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Alienated Labor

We have proceeded from the presuppositions of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We presupposed private property, the separation of labor, capital and land, hence of wages, profit of capital and rent, likewise the division of labor, competition, the concept of exchange value, etc. From political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity, the most miserable commodity; that the misery of the worker is inversely proportional to the power and volume of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands and thus the revival of monopoly in a more frightful form; and finally that the distinction between capitalist and landowner, between agricultural laborer and industrial worker, disappear and the whole society must divide into the two classes of proprietors and propertyless workers.

Political economy proceeds from the fact of private property. It does not explain private property. it grasps the actual, material process of private property in abstract and general formulae which it then takes as laws. It does not comprehend these laws, that is, does not prove them as proceeding from the nature of private property. Political economy does not disclose the reason for the division between capital and labor, between capital and land. When, for example, the relation of wages to profits is determined, the ultimate basis is taken to be the interest of the capitalists; that is, political economy assumes what it should develop. Similarly, competition is referred to at every point and explained from external circumstances. Political economy teaches us nothing about the extent to which these external, apparently accidental circumstances are simply the expression of a necessary development. We have seen how political economy regards exchange itself as an accidental fact. The only wheels which political economy puts in motion are greed and the war among the greedy, competition.

Just because political economy does not grasp the interconnections within the movement, the doctrine of competition could stand opposed to the doctrine of monopoly, the doctrine of freedom of craft to that of the guild, the doctrine of the division of landed property to that of the great estate. Competition, freedom of craft, and division of landed property were developed and conceived only as accidental, deliberate, forced consequences of monopoly, the guild, and feudal property, rather than necessary, inevitable, natural consequences.

We now have to grasp the essential connection among private property, greed, division of labor, capital and land ownership, and the connection of exchange with competition, of value with the devaluation of men, of monopoly with competition, etc., and of this whole alienation with the money-system.

Let us not put ourselves in a fictitious primordial state like a political economist trying to clarify things. Such a primordial state clarifies nothing. It merely pushes the issue into a gray, misty distance. It acknowledges as a fact or event what it should deduce, namely, the necessary relation between two things for example, between division of labor and exchange. In such a manner theology explains the origin of evil by the fail of man. That is, it asserts as a fact in the form of history what it should explain.

We proceed from a present fact of political economy. The worker becomes poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and extent. The worker becomes a cheaper commodity the more commodities he...
produces. The increase in value of the world of things is directly proportional to the decrease in value of the human world. Labor not only produces commodities. It also produces itself and the worker as a commodity, and indeed in the same proportion as it produces commodities in general.

This fact simply indicates that the object which labor produces, its product, stands opposed to it as an alien thing, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labor is labor embodied and made objective in a thing. It is the objectification of labor. The realization of labor is its objectification. In the viewpoint of political economy this realization of labor appears as the diminution of the worker, the objectification as the loss of and subservience to the object, and the appropriation as alienation [Entfremdung], as externalization [Entaussenung].

So much does the realization of labor appear as diminution that the worker is diminished to the point of starvation. So much does objectification appear as loss of the object that the worker is robbed of the most essential objects not only of life but also of work. Indeed, work itself becomes a thing of which he can take possession only with the greatest effort and with the most unpredictable interruptions. So much does the appropriation of the object appear as alienation that the more objects the worker produces, the fewer he can own and the more he falls under the domination of his product, of capital.

All these consequences follow from the fact that the worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object. For it is clear according to this premise: The more the worker exerts himself, the more powerful becomes the alien objective world which he fashions against himself, the poorer he and his inner world become, the less there is that belongs to him. It is the same in religion. The more man attributes to God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; then it no longer belongs to him but to the object. The greater this activity, the poorer is the worker, What the product of his work is, he is not. The greater this product is, the smaller he is himself. The externalization of the worker in his product means not only that his work becomes an object, an external existence, but also that it exists outside him independently, alien, an autonomous power, opposed to him. The life he has given to the object confronts him as hostile and alien.

Let us now consider more closely the objectification, the worker's production and with it the alienation and loss of the object, his product.

The worker can make nothing without nature, without the sensuous external world. It is the material wherein his labor realizes itself, wherein it is active, out of which and by means of which it produces.

But as nature furnishes to labor the means of life in the sense that labor cannot live without objects upon which labor is exercised, nature also furnishes the means of life in the narrower sense, namely, the means of physical subsistence of the worker himself.

The more the worker appropriates the external world and sensuous nature through his labor the more he deprives himself of the means of life in two respects: first, that the sensuous external world gradually ceases to be an object belonging to his labor, a means of life of his work; secondly, that it gradually ceases to be a means of life in the immediate sense, a means of physical subsistence of the worker.

In these two respects therefore, the worker becomes a slave to his objects; first, in that he receives an object of labor that is, he receives labor, and secondly that he receives the means of subsistence. The first enables him to exist as a worker and the second as a physical subject. The terminus of this slavery is that he can only maintain himself as a physical subject so far as he is a worker, and only as a physical subject is he a worker.

(The alienation of the worker in his object is expressed according to the laws of political economy as follows: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values
he creates the more worthless and unworthy he becomes; the better shaped his product, the more
misshapen is he; the more civilized his product, the more barbaric is the worker; the more
powerful the work, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more intelligence the work has,
the more witless is the worker and the more he becomes a slave of nature.)

Political economy conceals the alienation in the nature of labor by ignoring the direct
relationship between the worker (labor) and production. To be sure, labor produces marvels for
the wealthy but it produces deprivation for the worker. It produces palaces, but hovels for the
worker. It produces beauty, but mutilation for the worker. It displaces labor through machines,
but it throws some workers back into barbarous labor and turns others into machines. It produces
intelligence, but for the worker it produces imbecility and cretinism.

The direct relationship of labor to its products is the relationship of the worker to the
objects of his production. The relationship of the rich to the objects of production and to
production itself is only a consequence of this first relationship and confirms it. Later we shall
observe the latter aspect.

Thus, when we ask, What is the essential relationship of labor? we ask about the
relationship of the worker to production.

Up to now we have considered the alienation, the externalization of the worker only from
one side: his relationship to the products of his labor. But alienation is shown not only in the
result but also in the process of production, in the producing activity itself. How could the
worker stand in an alien relationship to the product of his activity if he did not alienate himself
from himself in the very act of production? After all, the product is only the resume of activity,
of production. If the product of work is externalization, production itself must be active
externalization, externalization of activity, activity of externalization. Only alienation-and
externalization in the activity of labor itself -is summarized in the alienation of the object of
labor.

What constitutes the externalization of labor?

First is the fact that labor is external to the laborer that is, it is not part of his nature-and
that the worker does not affirm himself in his work but denies himself, feels miserable and
unhappy, develops no free physical and mental energy but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind.
The worker, therefore feels at ease only outside work, and during work he is outside himself. He
is at home when he is not working and when he is working he is not at home. His work,
therefore, is not voluntary, but coerced, forced labor. It is not the satisfaction of a need but only a
means to satisfy other needs. Its alien character is obvious from the fact that as soon as no
physical or other pressure exists, labor is avoided like the plague. External labor, labor in which
man is externalized, is labor of self-sacrifice, of penance. Finally, the external nature of work for
the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own but another person s, that in work he does not
belong to himself but to someone else. In religion the spontaneity of human imagination, the
spontaneity of the human brain and heart, acts independently of the individual as an alien, divine
or devilish activity. Similarly, the activity of the worker is not his own spontaneous activity. It
belongs to another. It is the loss of his own self.

The result, therefore, is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his
animal functions-eating, drinking, and procreating, or at most in his shelter and finery-while in
his human functions he feels only like an animal. The animalistic becomes the human and the
human the animalistic.

To be sure, eating, drinking, and procreation are genuine human functions. In abstraction,
however, and separated from the remaining sphere of human activities and turned into final and
sole ends, they are animal functions.

We have considered labor, the act of alienation of practical human activity, in two
aspects: (1) the relationship of the worker to the product of labor as an alien object dominating him. This relationship is at the same time the relationship to the sensuous external world, to natural objects as an alien world hostile to him; (2) the relationship of labor to the act of production in labor. This relationship is that of the worker to his own activity as alien and not belonging to him, activity as passivity, power as weakness, procreation as emasculation, the worker's own physical and spiritual energy, his personal life—for what else is life but activity—as an activity turned against him, independent of him, and not belonging to him. Self-alienation, as against the alienation of the object, stated above.

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

Man is a species-being [Gattungswesen] not only in that he practically and theoretically makes his own species as well as that of other things his object, but also-and this is only another expression for the same thing-in that as present and living species he considers himself to be a universal and consequently free being.

The life of the species in man as in animals is physical in that man, (like the animal) lives by inorganic nature. And as man is more universal than the animal, the realm of organic nature by which he lives is more universal. As plants, animals, minerals, air, light, etc., in theory form a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art-his spiritual inorganic nature or spiritual means of life which he first must prepare for enjoyment and assimilation—so they also form in practice a part of human life and human activity. Man lives physically only by these products of nature; they may appear in the form of food, heat, clothing, housing, etc. The universality of man appears in practice in the universality which makes the whole of nature his inorganic body: (1) as a direct means of life, and (2) as the matter, object, and instrument of his life activity. Nature is the inorganic body of man, that is, nature insofar as it is not the human body. Man lives by nature. This means that nature is his body with which he must remain in perpetual process in order not to die. That the physical and spiritual life of man is tied up with nature is another way of saying that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.

In alienating (1) nature from man, and (2) man from himself, his own active function, his life activity, alienated labor also alienates the species from him; it makes species life the means of individual life. In the first place it alienates species-life and the individual life, and secondly it turns the latter in its abstraction into the purpose of the former, also in its abstract and alienated form.

For labor, life activity, and productive life appear to man at first only as a means to satisfy a need, the need to maintain physical existence. Productive life, however, is species-life. It is life begetting life. In the mode of life activity lies the entire character of a species, its species character; and free conscious activity is the species character of man. Life itself appears only as a means of life.

The animal is immediately one with its life activity, not distinct from it. The animal is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself into an object of will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he immediately identifies. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from the life activity of the animal Only thereby is he a species-being. Or rather, he is only a conscious being—that is, his own life is an object for him—since he is a species-being. Only on that account is his activity free activity. Alienated labor reverses the relationship in that man, since he is a conscious being, makes his life activity, his essence, only a means for his existence.

The practical creation of an objective world, the treatment of inorganic nature, is proof that man is a conscious species-being, that is, a being which is related to its species as to its own essence or is related to itself as a species being. To be sure animals also produce. They build them
selves nests, dwelling places, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc. But the animal produces only what is immediately necessary for itself or its young. It produces in a one-sided way while man produces universally. The animal produces under the domination of immediate physical need while man produces free of physical need and only genuinely so in freedom from such need. The animal only produces itself while man reproduces the whole of nature. The animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body while man is free when he confronts his product. The animal builds only according to the standard and need of the species to which it belongs while man knows how to produce according to the standard of any species and at all times knows how to apply an intrinsic standard to the object. Thus man creates also according to the laws of beauty.

In the treatment of the objective world, therefore, man proves himself to be genuinely a species-being. This production is his active species-life: Through it nature appears as his work and his actuality. The object of labor is thus the objectification of man's species-life: he produces himself not only intellectually, as in consciousness, but also actively in a real sense and sees himself in a world lie made. In taking from man the object of his production, alienated labor takes from his species-life, his actual and objective existence as a species. It changes his superiority to the animal to inferiority, since he is deprived of nature, his inorganic body.

By degrading free spontaneous activity to the level of a means, alienated labor makes the species-life of man a means of his physical existence.

The consciousness which man has from his species is altered through alienation, so that species-life becomes a means for him.

(3) Alienated labor hence turns the species-existence of man, and also nature as his mental species-capacity, into an existence alien to him, into the means of his individual existence. It alienates his spiritual nature, his human essence, from his own body and likewise from nature outside him.

(4) A direct consequence of man's alienation from the product of his work, from his life activity, and from his species-existence, is the alienation of man from man. When man confronts himself, he confronts other men. What holds true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work, and to himself, also holds true of man's relationship to other men, to their labor, and the object of their labor.

In general, the statement that man is alienated from his species-existence means that one man is alienated from another just as each man is alienated from human nature.

The alienation of man, the relation of man to himself, is realized and expressed in the relation between man and other men.

Thus in the relation of alienated labor every man sees the others according to the standard and the relation in which he finds himself as a worker.

We began with an economic fact, the alienation of the worker and his product. We have given expression to the concept of this fact: alienated, externalized labor. We have analyzed this concept and have thus analyzed merely a fact of political economy.

Let us now see further how the concept of alienated, externalized labor must express and represent itself in actuality.

If the product of labor is alien to me, confronts me as an alien power, to whom then does it belong?

If my own activity does not belong to me, if it is an alien and forced activity, to whom then does it belong?

To a being other than myself.

Who is this being?
Gods? To be sure, in early times the main production, for example, the building of temples in Egypt, India, and Mexico, appears to be in the service of the gods, just as the product belongs to the gods. But gods alone were never workmasters. The same is true of nature. And what a contradiction it would be if the more man subjugates nature through his work and the more the miracles of gods are rendered superfluous by the marvels of industry, man should renounce his joy in producing and the enjoyment of his product for love of these powers.

The alien being who owns labor and the product of labor, whom labor serves and whom the product of labor satisfies can only be man himself.

That the product of labor does not belong to the worker and an alien power confronts him is possible only because this product belongs to a man other than the worker. If his activity is torment for him. it must be the pleasure and the life-enjoyment for another. Not gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man.

Let us consider the statement previously made, that the relationship of man to himself is objective and actual to him only through his relationship to other men. If man is related to the product of his labor, to his objectified labor, as to an alien, hostile, powerful object independent of him, he is so related that another alien, hostile, powerful man independent of him is the lord of this object. If he is unfree in relation to his own activity, he is related to it as bonded activity, activity under the domination coercion and yoke of another man.

Every self-alienation of man, from himself and from nature, appears in the relationship which he postulates between other men and himself and nature. Thus religious self-alienation appears necessarily in the relation of laity to priest, or also to a mediator, since we are here now concerned with the spiritual world. In the practical real world self-alienation can appear only in the practical real relationships to other men. The means whereby the alienation proceeds is a practical means. Through alienated labor man thus not only produces his relationship to the object and to the act of production as an alien man at enmity with him. He also creates the relation in which other men stand to his production and product, and the relation in which he stands to these other men. Just as he begets his own production as loss of his reality, as his punishment; just as he begets his own product as a loss, a product not being to him, so he begets the domination of the non producer over production and over product. As he alienates his own activity from himself, he confers upon the stranger an activity which is not his own.

Up to this point, we have investigated the relationship only from the side of the worker and will later investigate it also from the side of the non-worker.

Thus through alienated externalized labor does the worker create the relation to this work of man alienated to labor and standing outside it. The relation of the worker to labor produces the relation of the capitalist to labor, or whatever one wishes to call the lord of labor. Private property is thus product, result, and necessary consequence of externalized labor, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself.

Private property thus is derived, through analysis, from the concept of externalized labor, that is, externalized man, alienated labor, alienated life, and alienated man.

We have obtained the concept of externalized labor (externalized life) from political economy as a result of the movement of private property. But the analysis of this idea shows that though private property appears to he the ground and cause of externalized labor, it is rather a consequence of externalized labor, just as gods are originally not the cause but the effect of an aberration of the human mind. Later this relationship reverses.

Only at the final culmination of the development of private property does this, its secret, reappear—namely, that on the one hand it is the product of externalized labor and that secondly it is the means through which labor externalizes itself, the realization of this externalization,

This development throws light on several conflicts hitherto unresolved.
(1) Political economy proceeds from labor as the very soul of production and yet gives labor nothing, private property everything. From this contradiction Proudhon decided in favor of labor and against private property. We perceive, however, that this apparent contradiction is the contradiction of alienated labor with itself and that political economy has only formulated the laws of alienated labor.

Therefore we also perceive that wages and private property are identical: for when the product, the object of labor, pays for the labor itself, wages are only a necessary consequence of the alienation of labor. In wages labor appears not as an end in itself but as the servant of wages. We shall develop this later and now only draw some conclusions.

An enforced raising of wages (disregarding all other difficulties, including that this anomaly could only be maintained forcibly) would therefore be nothing but a better slave-salary and would not achieve either for the worker or for labor human significance and dignity.

Even the equality of wages, as advanced by Proudhon, would only convert the relation of the contemporary worker to his work into the relation of all men to labor. Society would then be conceived as an abstract capitalist.

Wages are a direct result of alienated labor, and alienated labor is the direct cause of private property. The downfall of one is necessarily the downfall of the other.

(2) From the relation of alienated labor to private property it follows further that the emancipation of society from private property, etc., from servitude, is expressed in its political form as the emancipation of workers, not as though it is only a question of their emancipation but because in their emancipation is contained universal human emancipation. It is contained in their emancipation because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of worker to production, and all relations of servitude are only modifications and consequences of the worker's relation to production.

As we have found the concept of private property through analysis from the concept of alienated externalized labor, so we can develop all the categories of political economy with the aid of these two factors, and we shall again find in each category—for example, barter, competition, capital, money-only a particular and developed expression of these primary foundations.

Before considering this configuration, however, let us try to solve two problems.

(1) To determine the general nature of private property as a result of alienated labor in its relation to truly human and social property.

(2) We have taken the alienation of labor and its externalization as a fact and analyzed this fact. How, we ask now, does it happen that man externalizes his labor, alienates it? How is this alienation rooted in the nature of human development? We have already achieved much in resolving the problem by transforming the question concerning the origin of private property into the question concerning the relationship of externalized labor to evolution of humanity. In talking about private property one believes he is dealing with something external to man. Talking of labor, one is immediately dealing with man himself. This new formulation of the problem already contains its solution.

On (1) The general nature of private property and its relation to truly human property.

We have resolved alienated labor into two parts which mutually determine each other or rather are only different expressions of one and the same relationship. Appropriation appears as alienation, as externalization; externalization as appropriation: alienation as the true naturalization.

We considered the one side, externalized labor, in relation to the worker himself, that is, the relation of externalized labor to itself. We have found the property relation of the non-worker to the worker and labor to be the product, the necessary result, of this relationship. Private
property as the material, summarized expression of externalized labor embraces both relationships-the relationship of worker to labor, the product of his work, and the nonworker; and the relationship of the non-worker to the worker and the product of his labor.

As we have seen that in relation to the worker who appropriates nature through his labor the appropriation appears as alienation--self-activity as activity for another and of another, living as the sacrifice of life, production of the object as loss of it to an alien power, an alien man--we now consider the relationship of this alien man to the worker, to labor and its object.

It should be noted first that everything which appears with the worker as an activity of externalization and an activity of alienation appears with the non-worker as a condition of externalization, a condition of alienation. Secondly, that the actual, practical attitude of the worker in production and to his product (as a condition of mind) appears as a theoretical attitude in the non-worker confronting hint.

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

Let us consider more closely these three relationships. [Here the manuscript breaks off, unfinished.]