



## Marx and Humanized Nature

### *Marx and Humanized Nature*

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“One basis for life and another basis for *science* is a priori a lie.”  
— Marx, “Private Property and Communism” (p. 90).

In a standard presentation of philosophical naturalism, two distinctions are basic: the distinction between reductive and non-reductive or pluralist forms; and the distinction between method and ontology. Inside this typology, the philosophy of Karl Marx can be read as a non-reductive, humanistic form of naturalism, in method as well as ontology. His non-reductive naturalism can be interpreted as a naturalized Hegelianism executed in three internally related dimensions: a humanist philosophical anthropology, the theory of historical materialism, and the critique of political economy. In the course of his writing across four decades, Marx’s vocabulary becomes more “naturalistic” as it becomes less “Hegelian,” but his intellectual conversion to Hegelian philosophy in 1837 remains a permanent deposit in his thought as a whole. Finally, all of Marx’s philosophical views are predicated on his humanism, which is also the presupposition of his philosophy of science (his philosophical grounds for the development of a critical science of human social relations). Marx is not incidentally but essentially a humanist. The basic text of his humanism is the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. This humanism informs *The German Ideology*, the basic text of historical materialism, as well as *Capital*, the basic text of the critique of political economy.

By contrast with the non-reductive form of naturalism elaborated by Marx, it appears that in our time, the reductive form is in the ascendancy. In the domain of contemporary analytic metaphysics, physicalism (the theory that “everything is physical” without remainder) is the dominant theory. In the domain of political economy, inside and outside of Marxian theory, the economist’s version of physicalism is the dominant theory as well. In Marxian economics, physicalism is defined as “physically based analysis” or the “physical quantities approach” illustrated by Ian Steedman’s *Marx After Sraffa* (1977), according to which “technology and workers’ real wages are

the sole proximate determinants of value, surplus-value, prices of production, average profit, and rates of profit." This Sraffian approach to Marx interprets the terms and relations of his value theory solely as physical quantities. By virtue of its high pedigree, the physicalist interpretation of Marx has cachet as well as a firm foothold on the theoretical architecture of twentieth-century Marxian economics. Piero Sraffa's *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities* (1960) reconstructed the classical economic theory of David Ricardo. The following year, in his Presidential Address to the American Economic Association, Paul Samuelson flatly asserted, "Karl Marx can be regarded as a minor post-Ricardian." The tendency to regard Marx as a neo-Ricardian political economist rather than the fierce critic of the science of political economy is disturbingly well established. In a recent sign, Jonathan Sperber's *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (2013), meant both to locate (or confine) Marx in his nineteenth-century context and to make his life and thought accessible to a lay reader, concludes his chapter on Marx, "The Economist," this way: "Far from opposing the mainstream political economy of his day, the ideas of Smith, Ricardo, and their followers, Marx had embraced it and promoted his own work as the most advanced and correct version of their approach...Marx was an orthodox political economist, who rejected most socialist criticisms of Ricardo." The argument of this paper is not only that this is not Marx's theory; but also, to the point, that like Sraffa and Steedman, Ricardo is essentially a physicalist in his economic theory. Therefore, in our lexicon, he is a reductive naturalist who reduces the humanity of working people to factors of production and physical inputs into a process in which only physical quantities play a role. What Ricardo overlooks is precisely what Marx profiles.

The principal interest of this paper is the collision of Ricardo with Marx in their rival conceptions of science. Ricardo's science is the physicalist science of political economy. Marx, on the other hand, is attempting to work out a "truly human" science, a critical science of human social relations, which takes the form of a *critique* of political economy. The collision is a collision between a physicalist conception of human science on the one hand, and a phenomenological conception on the other hand. Marx has a phenomenological conception, which he develops by way of his criticism of Hegel.



In the 1844

*Manuscripts*, Marx writes that for Hegel, the “estrangement of self-consciousness is not regarded as an *expression* of the *real* estrangement of the human being—in knowledge and thought. Instead, the *real* estrangement—that which appears real—is from its *innermost*, hidden nature (a nature only brought to light by philosophy) nothing but the *manifestation* of the estrangement of the real essence of man, of *self-consciousness*. The science which comprehends this is

therefore called *Phenomenology*”

(p.113). This passage is subtle. It

appears in the context of Marx’s decisive criticism of Hegel (“Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole,”

pp. 106-25). Marx alleges that Hegel substitutes an estranged

self-consciousness for real human estrangement. Does Marx therefore propose to quit philosophy, as many have argued?

More pointedly, does he propose to

abandon the science of phenomenology? On balance, the answer is likely to be

no. Marx’s thought as a whole, by virtue of his many confessions, is better thought of as a critically

corrected Hegelianism, unlike Feuerbach’s abandonment of Hegelianism and his return to the pre-critical

standpoint of the Anglo-French materialism of the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries. In the immediate context of the quoted passage, Marx agrees with

Hegel that the aim of phenomenological science is “*surmounting the object of consciousness*” (see pp. 113-15). But for

Hegel, or at least Hegel at his worst, this movement is a process of thought alone; of philosophy and theory. For

Marx by contrast, it “is not the *act*

of *positing* which is the subject in this process: it

is the subjectivity of *objective* essential powers, whose action, therefore, must also be something *objective*” (p. 115). Marx’s

phenomenological science is therefore a scientific investigation into “the subjectivity of objective essential powers.” It is not

a “Cartesian” phenomenology of thinking  
but a post-Hegelian



phenomenology  
that pivots from thinking to acting.

In the light of these remarks so far, the conceptual framework of this paper locates Marx in the landscape of non-reductive naturalism; a naturalism that is at the same time a humanism. This humanistic naturalism or naturalistic humanism stands in contrast to the reductive forms of physicalism or materialism. This contrast comes out sharply in rival notions of science, a physicalist science that eliminates subjectivity and a phenomenological science that takes its point of departure from subjectivity. As far as economics is concerned, either it is a human science or it is a physical science. The latter renders the subjectivity and humanity of working people invisible; the former brings them out from hiding onto center stage.

In the 1844

*Manuscripts*, Marx explicitly identifies humanism with naturalism. He writes, “consistent naturalism or humanism distinguishes itself both from idealism and materialism, constituting at the same time the unifying truth of both.” A philosophically astute understanding of Marx’s thought as a whole requires his interpreters to work out the sense of this basic claim. Moreover, in the manuscript on “Private Property and Communism,” in one of his most audacious speculative moments, Marx links this form of naturalistic humanism or humanistic naturalism to the idea of communism. He writes, *Communism ... [is] ... the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being—a return become conscious, and accomplished within the entire wealth of previous development. This communism, as fully-developed naturalism equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution (p. 84).*

For  
Marx, then, if they are not quite synonymous, communism,

humanism, and naturalism are cognate terms jointly constituting a common field of internal relations.

In support of this conclusion, two premises are decisive:

first, a human being “is directly a *natural being*” (p. 115); second, however, a human being “is not merely a natural being: he is a *human natural being*. That is to say, he is a being for himself.

Therefore he is a *species being*” (p. 116). A human being is a “species being...because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore free being” (p. 75). On the platform of these complementary premises, natural being and species-being,

Marx works out a complex philosophy of human nature by way of adapting the discursive idiom of Hegelian philosophy and condensing it into five dense manuscripts (see pp. 70-125).

By his own lights, Marx’s method is not a “dialectic balancing of concepts,” but a “grasping of real relations.” This distinction is tantamount to a distinction between idealism and realism, versus the standard distinction (in Marxism) between idealism and materialism. In brief, Marx’s trouble with “idealism” is that it *reduces* “thinghood” to a “posit” of “self-consciousness” (see pp. 112-15). But his trouble with “materialism” is that it performs just the opposite reduction. Marx therefore turns Hegel’s own dialectical criticism of one-sidedness against each side of this polarity between self-consciousness and things. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, in the course of delineating what can be called the fallacy of reductive or “abstract” thinking, he uses the term, “abstraction” (see pp. 121-25); meaning, in this context, the reduction of real things to mere “*thought-entities*” (see p. 124). Marx alleges this mistake against both right-theological Hegelians and also the alternative versions of

left-Hegelian atheism (Bruno Bauer's on the one hand, Ludwig Feuerbach's on the other). Among the Young Hegelians, Feuerbach openly breaks with Hegel and embraces materialism. However, as Marx writes in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, "Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity" (p. 143); "Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, appeals to *sensuous contemplation*; but he does not conceive sensuousness as practical, human-sensuous activity" (p. 144); the result of a merely "contemplative materialism" (p. 145) is as equally mistaken as idealism, by virtue of the same fallacy. Both sides abstract from the nature of human action. One side abstracts human beings from nature. The other side abstracts nature from human beings. In their degenerate forms, both sides merely juggle concepts, when the point is to grasp "real relations."

Therefore, in the "Postface" (1873) to the second German edition of *Capital* (1872), Marx distinguishes between the "method of presentation" and the "method of inquiry." The method of inquiry "has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyse its different forms of development and to track down their inner connection. Only after this work has been done can the real movement be appropriately presented. If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is now reflected back in the ideas, then it may appear as if we have before us an *a priori* construction." The failure of Hegel's epigones to draw this basic distinction in method is what leads them in the first place to a mere "dialectic balancing of concepts," the look of an *a priori* construction, or a castle in the air; a mistake that Marx assigns to Hegel himself in the *1844 Manuscripts*. He writes, "There is a double error in Hegel" (p. 110), inasmuch as Hegel conjoins an "uncritical positivism" with an "equally uncritical idealism." The result is "that philosophic dissolution and restoration of the existing empirical world"—a merely conceptual movement that leaves everything just the way it is (p. 111). In particular, the Young-Hegelian "demand to change consciousness," as Marx puts it in *The German Ideology*, only "amounts to a demand to interpret reality in another way, i.e., to recognize it by means of another interpretation. The Young-Hegelian ideologists, in spite of their allegedly 'world-shattering' statements, are the staunchest conservatives... [They] are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world" (p. 149).



Still, for Marx, Hegel himself is a Janus-faced philosopher: his dialectic has a “mystificatory side”—that is, it mystifies human social reality in the way just indicated, which amounts to an uncritical ratification of the existing order of things or an idealization of what exists—but it also has a “rational form.” Marx writes,

The mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive way.... In its mystified form, the dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and glorify what exists. In its rational form it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in its positive understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well; and because it does not let itself be impressed by anything, being in its very essence critical and revolutionary.

If the ratification, transfiguration, and glorification of existing human social reality is the fundamental mistake of philosophical idealism, then Marx’s critical correction can be called “materialist” in the limited sense in which he discovers the materialist conception of history, the sense of which is briefly clarified below. The outcome of this critically corrected Hegelianism would be the dialectic in its “rational form.” It has become customary in Marxism-Leninism to call Marx’s philosophy *as a whole* “dialectical materialism.” However, if we take him at his word in the *1844 Manuscripts*, his naturalism or humanism is neither “idealism” nor “materialism.” It is also clear that Marx does not repudiate Hegelianism *überhaupt*.

For our purpose of the methodological clarification of Marx’s naturalistic humanism, a more appropriate nomenclature than dialectical materialism would be “ideal-realism” or critical realism. The point is not to diminish the critical, ideal, and speculative dimensions of Marx’s thought, but just the opposite, as against the prevailing signifier.



The propositions Marx enlists in his philosophical anthropology and philosophy of science can be classified and distinguished as descriptive or empirical, critical, explanatory, speculative, and normative.

All of these conceptual dimensions crystallize in Marx's conception of species-being (*Gattungswesen*).

"Species-being" has been subject to a variety of interpretations. In order to secure our bearings in this exposition, we can start with the road-stroke's character of Marx's philosophy

of human nature as a whole. *First*, the *first principle and foundation* of

Marx's humanist anthropology is *freedom*,

by which he means the self-activity and self-development of a self-creating, self-interpreting animal: the greater the scope and extent of human self-development; the greater the self-development of human active potencies or generic powers; the fuller will be the measure of modalities of action that are universal and free. In this general conception, the Aristotelian metaphysical categories of potency and act are as indispensable to Marx as they were to Hegel.

*Second*, Marx's principle of freedom conditions his philosophical *aim*, as a philosopher of action

or praxis: the aim

is the fullest possible measure of human emancipation, by way of the enactment of the latent generic powers seminally at work in a human being's being aboriginally a species-being, which

in turn constitutes the specific difference of her humanity. In *On the Jewish Question*,

on the aim of human emancipation, Marx writes, "*Every emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself.... Human emancipation will only be complete when the*

real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a *species-being*; and when

he has recognized and organized his own powers (*forces propres*) as *social powers* so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as *political power*" (p. 46). *Third*, on a world-historical scale,

Marx's theory of human development as a process of self-development can be characterized as a process of *humanization*,

beginning subjectively with the concrete, sensuous *activity* of human and humanizing forms of perception, sensibility,

and thought; moving through the objective enactment of these forms in the existing empirical world, as "[thinking] and being are no doubt distinct, but at the same time they are in unity with each other" (p. 86); and concluding

objectively to the conception of a "*humanized*





nature” (p. 89). The arc of self-development that Marx inscribes in his anthropology is most broadly characterized as a historical process of becoming of self-realization and self-actualization.

The theme of self-actualization is more or less common to a variety of forms of humanism, including Aristotelian humanism, Renaissance humanism, pragmatism, and mid-twentieth-century existential humanism. (“Enlightenment humanism,” the object of the Heideggerian and postmodern critiques of humanism, is not among these forms.)

With the principle of freedom, the aim of emancipation, and the social and historical process of humanization in hand, it should be understood next that Marx’s conception of species-being does not denote any sort of collective entity (p. 86). Rather, individual human beings are capable of being “universal and free” and “beings for themselves” by virtue of the exercise and development of species-wide generic powers or active potencies; the dynamism that belongs to the individual as social; or in other words, to a *social individual* (see p. 112).

That is, Marx’s position is a version of *individualism*, but it is worked out by way of reversing the counterposition, appropriated by classical political economy, of an atomic individualism. (“Enlightenment humanism” incorporates “atomic individualism.”) Marx’s critique of atomic individualism, in turn, is a major aspect of his critique of political economy.

Once bourgeois, capitalist, commercial society comes fully into its own in the wake of the industrial revolution, after a centuries-long gestation, Marx concludes (in *Capital*) that human beings are “henceforth related to each other in their social process of production in a purely atomistic way. Their own relations of production therefore assume a material shape which is independent of their control and their conscious individual action.” Marx then goes on to link this social atomism to the fetishized world of the commodity-form. He continues, “This situation is manifested first by the fact that the products of men’s labour universally take on the form of commodities. The riddle of the money fetish is therefore the riddle of the commodity fetish, now become visible and dazzling to our eyes.”



For Marx, the opposite of a fetishized world would be a humanized world. In the fetishized world of human social relations constituted by capitalist production, “individuals are dealt with...only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, the bearers of particular class-relations and interests.” “To the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labours appear as what they are, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather material [*dinglich*] relations between persons and social relations between things.” This form of social organization of the process of production is predicated on a conflation of persons with things and a reduction of persons to the status of things. Social agency then appears to reside in “the dominant subject of [the capitalist] process,”—“independent

of [human beings’] control and conscious individual action”— something no longer human, but the apparition of the abstract form of social wealth, “capital” or “self-valorizing value,” which appears to act autonomously. Marx writes, “For the movement in the course of which [value] adds surplus-value is its own movement, its valorization is therefore self-valorization. By virtue of being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or at least lays golden eggs.” In fact, however, this apparition of the goose that lays golden eggs turns out to conceal the real relation: namely, the domination of past, objectified, dead labor over living, human labor-power. Marx’s theoretical purpose in the critique of political economy is to demystify this “occult ability.” Where the fetish prevails, persons are reduced in their humanity, their status *as persons*, to the level of mere factors of production; a system of physical inputs and outputs by virtue of which “the products of labour become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time suprasensible or social.”

The commodity-form is a “social hieroglyphic” because it possesses this “double form, i.e. natural form and value form.” The former is sensible; the latter is not only suprasensible but concealed from view. Therefore, it is only natural, in the pre- critical attitude, to conflate the

value form with the natural forms in which commodities appear; or to fail to recognize the historically determinate character of the form of social relation that constitutes value as the abstract form of the wealth of capitalist society.

Hence, Marx writes, “The objectivity of commodities as values differs from *Dame Quickly* in the sense that ‘a man knows

not where to have it’. Not an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of commodities as values; in this it is the direct opposite of the coarsely sensuous objectivity of commodities as physical objects.” By comparison with the “coarsely sensuous objectivity” of a physical object, Marx writes that the objectivity of value is “phantom-like.” Therefore, “we may twist and turn a single commodity as we wish; it remains impossible to grasp it as a thing possessing value. However, let us remember that commodities possess an objective character as values only in so far as they are all expressions of an identical social substance, human labour, that their objective character as values is therefore purely social. From this it follows self-evidently that it can only appear in the social relation between commodity and commodity.” By way of this displacement of the basic social relation, in which labor is only indirectly and not directly social, the social character of the living individual is hidden from view, both practically and theoretically. Consequently (*post festum*), it is read out of account from the science of political economy Marx criticizes. This science of political economy is a science of things, a *physicalist* science, but it is not a properly *human* science.

At issue for us is the question of what is “natural” and what is not to the species-being and species life of the human animal. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx answers this question by way of his theory of alienation (estrangement, abstraction). As alienated *labor* is the basis of capitalist society, so the abstract, reductive form of thinking is a hallmark of bourgeois *thought*, showing up in the premises of the science of political economy, which takes itself to be a natural science. As Marx argues in the *Grundrisse*, the method of political economy entails a naturalization or “eternalization of historic relations of

production.” In the critique of political economy, the keyword, *value*, is the *abstract form* of social wealth, the form of wealth that prevails in capitalist production and circulation. Since this form of wealth is historically specific and determinate, it is a mistake to think of its signifier, money, which is “the true need produced by the modern economic system” (p. 93), as likewise “natural” or “eternal,” i.e. valid, or the “true need,” for all forms of society.

A fetishized world is reflected in the fetishized thought of this world. In a demystified understanding, by contrast, Marx writes:

It will be seen how in place of the *wealth* and *poverty* of political economy come the *rich human being* and *rich human need*. The *rich human being* is simultaneously the human being *in need* of a totality of human life-activities—the man in whom his own realization exists as an inner necessity, as *need*. Not only *wealth*, but likewise the *poverty* of man—given socialism—receives in equal measure a *human* and therefore social significance. Poverty is the passive bond which causes the human being to experience the need of the greatest wealth—the *other* human being. The dominion of the objective being in me, the sensuous outburst of my essential activity, is *emotion*, which thus becomes here the *activity* of my being (p. 91).

It would follow from this distinction that what is natural to the human animal are her natural needs, determined as necessary or essential to her being as a species-being, and grounding the distinction between wealth and poverty, such that what political economy takes for naturalness is a falsification and a systematic distortion, an ideological construct or mystification.

If a humanized world is the opposite of a fetishized world, we find Marx imagining, conceiving, and projecting an idea on the speculative outpost of his thought about what a humanized world would be (the communist idea); which would be the objective of a science, in turn, that rose to the full measure of our humanity. Marx assigns himself this speculative task early and returns to it often at various



milestones. Briefly, the operator is negation. The method is radical. Proposing to take our humanity by its root, Marx conceptualizes the possible world in which it would be fulfilled. From a logical point of view, the propositions or judgments projected into the limit-situation take the form of counterfactual conditional claims in the future-perfect tense of the subjunctive mood. Such speculative projections are thought-experiments.

We can find a *prima facie* illustration in the conclusion of Marx's *Comments on James Mill, Éléments D'économie Politique* (1844), where he poses the question, suppose we had produced as human beings?

Let us suppose that we had carried out production as human beings. Each of us would have *in two ways affirmed* himself and the other person. 1) In my *production* I would have objectified my *individuality, its specific character,* and

therefore enjoyed not only an individual *manifestation of my life* during the activity, but also when looking at the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be *objective, visible to the senses* and hence a power *beyond all doubt*. 2) In your enjoyment or use of my product I would have the *direct* enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a *human* need by my work, that is, of having objectified *man's* essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another *man's* essential nature. 3) I would have been for you the *mediator* between you and the species, and therefore would become recognised and felt by you yourself as a completion of your own essential nature and a necessary part of yourself, and consequently would know myself to be confirmed both in your thought and your love. 4) In the individual expression of my life I would have directly created your expression of your life, and therefore in my individual activity I would have directly *confirmed* and *realized* my true nature, my *human* nature, my *communal nature*.... My work would be a *free manifestation of life*.



In this passage, we can note first that Marx writes in the first and second person, establishing an I/thou (or a “directly social,” as opposed to an “indirectly social”) relation; second, that he writes about the individual, i.e. the social individual; and third, that he identifies “my true nature” with “my *human* nature,” in what can only be taken in the normative way of the “truly human,” where what is truly human is “a free manifestation of life.”

Compared to the actuality of capitalist life, communism is an ideality, but it entails an idea that exercises final causality. Before we consider how so, let’s first consider some other speculative milestones of Marx’s philosophy. For example, he writes in the *Communist Manifesto* (1847-48) that “In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which *the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all*” (p. 491; emphasis added). In *Capital* (1872), by way of an explicit conceptual reversal of the world of the commodity and money fetishes, he writes, “Let us finally imagine, for a change, an association of free men, working with the means of production held in common, and expending their many different forms of labour-power in full self-awareness as one single social labour force.” Finally, in the farthest speculative outpost of the communist idea, when the “horizon of bourgeois right” is “crossed in its entirety,” Marx writes in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875) that the principle of justice that would prevail in such a world would be, “From each according to [their] ability, to each according to [their] needs!” (p. 531). A communist society, the society of the social individual, would therefore be both a fulfillment of humanism and also a fulfillment of naturalism.

By contrast, the myth of the atomic individual is a mirage of seventeenth and eighteenth-century European philosophy. It would have been inoperative and unrecognizable in Greek antiquity or medieval Europe; and it would be inoperative and unrecognized again in a post-capitalist, socialist form of social organization. Hegel had already confronted this myth in his own philosophy, which Marx in turn appropriates, criticizes, and transforms. Marx’s philosophical transformation of Hegelianism, in turn, pivots on the critique of ideology, which is the critical component of the theory of historical materialism. Marx’s hypothesis of an objectively fetishized world of human social relations can be indirectly verified by investigating



how these relations are reflected in corresponding forms of understanding and self-understanding. These forms can be classified as either *ideological* or *critical*. Ideologies are systematic distortions inasmuch as they mystify social reality. Criticizing such distortions is therefore the key to a demystified understanding of human nature and the process of humanization natural to the species-being of the distinctively human animal.

The basic phenomenological figure of such systematic distortions is the one Hegel draws in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of a topsy-turvy, upside-down, or “inverted world” (*die verkehrte Welt*). This figure is fundamental to Marx’s thought. In *The German Ideology*, he writes, “Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their

circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical

life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process” (p. 154). The *method* of historical materialism has the *aim* of demystification. The critique of atomic individualism is an integral moment of this process, a process of reversal of the counterposition, the *result* of which is the social individual. Not only with respect to its object but also with respect to itself, ideology induces a “rupture” in the “actual life-process,” “[as] if this rupture had made its way not from reality into the textbooks, but rather from the textbooks into reality, and as if the task were the dialectic balancing of

concepts, and not the grasping of real relations!” The materialist conception of history is not a “dialectic balancing of concepts.” Rather, “Just as philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat find its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy” (p. 65).

If negation and critique push speculation, speculation

also pulls critique and negation. To this point, we have examined Marx's notion of species-being, as it relates to the social individual, in the dimensions of description, criticism, explanation, normativity, and especially in the speculative dimension. We have asked what is *human* in his philosophy of human nature. We should now pose the question of what is *natural* in it. For both terms, in the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx takes *the acting subject* as his point of departure. The acting subject draws upon a wealth of generic or essential powers with the prospect of humanizing the social and natural world in which she finds herself situated. Marx argues that in the regime of capitalist private property, the self-development of this wealth of powers is diminished and truncated. He writes, "Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only *ours* when we have it" (p. 87). On the other hand, he continues, "The transcendence of private property is therefore the complete *emancipation* of all human senses and attributes; but it is this emancipation precisely because these senses and attributes have become, subjectively and objectively, *human*" (p. 87).

Marx proceeds next to an account of the objectivity of self-confirmation (pp. 87-88), which he grounds in turn in the subjectivity of the acting subject. He writes:

...looking at this in its subjective aspect: just as music alone awakens in man the sense of music, and just as the most beautiful music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear—is no object for it, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers and can therefore only be so for me as my essential power is present for itself as a subjective capacity—for this reason, the *senses* of the social man are *other* senses than those of the non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective *human* sensibility ... either cultivated or brought into being. For...the humanness of the senses...comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of *humanized* nature. The *forming* of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present (pp. 88-89).

Marx projects this "labour of the entire history of the





world down to the present,” incorporating “the entire wealth of previous development” (p. 84), to its speculative limit. He writes,

[The] *human* essence  
of nature first exists only for *social* man;  
for only here does nature exist for him as a *bond* with *man*—as his  
existence for the other and the other’s existence for him—as the life-element  
of the human world; only here does nature exist as the *foundation* of his own *human* existence,  
and nature become man for him. Thus *society*  
is the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature—the true resurrection  
of nature—the naturalism of man and  
the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment (p. 85).

By “nature,” then, Marx means “the life-element of the human world.”

The key notion in Marx’s conception of the “life-element” and “life-activity” of the species-being of the social individual is the notion of “life” itself. In the life of the species, of course, Marx includes biological and zoological life (life is the object of the science of biology and species-life is the object of the science of zoology). This is life in its corporeality or materiality. In this respect, Marx writes:

The universality of man is in practice manifested precisely in the universality which makes all nature his *inorganic body*—both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life-activity. Nature is man’s *inorganic body*—nature, that is, in so far as it is not itself the human body. Man *lives* on nature—means that nature is his *body*, with which he must remain in continuous intercourse if he is not to die. That man’s physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature (p. 75).

If successful life therefore entails the successful



metabolic regulation of the natural relationship between the organic and the inorganic body of a social individual, then the life of a society predicated on *alienated* labor, the atomized society of the atomic individual, engenders a world of *estrangement*. In such a world, Marx continues:

In estranging from man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active functions, his life-activity, estranged labour estranges the *species* from man. It turns for him the *life of the species* into a means of individual life. First it estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species, likewise in its abstract and estranged form (p. 75).

This general circumstance of human estrangement and self-estrangement in capitalist society, an “inverted world” under the general condition of alienated labor, is a world that fails in the social task of successfully regulating the metabolic relation between human beings and nature in every conceptual dimension (materially and intellectually; empirically, theoretically, speculatively, and normatively). This general state of affairs can therefore be understood as pathological, as a form of social pathology.

To understand why the idiom of pathology is appropriate to the context of Marx’s writing, we can note that any empirical or clinical description of a pathological state of affairs, an illness, presupposes an underlying normative understanding of what a healthy outcome would be. As Marx develops his thought, he tends to exchange the technical philosophical vocabulary of Hegelianism for the technical terms and relations of the science of political economy. Correspondingly, as a philosopher, he also develops a more natural way of stating fundamental philosophical theses. For example, in Ch. 7 of Volume One of *Capital*, he distinguishes between “the labor process” in general, for all forms of social regulation of the natural metabolism, and the “valorization process” in particular, which is the specific difference between capitalist and other actual and possible modes of production. Marx begins the chapter by considering “the labour process independently of any specific social process.” He writes:



Labour is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body...in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature. He develops the potentialities slumbering within nature, and subjects the play of its forces to his sovereign power.

To this point in the quoted passage, Marx writes as if he has achieved a sound lay appropriation of an essentially biological and zoological understanding of human species-life. However, he continues:

We are not dealing here with those first instinctive forms of labour which remain on the animal level. An immense interval of time separates the state of things in which a man brings his labour-power to market for sale as a commodity from the situation when human labour had not yet cast off its first instinctive form. We presuppose labour in a form in which it is an exclusively human characteristic. A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the

weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it.... The simple elements of the labour process are (1) purposeful activity, that is, work itself, (2) the object on which that work is performed, and (3) the instruments of that work.

In this second part of the passage, Marx does not depart from a scientific understanding but comes instead to the flashpoint of the decisive difference between reductive or abstract forms of naturalism and a non-reductive, humanist form. At issue is not a scientific but a fundamental

philosophical disagreement. It would be more convenient for reductive naturalism (physicalism or materialism) if these references to “mind,” “conscious purpose,” and “will” were only manners of speaking; then the claim to an “ideal existence” would amount to nothing more than the banality or the tautology that all ideas are, after all, only ideal. But an elision of the difference at stake would only obscure Marx’s meaning and blunt his point; namely, the sense in which labor is “an exclusively *human* characteristic.”

From the *humane* point of view, the opposite of which would be *inhumane*, we can take the fundamental category of a naturalistic humanism or a humanistic naturalism as Marx takes it in the *1844 Manuscripts*, where the keyword is “life,” i.e. the milieu of the “life-element” and “life-activity” of a “species-being,” irreducible to its animality alone. Contrasting the animal with the human, Marx writes,

The animal is immediately identical with its life-activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is *its life-activity*.

Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity.

It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life-activity directly distinguishes man from animal life- activity. It is just because of this that he is a species being (p. 76).

A social individual is latently and seminally a species-being because she exercises conscious and purposeful life-activity, a modality of action different in kind from the forms of life-activity of other animal and insect species, even where they are also social organisms. The purpose animating the life-activity of a species-being is, in sum, the “free manifestation of life.” The opposite condition is essentially the condition of unfreedom.

Marx’s development of the notion of *life* inscribes a series of terms and relations that begins with subjectivity and the acting subject, “real, corporeal *man*” (p. 115). He achieves this standpoint in the *1844 Manuscripts* and bases the theory of historical materialism on it, as he develops the latter in *The German Ideology*. In *The German Ideology*, he writes, “The premises from which we begin are not



arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity” (p. 149). He continues, “Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life” (p. 150). Therefore, “consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process” (p. 154). Finally, these considerations direct Marx to the fundamental thesis of historical materialism: “Life,” the fundamental category, “is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as *their* consciousness” (p. 155). On this platform of corporeality—the organic bodies of individually existing human beings and the “inorganic body” of the natural world—the series of terms and relations Marx inscribes in the *1844 Manuscripts* begins with “life-activity,” locates the “life-element” in which this activity takes place, identifies human “life-activity” as “self-activity,” develops “self-activity” as “self-development,” and concludes to the process of humanization that would come to fulfillment in a “*humanized nature*.” In the light of this series, it is evident that Marx incorporates a biological and a zoological outlook. But he also supersedes such an outlook by incorporating it into the primary denotation of “life,” a framework category of his thought as a whole, in relation to subjectivity as his point of departure. The primary denotation of “life” in Marx’s usage is not biological or zoological but *phenomenological*. A hundred years before Sartre, Marx already writes “an essay on phenomenological ontology.” Moreover, this claim returns us to the sense in which Marx is a “Hegelian” philosopher. The *phenomenological figure* of “life” appears early in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in connection with “the truth of self-certainty” and the phenomenology of “desire.” Hegel writes of the “determination of Life as it has issued from the Notion.” If the *phenomenological figure* of life appears early in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, it makes a late appearance in the *Science of Logic as a notion (Begriff)*. As a notion, it belongs to Hegel’s second volume on “Subjective Logic” (a logic of subjectivity), appearing in the culmination of the work as a whole in “Section Three,” the final section on “The Idea.”

In other words, in the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx anticipates that a “truly human” science would be phenomenological in nature. That is, a truly human science would not be a physicalist science. It is the burden of this paper to account for this difference. The phenomenological sequence of development that Marx works out proceeds from “life” to “labor” and from “labor” to “praxis.” This is how labor comes to be the crucial mediating term of Marx’s thought as a whole.

Marx takes his own point of departure from his critical correction of what he takes to be Hegel’s “idealist” mistake. But he is still writing within the compass of Hegelianism. He writes, The outstanding thing in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and its final outcome—that is, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle—is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-genesis of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of *labour* and comprehends objective man—true, because real man—as the outcome of man’s *own labour*. The *real*, active orientation of man to himself as a species being, or his manifestation as a real species being (i.e., as a human being), is only possible by his really bringing out of himself all the *powers* that are his as the *species* man— something which in turn is only possible through the totality of man’s actions, as the result of history—is only possible by man’s treating these generic powers as objects: and this, to begin with, is again only possible in the form of estrangement (p. 112).

Through our own conscious existence and self-activity in the life-element, as social individuals, we make ourselves, by way of the self-development of the generic powers latent in our humanity and distinguishing it as *human*. This human development, as a totality, is, for Marx as for Hegel, the “movement of *surmounting the object of consciousness*” (p. 113). The opposite of this surmounting would be “thought revolving solely within the orbit of thought, of thought devoid of eyes, of teeth, of ears, of everything” (p. 124).

Marx proceeds to write that the “science which comprehends this is



therefore called *Phenomenology*" (p. 113). As we have seen, as Marx proceeds to develop his criticism of Hegel in this manuscript—not only of Hegel's phenomenology but also his philosophy of mind (the concluding volume of the *Encyclopedia*)—he essentially charges Hegel with the fallacy identified above as the fallacy of abstract thinking, a failure of concretion. His criticism of Hegel's *Phenomenology* is better regarded, not as an abandonment of the science of phenomenology, but, in its account of the acting subject, as a critically corrected form of phenomenological investigation. Marx's critical correction of what he takes to be Hegel's mistake leads him to pivot from thought to action, with the fundamental aim of bringing theory and practice together, in order to overcome the inevitable antinomies of a merely theoretical, merely abstract approach of theory apart from practice. Theory and practice, in turn, are integrated in conscious, purposeful activity, i.e., labor or work. Marx's pivot to action is what warrants his identification of humanism with naturalism and his claim, on the speculative outpost of the communist idea, to have worked out "the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man": "communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution." The theoretical oppositions Marx lists in this particular passage are existence versus essence, objectification versus self-confirmation, freedom versus necessity, and the individual versus the species. In the subsequent passage that introduces the idea and the ideal aim of praxis, Marx writes,

It will be seen how subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism and materialism, activity and suffering, only lose their antithetical character, and thus their existence, as such antitheses in the social condition; it will be seen how the resolution of the *theoretical* antitheses is *only possible in a practical way*, by virtue of the practical energy of men. Their resolution is therefore by no means merely a problem of knowledge, but a *real* problem of life, which *philosophy* could not solve precisely because it conceived this problem as *merely* a theoretical one (p. 89).

To the extent that Marx succeeds, then, what he succeeds in achieving is the

successful transformation of the “knowing subject” of German idealism and Hegelian philosophy into the “acting subject” of a post-Hegelian philosophy of praxis, through a successful reconstruction of “the science of phenomenology.”

The transformed premise of this reconstituted science is threefold: the actually existing individual human being is a social being in her animal nature; as a social individual, she is a species-being, a being “for herself” capable of “universal and free” modalities of action; finally, as a species-being, she aims to be fully a *zoon politikon* in the realized Aristotelian sense. The notion of species-being is a developmental, teleological notion. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes, “The human being is in the most literal sense a [*zoon politikon*], not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Production by an isolated individual outside society... is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living *together* and talking to each other.” Moreover, if the claim that species-being is a phenomenological notion is correct, then Marx correctly differentiates the “historical life-process” from the “physical life-process” in the theory of historical materialism (p. 154). Human beings are naturally species-beings, as they are also naturally political animals. However, these are not identical or coincident notions. Marx writes, “human beings become individuals *only through the process of history*. [A human being] appears originally as *species-being, clan being, herd animal*—although in no way whatever as a [*zoon politikon*] in the political sense.”

The conceptual distance between our being aboriginally species-beings and our becoming “political animals” (in the sense in which Marx recasts Aristotle) inscribes the arc of historical development. Marx’s phenomenological distinction between the animal being of a herd animal and the species-being of a social individual enables him to differentiate the “historical life-process” from the “physical life-process” (p. 154). That is, the life-process itself of human life is not merely physical. By locating the species-being of the human animal inside history, Marx does not step outside of nature. Rather, the herd animal becomes a *human* animal by virtue of her



enactment of the generic powers that distinguish her humanity as a historical as well as a natural being. These generic powers are the active potencies of her species-being actualized world- historically (through the development of the productive forces and social relations of the labor process). A human being is a species-being on her way to becoming a “political animal” in Marx’s Aristotelian sense of “an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society”; but she is also a *self-individuating* animal, an animal bursting with all of the capacities that can be realized in “a free manifestation of life,” being realized through our own self-activity and in the course of our own self-development. This is the sense in which, in the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes his aphorism, “Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape” (not the other way around). Marx was impressed with Darwin’s discovery and did not doubt evolution or its mechanism of natural selection; but his aphorism encodes the difference that history makes. As a humanist animated by a speculative vision of a possible future alternative to capitalist society, Marx introduces the telic categories of his phenomenological humanism into his philosophy and theory of history. It is not surprising that Marx’s phenomenology would anticipate future developments in the phenomenological movement of the twentieth century. For example, it may anticipate not only Husserl’s conception of the “lifeworld,” but also his characterization, in *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*, of phenomenology as a historical-teleological method of investigation. The telos of history, for Marx, is the coming-to-be of freedom and a truly free society.

In 1844, Marx develops a reconstituted science of phenomenology turning on “life-activity,” in which the primary denotation of the framework category of life—or the lifeworld—is also what Merleau-Ponty calls the world of lived experience. For Marx as for Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, this point of departure is a “return to the things themselves.” Merleau-Ponty writes, “To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign- language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is.”



On this basis, beginning with subjectivity, Marx works out his critique of the science of political economy. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, he writes, “*Political economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labour by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production*” (p. 73). The direct relationship between the worker and production is the directly social labor of the social individual. In capitalist production, however, this directly social relationship is deformed by the interposition of the law of value that constitutes the commodity-form in the dominant social relation that prevails at the point of production.

Concerning scientific method, the relevant contrast is the contrast between the physicalism of the science of political economy and the humanism of a reconstructed phenomenological science. Concerning this distinction, Marx writes, “one basis for life and another basis for *science* is *a priori* a lie” (p. 90). The lie consists in the reductive or abstract approach of a putatively human or social science that reduces persons to things. Working people count as mere factors of production, whose radical difference from non-labor inputs is obscured and concealed from view. The political economy of David Ricardo exemplifies this obscurantism. As we noted at the beginning, it is an irony of contemporary Marx scholarship that Marx “the economist” is still often presented as a “radical Ricardian” or a “neo-Ricardian.” The main reason why this way of interpreting Marx’s critique of political economy is mistaken is that Ricardo’s science is a *physicalist* science of human social relations in the all-pervasive realm of economic activity inside capitalist society.

We can conclude by turning in the most direct way to Marx’s essential criticism of political economy as a physicalist science. He concludes the first chapter of Volume One of *Capital* by writing:

Political economy has indeed analysed value and its magnitude, however incompletely, and has uncovered the content concealed within these forms. But it has never once asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form, that is to say, why labour is expressed in value, and why

the measurement of labour by its duration is expressed in the magnitude of the value of the product. These formulas, which bear the unmistakable stamp of belonging to a social formation in which the process of production has mastery over man, instead of the opposite, appear to the political economists' bourgeois consciousness to be as much a self-evident and nature-imposed necessity as productive labour itself. Hence the pre-bourgeois forms of the social organization of production are treated by political economy in much the same way as the Fathers of the Church treated pre-Christian religions.

What

counts most here is the question political economy fails to ask: "why this content has assumed that particular form"; namely, the form of value. Marx does ask this question. He asks, "Whence, then, arises the enigmatic character of the product of labour, as soon as it assumes the form of a commodity?" He answers, "Clearly, it arises from this form itself." But this is the form that political economy fails to grasp. Marx argues that the economists are "misled by the fetishism attached to the world of commodities, or by the objective appearance of the social characteristics of labour" that takes the form of a social relation between things. In this first chapter, Marx also criticizes Aristotle, "the great investigator who was the first to analyse the value-form," for failing to solve the riddle of money: "Aristotle...himself tells us what prevented any further analysis: the lack of the concept of value." Therefore, Aristotle concluded that equality in exchange is "only a makeshift for practical purposes.'... Such a thing, in truth, cannot exist."

In the *Grundrisse*,

Marx writes, "It was an immense step forward for Adam Smith to throw out every limiting specification of wealth-creating activity—not only manufacturing, or commercial or agricultural labour, but one as well as the others, labour in general. With the abstract universality of wealth-creating activity we now have the universality of the object defined as wealth, the product as such or again labour as such, *but labour as past, objectified labour.*" Smith's scientific advance on his predecessors is double-sided. On the one hand, he discovers that "labor as such" is the source of the wealth of a society. On the other hand, he fails to distinguish between "past, objectified labor" and "living labor-power," under a circumstance when the domination of dead over

living labor is a signature characteristic of capitalist production. The classical political economy of Smith and Ricardo is predicated on a labor theory of value, but if we slur

Marx's theory together with the respective versions of Smith and Ricardo, we will miss Marx entirely.

Smith and Ricardo advance on Aristotle, but they too lack a concept of value (i.e., a "concept" in Marx's Hegelian sense). Ricardo takes the equality of exchange (the exchange of equivalent values, "x commodity A = y commodity B") as the exchange of equivalent embodied-labor ratios, but, failing to ask

the question "never once asked," Marx writes in the *Grundrisse* that Ricardo "never investigated the form of the mediation."

With [Ricardo]...wage labour and capital are again conceived as a natural, not as a historically specific social form, for the creation of wealth as use value; i.e. their form as such, precisely because it is natural, is *irrelevant*, and is not conceived in its *specific* relation to the form of wealth, just as wealth itself, in its exchange-value form, appears as a merely formal mediation of its material composition: thus the specific character of bourgeois wealth is not grasped—precisely because it appears there as the adequate form of wealth as such, and thus, although *exchange value* is the point of departure, the *specific economic forms of exchange* themselves play no role at all in his economics....as if exchange value were merely a ceremonial form, which vanishes in Ricardo just as money as medium of circulation vanishes in exchange.

Because Ricardo treats the distinction between use-value and exchange-value as "natural" and therefore valid for all forms of society, he does not grasp that it belongs only to a historically determinate mode of production and a specific form of social organization. This is why Ricardo too lacks a concept of value, whereas the "exact development of the concept of capital is necessary" in order to grasp "the foundation of bourgeois society." By comparison with the science of political economy prior to Marx, Marx stakes

a claim to the priority of discovery like Darwin's discovery of the principle of natural selection, except that the latter belongs to the science of biology, while Marx's scientific discovery belongs to a science of human social relations irreducible to any physical science, since the concept of value is precisely *not* a physicalist concept.

Marx understands that the "sharp formulation of the basic presuppositions of the relation must bring out all the contradictions of bourgeois production, as well as the boundary where it drives beyond itself."

It takes a *critical theory* of society in order to discover the concept of value because its discovery requires a demystification of the appearance of naturalness. Ricardo is not a historical materialist. Because he too lacks a concept of value, he treats capital merely as the possession and accumulation of physical quantities. He fails to distinguish physicalist categories from the "phantom-like objectivity" of Marx's concept.

Therefore, he fails to distinguish the antediluvian forms of capital—merchants' capital and usury—from the historically determinate, specifically capitalist social forms of production and circulation. He recognizes that exchanges are exchanges of equivalent values, but because he lacks the *concept* of value, he also fails to explain surplus-value and profit. He makes equal exchange depend on embodied-labor ratios and he grasps that rising productivity produces a physical surplus. But he confuses the surplus product with surplus-value itself. (He does not distinguish between the "natural" and the "value" form of commodities.)

In other words, Ricardo takes the "physical quantities" approach that distinguishes the neo-Ricardian and Sraffian interpretations of Marx's theory of value widely held in twentieth-century Marxian economics. The technical details of this mistake are beyond the scope of this paper, but the philosophical point is that there are two sciences here, not one. As Marx writes in the *1844 Manuscripts: "Political economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labour by not considering the direct relationship between the worker and production"* (p. 73). From *Capital*, we have already noted Marx's view that the "economists are misled by the fetishism attached to the world of commodities." Within the analytic framework of the first chapter of Volume One, we can locate the precise mistake of this physicalist science as a failure of

inference. In the first section, Marx summarizes the distinction between the use-value and exchange-value of commodities; the distinction he inherits from the classical science. But he has a different scientific purpose. *Capital* is a *critique* of political economy. The science Marx aims to develop is a critical, not a positive science. Chapter One ends with the fourth and final section on commodity fetishism, but the understanding of the classical economists is fetishized or mystified from the bottom up, beginning with their own fundamental categories. A mystified understanding of something both overlooks and conceals it (like a crime and its cover-up). What the economists miss is an analytic entailment of their own distinction, which Marx presents in the second section on “The Dual Character of the Labour Embodied in Commodities.” In just this connection, Marx makes his claim to scientific originality.

He writes, “I was the first to point out and examine critically this twofold nature of the labour contained in commodities. As this point is crucial to an understanding of political economy, it requires further elucidation.” The further elucidation entails the distinction between “concrete” and “abstract” labor: on the premise of a labor theory of value, concrete labor is an entailment of use-value and abstract labor is an entailment of value (the form of appearance of which is exchange-value). Abstract labor, in turn, is the historically specific difference that specifies capitalist production, because it crystallizes the social relation that prevails at the point of production, governed by the law of value or “socially necessary labor-time.” Because Ricardo overlooks this analytic entailment of his own framework categories, he fails to distinguish between concrete and abstract labor (“human labour-power expended, without regard to the form of its expenditure”). He therefore also fails to distinguish between a physical surplus and surplus-value.

This is the outcome we would expect from a physicalist science of human social relations, as opposed to Marx’s phenomenological science and the critical theory of society it engenders. “One basis for life and another basis for *science* is *a priori* a lie.” A reductive, physicalist science is a science that eliminates subjectivity, whereas Marx’s critical theory is based on the acting subject; and Marx’s philosophy is a philosophy of the subject and a philosophy of praxis.



For the difference this makes, I will close with what I hope you will forgive as a long quotation from Raya Dunayevskaya's classic *Marxism and Freedom* (1958).

The failure of the Ricardian theory to explain the exchange between capital and labor, on the basis of its own primary law of labor value, meant the disintegration of that school. It was a fatal failure for it could not explain how it is that labor—the source and creator of all values—becomes the poorer the more values the worker creates. Utopian socialism could move nowhere because it remained a prisoner of the economic categories of Ricardo.

Marx broke through the barriers both because he split the categories created by classical political economy, and created new categories. He rejected the concept of labor as a commodity. Labor is an *activity*, not a commodity. It was no accident that Ricardo used one and the same work for the activity and for the commodity. He was a prisoner of his concept of the human laborer as a thing. Marx, on the other hand, showed that what the laborer sold was not his labor, but only his capacity to labor, his *labor power*.

Two principles are involved here, one flowing from theory and the other from practice. By splitting the old category, labor, into (1) labor as activity or function, and (2) ability to labor, or labor power, the commodity, Marx forged a new theoretical weapon with which to investigate the new material forces that developed outside the old category. The very term, *labor power*, opened all sorts of new doors of comprehension. It enabled him to make a leap in thought to correspond with the new activity of workers....

Capitalists and their ideologists think always of expanding productivity by more perfect machines. What happens to the worker as a result, well, that is just something that “can't be helped.” Their governing principle is to keep their eyes on economies and the expansion of machinery. That said, Marx is “quite in keeping with the spirit of capitalist production.”



At the opposite pole from these, Marx was concerned with the worker's "own personal productiveness."

That is the *class line* which

he draws. Starting from these premises— so strange to the intellectual and so natural to the worker who has worked in large-scale production—Marx was able to discover that what is involved in the cooperation of many workers is a productive force....

New powers are not easily imagined or created. It requires a revolution in thought to understand them, as it requires a revolution in society to create them.

### **Endnotes**

1. See David Papineau, "Naturalism," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/naturalism>.

- In the lexicon of this paper, the term "physicalism" denotes the reductive form of naturalism, as opposed to non- reductive forms. Inside physicalism, a question arises as to whether the physicalist thesis is a linguistic thesis, as Neurath and Carnap held, or whether it is a metaphysical thesis, as Quine and Smart held (see Daniel Stoljar, *Physicalism* [Routledge, 2010], pp. 21-25). This distinction inside physicalism resembles the broader distinction within the typology of naturalism between method and ontology. Linguistic and methodological versions abstain from metaphysical or ontological commitments, as a self- imposed discipline. On the other hand, Marx's view of the relation of method to ontology is like Hegel's. As Alain Badiou brings out in *Logics of Worlds* (Continuum, 2006), Hegel's philosophy is both onto-logical and onto-logical. Likewise Marx. Also, inside physicalism, the question arises as to whether there are non-reductive forms of the physicalist thesis (see Stoljar, pp. 160-62). In this paper,





I will assume without argument that the answer is no. Moreover, the answer, no, would lead us to conclude that the non-reductive forms of naturalism are not physicalist; and therefore that Marx is not a physicalist, as will be argued here. Additionally, concerning nomenclature, the coherence of this paper depends upon a demonstration that the distinction between “analytic metaphysicians’ physicalism” and “economists’ physicalism” is not equivocal. While no attempt at demonstration is proffered here, in previous papers I have argued that the discursive transposition from the former to the latter is not equivocal. See “Philosophical Implications of Temporal Single-System Interpretation” (Radical Philosophy Association, Canisius College, Buffalo, NY, October 2012); “Social Control and the Dictatorship of the Factory Clock” (Radical Philosophy Association,

Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY, November 2014); and also see “Beyond Naturalism: A Personalist Integral Humanism” (Creighton University, Omaha, NB, April 2018).

- The notion of an “intellectual conversion” is taken from Bernard Lonergan. Marx’s “Letter to His Father” of November 10, 1837 is a shoe that fits. In *The Marx-Engels Reader 2/e* (Norton, 1978), the editor Robert Tucker titles his selection from Marx’s letter, “Discovering Hegel” (pp. 7-8). For Marx, this discovery is philosophically decisive. “Permanent deposit” is taken from John Dewey, “From Absolutism to Experimentalism” (1930), in *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (U. of Southern Illinois Pr., 1981-91) 5; Dewey writes that “Hegel had left a permanent deposit in [his] thinking” (p. 154). The extrapolation to Marx is by design, since Dewey is also the architect of a non-reductive form of naturalism, which, in terms virtually identical to Marx’s, is likewise a naturalistic humanism or humanistic naturalism. See Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, in *The Later Works 1*; especially the first chapter on “Experience and Philosophic Method,” pp. 10-41. Page numbers for subsequent quotations from *The Marx- Engels Reader* appear in parentheses.
- Lenin was not wrong to identify the three sources and component parts of “Marxism” as German philosophy,

French socialism, and English political economy. However, a more integral presentation of Marx's philosophy as a whole can be worked out in the three internally related dimensions of his humanism (his philosophical anthropology or philosophy of human nature), historical materialism, and the critique of political economy.

- See n. 2 above.
- See Ian Steedman, *Marx After Sraffa* (Routledge, 1985; orig. 1977). For criticism, see Andrew Kliman, *Reclaiming Marx's "Capital": A Refutation of the Myth of Inconsistency* (Lexington, 2007). The quotation is taken from Kliman, p. 35.
- See Paul Samuelson, "Economists and the history of ideas," *The American Economic Review* 52 (1962): 12.
- See Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (Liveright, 2013), p. 462. Marx did reject what he and Engels called "utopian socialism."
- In this paper, "what Marx means by ..." claims are not intended as oracular discernments of Marx's intentions; they are interpretations of his body of work as a whole. The basic approach is hermeneutic and textualist. The criterion is not "knowing Karl Marx's inner thoughts" but fidelity to the text as a whole (or on the whole, all things considered). The interpretation here is oriented by the Marxist- Humanism worked out by Raya Dunayevskaya, who sought to recreate the "original Marxism of Marx for our age." In this interpretive dispensation, Marx's humanism is the key to his thought as a whole; and, in particular, to the critique of political economy, the



body of work that gravitates in the orbit of Volume One of Capital.

1. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, included in The Marx-Engels Reader, p. 115.

1. On “estranged labor”; “private property and communism”; “the meaning of human requirements”; “the power of money in bourgeois society”; and the “critique of the Hegelian dialectic and philosophy as a whole.” In this selection, Tucker leaves out “Antithesis of Capital and Labor. Landed Property and Capital,” and “Private Property and Labour,” which come between the manuscript on alienation and the manuscript on communism. In the manuscript on “Private Property and Labor,” Marx shows how physiocracy overcomes mercantilism’s fetish of precious metals by discovering the inner connection between wealth and

labor. But here wealth is in the form of land and labor is agricultural labor. If the fetishists are like Catholics, then Marx cites Engels, who “was right to call Adam Smith the Luther of Political Economy” (Struik, ed., p. 128). Smith takes the next step, by incorporating industrial wealth and the factory system into his conception of “labor in

general” (p. 131). But this is the complete generality of estranged or alienated labor. Therefore, Marx writes, “Because [the political economists] make private property in its active form the subject, thus simultaneously making man—and man as something unessential—the essence, the contradiction of reality corresponds completely to the contradictory essence which they accept as their principle. Far from refuting it, the ruptured world of industry confirms their self-ruptured principle. Their principle is, after all, the principle of this rupture” (pp. 129-30). Other manuscripts omitted from Tucker’s selection include

“Wages of Labor,” “Profits of Capital,” and “Rent of Land.” See The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, trans. Martin Milligan, ed. Dirk J. Struik (International Publishers, 1964).

1. For the distinction between a mere “dialectic balancing of concepts” and “the grasping of real relations,” see Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 89- 90. For the purpose of this paper, the

passage in which this distinction appears is worth quoting in full: “Thus production, distribution, exchange and consumption form a regular syllogism; production is the generality, distribution and exchange the particularity, and consumption the singularity in which the whole is joined together. This is admittedly a coherence, but a shallow one. Production is determined by general natural laws,

distribution by social accident, and the latter may therefore promote production to a greater or lesser extent; exchange stands between the two as formal social movement; and the concluding act, consumption, which is conceived not only as a terminal point but as an end-in-itself, actually belongs outside economics except in so far as it reacts in turn upon the point of departure and initiates the whole process anew” (p. 89). The “regular syllogism” Marx presents is faithful to the “first figure of the syllogism” in Hegel’s presentation in the *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Humanities Pr., 1969): “I-P-U is the general schema of the determinate syllogism. Individuality unites with universality through particularity” (p. 667). Hegel remarks that the “rationality” of the syllogism “is not a makeshift; on

the contrary, in contrast to the immediacy of relation that still obtains in the judgement, it is the objective element; and the former immediacy of cognition is rather the merely subjective element, whereas the syllogism is the truth of the judgement. Everything is a syllogism, a universal that through particularity is united with individuality; but it is certainly not a whole consisting of three propositions” (p. 669). If the syllogism is an integral unity of three terms internally related to one another in a single true judgment, then the object of affirmation or denial in judgment



is not an “abstract” but a “concrete universal,” i.e. an individual.

Following Hegel, Marx writes, “The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse” (p. 101). Furthermore, he writes that it is “correct to begin with the real and concrete,”

not as a “chaotic conception of the whole,” but as “a rich totality of many determinations and relations” (p. 100), the determination of which is “obviously the scientifically correct method” (p. 101). In this paper, the concrete universal most under consideration is “species-being,” which denotes an individual (the object of a true judgment in the syllogism). Like Hegel and Marx, Lonergan also writes that the object of judgment is always a concrete matter of fact or value (against deductivism, formalism, or logicism). The upshot is a method of scientific or critical realism. Karl Popper called his philosophy of science “critical rationalism.” Popper’s critical rationalism can be critically contrasted with Roy Bhaskar’s “critical realism.” But Lonergan also calls his position “critical realism.”

Here I am extrapolating from Lonergan to Marx by way of Hegel on the concrete universal. Marx’s philosophy of science is a realism of scientific discovery. As Darwin really discovered natural selection, Marx claims to have really discovered the “law of value” operative in in the bourgeois, capitalist, commercial form of society (or social organization). Having briefly set out what Marx takes to be the scientifically correct method, let’s return

to the paragraph in which Marx organizes the elements of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption into a regular syllogism (the scientifically correct method of political economy). Next, he writes, “The opponents of the



political economists—whether inside or outside its realm—  
who accuse them of barbarically tearing apart things which belong together,  
stand either on the same ground as they, or beneath them. Nothing is more  
common than the reproach that the political economists view production too much

as an end in itself, that distribution is just as  
important. This accusation is based precisely on the economic notion that the  
spheres of distribution and of production are independent, autonomous  
neighbors. Or that these

moments were not grasped in their unity. As if this  
rupture had made its way not from reality into the textbooks,

but rather from the textbooks into reality, and as if the  
task were the dialectic balancing of concepts, and not the grasping of real  
relations!” (pp. 89-90). Marx’s conclusion is that both parties are wrong, the  
political economists and their critics, by virtue of making the same mistake,

i.e. treating the sphere of production as separate from  
the sphere of distribution, the former “determined by general natural laws” and  
the latter by “social accident.” If this were correct, then the “general  
natural laws” of political economy would be subject neither to history nor to  
conscious social control and transformation, whereas what is historically  
malleable would be merely accidental. But this twofold conclusion is the opposite  
of what Marx takes to be the correct conclusion. In turn, the false conclusion  
is based on an ideological distortion by taking its point of departure from an  
“eighteenth-century idea” of an “independent individual” (see pp.83-85). This  
is the ideology of the atomic individual and social atomism. Taking the atomic  
individual for its point of departure leads political economy to mystify social  
reality by virtue of its “eternalization of historic relations of production”  
(see pp. 85-88). This naturalization or eternalization of a specific,  
historically determinate mode of production, capitalist production, is a “bad”  
naturalism inasmuch as it conflates nature with history and fails to  
differentiate what is distinctive about the natural animal who is also a human  
and historical animal. This difference is the difference between leaving  
humanity out and bringing humanity in. Finally, if the correct scientific  
method moves from reality into the textbooks and not vice-versa, then in  
philosophy, it would be the epigones of Hegel whose aim



was “the dialectic balancing of concepts” rather than the “grasping of real relations”; a shallow, degenerate form of dialectic exhibited, for example, by Proudhon. See Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847).

1. In the context of the Young

Hegelian aftermath of Hegelian philosophy and theology beginning with Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu* in 1835, “materialism” is Feuerbachian materialism. In *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* (International Publ., 1941; orig. 1888), Engels writes, “Then came Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity*...we all became at once Feuerbachians” (p. 18). This is the origin of the Feuerbach legend: the view that “Feuerbach...forms an intermediate link between Hegelian philosophy and our conception” (p. 7). On this basis, he launches “dialectical materialism” as the putatively correct view (the critical correction of Hegelianism); he writes: “Thus, ultimately, the Hegelian system represents merely

a materialism idealistically turned upside down in method and content” (p. 24). This sounds Marx-like, especially in the light of Marx’s own figure of the camera obscura in his critique of ideology (in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 154) and his own use of the metaphor of Hegel’s dialectic “standing

on it hand” in the “Postface” to the second German edition of *Capital 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin Books, 1976), p. 103. In context, however, Marx takes Feuerbach’s repudiation of Hegelianism to be a relapse to a pre-critical standpoint and a return to the outlook of Anglo-French materialism, which he excoriates in *The Holy Family* (1844).  
In the Theses

on Feuerbach (1845), Marx calls Feuerbach’s materialism the “old materialism” (in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, see pp. 143-45), sharply distinguishing it from his own “new” materialism (“Thesis X,” p. 145). What Marx means is best understood with respect to the naturalistic humanism,



humanistic naturalism of the 1844 Manuscripts. But in that case, it seems like a good terminological recommendation simply to drop the word “materialism” altogether. It is difficult to think of philosophical debates more sterile

than the nineteenth-century debate between “idealism” and “materialism,” as it would have been understood by Engels. In other words, as Stoljar points out, the thesis that

“everything is mental” is essentially indistinguishable from the thesis that “everything is physical” (see Physicalism, pp. 43-44). In the lexicon of this paper, “materialism” is synonymous with “physicalism,” and physicalism denotes the reductive form of naturalism, whether methodological or ontological. In “Thesis I,” Marx writes, “The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is

conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively” (p. 143). The fundamental point concerns the ineliminability of subjectivity and the acting subject—the principal point to be made in this paper. Materialism or physicalism is reductive by virtue of both its methodological and also its ontological elimination of subjectivity.

1. “Abstraction,” for Marx, can be either reductive—as in his use of the term here—or enriching, as when Marx

writes (in the “Preface” to the first edition of Capital) that “in the analysis of economic forms neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of assistance. The power of abstraction must replace both” (p. 90). In this latter context, the power of abstraction is the conceptual power of grasping the intelligibility immanent in the object under investigation. Concerning the fallacy of “abstract thinking” in the context of the 1844 Manuscripts, Marx orchestrates his criticism with respect to the architecture of Hegel’s Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences and





its three basic terms: logic, nature, and mind. He writes, “the philosophic mind is nothing but the estranged mind of the world thinking within its self-estrangement—i.e., comprehending itself abstractly. Logic (mind’s coin of the realm, the speculative or thought-value of man and nature—their essence grown totally indifferent to all real determinateness, and hence their unreal essence) is

alienated thinking and therefore thinking which abstracts from nature and from real man: abstract thinking. Then: The externality of this abstract thinking ... nature, as it is for this abstract thinking. Nature is external to it—its self- loss; and it apprehends nature also in an external fashion, as abstract thinking—but as alienated abstract thinking.

Finally, Mind, this thinking returning home to its own point of origin—the thinking which, as the anthropological, phenomenological, psychological, ethical, artistic, and religious mind, is not valid for itself, until ultimately it finds itself, and relates itself to itself, as absolute knowledge in the hence absolute, i.e., abstract mind, and so receives its conscious embodiment in a mode of being corresponding to it. For its real mode of being is abstraction” (p. 110).

1. In the 1844 Manuscripts, Marx writes, “For Hegel the essence of man—man—equals self-consciousness” (p. 113). On this predicate, Marx assigns eight theses to Hegel’s phenomenological method of “surmounting of the object of consciousness” (pp. 113-114). He then locates what he takes to be Hegel’s basic mistake in the second

of these theses. He writes, “As to (2): The alienation of self-consciousness establishes thinghood. Because man

equals self-consciousness, his alienated, objective essence, or thinghood, equals alienated self-consciousness, and thinghood is thus established through this alienation.... And since it is not real Man, nor therefore Nature—Man being human nature—who as such is made the subject, but



only the abstraction of man—self-consciousness—thinghood cannot be anything but alienated self-consciousness”

(p. 114). On the other hand, “It is only to be expected that a living, natural being equipped and endowed with

objective (i.e. material) essential powers should have real natural objects of his essence; as is the fact that his self- alienation should lead to the establishing of a real, objective world—but a world in the form of externality—a world therefore not belonging to his own essential being, and an overpowering world. There is nothing incomprehensible

or mysterious in this. It would be mysterious, rather, if it were otherwise” (p. 114). What makes the matter seem mysterious, however, is that (according to Marx) Hegel’s purpose is to derive thinghood from self-consciousness in “the act of positing,” rather than beginning with the premise of real human beings in their real, active lives. Marx draws out this distinction as follows: “But it is equally clear that

a self-consciousness can only establish thinghood—i.e., establish something which itself is only an abstract thing,

a thing of abstraction and not a real thing. It is clear, further, that thinghood is therefore utterly without any independence, any essentiality vis-à-vis self-consciousness; that on the contrary, it is a mere creature—something posited by self-consciousness. And what is posited, instead of confirming itself, is but a confirmation of the act of positing in which is concentrated for a moment the energy of the act as its product, seeming to give the de-posit—but only for a moment—the character of an independent, real substance” (pp. 114-15). This mere seeming, of course, is

a false semblance. By contrast, Marx states what he takes to be the correct procedure.



“Whenever real, corporeal man, man with his feet firmly on the solid ground, man exhaling and inhaling all the forces of nature, establishes his real, objective essential powers as alien objects by his externalization, it is not the act of positing which is the subject in this process: it is the subjectivity of objective essential powers, whose action, therefore, must also be something objective” (p. 115). The relevant distinction is

the distinction between the “act of positing” and the subject who, so to speak, “posits.” On the basis of this distinction, we have grounds to say that the heart of Marx’s realism is the “objectivity of subjectivity.” He concludes that “this objective being does not fall from his state of ‘pure activity’ into a creating of the object; on the contrary, his objective product only confirms his objective activity, establishing his activity as the activity of an objective, natural being” (p. 115). It would be wrong to call Marx’s way of establishing a point

of departure for philosophy “materialism” in any ordinary sense of the term, for materialism makes the opposite mistake by attempting to derive self-consciousness from “matter,” which is only nature taken abstractly. Accordingly, Marx writes, “But nature, too, taken abstractly, for itself— nature fixed in isolation from man—is nothing for man.

It goes without saying that the abstract thinker who has committed himself to intuiting, intuits nature abstractly... Thus, his intuition of nature is only the act of confirming his abstraction from the intuition of nature” (p. 124)! “Nature as nature—that is to say, in so far as it is still sensuously distinguished from that secret sense hidden within it— nature isolated, distinguished from these abstractions, is

nothing—a nothing proving itself to be nothing--is devoid of sense, or has only the sense of being an externality which has to be annulled” (p. 124).

1. See Marx, Capital 1, p. 102.

1. Ibid., p. 102. The method of inquiry is empirical research. The method of presentation is conceptual or theoretical understanding. If it were not too misleading, we could say that empirical research is the “materialist” side of Marx’s thought and that his formation of concepts is the “idealist” side. In the section of Capital on commodity fetishism, Marx succinctly restates their relation: “Reflection on the forms of human life, hence also scientific analysis of those forms, takes a course directly opposite to their real development. Reflection begins post festum, and therefore with the result of the process of development ready to hand” (p. 168).

1. For a fuller context, Marx writes of Hegel’s Phenomenology, “Consequently, despite its thoroughly negative and critical appearance and despite the criticism really contained in

it, which often anticipates far later development, there is already latent in the Phenomenology as a germ, a potentiality, a secret, the uncritical positivism and the equally uncritical idealism of Hegel’s later works—that philosophic dissolution and restoration of the existing empirical world” (p. 111). Two questions should be distinguished. One, what is Marx’s critique of Hegel? The

other, does Marx have Hegel right? This paper addresses the former but not the latter.

19.  
Ibid., p. 103.

- In his entry on “dialectical materialism” in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2 (Macmillan, 1967), H.B. Acton writes



that dialectical materialism is “a title first devised by G.V. Plekhanov...in 1891” (p. 389). But this is incorrect. See

n. 9 above. Ch. IV of Ludwig Feuerbach carries the title, “Dialectical Materialism,” the upshot of his *Anti-Dühring* (1878) and *Dialectics of Nature* (1883). A mistake like this might be made by someone who identifies “Marxism”

with “Marxism-Leninism” and takes a point of departure from the “Russian Marxism” on which Lenin initially cut his teeth. Especially once this body of thought degenerates into Stalinism and ossifies, it would perhaps be a matter of secondary importance to read Marx and Engels for themselves.

- It should be emphasized that Marx and Feuerbach are very different thinkers and also that unlike Engels, Marx was never a “Feuerbachian.” See n. 13 above.
- See n. 12 above; “ideal-realism” is a title Charles S. Peirce appropriated from his father, Benjamin Peirce. See Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indiana U. Pr., 1998). For Peirce’s appropriation of Hegel, see *What Pragmatism Is* (included in *The Essential Peirce*, Peirce Edition Project (eds.), Indiana Univ. Pr., 1998; orig. 1905). Peirce writes: “The truth is that pragmatism is closely allied to the Hegelian absolute idealism, from which, however, it is sundered by its vigorous denial that the third category (which Hegel degrades to a mere stage of thinking) suffices to make the world, or is even so much as self-sufficient. Had Hegel, instead of regarding the first two stages with his smile of contempt, held on to them as independent

or distinct elements of the triune Reality, pragmatists



might have looked up to him as the great vindicator of their truth.... For pragmatism belongs essentially to the triadic class of philosophical doctrines, and is much more essentially so than Hegelianism is" (p. 345). As to pragmatism itself, Peirce writes, "Now quite the most striking feature of the new theory was its recognition of

an inseparable connection between rational cognition and rational purpose" (p. 333).

- A locus classicus of Marx's critique of materialism is the Theses on Feuerbach (1845), included in The Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 143-45.
- Marx's expression is "generic powers." Identifying these powers with "active potencies" brings Aquinas to mind. Whereas Aristotle does not draw the distinction between

"passive" and "active" potency, Aquinas does, owing to the influence of Neoplatonism on this thought, as well as his own creative originality, which measures his distance from Aristotle, most acutely for the notion of "existence."

- For freedom as self-development, see James L. Marsh, Critique, Action, and Liberation (SUNY Pr., 1995).
- Hegel's fundamental interlocutors were Kant and Aristotle. Indeed, Hegel gives his last word to Aristotle. The concluding volume of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, the Philosophy of Mind, concludes with an epigraph from Aristotle's Metaphysics xii, 7: "And thinking in itself deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is thinking in the



fullest sense with that which is best in

the fullest sense. And thought thinks on itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same. For that which is capable of receiving the object of thought, i.e., the essence, is thought. But it is active when it possesses this object. Therefore the possession rather than the receptivity is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation is what is most pleasant and best. If, then, God is always in that good state in which we ourselves sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better this compels it yet more. And God is in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is

a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God" (Ross translation).

- In *The Human Condition* (U. of Chicago Pr., 1958), Hannah Arendt distinguishes among human activities labor, work, and action. She criticizes Marx for reducing a human being to a laboring animal, as she sees it, without regard to the other, more humanly important modalities of action. There is room for this criticism in a common enough reading of Marx. But Marx is neither a reductionist nor a positivist. It is sometimes said that Marx treats a human being as nothing

other than *Homo economicus*, whereas his critique of political economy is nothing less than a critical repudiation of *Homo economicus*.

- Although



“humanization” is not Marx’s own term, it has entered into the Marxian lexicon by way of thinkers like Paulo Freire, who writes of a dialectic of humanization and dehumanization in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Continuum, 1996). Freire writes, “I consider the fundamental theme

of our epoch to be that of domination—which implies its opposite, the theme of liberation, as the objective to be achieved. It is this tormenting theme which gives our

epoch [its] anthropological character...In order to achieve humanization, which presupposes the elimination of dehumanizing oppression, it is absolute necessary to surmount the limit-situations in which people are reduced to things” (p. 84).

- Here Marx writes:  
“What is to be avoided above all is the re-establishing of ‘Society’ as an abstraction vis-à-vis the individual. The individual is the social being.... Man, much as he may therefore be a particular individual (and it is precisely his particularity which makes him an individual, and a real individual social being), is just as much the totality—the ideal totality—the subjective existence of thought and experienced society present for itself; just as he exists in the real world as the awareness and the real enjoyment of social existence, and as a totality of human life-activity.”
- See n. 29 above.
- Marx presents “The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret” in the fourth and concluding section of the first chapter, “The Commodity,” of *Capital* 1, pp. 163-

77. In the first section, Marx presents “The Two Factors of the Commodity: Use-Value and Value (Substance of Value, Magnitude of Value),” pp. 125-31. An analytic entailment of the distinction between





use-value and value, unnoticed by political economy, follows in the second section, namely, “The Dual Character of the

Labour Embodied in Commodities.” Here Marx presents the important distinction between “concrete labor” (the analytic entailment of use-value) and “abstract labor” (the analytic entailment of value). With this distinction, Marx claims the originality of discovery. He writes, “Initially

the commodity appeared to us as an object with a dual character, possessing both use-value and exchange-value [i.e., the ‘form of appearance’ of value]. Later on it was seen that labour, too, has a dual character: in so far as it finds

its expression in value, it no longer possesses the same characteristics as when it is the creator of use-values. I was the first to point out and examine critically this twofold nature of the labour contained in commodities. As this point is crucial to an understanding of political economy,

it requires further elucidation” (pp. 131-32). In the third section, “The Value-Form, or Exchange-Value,” Marx derives the money-form of value from the commodity-form of value, beginning with “The Simple, Isolated, or Accidental Form

of Value,” “ $x$  commodity A =  $y$  commodity B” (pp. 138-63). Finally, after Marx concludes this scientific presentation of the law of value operative in capitalist production— namely, that what “exclusively determines the magnitude

of the value of any article is therefore the amount of labour socially necessary, or labour-time socially necessary for

its production” (p. 129)—he turns to the philosophical criticism of the fourth section, in which he accounts for the “mysterious,” “mystical,” and “enigmatic character of the product of labour, as soon as it assumes the form of a

commodity” (p. 164). His explanation discloses the “secret” of the commodity fetish.

- Marx, Capital 1, p. 187.

33.

Ibid., p. 92.

34. Ibid., pp. 165-66. In context, dinglich is best translated literally as “thing-like.” Things, in context, are best understood as physical objects.

35.

Ibid., p. 255.

36. Ibid., see p. 342. Not only are working people not the dominant subjects in capitalist society; neither is the figure of the capitalist. Marx writes, “As a capitalist, he is only capital personified. His soul is the soul of capital. But capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself, to create surplus-value, to make its constant part, the means of production, absorb the greatest possible amount of surplus labour. Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks.”

37.

Ibid., p. 165.



38.

Ibid., p. 167, p. 138.

39. This is the form of social relation that prevails at the point of production, which, in capitalist production, is governed by the socially necessary labor-time required to produce articles in the commodity-form. The conflation of the natural with the value form of the commodity is a

fundamental mistake Marx addresses in the methodological introduction to the Grundrisse, under the heading of “Eternalization of historic relations of production” (pp.

85-88; see also n. 8 above). Marx takes John Stuart Mill as exemplary. He writes, “But none of this is the

economists’ real concern in this general part. The aim is, rather, to present production—see e.g. Mill—as distinct from distribution etc., as encased in eternal natural laws independent of history, at which opportunity bourgeois relations are then quietly smuggled in as the inviolable natural laws on which society in the abstract is founded. This is the more or less conscious purpose of the whole proceeding. In distribution, by contrast, humanity has allegedly permitted itself to be considerably more arbitrary.

Quite apart from this crude tearing-apart of production and distribution and of their real relationship, it must be apparent at the outset that, no matter how differently

distribution may have been arranged in different stages of social development, it must be possible here also, just as with production, to single out common characteristics, and just as possible to confound or to extinguish all historical

differences under general human laws. For example, the slave, the serf and the wage labourer all receive a quantity of food which makes it possible for them to exist as slaves, as serfs, as wage labourers. The conqueror who lives from tribute, or the official who lives from taxes, or the landed proprietor and his rent, or the monk and his alms, or the Levite and his tithe, all receive a quota of social production, which is determined by other laws than that of the slave's, etc. ..." (p. 87). Here Marx also writes, "All production is appropriation of nature on the part of an individual within and through a specific form of society" (p. 87).

40. Ibid., p.  
138.

41. Ibid., p.  
128.

42.  
Ibid., pp. 138-39.

- See Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 85ff.
- Hegel and Marx both adopt Spinoza's maxim that all determination is negation.
- In an important paragraph from Marx's Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right': Introduction (1844), Marx writes: "It is clear that the arm of criticism

cannot replace the criticism of arms. Material force can only be overthrown by material force; but theory itself becomes a material



force when it has seized the masses. Theory is capable of seizing the masses when it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as

it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp things by the root. But for man the root is man himself. What proves beyond doubt the radicalism of German theory, and thus its practical energy, is that it begins from the resolute positive abolition of religion. The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the supreme being for man. It ends, therefore, with the categorical imperative to overthrow

all those conditions in which man is an abased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being—conditions which can hardly be better described than in the exclamation of a

Frenchman on the occasion of a proposed tax upon dogs: ‘Wretched dogs! They want to treat you like men!’” (p. 60).

- Or what Alain Badiou calls the “future anterior” in Being and Event (Continuum, 2005).
- This is the form of inference Peirce names “abduction.”
- <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/james-mill/>, retrieved 07/21/18.
- Marx, Capital 1, p. 171. Marx continues, “All the characteristics of Robinson’s [Robinson Crusoe’s] labour are repeated here, but with the difference that they are social instead of individual.” Marx takes Dafoe’s Robinson Crusoe as an icon or the phenomenological figure of the atomic



individual, under the condition of social atomism. In the methodological “Introduction” of the Grundrisse, Marx takes his point of departure, against Ricardo, from “the unimaginative conceits of the eighteenth-century Robinsonades” (p. 83). The subtitle of this first subsection of the “Introduction,” “(1) Production,” is “Independent Individuals. Eighteenth-century Ideas” (p. 83).

- See Max Horkheimer, “Traditional and Critical Theory” (1937).
- See Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.V. Miller (OUP, 1977), pp. 96-103.
- Marx, Grundrisse, p. 90.
- In Marx and Whitehead: Process, Dialectics, and the Critique of Capitalism (SUNY Pr., 2004), Anne F. Pomeroy accounts for the lure of the future as follows: “The conceptual pole operates ‘freely’ within the data and its formal elements, entertaining diverse combinations, eliminating unwanted contrasts, choosing the relational configurations of its

past as its achievement. The present activity is, therefore, dipolar: both reproducing the objective datum in physical feeling (how the object is efficacious in the present) and simultaneously entertaining the possibilities presented

by those objective contents as its potential relational arrangements and valuations with reference to the subject as achieved ‘value’ for its own future objectivity. Thus, the present contains a vital reference to the future. In fact, the present is active, productive, creative, and processive only by virtue of such reference. It is precisely the conceptual entertainment of those relational complexes potential within the forms of the datum and the self-realization of the individual as an achievement of such



relational complex that is the subjective activity as present. The present is productive of novelty because the heightened operation

of the conceptual pole allows for the entertainment of yet unrealized possibilities in the constructive becoming of the individual” (p. 118). Moreover, “Through such conceptual activity, alternate formal possibilities for

relational configurations of the given data are entertained as available with conscious reference to the future efficacy of the intensive pattern (production) as data for the world to come. Therefore, the self-world-creativity that is the productive activity of human being is essentially free (1) by virtue of the conscious (and hence self-conscious)

conceptuality operative within it and (2) by virtue of its self-creative conscious reference to purpose as self-production for others” (p. 134).

- See n. 11 above. In the Hegel critique of the 1844 Manuscripts, Marx distinguishes “the act of positing” and the “subject” of this act. He accuses Hegel, in effect, of eliding this distinction. This elision is a mystification

because it fails to denote the “real subject” who “posits”: it could be “God,” “History,” “Society,” “Man,” an “Individual,” or some other equally abstract term, such as “Matter.” In the passage quoted in n. 11, Marx writes, “it is not the act of positing which is the subject in this process; it is the subjectivity of objective essential powers, whose action,

therefore, must also be something objective” (p. 115).

What is at issue is “subjectivity.” For Marx, the acting subject is “real, corporeal man, man with his feet firmly on the solid ground, man exhaling and



inhaling all the forces of nature” (p. 115).

- See Erich Fromm, *To Have or to Be?* (Harper & Row, 1976). There is a lot of confusion concerning Marx’s view of capitalist private property—by which he means primarily the class monopoly of the bourgeoisie on social means of production—and other forms of property and property- relations. We can take Marx at his word when he writes, “on analysis of this concept it becomes clear that though private property appears to be the source, the cause of alienated labour, it is really its consequence” (p. 79).
- To avoid confusion, perhaps it should be said that Marx’s distinction between “organic” and “inorganic” here is not the distinction of chemistry. Rather, an individual lives in her own organic body; in fact, she is this body. Because she is a physical, corporeal being, she is fully a natural being and so she fully belongs to the world of nature. (Marx is not at all a “Cartesian.”) “Nature” as her “inorganic body” is therefore internally related or necessarily connected with her individual “organism.” The use of “organism” here could lead down a path (outside of Marxism), among other possibilities, either to Whitehead’s philosophy of

organism or to Dewey’s pragmatism and the latter’s theory of “experience” as a transactive field including “subject” and “object,” or in the terms he prefers, “organism” and “environment.”

- Marx, *Capital* 1, p. 283.
- As it would have been hard for a nineteenth-century natural scientist not to agree with this much, *mutatis mutandis*, we can say the same thing about a twenty-first century natural scientist. By this point in his development, Marx achieves



a more or less accessible, natural, and perhaps even obvious way of stating things, unencumbered by Hegelian jargon. In other words, to this point in the passage, Marx writes nothing to offend a “scientific” sensibility; nothing a biologist or zoologist might not also say.

- Marx, Capital 1, pp. 283-84.
- In The German Ideology, Marx goes on to write, “Where

speculation ends—in real life—there real, positive science begins” (p. 155). By “speculation” in context, Marx means unfastened, ungrounded speculation. He writes, “in direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven” (p. 154). However, he does not mean to zero out the speculative dimension of his own thought. Hence, in writing about the starting point of “real, positive science,” grounded in “real life,” his standpoint is reminiscent of Husserl’s call to return to the things themselves, which is also the spirit in which

he asserts that transcendental phenomenology is the “true positivism.”

- The subtitle of Being and Nothingness. We might also say that a century before Sartre, Marx has already written a “critique of dialectical reason.”
- See Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.V. Miller (OUP, 1977), pp. 104-11; Hegel presents life immediately before his presentation of “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage,” the phenomenological figure that virtually everyone agrees



is relevant to Marx's own conception of things ("history" as the history of freedom struggles; freedom struggles as struggles of classes in conflict).

- See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Humanities Pr., 1976), pp. 761-74. The culminating section on

"The Idea" includes three chapters: "Life"; "The Idea of Cognition," which differentiates between the "theoretical idea" and the "practical idea"; and "The Absolute Idea," i.e., the unity of the theoretical with the practical idea (the basic idea of praxis).

- Canonical uses of the term, phenomenology, include Hegel's; C.S. Peirce's, whose pragmatism, critical common-sensism, or ideal-realism takes a phenomenological point of departure (Peirce also uses the term, "phaneroscopy"); the various figures of the twentieth-century phenomenological movement, the major representatives of which include Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, and Ricoeur;

and with a little jerrymandering, also the existentialism of Sartre and Beauvoir. In the various nineteenth and twentieth-century developments of post-Hegelian philosophy, Kierkegaard is often recognized both as a successor to Hegel and as a forerunner of existential phenomenology properly so-called, as a current in Marx scholarship recognized a long time ago. See, for example,

Robert Heiss, *Hegel Kierkegaard Marx* (Dell, 1963). What these various philosophical strains share in common is that they are philosophies of the subject. For this reason, the thought of Bernard Lonergan can also be included in the list.



- The fallacy can also be named, from Whitehead, the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. It may appear less odd to include Whitehead in this paper if we turn to the “reformed subjectivist principle” of Process and Reality. Along with Hegel and Max, Peirce and Dewey, Whitehead criticizes “Cartesian” approaches for their failure to distinguish between “perception in the mode of presentational immediacy” and “perception in the mode of causal efficacy.” In the reformed subjectivist principle, Whitehead demonstrates the priority of the latter over the former. In another way, in Being and Time, Heidegger distinguishes something’s being “present at hand” (zuhandenes) from it’s being “ready to hand” (vorhandenes), where “ready-to- handedness” is the primitive or primary term from which “present-at-handedness” is derived.
- A noteworthy feature of the standard philosophical interpretation of the physical sciences is that they exclude telic categories from their lexicon.
- Marx, Grundrisse, p. 84. He continues, “There is no point in dwelling on this any longer. The point could go entirely unmentioned if this twaddle, which had sense and reason for the eighteenth-century characters, had not been earnestly pulled back into the centre of the most modern economics...” Later, he writes, concerning needs, “The fact that this need on the part of one can be satisfied by the product of the other, and vice versa, and that one is capable of producing the object of the need of the other,

and that each confronts the other as owner of the object of the other’s need, this proves that each of them reaches beyond his own particular need, etc., as a human being, and that they relate to one another as human beings; that

their common species-being is acknowledged by all. It



does not happen elsewhere—that elephants produce for tigers, or animals for other animals. For example. A hive of bees comprises at bottom only one bee, and they all produce the same thing” (p. 243).

- For a phenomenological interpretation of historical materialism, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s note on historical materialism in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (Humanities Pr., 1962), pp. 171-73.
- Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 496; emphasis added.

70.

*Ibid.*, p. 105.

- See Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr

(Northwestern Univ. Pr., 1970). One way into transcendental phenomenology is by way of Husserl’s critique of psychologism. This paper takes no stand on psychologism, nor on the issue of whether Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology is necessarily inconsistent or irreconcilable with Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. The modest point is only to notice some anticipations in Marx’s thought that make the phenomenological interpretation of the 1844 Manuscripts plausible and cogent.

- Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. ix.
- For the law of value, see Marx, *Capital* 1, p.

129: “What exclusively determines the magnitude of the value of any article is...the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour-time socially necessary for its production.”

74.

Ibid., pp. 173-75.

75.

Ibid., p. 164.

76.

Ibid., see pp. 151-52.

- Ibid., p. 151; Marx quotes Aristotle from the Nicomachean Ethics, Bk. V, Ch. 5.
- Marx, Grundrisse, p. 104; emphasis added. Smith’s labor theory is a theory of command over labor rather than the expenditure of labor-power. The former belongs to a bourgeois outlook; the latter belongs to a working-class outlook.
- See above, n. 36. Marx also criticizes Smith in another respect. When “wealth” is meant in the sense of “use-value,” “Labour...is not the only source of material wealth, i.e. of the use-values it produces. As William Petty says, labour is the father of material wealth, the earth is its mother” (Capital 1, p. 134).



- Marx, Capital 1, p. 139.

- Marx, Grundrisse, p. 327.

82.

Ibid., p. 331.

83. Ibid., p. 331. In shorthand, “capital” can be defined as “value-in-motion.”

84.

Ibid., p. 331.

- Some of the technical issues that arise in the interpretation of the quantitative dimension of Marx’s theory of value concern single-system versus dual-system interpretations of the relation of prices to values; simultaneous

versus temporal valuation of inputs with outputs; the transformation problem; whether the Okishio theorem is proved; and controversies on Marx’s law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit. The fingerprints of physicalism are all over these controversies. See Kliman, Reclaiming Marx’s “Capital.”

- Marx, Capital 1, p. 132.

- The fundamental premise of Marx’s critique of political economy in general is the twofold premise of the determination of value by labor-time (DVLTL), the magnitude of which is



measured by socially necessary labor-time (SNLT).

- Marx, Capital 1, p. 128; and see p. 137.
  
- Raya  
Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom* (Humanity Books, 2000; orig. 1958), pp. 108-09. Dunayevskaya (1910- 1987) was an American revolutionary and philosopher. It was her revolutionary activism in the nineteen-twenties, thirties, and forties that led her to philosophy. She was an autodidact, which in one way proves the naturalness of philosophy to the human animal.