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Alienation:
An Introduction to Marx's Theory

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depended on making more and more workers free in the double sense. Workers would become the overwhelming majority of the population, and this also formed a part of their revolutionary potential:

> All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority.[35]

This prediction proved to be completely accurate. There is now a vast, global working class, spanning the world. The process of development of the global South has created and continues to create huge groups of people, mostly in cities, who depend for their survival on working for someone else. In the developed world the working class remains enormous as well. They are often materially better off than those in the developing world, but they are still entirely dependent on employment to survive.

In Marx's analysis of the proletariat we can see how he viewed alienation as a double-edged sword. While capitalism brought about universal alienation, suffering and dispossession, it also created the possibility for radical change that had never existed before. Widespread alienation created the conditions and drive towards its own overthrow and supersession. Because of their universal alienation from property Marx saw the proletariat as capable of abolishing class divisions entirely. It was capable of representing all of humanity, being a universal class: "When the proletariat demands the negation of private property, it is only elevating to a principle for society what society has already made a principle for the proletariat".[36]

Chapter 4

Alienation from the labour process

Marx's account of alienation placed human labour at its centre. This was not "human activity" as understood by Hegel in merely abstract terms, but the concrete, specific ways in which human beings worked on the world around them. For Marx, "To say that man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous, objective being with natural powers means that he has real, sensuous objects as the objects of his being and of his vital expression, or that he can only express his life in *real, sensuous objects*".[37] In saying this he was arguing that we have to look to the particular ways in which practical activity is organised if we want to understand the conditions human beings find themselves in. It is productive activity, consciously shaping our environment in creative ways, rather than merely intellectual activity, that is key to realising ourselves in the world.

Marx emphasised the role of labour in a number of ways. Firstly, the way in which human beings labour is what distinguishes them from animals:

> A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguished the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally.[38]

Human labour is characterised by being a collective, conscious, creative and transforming engagement with the natural world. While the spider and the bee transform their environment to meet their needs, and bees even do so collectively, they act only according to instincts. Humans, on the other hand, plan their labour in advance, and furthermore they can produce *new* and *different* things.

For Marx, labour meant far more than what is narrowly considered work under capitalism. "Work" is often understood as describing only certain kinds of human activity which are "useful" or "productive". Under capitalism, this is generally labour performed by workers for a wage. However, for Marx, labour meant any human activity which involves the collective, creative transformation of the natural world.

This meant that Marx made a significant break from a tradition of talking about labour as a burden, or as necessary but undesirable. Many of the economists Marx was reading, while acknowledging the importance of labour for value, still saw it as something which was essentially burdensome. In contrast Marx saw labour as a vital part of human activity which could be the source of genuine fulfilment and expression. In fact, he attacked these ideas as *themselves* the result of alienation. The fact that we experience work as merely burdensome and feel happier outside of it is because of our alienation from it: "The result is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and adornment".[39]

An example of this is the distinction between leisure and work which is common in modern society. People perform all sorts of creative activity in their so-called "leisure time"—they make music, build models, play sport, read and write literature, and perform a vast range of other activities. Yet this is seen as merely unproductive leisure activity, or "hobbies", something to be done in between the useful work, to keep us occupied during the time between clocking off and clocking on again. In turn, the "leisure industry" creates a lucrative business on the back of this distinction. It finds all sorts of ways of commodifying and regimenting leisure so as to make profit from it. People's very diverse interests and projects are seen as merely a sideshow to their importance as, on one side, a waged labourer, and on the other, a passive consumer.

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx talks about the importance of labour in terms of *species-being*. This is a tricky concept which has caused some controversy, but can broadly be understood as a concept of human nature. However, this is not the vision of human nature promoted by Rousseau or Hobbes, or for that matter *Daily Mail* columnists, in which, for example, we are all "naturally" greedy and women are "naturally" housewives. Nor is it the fixed, static, conception of species-being employed by Feuerbach. Marx shifted the focus away from something inherent in the individual, and onto the relationships between people. Labour was the most fundamental of these relationships. Marx describes the importance of labour as "the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence".[40] The one constant fact about humans throughout history is that they labour on the world in collective, conscious and creative ways, firstly to meet immediate needs and then to go beyond those needs: "Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity".[41] Species-being remains a controversial concept, and some of those controversies will be addressed in Chapter 10.

Labour is first and foremost a collective act. The amount that any one person can achieve on their own is very limited. Only the most basic needs can be met, and often not even those. By contrast, through cooperation incredible things can be achieved. Despite the mythologies of right wing economists and historians, humans have always existed in societies,

in which labour has been cooperatively organised. The key question has always been what the terms of that cooperation will be. This means that labour, for Marx, plays a central role in shaping social relationships.

Alienation was, for Marx, about lack of control over our labour. The source of alienation was to be found in the lack of control of workers over the process of production. While this had been the case in all societies where one class dominated another, under capitalism it took a particular form. Because workers do not own means of production, they have to sell their labour power to capitalists to survive. In this way labour power itself becomes a commodity—something to be bought and sold on the market. In selling this commodity workers give over a portion of their time each day to create new value for a capitalist.

It is this process, the transformation of human labour into a commodity, which gives rise to the various dimensions of alienation that Marx analysed. It is the most fundamental form of alienation under capitalism (Marx describes other aspects of alienation as "summarising" alienation from the labour process). In selling their labour power to capitalists workers don't just lose some free time in which they could otherwise have done what they wanted—they lose all control over a vital part of their life: "The activity of the worker is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another, it is a loss of his self".[42] Their creative powers are channelled not towards their own projects, but towards the requirements of a boss.

Control is the most significant aspect here. Those who sell their labour power, literally alienating it away, lose all control over it. The labour process becomes something under the control of someone else and ultimately outside of any control whatsoever.

The needs of capitalism as a system mean that people are denied expression through their work. Firstly, capitalist

production is organised according to strict structures of authority and command: "That a capitalist should command in the field of production is now as indispensable as that a general should command on the field of battle".[43] Capitalism demands that most workers are not involved in the decision-making related to their jobs. Having sold their time to an employer, the employer can, more or less, tell them how to work and where.

In addition, from the point of view of a capitalist labour is something that has to be made uniform. This is not to say that every job has to be the same, but that it has to be measured in *abstract* terms. It must be countable, measurable, and comparable to other units of labour—it has to be quantifiable. This process of homogenisation cannot avoid transforming work in dramatic ways. Marx describes how workers come to be seen, and also begin to see themselves, as merely "abstract activity and a stomach".[44]

This need for measurement comes from the needs of capitalism itself. Capitalism rests, according to Marx, on treating human activity as abstract labour. Under capitalism all commodities have both a use-value and an exchange-value. As use-values commodities are the product of concrete human labour, possessing a use to humans which is "activated" by social relations, but independent of them. However, commodities are exchanged on the market according to their exchange-value, and to acquire this they must be seen as "merely congealed quantities of homogeneous human labour, ie of human labour power expended without regard to the form of its expenditure".[45] For capitalism to function, for it to be possible to exchange commodities according to certain standards, human labour has to be seen in these abstract terms. As a result, the particular, human quality of the labour of some particular individual becomes subordinated to abstract labour, homogenised and measurable.

Anyone who has worked in higher education over the past decades will be familiar with the constant demand to quantify and regulate labour and labour time. The arcane, confusing and much hated Research Assessment Exercise is one example of this. As Alex Callinicos describes:

> Academics are employed to engage in research as well as teach (two fifths of their salary is notionally to pay them to do research). How then to measure their productivity? Analogies with industry require that some physical output can be found that can be measured.[46]

Thus the demands of capitalism require that the work of research and teaching be just as measurable and quantifiable as any other kind of work. It has to be possible to compare the work of a lecturer with that of any other worker in an abstract way. Similarly, what is taught has to be measured. Great emphasis is placed on "transferable skills", which students are supposed to learn alongside their other studies. One job advice website describes these as "competencies that can be carried over from one activity to another". It is not hard to see the connection between this and abstract labour, which Marx described as labour "absolutely indifferent to its particular *specificity*, but *capable of all specificities*".[47]

Alienation under capitalism is all the worse because capitalism has unleashed unprecedented possibilities for people to shape the world around them. Previous forms of social production were limited in their creative capacity. In contrast capitalism is a system "whose universality produces not only the alienation of the individual from himself and others but also the universality and the comprehensiveness of his relations and capacities".[48] While the feudal lord had no interest in developing production beyond keeping himself well fed and in charge, capitalists constantly have to compete with one another. Thus they are always forced to look for new, more efficient ways of producing things faster, easier and cheaper. This has the effect of greatly increasing the capacity of humans to shape the world around them, to "realise themselves".

However, this self-realisation is never available to the majority under capitalism. Alongside the creative powers that capitalism unleashes, it brings an even greater denial of those powers, as these productive powers become more and more concentrated in the hands of a small minority, and more and more human activity becomes abstract, homogenised labour. For example, the development of industrial capitalism brought with it entirely new attitudes to time and the regulation of work. Widespread ownership of watches and clocks, and even the inclusion of a minute hand, went hand in hand with the development of wage-labour. Similarly the attempt to control and regiment time became an important concern. Work moved from being irregular, subject to the rhythms of nature and the needs of the particular task, to being constant and measured, working to the whistle instead of until a task is completed. In England capitalists made it a priority to abolish many traditional holidays and festivals, including cracking down on the practice of Saint Mondays—taking Monday off after the weekend—so that more working hours could be squeezed out.[49] All of this contributes to making work seem less fulfilling than it could be.

Modern call centres provide a clear example of this drive to squeeze every possible working minute out of employees. Computerised systems regulate toilet breaks and lunch hours, while strict guidelines dictate exactly how to use your time on the phone most efficiently. Everything is geared towards squeezing every possible minute of labour from workers; the amount of control a worker has over her environment is close to zero. In some call centres workers report being given a flowchart of questions and responses for dealing with customers,

so keen are the employers to reduce even this interaction to a mechanical model.

A recent study of call centres in Scotland found that "lack of control over shift patterns was frequently exacerbated by the introduction of new IT arrangements that gave individual employees minimum choice or discretion over shift arrangements",[50] while for many workers "the limitations represented by routinised, intensified and unpredictable work presents a major hurdle in attaining a more fulfilled life".[51] It was not merely rhetoric when civil service union leader Mark Serwotka referred to call centres as "the new dark satanic mills".

In capitalist production workers increasingly seem like mere parts of a grand machine. The Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács describes this process well:

> In consequence of the rationalisation of the work-process the human qualities and idiosyncrasies of the worker appear increasingly as mere sources of error when contrasted with these abstract special laws functioning according to rational predictions. Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of this process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient, it functions independently of him and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not.[52]

The particular individuality of the worker becomes a barrier to the work process. Individual human characteristics are something to be ironed out and minimised, rather than celebrated or utilised.

Work is broken down into simple monotonous tasks. A British car worker describes work on the production line:

> It's not really skill as such... I mean yeah, you do get a lot of different new things to do, but taken on their own they're pretty simple jobs. It's not skill, it's like you are really a robot... I can switch off and I'm sitting on a beach in Barbados.[53]

All individuality and creativity is sucked out of this work because of the needs of production: "It's bloody boring".[54]

For Marx, these tendencies were an inevitable consequence of capitalism. Capitalism relies on labour itself being transformed into a commodity, into something that is transferred away into the control of others. This initial alienation is the basis of people being denied expression through their work, and thus has enormous consequences for humanity.

Chapter 5

Alienation from product

Marx also described how under capitalism workers are alienated from the things that they produce. Once again, this has a literal aspect—workers do not own their product, rather it belongs to their employer. Many people work to produce things they will never own themselves—making cars or electrical goods that they could never afford to buy, or serving food in restaurants in which they could never afford to eat. The things which we produce end up as someone else's property; they are never truly ours.

This is as much a feature of modern life as it was in Marx's day. More than one billion people live on less than $1 a day, and more than two billion on $2 a day. Workers in China producing Apple's iPhones earn at most $172 a month—nowhere near enough to buy one of the thousands of fancy gadgets they produce on a daily basis. Nor is it merely a feature of the developing world. Recently the union that represents workers at General Motors in the US pointed out that the workers it represents would find it hard to buy the cars they produce. A major source of protests by migrant workers in America is the sense that they cannot even afford the vegetables that they pick, while many young workers find themselves working for minimum wage or less in restaurants that charge a week's wages for a meal.

The products workers produce are being sold to someone else, by someone else, to make profit for someone else. The idea that we can see them as the products of our creative

capacities is completely meaningless. As Marx puts it, "this realisation of labour appears as a *loss of reality* for the worker, objectification as *loss of and bondage to the object*, and appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*".[55] The way we interact with the products we produce becomes completely distorted.

This means that these products, as well as belonging to someone else, appear as something opposed to us: "The life which the worker has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien".[56] The more energy the worker expends on producing these objects, the less she has of her own: "The more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself—his inner world—becomes, the less belongs to him as his own".[57]

The attempts by management to deal with this kind of alienation, to make people believe in and identify with what they produce, are often hilarious. In his account of work at a General Motors truck factory in Michigan, Ben Hamper describes the various techniques management employed. The first was a "quality mascot", Howie Makem, an enormous cat with "a long red cape emblazoned with the letter Q for Quality", who would wander around the plant in a bid to boost morale.[58] The second was a series of neon signs placed around the plant bearing encouraging messages:

> The messages they would flash ranged from corny propaganda (green neon bulb depictions of Howie Makem's face uttering stuff like QUALITY IS THE BACKBONE OF GOOD WORKMANSHIP!) to motivated pep squawk (A WINNER NEVER QUITS & A QUITTER NEVER WINS!) to brain-jarring ruminations (SAFETY IS SAFE)... I remember the first day the message board went into operation. For the entire shift it beamed out one single message...SQUEEZING RIVETS IS FUN![59]

None of these, perhaps unsurprisingly, seemed to make any noticeable difference to workers' ability to identify with the trucks they were building.

In Chapter 11 I mentioned David Ricardo's argument that labour was the source of value. This meant that the products of human labour were embodiments of that labour, incorporating an aspect of the workers themselves. The machinery that people work on is just as much the product of labour as the things they produce. Thus workers were surrounded by, and dominated by, *embodiments* of their own past labour. Furthermore, Marx described the labour embodied by capital in this way as *dead*. Unlike the "living" labour of the workers, this dead labour—machinery, plant, etc—was unable to create any more value.

Capitalism's constant drive to accumulate more and more leads to this world of dead labour becoming ever bigger. The more work the worker performs, the more of her living labour she pours into this world of dead labour. Yet this world belongs to someone else, and thus appears radically alien. In a famous passage Marx compares capital to a vampire which "only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks".[60] Descriptions of work often describe the workplace as an independent, hostile living being. In *Germinal*, Emile Zola's 19th century novel about a coal miners' strike in France, he describes how the mine "at the bottom of its hole, with its posture as of an evil beast, continued to crunch, breathing with a heavier and slower respiration, troubled by its painful digestion of human flesh".[61]

While this world of dead objects gets bigger, it does not actually reduce the amount of labour that workers have to perform. While investment in technology and machinery could make workers' lives easier, it tends to just mean new and different kinds of toil. This has been a general story since the development of capitalism. In 1867 a vast

trade exposition was held in Paris, showcasing technology from across the world. In *Live Working or Die Fighting* Paul Mason describes how delegates from workers' organisations attended the expo and produced their own reports. Their reaction shocked the authorities: "Instead of a poem of praise to mechanisation the reports read like a sustained critique of the mid-19th century social order".[62] The workers' delegations were not hostile to the new machinery, but saw in it a denial of their own status. This new machinery appeared as symbols of their own worthlessness.

This indicates another feature of alienation under capitalism. Instead of seeing machinery as something which can relieve their burden, as Marx put it, "since the worker has been reduced to a machine, the machine can confront him as a competitor".[63] An extreme example of this can be found in the Luddite movement of the early 19th century, when workers actively destroyed machinery which they saw as a threat to their way of life. The problem still takes a significant form today. The introduction of new technology in a factory or office might signal an improvement in working conditions, but it is just as likely to signal a loss of jobs. Improvements in technology can be, rightly, just as much a cause for fear for workers as a cause for relief.

Chapter 6

Commodity fetishism

Marx's early analysis of alienation laid the foundations for his later, more developed analysis of the capitalist system. Alienation, understood as lack of control over the labour process, had existed in a number of different forms. However, under capitalism, Marx argued, it took a particular form which played an important role in reinforcing and re-creating the system. This form he called commodity fetishism.

Under feudalism, and other forms of society before capitalism, social production was organised in an *immediate* way. The serfs who worked the land gave direct tribute to their feudal lord. This relationship was enforced largely through direct force and coercion. It was the military strength of the lord that allowed him to extract this value. This does not mean that the serfs had control of their labour and their life, far from it. The feudal lord dictated what they did, and production was largely directed towards maintaining his authority and power.

Capitalism is different. It does not rely on the direct appropriation of wealth from one class by another. Rather, it depends on a relationship of exchange on the market. Marx and Engels described this transformation:

> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade.[64]

In the market everyone appears as an independent, autonomous agent who possesses something to exchange, and it is through this process of exchange that capitalism organises itself. It still involves a relationship of exploitation, but it is one which takes place through the apparently free buying and selling of commodities in the marketplace. Workers appear as the owner of a commodity—their own labour in an abstract form—which is bought by a capitalist, who is an owner of capital. As Marx puts it, the capitalist "can undertake the process of exploiting labour only because, being the owner of the conditions of labour power, he confronts the labourer as the owner of only labour power".[65]

People, then, relate to each other not directly, but through *commodities*. This means that relationships between human beings come to look like relationships between objects. This is what Marx meant by *fetishism*: "It is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things".[66] This develops over time, as the capitalist system becomes more established. Each time the process of exchange takes place, the more it seems like an unchanging feature of human life. The social relationships involved in capitalist production begin to crystallise or congeal into objects. Products of labour appear as congealed amounts of abstract labour. Marx describes how in the commodity, "the social character of men's labour appears to them

as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour".[67]

Marx compares this commodity fetishism to the kind of alienation identified by Feuerbach in religious thought:

> In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands.[68]

Just as gods come about through projecting human powers into external beings, which then interact with us, send us messages, play tricks on us, etc, in capitalist production commodities appear as independent entities too.

A frequent example of this kind of fetishism is the idea that "money makes money". This is a commonly invoked idea, and from the point of view of the capitalist, it appears to be true. A small stake invested in a business can produce far greater profits. In the short term money can be "grown" without directly investing it, through stock market speculation and so on. Yet, in reality this is merely projecting onto money a property of the natural world. Money does not literally grow in the same way that plants do. Money itself does not produce more wealth. It is the people employed who ultimately produce profit for the investor. Fetishism hides this reality, and suggests that money has some sort of almost mystical expanding power of its own.

The feeling that commodities dominate our lives is an increasingly familiar one. The Canadian activist Naomi

Klein's 2000 book *No Logo* described many of these phenomena, and how advertisers had become expert at manipulating them. For example, she quotes a shoe shop owner describing the way certain products become "must have", and almost become more valuable to people than health or food:

> I do get weary and worn down from it all. I'm always forced to face the fact that I make my money from poor people. A lot of them are on welfare. Sometimes a mother will come in here with a kid, and the kid is dirty and poorly dressed. But the kid wants a hundred-twenty-buck pair of shoes and that stupid mother buys them for him. I can feel that kid's inner need—this desire to own these things and have the feelings that go with them—but it hurts me that this is the way things are.[69]

Klein describes how these brands come to take on a significance way beyond the usefulness of the actual things they sell.

Marx may not have had Nike, Starbucks or Apple to contend with, but he would have recognised some of these features of modern life. He offers the more mundane example of a table:

> The form of wood, for instance, is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, everyday thing, wood. But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than "table-turning" ever was.[70]

The simple product of human activity takes on a whole new significance, way beyond its natural properties.

While Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism can help understand the kinds of developments Klein describes, it is important to stress the difference between his analysis and much popular commentary on so-called "consumer culture". Firstly, for Marx commodity fetishism had nothing to do with the particular features of the commodities themselves—it is not about some alluring or corrupting qualities that a Kindle has that a book doesn't have, or about music produced by an iPod rather than an orchestra. Often, commentary on consumerism suggests that there is something inherently wrong with the products that we are being encouraged to buy. For example, the American liberal Henry David Thoreau, still popular in radical circles today, argued that "it is preoccupation with possessions, more than anything else, that prevents us from living freely and nobly".

The idea here is that having *too much stuff* is in some way the root of the problem. For Marx, however, it was not the things themselves that were the problem but the social relationships in which we produce, own and exchange those things. There is nothing at all wrong with products that make human lives more bearable, or more fun, nor is there anything wrong with poor and desperate people wanting those products.

The second important difference in Marx's account is that it emphasises that these fetishes should not be understood as *merely* illusion. Anti-consumerism campaigns often emphasise people simply consuming less, abandoning their illusions and desires. This kind of attitude is what underlies projects like "Buy Nothing Day", in which people are encouraged to stop buying things they want or need. The idea here is that our attitude to commodities is an illusion which we should try to see through and abandon.

However, central to Marx's account is that fetishism is not just an illusion. Rather, the perception of

commodities as possessing a life of their own is a reflection of capitalist production, a necessary outgrowth of it. In Volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx corrects the Italian economist Galiani by pointing out that when he said "value is a relation between persons" he ought to have added, "a relation concealed beneath a material shell".[71] In pointing to this "material shell", Marx was observing that these "illusions" are rooted in the real relations between people. He insists that the analysis of commodities undertaken by himself and other political economists "marks an epoch in the history of mankind's development, but by no means banishes the semblance of objectivity possessed by the social characteristics of labour".[72]

Overcoming this fetishism cannot, therefore, be a matter of merely pointing out that it exists (although this helps). It is necessary to transform the social relations themselves. The experience of commodities as having a life of their own, as controlling rather than controlled, is a reflection of a system where products *are* out of the control of the majority.

The analysis of commodity fetishism also forms an important part of Marx's criticism of mainstream economics and the political economy of his day. He argued that mainstream economics focuses only on the fetishised form of economic relationships. The kinds of concepts and categories that economics uses are merely the fetishised reflections of real social relationships. Marx argues that, "to what extent some economists are misled by the fetishism inherent in commodities... is shown...by the dull and tedious quarrel over the part played by nature in the formation of exchange-value".[73] A concept like "value" is based on a social relationship; you will not discover the value of a commodity through looking at it, no matter how closely you look: "So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange value either in a pearl or a diamond".[74] However, mainstream economics treats this as a property

of the object itself, something to do with its physical nature rather than social relationships.

This also indicates the role that fetishism can have in maintaining the capitalist system. The economic laws which are particular to capitalism become seen as universal, unchangeable laws of human society. These laws, "which bear it stamped upon them in unmistakable letters that they belong to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him...appear to the bourgeois intellect to be as much a self-evident necessity imposed by nature as productive labour itself".[75] When the form that capitalism takes is seen as a fundamental feature of objects in the world, as in some way *natural*, then it becomes far harder to challenge it.

Fetishism also influences the way in which we relate to each other. Because we relate through commodities, we tend to relate to each other through the form these commodities take. Thus aspects of our social and personal life become commodified and take on a particular value form. The starkest example of this is probably the commodification of sexuality. The sex industry is vast. It is worth $57 billion a year in revenue, including $20 billion a year from adult videos and $11 billion a year from escort services.[76] This involves an undeniable aspect of our humanity, our sexuality, being packaged and sold back to us. Sex itself becomes a commodity. In turn, sexualised imagery, overwhelmingly of women, comes to dominate all sorts of aspects of culture. Sex is used to advertise a vast range of products, and women's bodies become symbols of anything from alcohol to valve caps. You only need to think about the prevalence of the Playboy bunny, emblazoned on jewellery, T-shirts and even pencil cases, to see the extent this reaches.

This cannot fail to affect those sexual relationships that are not directly commodified. Not all sex is bought and sold,

but in a society where we relate to each other through commodities it begins to take on certain characteristics. As Sheila McGregor puts it, the sex industry "reinforces the gender division of women as sexual objects and men as buyers of the product. This division traps women in a denial of their own sexual needs and men in the belief that women are bodies to be ogled at or bought".[77] Sexuality itself becomes understood through the form of value and commodities.

Commodity fetishism thus forms an important bridge between Marx's economic analysis of capitalism and his radical criticism of it. The commodity form, which is crucial to understanding the economics of capitalism, also pervades every aspect of our social life under capitalism, and leaves no aspect of our personal relationship untouched.

Chapter 7

Alienation from others

Marx saw labour, because of its collective character, as being important in shaping the way people interact with one another. When this labour is alienated it comes to have widespread consequences for our social life and relationships with others. Marx writes:

> An immediate consequence of man's estrangement from the products of his labour, his life activity, his species-being, is the estrangement of man from man. When man confronts himself, he also confronts other men. What is true of man's relationship to his labour, to the product of his labour and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, and to the labour and the object of the labour of other men.[78]

Alienation does not merely involve a relationship between workers and their labour; it shapes and colours relationships between everyone in society. People become isolated and divided; they see their neighbours as hostile competitors rather than cooperative partners.

The terms of relationships between individuals become coloured by the logic of the capitalist system. Other human beings appear to us through economic categories. We relate to them not directly, but as customers, employers, managers or competitors. The Hungarian philosopher István Mészáros describes this as a process of "second-order mediations". Human labour plays a direct *mediating* role between human beings and the world; it is the way in which we relate to the external world.

Mészáros argues that "productive activity is *alienated activity* when it departs from its proper function of humanly mediating in the subject-object relationship between man and nature".[79] In other words, capitalism puts in place of this direct mediation a host of "second-order" mediations, instituted by capitalist relationships: "Man's productive activity cannot bring him fulfilment because the institutionalised second-order mediations interpose themselves between man and his activity, between man and nature, and between man and man".[80]

Most clearly, this division appears in the relationship between workers and bosses:

> If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, this is only possible because it belongs to a man other than the worker... If he relates to his own activity as unfree activity, then he relates to it as activity in the service, under the rule, coercion and yoke of another man.[81]

The division of society into classes with opposed interests means that people become artificially divided against one another. As long as one group's existence depends on the exploitation and domination of another, these kinds of divisions will remain.

Marx stressed the physical and practical consequences of this alienation. He describes vividly the barriers and divisions set up between working people and capitalists in his brief comments on housing:

> The cellar dwelling of the poor man is a hostile element...a dwelling which he cannot regard as his own hearth—where he might at last exclaim: "Here I am at home"—but where

instead he finds himself *in someone else's* house, in the house of a *stranger* who always watches him and throws him out if he does not pay his rent.[82]

This alienation is reinforced when workers see the contrast between the houses they are forced to live in and the wealth of the rich. The worker "is also aware of the contrast in quality between his dwelling and a human dwelling that stands in the *other* world, in the heaven of wealth".[83]

The alienation between workers and capitalists takes other concrete forms. Barbara Ehrenreich describes the way she was forced to take a variety of tests and questionnaires when applying for low paid jobs across America. These tests were, presumably, supposed to dispense with the necessity for bosses to ever physically interview their workers:

> At The Maids, a housecleaning service, I am given something called the "Accutrac personality test", which warns at the beginning that "Accutrac has multiple measures which detect attempts to distort or psych out the questionnaire". Naturally I "never" find it hard "to stop moods of self-pity", nor do I imagine that others are talking about me behind my back or believe that "management and employees will always be in conflict because they have different sets of goals". The real function of these tests, I decide, is to convey information not to the employer but to the potential employee, and the information being conveyed is always: You will have no secrets from us. We don't want your muscles and that portion of your brain that is directly connected to them, we want your innermost self.[84]

All of this serves to emphasise both the separation of capitalists and workers, and the domination of the one over the other.

However, there is not just alienation between classes; capitalism encourages division and alienation among classes. The

system relies on capitalists being a "band of warring brothers", competing aggressively among themselves even while they stand united against the working class. Capitalism depends on some capitalists succeeding, and others failing, on mergers, hostile takeovers and price wars. These pit individual capitalists against one another in a ruthless fight to squeeze as much profit as possible out of the system.

This affects the working class too. Working people are encouraged to see themselves as individuals competing with their workmates, neighbours and even friends. This begins in the competition for jobs themselves, as people are encouraged, often quite humiliatingly, to compete for the attention of employers. Anyone who has had to search for a job will have heard the endless advice from employment agencies and governments urging you to find a way to "get ahead", to distinguish yourself from other workers and prove yourself better. Once in work, this process intensifies. People are encouraged to compete to be "employee of the month", or for performance-related bonuses. A union steward from the Vauxhall car plant at Ellesmere Port on Merseyside describes how being divided into teams with team leaders "puts pressure on the weakest member of the team to keep up with their team mates. It also creates a competitive atmosphere because people are vying for the position of team leader and more pay".[85]

This inevitably has consequences outside of work too, affecting our relationship with our neighbours, friends and family. The kind of commodity fetishism I described in the previous chapter contributes to competition among friends and neighbours for meaningless status items. Just as people look for some sort of confirmation in acquiring commodities, they are encouraged to measure themselves against others by exactly that standard.

This competition and division creates fertile ground for ideas that divide the working class. People are pitted against

one another, are told to compete with their workmates and friends, and in this environment racism, sexism and homophobia can easily take root. It is only in a situation where workers are forced to compete with one another for a small number of jobs that nationalist slogans such as "British jobs for British workers" can become meaningful or attractive. These sorts of ideas rely on the alienation from others which is so widespread under capitalism.

This also means that people are less likely to challenge the system. Because people are alienated and divided from one another, they are less likely to look to collective solutions to their problems. Instead they will accept the logic of the system, and compete to get ahead within capitalism. So, for example, instead of engaging in collective action to try to improve their condition alongside their workmates, workers feel the pressure to get their head down and work hard, in the hope that they might get a pay rise or an extra bonus. People become more likely to believe that they can only get ahead at the expense of other people, that we are "all in it for ourselves". In the speech I quoted in the introduction, Jimmy Reid observes the "implicit acceptance of the concept and term 'the rat race'. The picture it conjures up is one where we are scurrying around scrambling for position, trampling on others, back-stabbing, all in pursuit of personal success".[86]

As the example of sexuality described in the previous chapter shows, no aspect of our personal relationships is free from the effects of alienation. Even family life, which can provide some respite from the outside world, is affected by it. This can also involve some of the most shocking examples of alienation. To pick just one, in March 2010 a baby in Korea starved to death while her parents spent 12 hours playing a game in an internet cafe which involved raising a virtual child.[87] This is at the most extreme end of mediated social

relationships, where the immediate connection between parents and child has become subordinated to an entirely artificial relationship.

Marx also saw *politics* as a particular example of this social alienation. The idea that politics is something separate from ordinary people's lives, something done by other people, is a result of artificially separating certain aspects of our lives from others. Politics becomes transformed into something narrow and specific, done by a special class of people. This separation in turn encourages the idea that economic, social and political questions are in some way separate from one another. Think about the newspaper, which has separate sections for each of these fields, as if economic questions were not of political importance, and vice versa. It is common to hear people assert that certain things, even famine and war, are "not a political issue". Even the act of politics becomes an isolated experience—casting your vote once a year (at most) in a private box, isolated from collective debate. This also encourages disaffection from political questions, people saying that they "don't do politics", even while they daily fight against a bullying boss or complain about price rises.

An important aspect of this alienation is the state. For Marx the existence of a distinct state, set apart and separate from society, is the inevitable consequence of division into classes. This is reminiscent of the both Rousseau's and Hegel's analyses, which saw the state as the result of social alienation, transferring away certain functions of social life to particular bodies—the courts, police, judges, etc. However, for both these thinkers this alienation was an inevitable and largely positive thing, necessary for people to live fulfilling lives within society.

Rousseau and Hegel saw the state as a neutral force, while Marx argued that it was necessarily a feature of class divisions, and existed to cement the rule of one class over another:

> At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class antagonism between capital and labour, the state power assumed more and more the character of a national power of capital over labour, of a public force organised for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism.[88]

The state claims to operate in the communal interest, ie in the interests of everyone. However, Marx argued that capitalism is defined by class divisions that cannot be reconciled. Thus, whenever the state intervenes to defend the "common interest", it in fact intervenes to defend the status quo, and thus the interests of the ruling class. What is in the interests of helping capitalism survive is very much not in the interests of the working class. Thus the state is a feature of capitalist production.

Just as commodity fetishism creates the impression that mere objects have an independent existence, so does social alienation create the impression of the state as an independent entity, beyond the people who make it up. And just like in commodity fetishism, this becomes more than mere illusion. The nation state comes to have significance way beyond the people who live in it, and it takes on a permanent life of its own. People's willingness to die "for their country" or even for "the flag" is testament to this. The community becomes embodied in objects and symbols, which are seen as somehow "more" than the community itself.

More broadly than the state, however, this social alienation also gives rise to the sense that much of human life is outside of our control. Despite our social and economic life being entirely the product of human activity, it is experienced as a disembodied, alien power. As Marx puts it, throughout history human beings have "become more and more enslaved under a power alien to them...a power which has become more and more enormous and, in the last instance, turns out to be the world market".[89] You only need to watch the TV news to see how this kind of thinking begins to take hold. Stock market movements are reported like changes in the weather, with stock going up and down in value as if the result of a natural process. In the 2010 election in Britain "the markets" were said to demand a quick resolution to the hung parliament, and even more sinisterly, said to have a preferred outcome.

This feature of alienation affects everyone, even those at the top of the system. As Marx put it, "the immanent laws of capitalist production confront the individual capitalist as a coercive force external to him".[90] They are slaves to the pressures of the market, and completely subject to its whims. However, capitalists experience alienation in a different way. Their wealth enables them to be cushioned from some of its worst effects, and in as much as the system is organised in their interests the effects of alienation are not so severe. Despite this, capitalists are incapable of finding fulfilment in their work, just as workers are. Often capitalists are merely passive exploiters who grow rich on the back of the work of others. When they do "work", it is generally at finding new and intricate ways of squeezing more profit from those workers. As Bertell Ollman puts it, "the capitalists' advantages over the proletariat are relative rather than absolute; they concern registering a higher score on a scale which itself must be condemned".[91]

Chapter 8

Alienation from self

Capitalism is not just bad for us socially, Marx argued, it is also bad for us individually. Marx wrote that the worker "does not confirm himself in his work, but denies himself, feels miserable and not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy, but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind".[92]

This aspect of Marx's critique was motivated largely by his analysis and experience of the proletariat in his own time. Here he observed the physical and psychological damage done to workers by factory conditions. The most significant feature was not the factory work itself, but the way it was organised so as to put the needs of production and profit before the needs of the worker. In Marx's economic works he details many of the diverse kinds of factory production, and how they affect the lives of the workers. To take just one example, he describes the change in printing workers brought about by the printing machine:

> In the English letter-press printing trade there existed formerly a system, corresponding to that in the old manufactures and handicrafts, of advancing the apprentices from easy to more and more difficult work. They went through a course of teaching till they were finished printers. To be able to read and write was for every one of them a requirement of their trade. All this was changed by the printing machine. It employs two sorts of labourers, one grown up, renters, the other, boys mostly from 11 to 17 years of age whose sole business is either to spread the sheets of paper under the machine, or to take from it the printed sheets. They perform this weary task, in London especially, for 14, 15, and 16 hours at a stretch, during several days in the week, and frequently for 36 hours, with only two hours' rest for meals and sleep. A great part of them cannot read, and they are, as a rule, utter savages and very extraordinary creatures.

Many of these new processes involved damage to health and fitness, but actually made it easier for workers to perform their work. One example of this is the permanent changes to the shape of workers' bones which resulted from the use of certain machinery. Features that would be a problem for an artisan, who had to do many different jobs in a working day, were in fact beneficial when only one action was performed repetitively for eight to ten hours a day. In this way workers are converted "into a living appendage of the machine", and their own health and life is subordinated to the needs of production. Their work shapes and defines their very identity, getting under their skin—in some cases literally. In St Helens, a town in the Northwest of England dominated by glass production, it used to be remarked that, "You can recognise a fibreglass worker by the fact he's always scratching".[93]

It is worth emphasising that these sorts of health problems related to working conditions have hardly gone away. The suicides in 2010 at the Foxconn factory, which manufactures parts for the iPad, brought to attention the prevalence of mass factory conditions. Workers report that "their hands continue to twitch at night, or that when they are walking down the street they cannot help but mimic the motion".[94] In response to the suicides Foxconn put up a net around the factory to catch people jumping. A study of call centres found that the pressures and processes of work have severe implications for employee well-being: "Workers were subject to

feelings of exhaustion and not being able to 'switch off' after work and, more seriously, feelings of stress and, occasionally, even adverse health consequences".[95]

A worker reports on his first week working at a British car plant:

> Everyone is chatting away when they can, and then someone asks about Tom, who has been off for a few weeks with back pain from an injury he got when lifting a hood onto a jig when the automatic feeder broke down. It's like lifting the lid on a pressure cooker. Some can't stop talking about the various physical injuries. Things they "just have to carry on with". But it's not only the physical pain, which someone points out to me later most people have to put up with "as long as you can cope", but also the mental stress of not making mistakes, and it's worse too with the mental isolation.[96]

Even in the absence of mass factory conditions, there remains a big difference between workplaces designed for the needs of profit and of regulating the workforce and the kind of workplaces that are best for our health. A study of clerical and office workplaces in Glasgow argued, "Our respondents' comments confirm that a crucial ingredient of a healthy and agreeable working environment is the degree to which the worker can exercise control over it".[97] However, the way these buildings are designed tends to be the exact opposite of this. What is valued is cost reduction and workforce control: "Current practice is an overwhelmingly technology-centred, top-down operation in which the environmental system is installed and then people are expected to adjust".[98]

More broadly, Marx was concerned with the impact of social relationships on our physical and mental health. It was not just the kind of work which was important, but the relationships of power and control within them. Class, therefore,

was of vital importance. The lack of control over their working and private lives experienced by members of the working class played a crucial role in explaining their ill-health.

Marx's arguments are consistent with a number of recent findings in studies of health and illness. Many studies have shown a close connection between social status and health problems. In general, the poorer you are, the less you have in society, the greater your risk of developing health problems. Class and class divisions shape people's early lives, their friendships, social relationships, leisure time and working conditions. All of these have a profound effect on their long-term health.

A key indicator of this is social inequality. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's popular book *The Spirit Level* offers important insights into how much inequality can affect societies. The greater the gap between the richest and the poorest in society the worse off people are likely to be. Significantly this is not merely a matter of material deprivation. It is not simply a matter of the poor being very poor, and suffering as a result. Rather it is a direct feature of the inequality within society; of the rich being very, very, very rich. Even in countries where the poor are comparatively better off than in other countries, the existence of hierarchies and inequalities contributes directly to poor physical and mental health. In fact, recent studies have suggested that a whole range of things are directly affected by inequality—teenage pregnancy, crime, mental health, life expectancy and so on.

The same physical health risks impact differently depending on your position within a society. A study of civil servants found a close connection between their rank, the amount of control they have over their work, and their health: "An administrator who smokes 20 cigarettes a day has a lower risk of dying from lung cancer than does a lower grade civil

servant who smokes the same amount".[99] The conclusion was that "having control at work was the most successful single factor explaining threefold differences in death rates between senior and junior civil servants working in the same government offices in Britain".[100] A similar report concludes that "giving employees more variety in tasks and a stronger say in decisions about work may decrease the risk of coronary heart disease".[101]

All of this suggests that it is not just inequality in the distribution of wealth or social status alone that causes these problems, but alienation. The roots of these problems are to be found in the way in which our social and working lives are organised, and that is first and foremost defined by a lack of control. It is not just the gap between the richest and the poorest but the division between bosses and workers that affects our health and well-being. Inequality is likely to be an indicator of class position and alienation—those with least control over their work are also likely to be the least paid and vice versa—but it is not the root cause.

Because we lack the opportunity to express ourselves through fulfilling, creative work, we look for other ways of exerting control over our lives. This means that our personal lives come to be seen as the sole means of expressing our individuality. At work we are faceless, powerless and interchangeable; at home we try to express our individuality through the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the music we listen to, the cars we drive and the relationships we form.

For most people, though, this is fairly limited. They can't afford much more than mass-produced identical things, and the demands of work constantly impact on this individuality. This, in part, explains the obsession with celebrity culture which is so widespread under modern capitalism. These are people whose individuality is taken seriously, and generally have the means to achieve it. As Colin Sparks puts it:

> The realm of celebrity is the realm of legitimised personality. One of the key characteristics of celebrities is that their private lives and doings are taken to be interesting and treated as public property. This is often denounced as an intolerable intrusion, but in fact it is the highest reward that can be bestowed under capitalism. Unlike the mass of the population, the celebrity is someone whose individuality is taken seriously.[102]

The obsession with celebrity culture comes from a desire to have our individuality taken seriously in a way that capitalism consistently denies to the immense majority. Of course, this offers no real challenge to the alienation which gives rise to it. It might give people temporary respite, but it does not overcome their alienation.

Often people look to reassert control over their lives in even more dramatic ways. For example, according to a 2006 study, "An estimated 1.2 million young people [in Japan have] retreated from all contact with the outside world into the confines of their own rooms—modern hermits or *hikikomori*".[103] These young people are quite literally alienated, cutting themselves off from the world and others completely.

A feeling of not having control also plays a notable role in many eating disorders, in particular anorexia nervosa. Studies of anorexia patients suggest that control plays a significant part in their attitudes towards the disorder. The following quotations all come from a 2006 study of ten female anorexia patients aged between 13 and 21 and their parents.[104] The disorder is seen as a means of asserting control: "If I was fat then I would be unattractive and a complete failure, and completely not in control of what I do and what I ate"; "She's got control over it, the only thing she can control is her body." Control also figures in attitudes towards treatment:

> As soon as I was in a place where I was in control and choice and everything then I just wanted to be healthy and the figures weren't so relevant, it was how I felt and stuff. I really think that if I'd stayed in a place that was really rigid I'd have lost it all again... But coming to a place where it's all my choice and in my control then I could really work out what I wanted and it works so much better for me that way.

The report noted that some suggested the disorder would "help them feel safe and in control especially in difficult times". In a world in which so much is outside of the control of most people, people look to assert control in any way they can, often with tragic consequences.

Mental health problems under capitalism are rife. Just taking Britain as an example, it is estimated that one in six of the adult population suffer from depression or chronic anxiety disorder (around six million people), meaning that one in three families are directly affected by it. Forty percent of disability is due to mental, rather than physical, illness. One report concluded that "crippling depression and chronic anxiety are the biggest causes of misery in Britain today".[105]

Yet despite widespread agreement on the depth of the problem of mental health, there is a remarkable tendency to ignore the wider social context, to treat these as problems for individuals rather than society as a whole, and to look to solutions in individual therapy or medication. The same report that identified the prevalence of depression in Britain also restricted its proposed solutions to making Cognitive Behavioural Therapy more available to ordinary people. The question was not posed as "How can we organise society to stop this happening?" but "How can we get more people medication and therapy?" This often combined the well-meaning with the sinister—for example, therapy in job centres, with

half a mind on helping people, but the other half on getting them back to work as quickly as possible.

In other words, as well as contributing to worsening mental health, alienation provides a barrier to overcoming it. Firstly, proposed solutions are driven by the need to get people back to work, and to make profit. Thus the real problems are often not addressed at all. Secondly, alienation contributes to a failure to address these problems as rooted in social relationships. Just like the economist who examines a commodity to find its value, ignoring that the value is socially constituted, so medical professionals tend to examine people as individuals, looking for internal causes of their problems, and ignoring the clearly social causes.

More broadly, alienation shapes even what we define as mental health problems. In the report cited above, the overwhelming focus was on conditions that interfere with people's working lives, making them less productive individuals in the labour process. Much of it is pitched in terms of the economic damage that depression does to the UK economy. This is framed entirely in terms of the needs of capitalism, not the needs of the individual. As Peter Sedgwick argues, definitions of illness and fitness depend on the goals society sets.[106] In a society organised on the basis of wage-labour, anything which interferes with this is seen as an illness to be managed or cured. A society organised according to different priorities could offer a different understanding of illness, and also offer alternative ways of helping those who suffer.

hunger, insecurity and the constant threat of unemployment... Dignity was a meaningless notion unless it meant an end to poverty and need.[152]

It is revolutions like the one in Egypt that give the most hope for the possibility of ending both the capitalist system and the alienation it brings with it. The revolution in Egypt may be the tip of the iceberg, where a process of people transforming both themselves and their surroundings can continue into a far more radical transformation. Or it may not. But it lights a beacon, indicating possibilities for the overwhelming majority to take back control of their lives, their work and their future, and in so doing build a better world.

Further reading

All of Marx's and Engels's works are available online at the excellent Marxists Internet Archive, www.marxists.org. Marx's most detailed writings on alienation are in his 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (sometimes called the *Paris Manuscripts*), but references to alienation and connected concepts return throughout his work.

The two best books on alienation are Bertell Ollman's *Alienation: Marx's Concept of Man in Capitalist Society* and István Mészáros's *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. Both are significantly more complex than this book, but make rewarding reading. Sean Sayers' more recent book *Marx and Alienation* offers a very accessible account of the influence of Hegel and Marx, and engages well with some of the questions I address in Chapter 10.

Georg Lukács's work *History and Class Consciousness*, while hard going, offers a number of important insights into the connection between Marx's and Hegel's works. The chapter entitled "Reification and the consciousness of the proletariat" is an important contribution to understanding the connection between commodity fetishism and alienation.

Isaak Rubin's book *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value* contains an excellent account of commodity fetishism and also includes an excellent introduction by Fredy Perlman. Joseph Choonara's *Unravelling Capitalism* is an accessible introduction to Marx's economic theory.

Martin Empson's pamphlet *Marxism and Ecology* offers an excellent introduction to Marx's ideas about nature and environment. John Bellamy Foster's book *Marx's Ecology* offers the most detailed analysis of Marx's notion of metabolism and metabolic rift.

Kevin Doogan's book *New Capitalism* is an excellent reply to those who argue that work has changed in certain important ways. Paul Thompson's article "Foundation and Empire: A Critique of Hardt and Negri", in *Capital and Class* 86, deals more directly with Hardt and Negri's arguments.

A number of articles have made far more detailed attempts to connect the arguments about health inequality with theories of alienation than I have been able to here: Mike Haynes, "Capitalism, class, health and medicine", in *International Socialism* 123, and Ian Crinson and Chris Yuill, "What can alienation theory contribute to an understanding of social inequalities in health?", in *International Journal of Health Services* 38, are good examples. Iain Ferguson's interview with Richard Pickett in *International Socialism* 127 also raises these issues. For an impressive Marxist account of psychiatry and mental health issues see Peter Sedgwick's *Psychopolitics*.

Finally, *Ours to Master and to Own*, edited by Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini, draws together accounts and lessons from the history of workers' control throughout the history of capitalism, and makes inspiring and essential reading.

Notes

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All of Marx and Engels' works are freely available online at the Marxists Internet Archive. References to their works here are given by title and date and can be accessed at www.marxists.org

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