

Marx on Development

Ted Winslow
Social Science Department
York University
Toronto ON
Canada
Email: winslow@yorku.ca

In an 1843 letter to Arnold Ruge, Marx identifies “the socialist¹ principle” with “the reality of the true human being.”

“the whole socialist principle in its turn is only one aspect that concerns the reality of the true human being.” (Marx 1843, p. 143)

By true human being he means human being as fully developed. Human being in this sense actualizes self-conscious reason. Marx elaborates this as a particular kind of “individuality,” the “true individuality” of “universally developed individuals.” These ideas appropriate ideas of Aristotle.

To begin with, they appropriate Aristotle’s idea that “what each thing is when it has reached the end of its coming into being is that which we say is the nature of each, as with a human being, a horse, a house.”² True individuality is actualized in a kind of labour, a kind Marx claims becomes “life’s prime want” in socialism (Marx 1875, p. 87). The kind is the “action” Aristotle identifies with human nature in the above sense. This is action originating in “choice” defined as desire determined by self-conscious reason.³ The ultimate object of desire in this sense, the object for which all others are instrumental, is *eudaimonia*. This is truly “good” action. As elaborated by Aristotle, it is the realization and perfect practice of the ethical and intellectual “virtues.”⁴ The most important and inclusive of these is “justice” as the practice of “complete virtue” in relations with others.⁵ Marx elaborates the reciprocal practice of justice in this sense as the sharing of the products – beauty and truth – of “really free working.” This sharing is an essential aspect of the goodness – the *eudaimonia* – of the working.

Human history is an “educational” process that brings about the development of true human being. Marx appropriates from Hegel the idea that this works through the “dialectic of negativity” functioning as “estrangement” within the labour process. In its form as estrangement, labour works to bring about the full development and actualization of socialist labour. In particular, Marx claims the estranged labour of capitalism – wage labour – plays an essential developmental role in this sense.

The transcendence of capitalism is accomplished by “revolutionary” labour, by what Marx means by “revolutionary practice.” The initiation of this labour requires the degree of rational self-consciousness developed by capitalist estrangement. It then further develops this to the degree necessary to make practicable the appropriation of the knowledge objectified in the productive forces of social labour and, by this means, transform these forces from private into social property.

The paper aims to support these interpretive claims with textual evidence.

Socialist Labour

Socialist labour is the labour of universally developed individuals – “the summit of self-conscious reason” – issuing from “the prehistory of human⁶ society” (Marx 1859, p. 264).

“Universally developed individuals, whose social relations, as their own communal [*gemeinschaftlich*] relations, are hence also subordinated to their own communal control, are no product of nature, but of history. The degree and the universality of the development of wealth where *this* individuality becomes possible supposes production on the basis of exchange values as a prior condition, whose universality produces not only the alienation of the individual from himself and from others, but also the universality and the comprehensiveness of his relations and capacities.” (Marx 1973, p. 162)

This individuality is the “free individuality,” the “true individuality,” Marx elaborates as the “the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also therefore appears no longer as labour, but as the full development of activity itself, in which natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared; because a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one.” (Marx 1973, p. 325) It is “free” in Marx’s “materialistic sense, i.e., is free not through the negative power to avoid this or that, but through the positive power to assert his true individuality.” (Marx and Engels 1845A, p. 131)

True individuality actualizes human nature as what Marx calls “species-being.”

“In creating a *world of objects* by his personal activity, in his *work upon* inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species-being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as his own essential being, or that treats itself as a species-being. Admittedly animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwellings, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc. But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. It produces only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom. An animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature. An animal’s product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product. An animal forms only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty.” (Marx 1844B, pp. 276-7)

Rich individuality embodies an idea of “wealth” very different from the capitalist idea of it as “an immense accumulation of commodities” (Marx 1867, p. 125).

“It will be seen how in place of the *wealth and poverty* of political economy come the *rich human being* and the rich *human need*. The rich human being is simultaneously the human being *in need of* a totality of human manifestations of life – the man in whom his own realisation exists as an inner necessity, as *need*. Not only *wealth*, but likewise the *poverty* of man—under the assumption of socialism—receives in equal measure a human and therefore social significance⁷.

“Poverty is the passive bond which causes the human being to experience the need of the greatest wealth—the other human being.” (Marx 1844B, p. 304)

The “greatest wealth” is “the other human being” because socialist labour is the reciprocal practice of justice in Aristotle’s sense.

Marx provides an elaboration of this reciprocal practice in the following account of how we would produce if “we had carried out production 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 as 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 *realised* my true nature, my *human* nature, my *communal* nature.

“Our products would be so many mirrors in which we saw reflected our essential nature.

“This relationship would moreover be reciprocal; what occurs on my side has also to occur on yours.” (Marx 1844A, pp. 227-8)

Marx also identifies true wealth with the “capabilities,” the “virtues” (including the intellectual virtues), that constitute the “universality” of the universally developed individual.

"What is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a *predetermined* yardstick? Where he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? In bourgeois economics—and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds—this complete working-out of the human content appears as a complete emptying out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end.” (Marx 1973, p. 488)

He also identifies it with “free time.”

"Time of labour, even if exchange value is eliminated, always remains the creative substance of wealth and the measure of the cost of its production. But free time, disposable time, is

wealth itself, partly for the enjoyment of the product, partly for free activity which—unlike labour—is not determined by a compelling extraneous purpose which must be fulfilled, and the fulfillment of which is regarded as a natural necessity or a social duty, according to one's inclination.” (Marx 1864A, p. 257)

Free time is time for the development of wealth as the full development of capabilities and needs. Ultimate needs are those satisfied by socialist labour as *eudaimonia*. This labour is the creation and appropriation of truth and beauty as the content of social relations actualizing the reciprocal practice of justice. The labour objectifies universal artistic, scientific and ethical values. Free time is time for the development of the virtuosity required for such creation and appropriation, i.e., for “the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them.”

“As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The *surplus labour of the mass* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of the few*, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time so as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them.” (Marx 1973, pp. 705-6)

Marx also claims socialist labour will not be divided and specialized. The universally developed individual is an “educated” person in Hegel’s sense⁸, a person “absolutely available for the different kinds of labour required of him” and “for whom the different social functions are different modes of activity he takes up in turn.” (Marx 1867, p. 618) Artistic development, for example, ends “the subordination of the individual to some definite art.”

“with a communist organisation of society, there disappears the subordination of the artist to local and national narrowness, which arises entirely from division of labour, and also the subordination of the individual to some definite art, making him exclusively a painter, sculptor, etc.; the very name amply expresses the narrowness of his professional development and his dependence on division of labour. In a communist society there are no painters but only people who engage in painting among other activities.” (Marx and Engels 1845B, p. 394)

Related to this, the universally developed individual has fully developed “senses”: “a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form,” a “*sense* for the finest play.”

“the *senses* of the social man *differ* from those of the non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man’s essential being is the richness of subjective *human* sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form – in short, *senses* capable of human gratification, senses affirming themselves as essential powers of *man*) either cultivated or brought into being. For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses, the practical senses (will, love, etc.), in a word, *human* sense, the human nature of the senses, comes to be by virtue of *its* object, by virtue of *humanised* nature. The *forming* of the five

senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present.” ((Marx 1844B, p. 302)

Labour as *eudamonia* defines what Marx calls "the true realm of freedom" of a socialist society. Really free working is *end in itself* activity. This realm is one of two. The second is the “realm of natural necessity” defined by *instrumental* activity producing the *means* both for itself and for activity in the true realm of freedom.

"Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. This realm of natural necessity expands with his development, because his needs do too; but the productive forces to satisfy these expand at the same time. Freedom, in this sphere, can only consist in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate to their human nature. But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis. The reduction of the working day is the basic prerequisite.” (Marx 1981, p. 959)

Labour in the realm of natural necessity is also the labour of universally developed individuals.

“Free time—which is both idle time and time for higher activity—has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and, at the same time, practice [*Ausübung*], experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society.” (Marx 1973, pp. 711-2)

Because its ends are given by self-conscious reason, the labour is “free” in the sense of fully self-determined. It is also, as the activity of universally developed individuals, no longer estranged labour. As instrumental, however, the time and energy it requires are minimized so as to maximize the time available for really free working.

The distribution principle governing the realm is a feature of this freedom; it too actualizes self-conscious reason as the reciprocal practice of justice. Marx elaborates both the principle and the conditions required for its actualization in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.

“In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly - only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!” (Marx 1875, p. 87)

In sum,

“Communism as the positive transcendence of private property as human self-estrangement, and therefore as 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 accomplished consciously and embracing 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.” (Marx and Engels 1845B, p. 49)

The second kind of labour essentially related to socialism is the labour by means of which socialist labour comes into being. This is “estranged” labour including wage labour, the estranged labour of capitalism.

Estranged Labour

Marx conceives the human historical process as an educational process ending in the full development of the “species-powers” that, actualized in socialist labour, are the “real active orientation of man to himself as a species-being,” “his manifestation as a real species-being (i.e., as a human being).” He appropriates from Hegel the idea that “the moving and generating principle” of this process is labour in the form of “estrangement.”

“The outstanding achievement of Hegel’s *Phänomenologie* and of its final outcome, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle, is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as 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 if he really brings out all his species-powers – something which in turn is only possible through the cooperative action of all of mankind, only as the result of history – and treats these powers as objects: and this, to begin with, is again only possible in the form of estrangement.” (Marx 1844B, pp. 332-3)

What Marx calls “the dialectic of negativity” is, for Hegel, the “efficient or motive principle” at work in the historical process. It is the historical form of the governance of the world by “reason” (Hegel 1956, p. 9) through which “the summit of self-conscious reason” is attained. The working of this dialectic in history is, therefore, “the work of reason” in history. In human history this is the work of estrangement. By means of it, reason itself (and nature as governed by it) develop and actualize their own “nature” in human “nature” as the “real species-being,” “the summit of self-conscious reason.” In terms of these foundational ontological and anthropological ideas, the “business of science” in relation to human history generally and capitalism specifically “is simply to bring the work of the reason [in the form of estrangement], which is in the thing to consciousness.” (Hegel 1996, p. 37)

“The efficient or motive principle, which is not merely the analysis but the production of the

several elements of the universal, I call dialectic. ... the higher dialectic of the conception does not merely apprehend any phase as a limit and opposite, but produces out of this negative a positive content and result. Only by such a course is there development and inherent progress. Hence this dialectic is not the external agency of subjective thinking, but the private soul of the content, which unfolds its branches and fruit organically. ... To consider anything rationally is not to bring reason to it from the outside, and work it up in this way, but to count it as itself reasonable. Here it is spirit in its freedom, the summit of self-conscious reason, which gives itself actuality, and produces itself as the existing world. The business of science is simply to bring the specific work of the reason, which is in the thing, to consciousness." (Hegel 1996, p. 37)

As early as his 1843 letter to Ruge, Marx describes the work of the "critic" (e.g., the work that produced *Capital* as "a critique of political economy") as scientific in this sense.

"Reason has always existed, but not always in a reasonable form. The critic can therefore start out from any form of theoretical and practical consciousness and from the forms peculiar to existing reality develop the true reality as its obligation and its final goal." (Marx 1843, p. 143)

Capital starts out from a "form of theoretical and practical consciousness," classical political economy, and from the form "peculiar to existing reality," the commodity, develops, according to Marx's 1877 summary of what he understood himself to have accomplished, "true reality ("social property") as its obligation and its final goal."

"At the end of the chapter ['(*Capital*, French Edition, 1879, p. 315)'] the historic tendency of production is summed up thus: That it itself begets its own negation with the inexorability which governs the metamorphoses of nature; that it has itself created the elements of a new economic order, by giving the greatest impulse at once to the productive forces of social labour and to the integral development of every individual producer; that capitalist property, resting as it actually does already on a form of collective production, cannot do other than transform itself into social property. At this point I have not furnished any proof, for the good reason that this statement is itself nothing else than the short summary of long developments previously given in the chapters on capitalist production." (Marx 1877, p. 200)

The contrast Marx draws, in the 1873 afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*, between 'the mere critical analysis of actual facts' and 'writing receipts ... for the cook-shops of the future' (Marx 1873, p. 16), is based on this understanding of "actual facts" as themselves "reasonable" in Hegel's sense.

"Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence." (Marx and Engels 1845B, p. 49)

In *The Holy Family* of 1845, Marx and Engels claim "[t]he propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-estrangement." They describe the self-estrangement of the proletariat as "*what the proletariat is*." What it "is" is the dialectic of negativity functioning as estrangement. This will develop the degree of rational self-consciousness required to initiate "revolutionary" labour. Consistent with this interpretation, they describe labour in capitalism as a "steeling school."

“It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment *regards* as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do.” (Marx 1845A, p. 38)

In the case of the propertied class, the primary form of this estrangement is motivation by what Hegel calls the “passions.”

“Two elements therefore enter into our investigation [of human history]: first, the Idea, secondly, the complex of human passions; the one the warp, the other the woof of the vast tapestry of world history.” (Hegel 1956, p. 23)

Passions are motives that, though “negative” in the sense of inconsistent with rational motives, provide, as expressions of the dialectic of negativity, “the impelling and actuating force for accomplishing deeds shared in by the community at large.” (Hegel 1956, p. 23).'

Marx treats “greed” as the dominant capitalist passion. This is the desire for money as estrangement, i.e., for money as “men’s estranged, alienating and self-disposing *species-nature*.”

“The distorting and confounding of all human and natural qualities, the fraternisation of impossibilities – the *divine* power of money – lies in its *character* as men’s estranged, alienating and self-disposing *species-nature*. Money is the alienated *ability of mankind*.” (Marx 1844B, p. 325)

In the *Grundrisse*, he also makes it an important aspect of the estrangement of wage labour. It motivates the developmental of general industriousness, indifference to the particularity of labour, the positive development of needs and other characteristics of what will ultimately become the universally developed individual. (Marx 1973, pp. 222-5)

A similar passage in the 1864 “Results of the Immediate Process of Production,” contrasting wage with slave labour, claims that:

“All these differences in the relation make the activity of the free worker more intensive, more continuous, more agile, and more dexterous than that of the slave, quite apart from the fact that they fit the worker himself to undertake historical actions of an entirely different nature.” (Marx 1864, pp. 1032-3)

Marx summarizes the positive consequences of capitalist estrangement as greed in the following passage from the *Grundrisse*, focusing on the “drive to create ... surplus labour” deriving from it.

"if the worker needs only half a working day in order to live a whole day, then, in order to keep alive as a worker, he needs to work only half a day. The second half of the labour day is forced labour; surplus-labour. What appears as surplus value on capital’s side appears identically on the worker’s side as surplus labour in excess of his requirements as worker, hence in excess of his immediate requirements for keeping himself alive.

“The great historic quality of capital is to create this *surplus labour*, superfluous labour from the standpoint of mere use value, mere subsistence; and its historic destiny [*Bestimmung*] is fulfilled as soon as, on one side, there has been such a development of needs

that surplus labour above and beyond necessity has itself become a general need arising out of individual needs themselves – and, on the other side, when the severe discipline of capital, acting on succeeding generations [*Geschlechter*], has developed general industriousness as the general property of the new species [*Geschlecht*] – and, finally, when the development of the productive powers of labour, which capital incessantly whips onward with its unlimited mania for wealth, and of the sole conditions in which this mania can be realized, have flourished to the stage where the possession and preservation of general wealth require a lesser labour time of society as a whole, and where the labouring society relates scientifically to the process of its progressive reproduction, its reproduction in a constantly greater abundance; hence where labour in which a human being does what a thing could do has ceased. Accordingly, capital and labour relate to each other here like money and commodity; the former is the general form of wealth, the other only the substance destined for immediate consumption. Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness [*Naturbedürftigkeit*], and thus creates the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also therefore appears no longer as labour, but as the full development of activity itself, in which natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared; because a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one. This is why *capital is productive; i.e. an essential relation for the development of the social productive forces*. It ceases to exist as such only where the development of these productive forces themselves encounters its barrier in capital itself.” (Marx 1973, p. 325)

A very similar passage is found further on in the *Grundrisse* (pp. 408-10). There Marx claims that

“cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations—production of this being as the most total and universal possible social product, for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures [*genussfähig*], hence cultured to a high degree—is likewise a condition of production founded on capital.”

Three essential features of species-being Marx claims estranged labour works to develop are: “real intellectual wealth,” “general industriousness” and “indifference to the particularity of labour.”

In *The German Ideology* (1845B, p. 51), Marx and Engels claim “the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections.” Consequently, one of main ways capitalism works to develop “real intellectual wealth” is by expanding “real connections.” One way it does this is by improving means of travel and communication. Another is by creating “the *world market, the connection of the individual with all.*”

“In the case of the *world market, the connection of the individual with all*, but at the same time also the *independence of this connection from the individual*, have developed to such a high level that the formation of the world market already at the same time contains the conditions for going beyond it.” (Marx 1973, pp. 160-2)

The “communist revolution” ends “the *independence of this connection from the individual*,” i.e., ends its estrangement, and creates “real communality and generality.”

“Only then [after ‘the communist revolution’] will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man). *All-round* dependence, this natural form of the world-historical co-operation of individuals, will be transformed by this communist revolution into the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them.” (Marx and Engels 1845B, pp. 51-2)

The passages above emphasize “general industriousness” as one of the virtues developed by wage labour. This is required for socialist labour. In the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1973, p. 611-2), Marx disagrees with Adam Smith’s positing of “‘freedom and happiness’ and with Fourier’s idea of the ideal form of labour as “mere fun, mere amusement.” Once labour has “created the subjective and objective conditions for itself,” i.e., become socialist labour, both its instrumental and end in itself forms are “self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour.” This, however,

“in no way means that it becomes mere fun, mere amusement, as Fourier, with *grisette*-like naïveté, conceives it. Really free working, e.g. composing, is at the same time precisely the most damned seriousness, the most intense exertion. The work of material production can achieve this character only (1) when its social character is posited, (2) when it is of a scientific and at the same time general character, not merely human exertion as a specifically harnessed natural force, but exertion as subject, which appears in the production process not in a merely natural, spontaneous form, but as an activity regulating all the forces of nature.”

Marx also claims that, in contrast to wage labour, slave labour can “never create *general industriousness*.”

“Wealth confronts direct forced labour not as capital, but rather as *relation of domination* [*Herrschaftsverhältnis*]; thus, the relation of domination is the only thing which is reproduced on this basis, for which wealth itself has value only as gratification, not as wealth itself, and which can therefore never create *general industriousness*.” (Marx 1973, p. 325)

As also indicated in the passages quoted above, estranged labour also works to develop “indifference to the particularity of labour.”⁹ The ultimate end point of this is the socialist labour of “the totally developed individual, for whom the different social functions are different modes of activity he takes up in turn.”

“Since the purpose of labour is for the wage labourer wages alone, money, a definite quantity of exchange value, in which any specific characteristics of use value have been extinguished, he is completely indifferent to the *content* of his labour, and therefore to the specific character of his activity. In the guild or caste system, on the other hand, this activity was regarded as the exercise of a vocation, whereas with the slave, as with the beast of burden, it is only a particular kind of activity, of exertion of his labour capacity, imposed on him and handed down from the past. Hence in so far as the division of labour has not made his labour capacity entirely one-sided, the free worker is *in principle* receptive to, and ready for, any variation in his labour capacity and his working activity which promises better wages (as is indeed demonstrated in the case of the surplus population of the countryside, which constantly transfers to the towns). If the developed worker is more or less incapable of this

variation, he still regards it as always open to the next generation, and the emerging generation of workers can always be distributed among, and is constantly at the disposal of, new branches of labour or particularly prosperous branches of labour. In North America, where the development of wage labour has least of all been affected by reminiscences of the old guild system, etc., this variability, this complete indifference to the specific content of labour, this ability to transfer from one branch to another, is shown particularly strongly. Hence the contrast between this *variability* and the uniform, traditional character of *slave labour*, which does not vary according to the requirements of production, but rather the reverse, requiring that production should itself be adapted to the mode of labour introduced originally and handed down by tradition, is emphasised by all United States writers as the grand characteristic of the free wage labour of the North as against the slave labour of the South. (See Cairnes.)” (Marx 1964B, pp.1033-1034)

In the *Grundrisse* he claims that:

“The fact that the particular kind of labour employed is immaterial is appropriate to a form of society in which individuals easily pass from one type of labour to another, the particular type of labour being accidental to them and therefore irrelevant. Labour, not only as a category but in reality, has become a means to create wealth in general, and has ceased to be tied as an attribute to a particular individual. This state of affairs is most pronounced in the United States, the most modern form of bourgeois society.” (Marx 1973, p. 105)

These claims are repeated in *Capital* where they are explicitly connected to the development of the “totally developed individual.”

“Modern industry never views or treats the existing form of a production process as the definitive one. Its technical basis is therefore revolutionary, whereas all earlier modes of production were essentially conservative. By means of machinery, chemical processes and other methods, it is continually transforming not only the technical basis of production but also in the functions of the worker and the social combinations of the labour-process. At the same time, it thereby also revolutionises the division of labour within society, and incessantly throws masses of capital and of workers from one branch of production to another. Thus large-scale industry, by its very nature, necessitates variation of labour, fluidity of functions, and mobility of the worker in all directions. But on the other hand, in its capitalist form, it reproduces the old division of labour with its ossified particularities. We have seen how this absolute contradiction does away with all repose, all fixity and all security as far as the worker's life-situation is concerned; how it constantly threatens, by taking away the instruments of labour, to snatch from his hands his means of subsistence, and, by suppressing his specialized function, to make him superfluous. We have seen, too, how this contradiction bursts forth without restraint in the ceaseless human sacrifices required from the working class, in the reckless squandering of labour-powers, and in the devastating effects of social anarchy. This is the negative side. But if, at present, variation of labour imposes itself after the manner of an overpowering natural law, and with the blindly destructive action of a natural law that meets with obstacles everywhere, large-scale industry, through its very catastrophes, makes the recognition of variation of labour and hence of the fitness of the worker for the maximum number of different kinds of labour into a question of life and death. This possibility of varying labour must become a general law of social production, and the existing relations must be adapted to permit its realization in practice. That monstrosity, the disposable working population held in reserve, must be replaced by the individual man who is absolutely available for the different kinds of labour required of him; the partially

developed individual, who is merely the bearer of one specialized social function, must be replaced by the totally developed individual, for whom the different social functions are different modes of activity he takes up in turn.” (Marx 1867, pp. 618-9)

In a footnote to this passage, Marx quotes a French worker recently returned from San Francisco

"A French worker wrote as follows on his return from San Francisco,: ‘I could never have believed, that I was capable of working at all the trades I practised in California. I was firmly convinced that I was fit for nothing but the printing of books ... Once I was in the midst of this world of adventurers, who change their jobs as often as their shirts, then, upon my faith, I did as the others. As mining did not pay well enough, I left it for the city, and there I became in succession a typographer, a slater, a plumber, etc. As a result of this discovery that I am fit for any sort of work, I feel less of a mollusc and more of a man.’ (A. Corbon, "De l'enseignement professionnel," 2nd ed., p. 50.)" (Marx 1867, p. 618)

He then goes on to claim that, though actualization of the fully rational form of indifference to the particularity of labour requires the transcendence of “the capitalistic form of production,” “the historical development of the antagonisms, immanent in a given form of production [i.e., the working of the dialectic of negativity as estrangement], is the only way in which that form of production can be dissolved and a new form established.” He points, as evidence of this work by capitalist estrangement in developing indifference to particularity, to the fact that:

“*Ne sutor ultra crepidam* — this *nec plus ultra* of handicraft wisdom became sheer nonsense, from the moment the watchmaker Watt invented the steam-engine, the barber Arkwright, the throstle, and the working-jeweller, Fulton, the steamship.”

As pointed out above, Marx claims these positive developmental effects of estranged labour “fit the worker himself to undertake historical actions of an entirely different nature.” In particular, according to Marx they fit the worker to undertake “revolutionary” labour.

Revolutionary Labour

In the third thesis on Feuerbach, Marx claims that

“The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.” (Marx 1845, p. 4)

An essential way capitalist estrangement is self-transcending is by bringing about the degree of “integral development of every individual producer” that “fits” them to undertake the “*revolutionary practice*” – the labour – that will transform capitalism into a social form from which all barriers to the full development and actualization of species-being have been removed.

This labour

“does away with [capitalist estranged] labour, and abolishes the rule of all classes with the classes themselves, because it is carried through by the class which no longer counts as a class in society, is not recognised as a class, and is in itself the expression of the dissolution of all classes, nationalities, etc. within present society.” (Marx 1845B, p. 52)

This requires that the labour develop “communist consciousness.” This is the penultimate form of the full development and actualization of rational self-consciousness, i.e., of the true “human” self and of “activity” as true human “self-activity.” This is a self that “corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals and the casting-off of all natural limitations.” (Marx and Engels 1845B, p. 88)

The development of communist consciousness is a key and necessary result of the revolutionary practice that transforms capitalism into socialism.

“Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.” (Marx and Engels 1845B, pp. 52-3)

As capital, the productive forces of social labour exist in estrangement from labour. They are, however, the objectification of the development of self-conscious reason, “the power of knowledge, objectified.” (Marx 1973, p. 706) The appropriation of this knowledge requires “the development of the individual capacities corresponding to the material instruments of production.” Marx claims revolutionary labour develops the capabilities the appropriation requires.

"Thus things have now come to such a pass that the individuals must appropriate the existing totality of productive forces, not only to achieve self-activity, but, also, merely to safeguard their very existence. This appropriation is first determined by the object to be appropriated, the productive forces, which have been developed to a totality and which only exist within a universal intercourse. From this aspect alone, therefore, this appropriation must have a universal character corresponding to the productive forces and the intercourse.

"The appropriation of these forces is itself nothing more than the development of the individual capacities corresponding to the material instruments of production. The appropriation of a totality of instruments of production is, for this very reason, the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves.

"This appropriation is further determined by the persons appropriating. Only the proletarians of the present day, who are completely shut off from all self-activity, are in a position to achieve a complete and no longer restricted self-activity, which consists in the appropriation of a totality of productive forces and in the thus postulated development of a totality of capacities. All earlier revolutionary appropriations were restricted; individuals, whose self-activity was restricted by a crude instrument of production and a limited intercourse, appropriated this crude instrument of production, and hence merely achieved a new state of limitation. Their instrument of production became their property, but they themselves remained subordinate to the division of labour and their own instrument of production. In all expropriations up to now, a mass of individuals remained subservient to a single instrument of production; in the appropriation by the proletarians, a mass of instruments of production must be made subject to each individual, and property to all.

Modern universal intercourse can be controlled by individuals, therefore, only when controlled by all.

"This appropriation is further determined by the manner in which it must be effected. It can only be effected through a union, which by the character of the proletariat itself can again only be a universal one, and through a revolution, in which, on the one hand, the power of the earlier mode of production and intercourse and social organisation is overthrown, and, on the other hand, there develops the universal character and the energy of the proletariat, without which the revolution cannot be accomplished; and in which, further, the proletariat rids itself of everything that still clings to it from its previous position in society.

"Only at this stage does self-activity coincide with material life, which corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals and the casting-off of all natural limitations." (Marx and Engels 1845B, pp. 87-88)

Conclusion

As elaborated in these texts, Marx's ideas are inconsistent with those conventionally attributed to him. They conceive fully developed human being as actualizing self-conscious reason elaborated as species-being. Socialism is the social form that coincides with this development. It is defined by activity as socialist labour, the defining social feature of which is the reciprocal practice of justice. Elaborated in terms of these ideas, socialism actualizes freedom as fully self-determined activity, i.e., as activity determined by self-conscious reason.

Universally developed individuals are the product of history. The "moving and generating principle" in this history is the dialectic of negativity functioning as estrangement within the labour process. It is this that makes the process "basic." It develops self-conscious reason. The degree of this development attained in each historical stage is expressed by its "superstructure": "its religion, its polity, its ethics, its legislation, and even its science, art and mechanical skill." (Hegel 1956, p. 64)

Marx invokes this relation to explain political despotism as the expression of a economic conditions radically inconsistent with individual development. The key such condition, given the dependence of the "real intellectual wealth" of the individual on the "wealth of his real connections," is "isolation." He pointed to this to explain political despotism in Prussia, India, France and Russia. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, for example, he makes the "prejudice and superstition" of masses of French peasants, produced, he claims, by their isolation, "responsible" for the restoration of the Bonaparte dynasty. (Marx 1852, pp. 187-8)

Estranged labour works to develop the capabilities that fit individuals to initiate the revolutionary labour that then educates them to the further degree necessary to enable them to transform capitalist property into social property. A key way it does this is by developing the capabilities required to appropriate the knowledge objectified in the productive forces developed in capitalism.

The paper has not been concerned with evaluating the ideas it attributes to Marx. It is obvious, however, that the capitalist labour process has not worked to develop revolutionary subjectivity in his sense.¹⁰ Without such development, socialism is impracticable.¹¹

¹ Marx uses “socialism” and “communism” interchangeably sometimes to mean, as here, the society that actualizes “true human being” and sometimes to mean the penultimate society emerging initially from the revolutionary transformation of capitalism.

² *Politics*, Book I, chap. 2: 1252b lines 34-5

³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, chap. 1: 1139a line 17 to 1139b line 8

⁴ *Politics*, Book VII, chap. 8: 1328a lines 35-9

⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, chap. 1: lines 1129B 27 – 1130A 15

⁶ Used in this way, “human” means what human being is when fully developed.

⁷ True “wealth” has “a human and therefore social significance” because fully developed human being is a “social being,” i.e., a being for whom the sharing of “goods” with others is an essential aspect of their goodness.

⁸ "By educated men we may prima facie understand those who without the obtrusion of personal idiosyncrasy can do what others do. It is precisely this idiosyncrasy, however, which uneducated men display, since their behaviour is not governed by the universal characteristics of the situation. ... Education rubs the edges off particular characteristics until a man conducts himself in accordance with the nature of the thing." (Hegel 1945, p. 268)

⁹ In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx associates the development of this particular feature of species-being with the “integral development of the individual.” (Marx 1847, p. 190)

¹⁰ *Capital* itself contains passages inconsistent with Marx’s 1877 claim that wage labour as estrangement contributes to “the integral development of every individual producer” to the degree required to fit them to initiate revolutionary practice. See, for example, the passage on pp. 798-9 that ends as follows:

“Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital.” (Marx 1867, p. 799)

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