws of movement in matter and stands in no need of a 'universal spirit'.¹⁴ The dialectic is found within the interaction of society under the influence of matter, materialistic phenomena, and the methodology is to employ the primacy of matter as an interpretative mechanism to grasp the essence of human activity, especially the realm of economic activity.

Economic Infrastructure and Socio-Economic Superstructure

Although Marx did not consistently argue for a crude economic determinism, he left no doubt that he considered the economy to be the foundation of the whole socio-cultural system. Throughout *their* study, Marx and Engels emphasized the primacy of *economies* in human relationship and the centrality of the economic dimension in political structures. The economic system of production and distribution, or the means and relations of production in the Marxian sense, constitute the basic structure of

society on which are built all other social institutions, particularly the state and legal system. According to Engels, "... the production of immediate material means of subsistence, and consequently, the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, the ideas on art, and even on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved."¹⁵

The following passage which appears in the *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* contains all the essential ideas of Marx's economic interpretation of history and social change.

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once obtained, served to guide me in my studies, may be summarized as follows. In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work. From forms of development of the forces of production, these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformation the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short ideological—forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so we cannot judge such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must rather be explained from the

contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production."¹⁶

Under the influence of the forces and relations of production, men spend their lives struggling with and against one another for survival and power. Having adopted the evolutionary perspective on the emergence of human society, Marx believed that the materialistic conditions within which mankind finds itself are reflective of that which most nearly established man's humanity, i.e., his ability to create for himself that which he needs for survival. "Legal relations", he wrote, "as well as the form of state are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life, the sum total of which Hegel . . . combines under the name of 'civil society' . . . The anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy."¹⁷ In other words, understand economics, and you can potentially control the cause and source of human competition. As Freud was dominated by the sexual metaphor in his analysis of all forms of mental illness, Marx was dominated by the economic metaphor in his attempt to understand and control all forms of human activity in competition, cooperation, and revolution. Like Freud, Marx was unwilling to allow any other variable in the human arena of thought and action to share the spotlight with his one overriding premise: sex for Freud, and economics for Marx were paramount. All other factors in the human experience of social relations were subservient and dependent upon the economic factor in the Marxian theory of social relationships. "The political, legal, philosophical, literary, and artistic development," Marx wrote, "rests on the economic. But they all react upon one another and upon the economic base. It is not that the economic situation is the sole active cause and that everything else is merely a passive effect, there is, rather a reciprocity within a field of economic necessity which in the last instance always asserts itself".¹⁸ He would argue, even, that human thought, human awareness, and human consciousness, were not self-originating but were derivatives of the economic principle. And it is in the arena of political economy that governments and religions must be controlled and human consciousness brought under dominance;

particularly when it comes to the governance of the material world, men must realize that the social environment is dependent upon the economics of the situation and that classes, if they are to cease their competitiveness and potential destruction of society, must be abolished by the removal of structures which nurture class divisions. As Doyle Johnson reminds us, Marx may have overstated his case to establish his point against competing viewpoints but Marx's economic interpretation of history "provides a note of hard realism that is sometimes lacking in more idealistic theories of society."¹⁹

Social Location of Ideas

Consistent with his economic interpretation of history, Marx developed a variant of the sociology of knowledge which stressed the primacy of the economic principle in the evolution of ideologies, philosophical systems, politics, ethics and religion. The central thesis of Marx is this: "It is not the unfolding of ideas that explains the historical development of society (as Hegel and Comte would have argued), but the development of the social structure in response to changing material conditions that explains the emergence of new ideas."²⁰ According to Marx, ideas belong to the realm of the superstructure and are determined by the economic infrastructure. He believed that the ideologies prevailing at any particular point in time reflect the worldview of the dominant class. In other words, ideas depend on the social positions—particularly on the class positions of their proponents. These views, moreover, tend either to enhance or undermine the power and control of whatever class happens to be dominant at the time. If generated from the dominant class, they tend to be supportive and reinforce the predominance of the social structures. "The ideas of the ruling class", Marx pointed out "are, in every age, the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the dominant *material* force in society is at the same time its dominant *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production."²¹

Marx warned that we will fail to understand the historical process "if . . . we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence, if we confine ourselves to saying that in a particular age these or

those ideas were dominant, without paying attention to the conditions of production and the producers of these ideas, and if we thus ignore the individuals and the world conditions which are the source of these ideas."²² Thus Marx sought to trace the evolution of ideas to the life conditions in general, and the forces and relations of production in particular. As it is with conservative ideas, so it is with revolutionary ideas: the former originate in the worldview of the ruling class and the latter in the material conditions of the revolutionary class.

Theory of Class and Class Conflict

A social class in Marx's terms is any aggregate of persons who perform the same function in the organization of production."²³ It is determined not by occupation or income but by the position an individual occupies and the function he performs in the process of production. For example, two carpenters, of whom one is the shop owner and the other his paid worker, belong to two different classes even though their occupation is the same. Bendix and Lipset have identified five variables that determine a class in the Marxian sense:

- (1) Conflicts over the distribution of economic rewards between the classes;
- (2) Easy communication between the individuals in the same class positions so that ideas and action programs are readily disseminated;
- (3) Growth of class consciousness in the sense that the members of the class have a feeling of solidarity and understanding of their historic role;
- (4) Profound dissatisfaction of the lower class over its inability to control the economic structure of which it feels itself to be the exploited victim;
- (5) Establishment of a political organization resulting from the economic structure, the historical situation and maturation of class-consciousness."²⁴

According to Marx, the organization of production is not a sufficient condition for the development of social classes. There must also be a physical concentration of masses of people, easy communication among them, repeated conflicts over economic rewards and the growth of class consciousness. The small peasants

form a vast mass and live in similar conditions but they are isolated from one another and are not conscious of their common interests and predicament; hence they do not constitute a class. "In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes, and put them into hostile contrast to the latter, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no unity, no national union, and no political organization, they do not form a class."²⁵

From the beginning of human existence in community, society has been divided into classes because of its absolute dependence on the division of labor which precipitated dominance among the ruling class and subordination among the subjugated class. Marx's classic statement clearly establishes the most fundamental premise of all his theoretical work on the question of class:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Free men and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes.²⁶

Although the class war has always been between the oppressor and the oppressed, the leading contenders in the social drama of conflict differed markedly in different historical periods. "The fact that modern workers are formally 'free' to sell their labor while being existentially constrained to do so makes their condition historically specific and functionally distinct from that of earlier exploited classes".²⁷

In addition to a recognition of the origin of class, Marx was even more interested in the future of class, especially as that future relates to the emergence of class-consciousness, an awareness of shared interests and the necessity of mutual support to other struggling classes against the ruling class. Marx made a distinction between "class in itself" and "class for itself" to reflect the movement from a class's potential self-awareness to actual self-awareness. Only when the "common struggle" as a point of consciousness appears within a class does that class actually emerge

as a potential power force. "Self-conscious classes", Coser explains, "arise only if and when there exists a convergence of what Max Weber later called 'ideal' and 'material' interests, that is the combination of economic and political demands with moral and ideological quests."²⁸

The assault upon the class structure of western society was almost an obsession with Marx. And the changing of social class was not to be thought of as manageable in terms of "social mobility," for which Marx gave virtually no room in his methodology or analysis. Social class was bigger than the individual and the individual was dominated by it. It fell upon the responsibility of the class system itself, of the state, to take in hand steps to alter the situation.

In his *Capital* Marx said that "here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests." To deal with the predicament of modern man, alienated, dominated, and estranged from himself, his neighbours, and his world, the analyst must not begin with the individual but with the social structures within which the individual is essentially caught up and lost as a person.

This emphasis on the objective determinants of man's class-bound behavior does not mean that Marx reified society and class at the expense of the individual; rather his primary interest lay in the identification of the source of the problem of modern man and his entrapment in the complexities of social relations that control and constrain him. "The individual is a *social being*", Marx insisted. "The manifestation of his life—even when it does not appear directly in the form of social manifestation, accomplished in association with other men—is therefore a manifestation and affirmation of social life."²⁹

Marx developed his theory of class conflict in his analysis and critique of the capitalist society. The main ingredients of the theory may be summarized as follows:

1. *The development of the proletariat.* Marx described the process of development of the proletariat as follows:

The first attempts of the workers to *associate* among themselves always take place in the form of combinations (unions). Large-scale industry concentrates in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their

interest. But the maintenance of wages, this common interest which they have against their boss, unites them in a common thought of resistance—combination. Thus combination always has a double aim, that of stopping the competition among themselves, in order to bring about a general competition with the capitalist.³⁰

The capitalist economic system transformed the masses of people into workers, created for them a common situation and inculcated in them an awareness of common interest. Through the development of class consciousness, the economic conditions of capitalism united the masses and constituted them into a class for itself.

2. *The importance of property.* To Marx, the most distinguishing characteristic of any society is its form of property, and the crucial determinant of an individual's behavior is his relation to property. Classes are determined on the basis of individual's relation to the means of production. It is not a man's occupation but his position relative to the instruments of production that determines his class. Property divisions are the crucial breaking lines in the class structure. Development of class consciousness and conflict over the distribution of economic rewards fortified the class barriers. Since work was the basic form of man's self-realization, economic conditions of the particular historic era determined the social, political and legal arrangements and set in motion the processes of evolution and societal transformation.

3. *The identification of economic and political power and authority.* Although classes are founded on the forces and relations of production, they become socially significant only in the political sphere. Since the capitalist society is based on the concentration of the means of production and distribution in the hands of a few, political power becomes the means by which the ruling class perpetuates its domination and exploitation of the masses. The capitalists who hold the monopoly of effective private property take control of the political machinery, and their interests converge in the political and ideological spheres. "Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another."³¹ The bourgeoisie use the State as an instrument of economic exploitation and consolidation of self interests.

"The State is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interest."³² The economic power of the bourgeoisie is transformed into political power, and the entire political processes and institutions including the courts, the police and the military and the ruling elites become subservient to the interests of the capitalists.

4. *Polarization of classes.* Inherent in capitalist society is a tendency toward radical polarization of classes. "The whole society breaks up more and more into two great hostile camps, two great, directly antagonistic classes: bourgeoisie and proletariat."³³ The capitalists who own the means of production and distribution, and the working classes who own nothing but their own labor. This is not to deny the existence of other classes; indeed, Marx repeatedly referred to the small capitalists, the *petit bourgeoisie*, and the *lumpenproletariat*. But on maturation of class consciousness and at the height of the conflict, the *petit bourgeoisie* and small capitalists will be deprived of their property and drawn into the ranks of the proletariat. This is what Aron calls the process of proletarianization which "means that, along with the development of the capitalist regime, the intermediate strata between capitalists and proletarians will be worn thin and that an increasing number of the representatives of these intermediate strata will be absorbed by the proletariat."³⁴ Marx is emphatic that only two classes—capitalist and proletariat—represent a possibility for a political regime and that on the day of the decisive conflict, every man will be forced to join either of the two contending classes.

5. *The theory of surplus value.* Capitalists accumulate profit through the exploitation of labor. The value of any commodity is determined by the amount of labor it takes to produce it. "The labor time necessary for the worker to produce a value equal to the one he receives in the form of wages is less than the actual duration of his work. Let us say that the worker produces in five hours a value equal to the one contained in his wage, and that he works ten hours. Thus he works half of his time for himself and the other half for the entrepreneur. Let us use the term "surplus value" to refer to the quantity of value produced by the worker beyond the necessary labor time, meaning by the latter the working time required to produce a value equal to the one he has

received in the form of wages."³⁵ Since employers have the monopoly of the instruments of production, they can force workers to do extra hours of work, and profits tend to accumulate with increasing exploitation of labor.

6. *Pauperization.* Poverty of the proletariat grows with increasing exploitation of labor. One capitalist kills many others and the wealth of the bourgeoisie is swelled by large profits with corresponding increase in "the mass of poverty; of pressure, of slavery, of exploitation," of the proletariat. "It follows that in every mode of production which involves the exploitation of man by man, the social product is so distributed that the majority of people, the people who labor, are condemned to toil for no more than the barest necessities of life. Sometimes favorable circumstances arise when they can win more, but more often they get the barest minimum—and at times not even that. On the other hand, a minority, the owners of means of production, the property owners, enjoy leisure and luxury. Society is divided into rich and poor."³⁶ Thus, to Marx poverty is the result of exploitation, not of scarcity.

7. *Alienation.* The economic exploitation and inhuman working conditions lead to increasing alienation of man, a theme about which we will have more to say later. Here we will only reproduce an extended passage from Marx:

...Within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productiveness of labor are brought about at the cost of the individual laborer; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor-process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labor-process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life time into working-time and drag his wife and child under the wheels of the Juggernaut of capital. But all methods for the accumulation of surplus value are at the same time methods of accumulation; and every extension of accumulation becomes again a means for the development of those methods. It follows

therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the laborer, be his payments high or low, must grow worse."³⁷

Work is no longer an expression of man himself, only a degraded instrument of livelihood. It is external to the worker and imposed upon him; there is no fulfillment in work. The product of work becomes an instrument of alien purpose. The worker becomes estranged from himself, from the process as well as the product of his labor, from his fellow men and from the human community itself.

8. *Class solidarity and antagonism.* With the growth of class consciousness, the crystallization of social relations into two groups becomes streamlined and the classes tend to become internally homogeneous, and the class struggle more intensified. In the words of Marx:

"...with the development of industry, the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labor and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeoisie and the resulting commercial crises make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuated. The increasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeoisie take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combination (trade unions) against the bourgeoisie; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provisions beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots."³⁸

9. *Revolution.* At the height of the class war a violent revolution breaks out which destroys the structure of capitalist society. This revolution is most likely to occur at the peak of an economic crisis which is part of the recurring booms and recessions characteristic of capitalism. To quote Marx: "Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift and

joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeois ideologists who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole."³⁹

10. *The dictatorship of the proletariat.* The bloody revolution terminates capitalist society and leads to the social dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolution is violent but does not necessarily involve mass killings of the bourgeoisie; since property is wrested from them, the bourgeoisie will cease to have power and will be transformed into the ranks of the proletariat. Thus the inevitable historical process destroys the bourgeoisie and the proletariat establishes a social dictatorship, merely a transitional phase, to consolidate the gains of the revolution. The political expression of the social dictatorship was conceived as a form of worker's democracy which later became "a fateful bone of contention" among Marxists. Irving Howe observes: "By now, almost all socialists have abandoned the treacherous phrase 'dictatorship of the proletariat', both because it is open to obvious misconstruction and because it has acquired, in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist dictatorships, abhorrent connotations. Marx himself had written that he differentiated himself from 'those communists who were out to destroy personal liberty and who wish to turn the world into one large barrack or into a gigantic warehouse'."⁴⁰

11. *Inauguration of the communist society.* Socialization of effective private property will eliminate class and thereby the causes of social conflict. The state will eventually wither away as it becomes obsolete in a classless society in which nobody owns anything but everybody owns everything and each individual contributes according to his ability and receives according to his need.

This, in a nutshell, is Karl Marx's theory of class conflict.

Alienation

In order to fulfill their human needs men must engage in productive activity which involves an expenditure of human energy and creative ability. But the forces and social relations of production determine man's relations to other men, to nature and to elements of superstructure. The material conditions of life generate alienation, and no institution, whether religious, political or

economic, is exempt from the condition of alienation. "Objectification", Marx wrote, "is the practice of alienation. Just as man, so long as he is engrossed in religion, can only objectify his essence by an Alien and fantastic being, so under the sway of egoistic need, he can only affirm himself and produce objects in practice by subordinating his products and his own activity to the domination of an alien entity, and by attributing to them the significance of an alien entity, namely money."⁴¹ Marx was convinced that systems of political economy had some control over the level and intensity of this alienation, and he sought to analyze the cause and consequences of alienation. Particularly, he was distraught over the nature and function of money in society, for "money", he believed, "is the alienated essence of man's work and existence; the essence dominates him and he worships it."⁴² Though religion and educational systems foster intellectual alienation, it is economic alienation, particularly as nurtured under capitalism, which touches every aspect of people's lives and not just their minds. "Religious alienation as such occurs only in the sphere of consciousness, in the inner life of man", Marx writes, "but economic alienation is that of *real life* . . . It therefore affects both aspects (mind and action)."⁴³

However, Marx was particularly interested in the process of alienation in capitalist society. Owing to his close association with Engels, Marx became personally aware of the anguish and alienation of the urban industrial workers. While alienation is commonplace in capitalist society and dominates every institutional sphere such as religion, economy, and polity, its predominance in workplace assumes an overriding importance for Marx. Estranged or alienated labor involves four aspects: workers' alienation from the object he produces, from the process of production and himself, and from the community of his fellowmen. According to Marx, "alienation appears not merely in the result but also in the *process of production*, within *productive activity* itself. . . If the product of labor is alienation, production itself must be active alienation. . . The alienation of the object of labor merely summarizes the alienation in the work activity itself."⁴⁴

The worker is a victim of exploitation at the hands of the bourgeoisie. The more wealth the worker produces, the poorer he becomes. Just as labor produces the world of things, it also creates the devaluation of the world of men. This devaluation in-

creases in direct proportion to the increase in the production of commodities. The worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities. "This fact expresses merely that the object which labor produces—labor's product—confronts it as *something alien*, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labor which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification. In the conditions dealt with by political economy this realization of labor appears as *loss of reality* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object* and *object-bondage*, appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*."⁴⁵

The more the worker spends himself, the less he has of himself. The worker puts his life into the object he creates but the very object becomes an instrument of alien purpose and strengthens the hands of his exploiters. The worker becomes a slave of his object. "The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him; it means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien."⁴⁶ In short, the worker spends his life and produces everything not for himself but for the powers that manipulate him. While labor may produce beauty, luxury and intelligence, for the worker it produces only the opposite—deformity, misery and idiocy. Marx summarizes the alienation of labor in the following inimitable words:

First, the fact that labor is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labor*. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a *means* to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of *self-sacrifice*, of mortification. Lastly,

the external character 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 it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates independently of the individual—that is, operates on him as an alien, divine or diabolical activity—in the same way the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self.⁴⁷

Thus Marx has identified two 'hostile powers' which render labor and its product alien. One is the 'other man', the capitalist, who commands production. The other is the economic system, the market situation which governs the behavior of capital and the process of production. The former is a human power and the latter an "inhuman power."⁴⁸ As a worker, I am at the mercy of the 'other man' who decides what I should make and how I should make it. My product bears no relation to my personality and interest; it ceases to be an expression of my creative powers. Indeed, it never is my product at all; it is an alien object produced at my expense, at the cost of my self-realization and physical well-being, and against my will but at the bidding of "another alien, hostile, powerful and independent man."⁴⁹ Once the object is finished, it belongs to the other man who is free to use it in whatever manner he chooses. As it becomes an instrument of his will, he becomes all the more powerful. And my product becomes an "alien, hostile, powerful and independent object," an instrument of my own oppression at the hands of the other man who is "lord of this object."⁵⁰ To Marx, "Alienation is apparent not only in the fact that *my* means of life belong to *someone else...*, but also that...an *inhuman power* rules over everything."⁵¹ The impersonal forces of the market economy are alien to the worker; they make him "dependent upon all the fluctuations in market price and in the movement of capital." They have no regard for his welfare, are independent of his will, and, ultimately produce his "beggary or starvation."

Schacht in his detailed evaluation of Marxian thought suggests that Marx's concept of alienation implies two meanings: alienation from other men, and self-alienation. The first meaning is reflected in Marx's treatment of estranged labor, alienation of the worker from the process of production and its product, and alienation in relation to the two "hostile powers" discussed above. Schacht

writes: "A man is self-alienated for Marx if his true 'human' nature is something alien to him—if his life fails to manifest the characteristics of a truly human life. There are three such characteristics of Marx: individuality, sociality, and cultivated sensibility. Self-alienation thus takes the form of dehumanization in the spheres of life which correspond to them: production, social life, and sensuous life. It may best be understood in terms of dehumanization in each of these areas."⁵²

Since the worker's own activity does not belong to him because it is a coerced activity, the entire process of production, of estranged labor, is performed in the service, and under the yoke of, a powerful and hostile force. The man who regards himself as a species being and a free being feels doubly deprived. Moreover, the condition of subservience to another man engenders his relation to other men.

"Through *estranged, alienated* labor then, the worker produces the relationship to this labor of a man alien to labor and standing outside it. The relationship of the worker to labor engenders the relation to it of the capitalist, or whatever, one chooses to call the master of labor. *Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of alienated labor, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself."⁵³ And, the alien being to whom labor and the product of labor belong continue to dominate the life of the worker. He manipulates the political structure, lends legitimacy to the system of production and distribution, and seeks to solidify his privileged position. And the cycle of exploitation continues.

Thus, in summary, several elements are involved in the Marxian concept of alienation: estrangement or man's alienation from himself and from nature, powerlessness or political alienation, religious alienation and the workers' alienation in relation to the process of production and the object they produce. And estranged labor constitutes the most recurrent theme in the Marxian conception of alienation.