

While still in his twenties, Marx produced a brief series of manuscripts called the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, first published in 1932. The key concept of these manuscripts is that of *alienation*, a theme which moves throughout the whole system of Marx's thought. Although Marx was by no means the first to develop a theory of alienation, his views on this theme were unique, because they were based upon his particular economic and philosophical assumptions which formed the basis of his criticism of capitalism.

If man is alienated, that is, estranged or separated, he must be alienated from something. As early as biblical times, man was seen as alienated from God through "the fall." In a legal sense, alienation means selling or giving something away, or as Kant says, "the transference of one's property to someone else is its alienation." In the course of time almost everything became a saleable object. Kant spoke of the process by which a person could be used as a thing, while Balzac said ironically that "even the Holy Spirit has its quotation on the Stock Exchange." Rousseau insisted upon some severe limits to alienation. He held that although upon entering the Social Contract there is "the total alienation of each associate . . . to the whole community," Rousseau held that man cannot alienate his freedom. In addition, Rousseau decried the dehumanizing effect upon man of certain social values, of "civilization," saying that social corruption has introduced "from outside" various vices "alien to man's constitution" and destructive of the "original goodness of man." For Marx there is something about man that is essential to his nature and from which he can be alienated. What is novel about Marx's concept of alienation is the manner in which he identifies the causes of the alienation of labor within capitalism.

Marx calls attention to four aspects of alienation, saying that man is alienated (1) from *nature*, (2) from *himself*, (3) from his *species-being*, and (4) from *other men*. He begins with the fundamental relation of a worker to the product of his labor. Originally, man's relation to the product of his labor is identical with the relation of man to the *sensuous external world*, to the objects of nature. Man's relation to nature is intimate because man lives from inorganic nature, for as Marx says, "nature is his *body* with which he must remain in continuous interchange in order not to die." To say that man's relation, both physical and mental, is intimately related to nature, to the objects of nature, means that nature is interdependent with itself, because man is a part of nature. This intimate relation between man and nature, between man's activity and the objects of nature, is the "right" relationship between man and the objects of nature. The worker is not capable of creating without nature, that is, without the sensual external world. That world is the material into which he invests his labor, through which he produces things, and without which he cannot live. But in capitalism this relationship is broken, man is alienated from nature, from the products of his activity or work.

The contemporary economic fact is, says Marx, that the object produced by labor now stands as an "alien being" to the worker. Man's labor is embodied in an object and is turned into a physical thing; this product is an "objectification of

labor." The objectification of labor represents a loss to the worker as well as "servitude to the object." In short it is the alienation of the worker from what he produces. Moreover, in the productive process, man's labor becomes as much an object as the physical material being worked upon, since labor is now bought and sold. The more objects the worker produces the fewer he can personally possess and therefore the greater is his loss. This follows from the fact that the worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object. What is embodied, "objectified," in the product, part of himself, his labor, is no longer his own. "The worker," says Marx, "puts his life into the object, and his life then belongs no longer to himself but to the object." And the object is appropriated, owned, by someone else. In this way, the original relation between man and nature is destroyed through the alienation from man of the products of his labor.

Man is alienated not only from the products of his labor but also from himself through the *process* of production. The nature of labor's productive activity results in man's self-alienation. This comes about because work is *external* to, that is, not part of the nature of, the worker. His work is not voluntary but is imposed upon him; he has a feeling of misery instead of well being; rather than fulfilling himself, he must deny himself; he does not freely develop his physical and mental capacities but is instead physically exhausted and mentally debased. As a consequence, the worker feels like a human being only during his leisure hours. Most important of all the worker is alienated from his work because it is not his own work but rather work for someone else. In this sense, the worker does not belong to himself but to someone else. The result is that "man [the worker] feels himself to be freely active only in his animal functions—eating, drinking and procreating—or at most also in his dwelling and personal adornment—while in his human functions he is reduced to an animal." Although eating, drinking and procreating are genuine human functions, they become animal functions when separated, alienated, from other human functions.

At still another level, man is alienated from his *species-being*, from his truly human nature. The character of any species resides in the type of life activity it expresses. The species-character of human beings is "free, conscious activity." By contrast, an animal cannot distinguish itself from its activity. The animal *is* its activity. But, says Marx, "man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness." It is true that animals can produce nests and dwellings as in the case of bees, ants and beavers. But their production of these things is limited to what is strictly required for themselves or their young. Man, on the other hand, produces universally, that is, in a manner that is applicable and understandable to all human beings. Also, whereas animals produce only under the compulsion of specific physical need, man produces his most distinctive products only when he is free from physical need. Animals reproduce only themselves whereas man can produce a whole world, a world of art, of science and literature. Animals are limited in their activity to the standards of the species to which they belong. Man, on the other hand, knows how to produce in accordance with the standards of every species. For these reasons, the whole object of man's labor is to objectify, that is, impose upon the world of nature, his species life, his free,

spontaneous and creative activity. In this way man reproduces himself in the things he creates not only intellectually, in the realm of ideas, but also actively, seeing his own reflection in the world which he has created. This unique character of human species-life is lost when man's labor is alienated. Just as the object of labor is no longer his, so also man is shorn of his free and spontaneous activity and creativity. His consciousness is now deflected from creativity and is transferred into simply a means to his individual existence. Thus alienated labor turns the species life of man into an alien being and alienates his mental life and his human life.

Inevitably the alienation of man from the product of his labor, from his productive or life activity and from his species life—all this leads to man's alienation from other men. The breakdown in man's relation to his fellow human beings is similar to the alienation of man from the objects of his labor. In an environment of alienated labor all men look upon other men from the point of view of workers who see other workers as objects whose labor is bought and sold, and not as full members of the human species. To say, then, that man's species nature is alienated or estranged from him means that "each man is estranged from the other, as each of them is from man's essential nature."

Marx asks, "if the product of labor is alien to me . . . to whom does it belong?" In an earlier age, when temples were built in Egypt and India, it was thought that the product belonged to the gods. But, says Marx, the alienated product of labor can belong only to man himself. If it does not belong to the worker, it must belong to a man other than the worker. Thus, as a result of alienated labor the worker produces a new relationship between another man and labor, this other man being the capitalist. The final product of alienated labor is private property. Private property is both a product of alienated labor and also the means by which labor is alienated. In the wage system entailed by private property labor finds itself not as an end but as the servant of wages. Nor would a forced increase in wages restore to either the workers or to their work their human significance or value. As a statement of eventual redemption, Marx concludes that the emancipation of society from private property involves the eman-

ipation of the workers which in turn will lead to the emancipation of humanity as a whole.

The general matter-of-fact tone of Marx's analysis of capitalism is in sharp contrast to the shrill voice of world communism. Marx was himself capable on occasion of the severest denunciation of the conditions of the capitalism to which he was exposed. He was convinced, moreover, that the dialectic process inevitably involved tragic conflicts, wars, and revolutions. He saw in history the deep tension between forces that were in the last analysis incompatible, each exerting its power to overcome the other. The use of revolutionary force could hardly be avoided, but force could not bring into being simply any desired utopian system. Only the relations of production toward which the inner logic of the material order was driving in a determined way could be the objective of revolution. Even when a society is aware of the so-called "natural laws of its movement," this society, says Marx, "can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development." What, then, is the function of the revolutionary activities of the working classes? It is, says Marx, to "shorten and lessen the birth-pangs."

With this rigorous view of the nature of the class struggle, Marx had clearly assigned to the substructure, to the material order, the supreme significance in the dialectic process of history. What, then, is the status and role of human thought? Do ideas have power and consequences? For Marx, ideas represented a mere reflection of the basic material reality, and for this reason, he described the enterprise of human thought as the *superstructure*.