

hardened.—Jones's *Antiquities of Southern Indians*, p. 461. Prof. Rau's article on *Pottery*. *Smithsonian Report*, 1866, p. 352.

^d*Early History of Mankind*, p. 181; *Pre-Historic Times*, pp. 437, 441, 462, 477, 533, 542.

^eLewis and Clarke (1805) found plank in use in houses among the tribes of the Columbia River.—*Travels*, Longman's Ed., 1814, p. 503. Mr. John Keast Lord found "cedar plank chipped from the solid tree with chisels and hatchets made of stone," in Indian houses on Vancouver's Island.—*Naturalist in British Columbia*, I, 169.

^fTylor's *Early History of Mankind*, p. 265, *et seq.*

^g*Geological Survey of Indiana*, 1873, p. 119. He gives the following analysis:

Ancient Pottery, "Bone Bank," Posey Co., Indiana.			
Moisture at		Alumina,	5.00
212°F.,	1.00	Peroxide of iron,	5.50
Silica,	36.00	Sulphuric acid,	.20
Carbonate of		Organic matter	
lime,	25.50	(alkalies and	
Carbonate of		loess),	23.60
magnesia,	3.02		100.00

^h*History of the American Indians*, Lond. ed., 1775, p. 424. The Iroquois affirm that in ancient times their forefathers cured their pottery before a fire.

5. Feuerbach: Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook

KARL MARX (1818–1883) AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS (1820–1895)

THE ILLUSIONS OF GERMAN IDEOLOGY

As we hear from German ideologists, Germany has in the last few years gone through an unparalleled revolution.¹ The decomposition of the Hegelian philosophy, which began with Strauss, has developed into a universal ferment into which all the "powers of the past" are swept. In the general chaos mighty empires have arisen only to meet with immediate doom, heroes have emerged momentarily only to be hurled back into obscurity by bolder and stronger rivals. It was a revolu-

tion beside which the French Revolution was child's play, a world struggle beside which the struggles of the Diadochi [successors of Alexander the Great] appear insignificant. Principles ousted one another, heroes of the mind overthrew each other with unheard-of rapidity, and in the three years 1842–45 more of the past was swept away in Germany than at other times in three centuries.

All this is supposed to have taken place in the realm of pure thought.

Certainly it is an interesting event we are dealing with: the putrescence of the absolute

From *The German Ideology* (1845–1846)

¹ Marx and Engels, living in exile in Belgium, collaborated on *The German Ideology* in 1845 and 1846. They sent the manuscript to Germany for publication, but political crises prevented it from appearing. Marx later remarked that it had been abandoned to "the gnawing criticism of the mice." At the time *The German Ideology* was written, Marx and Engels were developing a thoroughly materialist worldview, which separated them from other German philosophers. This work is the first relatively complete

statement of this worldview, although the materialist position it presents is foreshadowed in works like "On the Jewish Question" (1863, orig. 1844) and "The Holy Family" (1875, orig. 1845). The complete version of *The German Ideology* was not available until the 1930s. Thus, while European and American theorists of the early twentieth century were profoundly affected by Marx, they did not have this particular work.

spirit. When the last spark of its life had failed, the various components of this *caput mortuum*² began to decompose, entered into new combinations and formed new substances. The industrialists of philosophy, who till then had lived on the exploitation of the absolute spirit, now seized upon the new combinations. Each with all possible zeal set about retailing his apportioned share. This naturally gave rise to competition, which, to start with, was carried on in moderately staid bourgeois fashion. Later when the German market was glutted, and the commodity in spite of all efforts found no response in the world market, the business was spoiled in the usual German manner by fabricated and fictitious production, deterioration in quality, adulteration of the raw materials, falsification of labels, fictitious purchases, bill-jobbing and a credit system devoid of any real basis. The competition turned into a bitter struggle, which is now being extolled and interpreted to us as a revolution of world significance, the begetter of the most prodigious results and achievements.

If we wish to rate at its true value this philosophic charlatanry, which awakens even in the breast of the honest German citizen a glow of national pride, if we wish to bring out clearly the pettiness, the parochial narrowness of this whole Young-Hegelian movement and in particular the tragicomic contrast between the illusions of these heroes about their achievements and the actual achievements themselves, we must look at the whole spectacle from a standpoint beyond the frontiers of Germany.

German criticism has, right up to its latest efforts, never quitted the realm of philosophy. Far from examining its general philosophic premises,

the whole body of its inquiries has actually sprung from the soil of a definite philosophical system, that of Hegel.³ Not only in their answers but in their very questions there was a mystification. This dependence on Hegel is the reason why not one of these modern critics has even attempted a comprehensive criticism of the Hegelian system, however much each professes to have advanced beyond Hegel. Their polemics against Hegel and against one another are confined to this—each extracts one side of the Hegelian system and turns this against the whole system as well as against the sides extracted by the others. To begin with they extracted pure unfalsified Hegelian categories such as “substance” and “self-consciousness,” later they desecrated these categories with more secular names such as “species,” “the Unique,” “Man,” etc.

The entire body of German philosophical criticism from Strauss to Stirner is confined to criticism of *religious* conceptions. The critics started from real religion and actual theology. What religious consciousness and a religious conception really meant was determined variously as they went along. Their advance consisted in subsuming the allegedly dominant metaphysical, political, juridical, moral and other conceptions under the class of religious or theological conceptions; and similarly in pronouncing political, juridical, moral consciousness as religious or theological, and the political, juridical, moral man—“*man*” in the last resort—as religious. The dominance of religion was taken for granted. Gradually every dominant relationship was pronounced a religious relationship and transformed into a cult, a cult of law, a cult of the State, etc. On all sides it was only a question of dogmas and belief in dogmas. The

² *Caput mortuum*: Latin for the head of death.

³ Marx, like all German philosophers of the nineteenth century, was profoundly influenced by the work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel was, among other things, concerned with the relationship of individuals to the state. He saw this as a spiritual process of historical development, fueled by dialectical contradiction and culminating in absolute freedom. He believed this freedom was possible under

the Prussian monarchy (which, incidentally, employed him). After Hegel's death, his followers split into two camps: the Right Hegelians and the Young Hegelians. The Right Hegelians stayed very close to Hegel's teaching. The Young Hegelians, with whom Marx associated as a young man, held on to Hegel's ideas of historical progress through contradiction, but rejected the notion that freedom was possible under existing forms of the state. They supported political programs varying from liberal democracy to anarchism.

world sanctified to an ever-increasing extent till at last our venerable Saint Max was able to canonize it *en bloc* and thus dispose of it once for all.⁴

The Old Hegelians had *comprehended* everything as soon as it was reduced to an Hegelian category. The Young Hegelians *criticized* everything by attributing to it religious conceptions or by pronouncing it a theological matter. The Young Hegelians are in agreement with the Old Hegelians in their belief in the rule of religion, of concepts, of a universal principle in the existing world. Only, the one party attacks this dominion as usurpation, while the other extols it as legitimate.

Since the Young Hegelians consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men (just as the Old Hegelians declared them the true bonds of human society) it is evident that the Young Hegelians have to fight only against these illusions of consciousness.⁵ Since, according to their fantasy, the relationships of men, all their doings, their chains and their limitations are products of their consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their present consciousness for human, critical or egoistic consciousness, and thus of removing their limitations. This demand to change consciousness 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. The most recent of them have found the correct expression for their activity when they declare they are only fighting against "*phrases*." They forget, however, that to these phrases they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world. The only results which this philosophic criticism could achieve were a few (and at that thoroughly one-sided) elucidations of Christianity from the point of view of religious history;—all the rest of their assertions are only further embellishments of their claim to have furnished, in these unimportant elucidations, discoveries of universal importance.

It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the relation of their criticism to their own material surroundings.

FIRST PREMISES OF MATERIALIST METHOD

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.⁶ They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing

⁴ Much of *The German Ideology* is a critique of the Young Hegelians from the left. Marx and Engels open with a biting attack on them. David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874) was an early Young Hegelian. His *Life of Jesus* (1892) held that the gospels were not literally true, but myths about early Christians. The anarchist Max Stirner (1806–1856, born Kaspar Schmidt), ridiculed here as Saint Max, bears the brunt of Marx and Engels' attack. Stirner's influential book, *The Ego and Its Own* (1918), had been published in 1844. In it, Stirner attacks Marx and Engels and calls for a thoroughly idealistic approach to changing the state—he argues that we can change society by changing our ideas about it. For Stirner, oppression and alienation are created through ideas that people accept as holy or sacred (hence Marx and Engels' epithets "holy" and "Saint"); freedom, on the other hand, originates through the ego's creation of its

own ideas. Thus people can think their way into a new society, freeing themselves from the oppressive state. For Marx and Engels, this was anathema. They believed that freedom from oppression could only be achieved through changes in the material bases of society.

⁵ Much of the controversy over Hegelian philosophy concerned the place of religion within it, but religion was largely a surrogate for discussing politics and the state, taboo subjects for debate within Germany. Marx and Engels were living in Belgium at this time and so could speak a bit more openly about German politics.

⁶ For Hegel, and most of the Right and Young Hegelians, the world was conditioned by ideas, and history was about the progress of the human spirit. For Marx, human society was based in particular material conditions, and history

and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself—geological, oreohydrographical, climatic and so on. The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.

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.⁷

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with

what they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.⁸

This production only makes its appearance with the *increase of population*. In its turn this presupposes the *intercourse* of individuals with one another. The form of this intercourse is again determined by production.

The relations of different nations among themselves depend upon the extent to which each has developed its productive forces, the division of labour and internal intercourse. This statement is generally recognized. But not only the relation of one nation to others, but also the whole internal structure of the nation itself depends on the stage of development reached by its production and its internal and external intercourse. How far the productive forces of a nation are developed is shown most manifestly by the degree to which the division of labour has been carried. Each new productive force, insofar as it is not merely a quantitative extension of productive forces already known (for instance the bringing into cultivation of fresh land), causes a further development of the division of labour.⁹

The division of labour inside a nation leads at first to the separation of industrial and commercial from agricultural labour, and hence to the separation of *town* and *country* and to the conflict of their interests.¹⁰ Its further development leads to the separation of commercial from industrial labour. At the same time through the division of labour inside these various branches there de-

was driven by conflicts at the core of society. This is the root of Marx and Engels' disagreements with Hegelians. Here and in following paragraphs they lay out a materialist understanding of the world, beginning with real people and the conditions under which they live.

⁷ The argument in this paragraph is basic to the Marx-Engels view: the thing that fundamentally distinguishes humans from animals is the manner in which they produce their livelihood, that is, labor. Other characteristics unique to humans are derived from labor.

⁸ Here Marx and Engels pursue the importance of labor further: production is more than simply feeding oneself; through labor people create their society. Since human nature is determined by the social conditions under which people live, humans, through labor, create their own nature.

⁹ Like the Hegelians, Marx and Engels believed that history had a beginning and an end. It followed a specific, scientifically knowable path. For Marx, this path was tied to modes of production and the necessary forms of property associated with each of them. These follow each other in a historically specific order. Changes in human consciousness are part of this historical progression. There can be no experience of transcendental human nature before the end of history and the emergence of a communist society.

¹⁰ This is a critical passage. The developments Marx and Engels outline here are reminiscent of both Adam Smith's work on the division of labor and Herbert Spencer's ideas about the organic growth of societies, but with a key difference. Smith and Spencer saw the division of labor as leading to the achievement of the greatest good for the

velop various divisions among the individuals co-operating in definite kinds of labour. The relative position of these individual groups is determined by the methods employed in agriculture, industry and commerce (patriarchalism, slavery, estates, classes). These same conditions are to be seen (given a more developed intercourse) in the relations of different nations to one another.

The various stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of ownership, i.e. the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument, and product of labour.¹¹

The first form of ownership is tribal ownership. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture. In the latter case it presupposes a great mass of uncultivated stretches of land. The division of labour is at this stage still very elementary and is confined to a further extension of the natural division of labour existing in the family. The social structure is, therefore, limited to an extension of the family; patriarchal family chieftains, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter.¹²

The second form is the ancient communal and State ownership which proceeds especially

from the union of several tribes into a city by agreement or by conquest, and which is still accompanied by slavery. Beside communal ownership we already find movable, and later also immovable, private property developing, but as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership. The citizens hold power over their labouring slaves only in their community, and on this account alone, therefore, they are bound to the form of communal ownership. It is the communal private property which compels the active citizens to remain in this spontaneously derived form of association over against their slaves. For this reason the whole structure of society based on this communal ownership, and with it the power of the people, decays in the same measure as, in particular, immovable private property evolves. The division of labour is already more developed. We already find the antagonism of town and country; later the antagonism between those states which represent town interests and those which represent country interests, and inside the towns themselves the antagonism between industry and maritime commerce. The class relation between citizens and slaves is now completely developed.¹³

With the development of private property, we find here for the first time the same conditions which we shall find again, only on a more extensive scale, with modern private property. On the one hand, the concentration of private property, which began very early in Rome (as the Licinian agrarian law¹⁴ proves) and proceeded very rapidly

greatest number. Marx and Engels focus instead on the conflicts and oppression it generates. For them, these conflicts are critical to social development.

¹¹ The interplay between technology and the social relationships through which technology is put to work is central to Marx and Engels' theory. The idea of ownership is key to this. In these paragraphs, the authors describe history as a progression of different forms of ownership and, hence, different modes of production.

¹² Marx and Engels have stated that humans produce their own nature through labor. However, in this passage they ground their analysis in a claim about the "natural division of labour existing in the family." These assertions seem to contradict each other. Note that Marx and Engels envision the "natural" family as consisting of a patriarch who controls the members of his tribe. Although a powerful male

head of the household was a feature of European society of their time, it is hardly a universal aspect of primitive societies. Additionally, Marx and Engels cite no evidence to support their understanding of the family. They were aware of this problem, but almost thirty years would pass before the publication of Morgan's *Ancient Society* in 1877, which they believed resolved this issue.

¹³ One of Marx and Engels' critical ideas is that history is driven by dialectical conflict. Notice the emphasis on conflict and antagonism in this outline of history. This paragraph describes the conflict between the communal action required to control slaves and private ownership of immovable property such as land.

¹⁴ The Licinian law (367 B.C.E.) limited the amount of common land a Roman citizen could hold to about 300 acres.

from the time of the civil wars and especially under the Emperors; on the other hand, coupled with this, the transformation of the plebeian small peasantry into a proletariat, which, however, owing to its intermediate position between propertied citizens and slaves, never achieved an independent development.

The third form of ownership is feudal or estate property. If antiquity started out from the *town* and its little territory, the Middle Ages started out from the *country*. This different starting-point was determined by the sparseness of the population at that time, which was scattered over a large area and which received no large increase from the conquerors. In contrast to Greece and Rome, feudal development at the outset, therefore, extends over a much wider territory, prepared by the Roman conquests and the spread of agriculture at first associated with it. The last centuries of the declining Roman Empire and its conquest by the barbarians destroyed a number of productive forces; agriculture had declined, industry had decayed for want of a market, trade had died out or been violently suspended, the rural and urban population had decreased. From these conditions and the mode of organization of the conquest determined by them, feudal property developed under the influence of the Germanic military constitution. Like tribal and communal ownership, it is based again on a community; but the directly producing class standing over against it is not, as in the case of the ancient community, the slaves, but the enserfed small peasantry. As soon as feudalism is fully developed, there also arises antagonism to the towns. The hierarchical structure of landownership, and the armed bodies of retainers associated with it, gave the nobility power over

the serfs. This feudal organization was, just as much as the ancient communal ownership, an association against a subjected producing class; but the form of association and the relation to the direct producers were different because of the different conditions of production.¹⁵

This feudal system of landownership had its counterpart in the *towns* in the shape of corporative property, the feudal organization of trades. Here property consisted chiefly in the labour of each individual person. The necessity for association against the organized robber nobility, the need for communal covered markets in an age when the industrialist was at the same time a merchant, the growing competition of the escaped serfs swarming into the rising towns, the feudal structure of the whole country: these combined to bring about the *guilds*. The gradually accumulated small capital of individual craftsmen and their stable numbers, as against the growing population, evolved the relation of journeyman and apprentice, which brought into being in the towns a hierarchy similar to that in the country.¹⁶

Thus the chief form of property during the feudal epoch consisted on the one hand of landed property with serf labour chained to it, and on the other of the labour of the individual with small capital commanding the labour of journeymen. The organization of both was determined by the restricted conditions of production—the small-scale and primitive cultivation of the land, and the craft type of industry.¹⁷ There was little division of labour in the heyday of feudalism. Each country bore in itself the antithesis of town and country; the division into estates was certainly strongly marked; but apart from the differentiation of princes, nobility, clergy and peasants in

¹⁵ In Marx and Engels' view, feudal ownership derived from the material conditions of the end of the Roman empire, in particular the collapse of the Roman economy. Both feudalism and the ancient society that preceded it involved the oppression of those who produced. The differences between these societies resulted from their use of different types of production technology. Once again social form is vitally influenced by production.

¹⁶ Guilds are created as a result of purely material processes. They recapitulate, in the town, the social organ-

ization of the countryside. Notice that Marx and Engels understood property as including both material goods and labor. The idea of labor as a commodity that can be bought and sold is crucial to their later analysis of capitalism.

¹⁷ Marx and Engels give priority to the conditions of production in determining society. It is, however, important to distinguish this from ecological determinism. The processes that Marx and Engels list as restricting production are all created by human agency rather than ecological necessity. Production is a human activity.

the country, and masters, journeymen, apprentices and soon also the rabble of casual labourers in the towns, no division of importance took place. In agriculture it was rendered difficult by the strip-system, beside which the cottage industry of the peasants themselves emerged. In industry there was no division of labour at all in the individual trades themselves, and very little between them. The separation of industry and commerce was found already in existence in older towns; in the newer it only developed later, when the towns entered into mutual relations.

The grouping of larger territories into feudal kingdoms was a necessity for the landed nobility as for the towns. The organization of the ruling class, the nobility, had, therefore, everywhere a monarch at its head.

The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations.¹⁸ Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they *really* are; i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with

the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. — real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. 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.¹⁹

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven.²⁰ That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus

¹⁸ The next several paragraphs contain a very direct statement of Marx's materialist philosophy. The emphasis is on observable relations and processes. Notice that Marx and Engels make no effort here to document the relationships among social and political structure and production. Much of Marx's later work was devoted to this task of documentation, particularly *Das Kapital*, the first volume of which appeared in 1867.

¹⁹ To Marx and Engels, ideas, the currency of the Young Hegelians, cannot by themselves have explanatory value. They claim that human thinking is conditioned by the social relations under which people live, which can only be understood with reference to material processes. For example, the fact that ideas in nineteenth-century Germany

seemed to have power of their own cannot be understood apart from the social relations of that era.

²⁰ In this critical passage, Marx and Engels explain their reversal of Hegelian philosophy. Where Hegelian philosophy gave the driving force of history to the realm of pure thought, Marx and Engels assigned it to the material processes of production. In his critical 1974 article, "Marxism, Structuralism, and Vulgar Materialism," Jonathan Friedman stresses the importance of understanding this passage. He points out that Marx and Engels are not promoting simple materialist determinism (which, following Marx, he calls vulgar materialism) but dialectical materialism, a process of change driven by opposition and contradiction.

no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life 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.

This method of approach is not devoid of premises.²¹ It starts out from the real premises and does not abandon them for a moment. Its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists.

Where speculation ends—in real life—there real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men.²² Empty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place. When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing-up of the most general results, abstractions which arise from the observation of the historical development of men. Viewed apart from real history, these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangement of histori-

cal material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata. But they by no means afford a recipe or schema, as does philosophy, for neatly trimming the epochs of history. On the contrary, our difficulties begin only when we set about the observation and the arrangement—the real depiction—of our historical material, whether of a past epoch or of the present. The removal of these difficulties is governed by premises which it is quite impossible to state here, but which only the study of the actual life-process and the activity of the individuals of each epoch will make evident. We shall select here some of these abstractions, which we use in contradistinction to the ideologists, and shall illustrate them by historical example.

HISTORY: FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS

Since we are dealing with the Germans, who are devoid of premises, we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to “make history.” But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life. Even when the sensuous world is reduced to a minimum, to a stick as with Saint Bruno, it presupposes the action of producing the stick.²³ Therefore in any

²¹ One such premise is outlined here: humans, by altering the material conditions of their lives, alter their consciousness.

²² Notice the emphasis throughout this portion of the text on empiricism and science. Marx and Engels considered their theory to be scientific in the same sense as the physical sciences. They believed that philosophy, in the future, would be replaced by science. Marx devoted much of his later life to writing *Das Kapital*, in which he attempted to use his materialist perspective to explain specific historical developments.

²³ Marx and Engels open this section with yet another satirical attack on the Young Hegelians, particularly Bruno Bauer (their “Saint Bruno”). Bauer, one of Marx’s colleagues in Berlin in the early 1840s, wrote the three-volume *Critique of the Evangelical Gospels* (1841–1842). Marx and Engels’ style is important. Their mixture of name calling, satirical intellectual humor, polemic, and hyperbole set the tone for much of later writing by Marxists. Their indulgence in these tactics marginalized Marxists within academic discourse. This hyperbole may have been

interpretation of history one has first of all to observe this fundamental fact in all its significance and all its implications and to accord it its due importance. It is well known that the Germans have never done this, and they have never, therefore, had an *earthly* basis for history and consequently never an historian. The French and the English, even if they have conceived the relation of this fact with so-called history only in an extremely one-sided fashion, particularly as long as they remained in the toils of political ideology, have nevertheless made the first attempts to give the writing of history a materialistic basis by being the first to write histories of civil society, of commerce and industry.²⁴

The second point is that the satisfaction of the first need (the action of satisfying, and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired) leads to new needs; and this production of new needs is the first historical act. Here we recognize immediately the spiritual ancestry of the great historical wisdom of the Germans who, when they run out of positive material and when they can serve up neither theological nor political nor literary rubbish, assert that this is not history at all, but the "prehistoric era." They do not, however, enlighten us as to how we proceed from this nonsensical "prehistory" to history proper; although, on the other hand, in their historical speculation they seize upon this "prehistory" with especial eagerness because they imagine themselves safe there from interference on the part of "crude facts," and, at the same time, because there they can give full rein to their speculative impulse and set up and knock down hypotheses by the thousand.

The third circumstance which, from the very outset, enters into historical development, is that

men, who daily remake their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the *family*.²⁵ The family, which to begin with is the only social relationship, becomes later, when increased needs create new social relations and the increased population new needs, a subordinate one (excepting Germany), and must then be treated and analyzed according to the existing empirical data, not according to "the concept of the family," as is the custom in Germany.^a These three aspects of social activity are not of course to be taken as three different stages, but just as three aspects or, to make it clear to the Germans, three "moments," which have existed simultaneously since the dawn of history and the first men, and which still assert themselves in history today.

The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship.²⁶ By social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a "productive force." Further, that the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society, hence, that the "history of humanity" must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange. But it is also clear how in Germany it is impossible to write this sort of history, because the Germans lack not only the necessary power of comprehension and the material but also the "evidence of their senses," for across the Rhine you cannot

useful for political propaganda, but it made their work easy for others to dismiss.

²⁴ Marx and Engels claim Germans never had historians because they have relied on spiritual rather than material explanations. History is created by people producing the material goods of subsistence and (in the next paragraph) by the social production of new needs.

²⁵ Here Marx and Engels turn from production to the reproduction of society. They understood reproduction as in-

cluding both the biological process of human reproduction and the reproduction of social forms through time. Just as people must produce to live, societies must reproduce themselves to survive.

²⁶ Social forms are created by the interaction of the way in which people produce and the way in which they arrange themselves to reproduce their society. Of these, however, production is more important.

have any experience of these things since history has stopped happening.²⁷ Thus it is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialistic connection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production, and which is as old as men themselves. This connection is ever taking on new forms, and thus presents a "history" independently of the existence of any political or religious nonsense which in addition may hold men together.²⁸

Only now, after having considered four moments, four aspects of the primary historical relationships, do we find that man also possesses "consciousness," but, even so, not inherent, not "pure" consciousness. From the start the "spirit" is afflicted with the curse of being "burdened" with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into "*relations*" with anything, it does not enter into any relation at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.²⁹ Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the *immediate* sensuous environment and con-

sciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men's relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus a purely animal consciousness of nature (natural religion) just because nature is as yet hardly modified historically. (We see here immediately: this natural religion or this particular relation of men to nature is determined by the form of society and vice versa. Here, as everywhere, the identity of nature and man appears in such a way that the restricted relation of men to nature determines their restricted relation to one another, and their restricted relation to one another determines men's restricted relation to nature.) On the other hand, man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him is the beginning of the consciousness that he is living in society at all.³⁰ This beginning is as animal as social life itself at this stage. It is mere herd-consciousness, and at this point man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one. This sheep-like or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and, what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these there develops the division of labour, which was originally nothing but

²⁷ In the "across the Rhine" passage, Marx and Engels attack the Hegelians who believed that history had achieved its culmination with the Prussian monarchy.

²⁸ A key Marxist doctrine—one later adopted by structural anthropologists—is that the real forces that drive society are hidden from view. For Marxists, specific forms of religion or politics are merely the surface appearances of the deeper forces of production and reproduction. These forces are visible only through Marxist analysis.

²⁹ Most other nineteenth-century anthropological writers, perhaps taking their cue from Locke, think of the human mind as evolving through some universal unfolding of natural law. Marx, on the other hand, saw the mind as condi-

tioned by social institutions and claimed there was no such thing as human thought apart from the institutions within which humans do their thinking. However, he did not extend this idea to his own work, maintaining his belief in the truth-generating capacities of science.

³⁰ Particular forms of consciousness arise from specific social arrangements, not vice versa. Cultural ecologists and cultural materialists of the mid and late twentieth century will use this key insight (see essays 19 to 25). According to Marx and Engels, the development of consciousness that is distinctly human is dependent on increased population and division of labor. The implication is that the most "primitive" human groups have consciousness that is virtually indistinguishable from that of animals.

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the division of labour in the sexual act, then that division of labour which develops spontaneously or "naturally" by virtue of natural predisposition (e.g. physical strength), needs, accidents, etc. etc. Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, *priests*, is concurrent.) From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. But even if this theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. comes into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production; this, moreover, can also occur in a particular national sphere of relations through the appearance of the contradiction, not within the national orbit, but between this national consciousness and the practice of other nations, i.e. between the national and the general consciousness of a nation (as we see it now in Germany).

Moreover, it is quite immaterial what consciousness starts to do on its own: out of all such muck we get only the one inference that these three moments, the forces of production, the state of society, and consciousness, can and must come into contradiction with one another, because the *division of labour* implies the possibility, nay the fact that intellectual and material activity—enjoyment and labour, production and consumption—devolve on different individuals, and that the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in the negation in its turn of the division of labour.³¹ It is self-evident, moreover, that "specters," "bonds," "the higher being," "con-

cept," "scruple," are merely the idealistic, spiritual expression, the conception apparently of the isolated individual, the image of very empirical fetters and limitations, within which the mode of production of life and the form of intercourse coupled with it move.

PRIVATE PROPERTY AND COMMUNISM

With the division of labour, in which all these contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, is given simultaneously the *distribution*, and indeed the *unequal* distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property: the nucleus, the first form, of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband.³² This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others. Division of labour and private property are, moreover, identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity.

Further, the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another. And indeed, this communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination, as the "general interest," but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided. And finally, the division of labour offers us the first example

³¹ With the appearance of human society and division of labor comes dialectical conflict. For Marx and Engels, this is the fundamental driving force of history.

³² Notice the concern with gender and the subjugation of

women and children present in this paragraph. Because it was a good tool for analyzing relations of inequality between genders, Marxism proved appealing to many feminist scholars. See Eleanor Leacock's essay (36) in this volume for an example of Marxist-feminist scholarship.

of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him.³³ For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.³⁴

(And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the com-

munity the latter takes an independent form as the *State*, divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration—such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests—and especially, as we shall enlarge upon later, on the classes, already determined by the division of labour, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others.³⁵ It follows from this that all struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc. etc. are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another. Of this the German theoreticians have not the faintest inkling, although they have received a sufficient introduction to the subject in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* and *Die Heilige Familie*.³⁶ Further, it follows that every class which is struggling for mastery, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, postulates the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination itself, must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest, which immediately it is forced to do. Just because individuals seek *only* their particular interest,

³³ Division of labor makes society possible, but it also destroys freedom and creates alienation. Alienation or estrangement, a key Marxist concept, refers to the separation of the individual from either the preconditions or the products of labor, or, in this case, from life's necessities. Alienation was understood by Marx and Engels as antithetical to freedom. Specialization in one activity creates alienation in all others. They believed utopian communist society would end contradiction between the individual and the forces of production and hence, end alienation.

³⁴ Marx and Engels claim that alienation is rooted in specialization and here envision a society in which people do not specialize in a single job. But can one be an engineer one day and a doctor the next? Marx and Engels' view of a society without alienation is utopian, but if specialization is an inevitable part of industrial society, their vision cannot be achieved.

³⁵ This paragraph is a marginal note to the paragraph above it in the original manuscript. Several important Marxist principles are laid out in it. First, all of history is ultimately the history of class struggle (the famous opening of the *Manifesto*, written two years later). Second, this class struggle is the hidden, underlying dynamic driving political and economic history. Third, the state is an instrument of control and oppression. However, seizing control of the state is a necessary step in changing society.

³⁶ *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (The German-French Annals, 1844) was a radical periodical edited by Marx and his friend Arnold Ruge. Only one issue of it appeared. *Die Heilige Familie* (The Holy Family, 1845) was Marx and Engels' first collaboration. It was a mocking attack on Bruno Bauer and other Young Hegelians.

which for them does not coincide with their communal interest, the latter will be imposed on them as an interest "alien" to them, and "independent" of them, as in its turn a particular, peculiar "general" interest; or they themselves must remain within this discord, as in democracy. On the other hand, too, the *practical* struggle of these particular interests, which constantly *really* run counter to the communal and illusory communal interests, makes *practical* intervention and control necessary through the illusory "general" interest in the form of the State.)

The social power, i.e. the multiplied productive force, which arises through the co-operation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since their cooperation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these.³⁷

How otherwise could for instance property have had a history at all, have taken on different forms, and landed property, for example, according to the different premises given, have proceeded in France from parcellation to centralization in the hands of a few, in England from centralization in the hands of a few to parcellation, as is actually the case today?³⁸ Or how does it happen that trade, which after all is nothing more than the exchange of products of various individuals and countries, rules the whole world through the relation of supply and demand—a relation which, as an English economist³⁹ says, hovers over the earth like the fate of the ancients, and

with invisible hand allots fortune and misfortune to men, sets up empires and overthrows empires, causes nations to rise and to disappear—while with the abolition of the basis of private property, with the communistic regulation of production (and, implicit in this, the destruction of the alien relation between men and what they themselves produce), the power of the relation of supply and demand is dissolved into nothing, and men get exchange, production, the mode of their mutual relation, under their own control again?

In history up to the present it is certainly an empirical fact that separate individuals have, with the broadening of their activity into world-historical activity, become more and more enslaved under a power alien to them (a pressure which they have conceived of as a dirty trick on the part of the so-called universal spirit, etc.), a power which has become more and more enormous and, in the last instance, turns out to be the *world market*. But it is just as empirically established that, by the overthrow of the existing state of society by the communist revolution (of which more below) and the abolition of private property which is identical with it, this power, which so baffles the German theoreticians, will be dissolved; and that then the liberation of each single individual will be accomplished in the measure in which history becomes transformed into world history. From the above it is clear that the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then 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

³⁷ Marx and Engels argue here that even though people compose society, they are alienated from it. It seems to be something external to them, when in fact, through their production, they create it. Communism will allow the people to break through this form of otherness.

³⁸ Marx and Engels are very Hegelian in their approach to alienation. Hegel's philosophy dealt with the spirit's alien-

ation from the world, and he viewed history as the process of dissolving this alienation. Marx and Engels here see a human structure—trade and the division of labor—as creating alienation, and communism as providing a way to break through the otherness thus engendered.

³⁹ Adam Smith.

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. Now this view can be expressed again in speculative-idealistic, i.e. fantastic, terms as "self-generation of the species" ("society as the subject"), and thereby the consecutive series of interrelated individuals connected with each other can be conceived as a single individual, which accomplishes the mystery of generating itself. It is clear here that individuals certainly make *one another*, physically and mentally, but do not make themselves.⁴⁰

This "alienation" (to use a term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers) can, of course, only be abolished given two *practical* premises. For it to become an "intolerable" power, i.e. a power against which men make a revolution, it must necessarily have rendered the great mass of humanity "propertyless," and produced, at the same time, the contradiction of an existing world of wealth and culture, both of which conditions presuppose a great increase in productive power, a high degree of its development. And, on the other hand, this development of productive forces (which itself implies the actual empirical existence of men in their *world-historical*, instead of local, being) is an absolutely necessary practical premise because without it *want* is merely made general, and with *destitution* the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced; and furthermore, be-

cause only with this universal development of productive forces is a *universal* intercourse between men established, which produces in all nations simultaneously the phenomenon of the "propertyless" mass (universal competition), makes each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others, and finally has put *world-historical*, empirically universal individuals in place of local ones. Without this, (1) communism could only exist as a local event; (2) the *forces* of intercourse themselves could not have developed as *universal*, hence intolerable powers: they would have remained home-bred conditions surrounded by superstition; and (3) each extension of intercourse would abolish local communism. Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples "all at once" and simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with communism. Moreover, the mass of *propertyless* workers—the utterly precarious position of labour-power on a mass scale cut off from capital or from even a limited satisfaction and, therefore, no longer merely temporarily deprived of work itself as a secure source of life—presupposes the *world market* through competition. The proletariat can thus only exist *world-historically*, just as communism, its activity, can only have a "world-historical" existence. World historical existence of individuals means, existence of individuals which is directly linked up with world history.

Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which real-

⁴⁰ As Hegelians, Marx and Engels saw world history as following an inevitable path. Individual societies may have their own histories, but the destiny of the world was fixed, with communism the ultimate end of this path. Marx and Engels believed that communist revolution must be a worldwide event and that it must happen first in highly industrialized societies. Anything that increased worldwide productivity and industrialization would favor its appearance, hence their seemingly contradictory embrace of British colonialism.

At the time of *The German Ideology*, the authors believed that the preconditions for revolution had been met,

and a communist society was imminent. They altered this belief after the failure of the European revolutions of 1848–1849, which convinced them that the changes they were witness to in Europe were the birth pangs of capitalism rather than its death throes. Although they still believed that dialectical contradictions led history inevitably toward communist society, they now saw this society as still distant. Much greater industrialization and internationalization of the economy would be needed. (This assumption set a conundrum for Marxists after the Russian Revolution: How could the communist revolution have occurred in one of Europe's most technologically backward societies?)

ity [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.⁴¹

NOTE

⁴¹The building of houses. With savages each family has as a matter of course its own cave or hut like the separate family tent of the nomads. This separate domestic economy is made only the more necessary by the further development of private property. With the agricultural peoples a communal domestic economy is just as impossible as a communal cultivation of the soil. A great advance was the building of towns. In all previous periods, however, the abolition of individual economy, which is inseparable from the abolition of private prop-

erty, was impossible for the simple reason that the material conditions governing it were not present. The setting-up of a communal domestic economy presupposes the development of machinery, of the use of natural forces and of many other productive forces—e.g., of water-supplies, of gas-lighting, steam-heating, etc., the removal [of the antagonism] of town and country. Without these conditions a communal economy would not in itself form a new productive force; lacking any material basis and resting on a purely theoretical foundation, it would be a mere freak and would end in nothing more than a monastic economy—What was possible can be seen in the towns brought about by condensation and the erection of communal buildings for various definite purposes (prisons, barracks, etc.). That the abolition of individual economy is inseparable from the abolition of the family is self-evident.

⁴¹ Although Marx and Engels believed that the communist revolution would be distant, they also believed that people could speed its arrival. Humans, through production, created their own society. Therefore, they and their

followers hoped to use their understanding of the links between material production and the production of consciousness to take actions that would hasten the course of history.