TOWARD A CRITIQUE OF HEGEL’S PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT

In Germany, . . . where practical life is as mindless as mental life is impractical, no class in civil society has any need or capacity for general emancipation until it is forced to it by its *immediate* condition, by *material* necessity, by its *very* chains.

Where, then, is the *positive* possibility of German emancipation? Answer: In the formation of a class with *radical chains*, a class in civil society that is not of civil society, a class that is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society having a universal character because of its universal suffering and claiming no *particular* right because no *particular* wrong but *unqualified wrong* is perpetrated on it; a sphere that can invoke no *traditional* title but only a *human* title, which does not partially oppose the consequences but totally opposes the premises of the German political system; a sphere, finally, that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, thereby emancipating them; a sphere, in short, that is the *complete loss* of humanity and can only redeem itself through the *total redemption of humanity.* This dissolution of society is a particular class is the *proletariat.*

The proletariat is only beginning to appear in Germany as a result of the rising *industrial* movement. For it is not poverty from *natural circumstances* but *artificially produced* poverty, not the human masses mechanically oppressed by the weight of society but the masses resulting from the *acute*
disintegration of society, and particularly of the middle class, which gives rise to the proletariat—though also, needless to say, poverty from natural circumstances and Christian-Germanic serfdom gradually join the proletariat.

Heralding the dissolution of the existing order of things, the proletariat merely announces the secret of its own existence because it is the real dissolution of this order. Demanding the negation of private property, the proletariat merely raises to the principle of society what society has raised to the principle of the proletariat, what the proletariat already embodies as the negative result of society without its action. The proletarian thus has the same right in the emerging order of things as the German king has in the existing order when he calls the people his people or a horse his horse. Declaring the people to be his private property, the king merely proclaims that the private owner is king.

As philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat, the proletariat finds its intellectual weapons in philosophy. And once the lighting of thought has deeply struck this unsophisticated soil of the people, that Germans will emancipate themselves to become men.

Let us summarize the result: The only emancipation of Germany possible in practice is emancipation based on the theory proclaiming that man is the highest essence of man. In Germany emancipation from the Middle Ages is possible only as emancipation at the same time from partial victories over the Middle Ages. In Germany no brand of bondage can be broken without every brand of bondage being broken. Always seeking fundamentals, Germany can only make a fundamental revolution. The emancipation of the German is the emancipation of mankind. The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat. Philosophy cannot be actualized without the transcendence [Aufhebung] of the proletariat, the proletariat cannot be transcended without the actualization of philosophy.

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**ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHIC MANUSCRIPTS (1844): ALIENATED LABOR**

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

Let us not put ourselves in a fictitious primordial state like a political economist trying to clarify things. Such a primordial state clarifies nothing.
It merely pushes the issue into a gray, misty distance . . . We proceed from a present fact of political economy.

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

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

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

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

Let us now consider more closely the objectification, the worker’s production and with it the alienation and loss of the object, his product. The worker can make nothing without nature, without the sensuous external world. It is the material wherein his labor realizes itself, wherein it is active, out of which and by means of which it produces. But as nature furnishes to labor the means of life in the sense that labor cannot live without objects upon which labor is exercised, nature also furnishes the means of life in the narrower sense, namely, the means of physical subsistence of the worker himself.

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

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

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

Political economy conceals the alienation in the nature of labor by ignoring the direct relationship between the worker (labor) and production. To be sure, labor produces marvels for the wealthy but it produces deprivation for the worker. It produces palaces, but hovels for the worker. It produces beauty, but mutilation for the worker . . .

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

What constitutes the externalization of labor? First is the fact that labor is external to the laborer—that is, it is not part of his nature—and that the worker does not affirm himself in his work but denies himself, feels miserable and unhappy, develops no free physical and mental energy but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind. The worker, therefore feels at ease only outside work, and during work he is outside himself. He is at home when he is not working and when he is working he is not at home. His work, therefore, is not voluntary, but coerced, forced labor. It is not the satisfaction of a need but only a means to satisfy other needs. Its alien character is obvious from the fact that as soon as no physical or other pressure exists, labor is avoided like the plague. External labor, labor in which man is externalized, is labor of self-sacrifice, of penance. Finally, the external nature of work for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own but another person’s, that in work he does not belong to himself but to someone else.

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

We now have to derive a third aspect of alienated labor from the two previous ones. Man is a species-being \([\text{Gattungswesen}]\) not only in that he practically and theoretically makes his own species as well as that of other things his object, but also—and this is only another expression for the same thing—in that as present and living species he considers himself to be a universal and consequently free being.

The life of the species in man as in animals is physical in that man, (like the animal) lives by inorganic nature. And as man is more universal than the animal, the realm of inorganic nature by which he lives is more universal. The universality of man appears in practice in the universality which makes the whole of nature his inorganic body: (1) as a direct means of life, and (2) as the matter, object, and instrument of his life activity. Nature is the inorganic body of man, that is, nature insofar as it is not the human body. Man
lives by nature. This means that nature is his body with which he must remain in perpetual process in order not to die. That the physical and spiritual life of man is tied up with nature is another way of saying that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.

In alienating (1) nature from man, and (2) man from himself, his own active function, his life activity, alienated labor also alienates the species from him. . . . The animal is immediately one with its life activity, not distinct from it. The animal is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself into an object of will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he immediately identifies. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from the life activity of the animal. Only thereby is he a species-being. Or rather, he is only a conscious being—that is, his own life is an object for him—since he is a species-being. Only on that account is his activity free activity. Alienated labor reverses the relationship in that man; since he is a conscious being, makes his life activity, his essence, only a means for his existence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Let us now see further how the concept of alienated, externalized labor must express and represent itself in actuality. If the product of labor is alien to me, confronts me as an alien power, to whom then does it belong? If my own activity does not belong to me, if it is an alien and forced activity, to whom then does it belong? To a being other than myself. Who is this being? . . .

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

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

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

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

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**ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHIC MANUSCRIPTS (1844): PHENOMENOLOGY**

For Hegal human nature, man, is equivalent to self-consciousness. All alienation of human nature is thus nothing but the alienation of self-consciousness. The alienation of self-consciousness is not taken to be an expression of the actual alienation of human nature reflected in knowledge and thought. Actual alienation, that which appears real, is rather in its innermost and concealed character (which philosophy only brings to light) only the appearance of the alienation of actual human nature, of self-consciousness.

* * *

But . . . a self-consciousness, that is, its externalization, can only establish thinghood, that is, only an abstract thing, a thing of abstraction and no
actual thing . . . When actual, corporeal man with his feet firmly planted on the solid ground, inhaling and exhaling all of nature’s energies establishes his actual, objective essential capacities as alien objects through his externalization, the establishing is not the subject but the subjectivity of objective capacities whose action must therefore also be objective. An objective being acts objectively and would not act objectively if objectivity did not lie in its essential nature. It creates and establishes only objects because it is established through objects, because it is fundamentally part of nature. In the act of establishing, this objective being does not therefore descend from its “pure activity” to the creation of the object, but its objective product merely confirms its objective activity, its activity as that of an objective, natural being.

MARX AND ENGELS
THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY (1845–1846)

German criticism has, right up to its latest efforts, never left the realm of philosophy. It by no means examines its general philosophic premises, but in fact all its problems originate in a definite philosophical system, that of Hegel. Not only in its answers, even in its 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.

The premises from which we being are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing 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 organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. . . . All historical writing must 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 organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the means of subsistence they actually find in existence and have to reproduce.

This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction 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. Hence what individuals are depends on the material conditions of their production. . . .

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. 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 develop various divisions among the individuals co-operating in definite kinds of labour. The relative position of these individual groups is determined by the way work is organised 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 property, 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.

The first form of property is tribal property [Stammeigentum]. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by cattle-raising or, at most, by 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 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 intercourse, both of war and of barter.
The second form is the ancient communal and state property, 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 property we already find movable, and later also immovable, private property developing, but as an abnormal form subordinate to communal property. The citizens hold power over their labouring slaves only in their community, and even on this account alone they are bound to the form of communal property. It constitutes the communal private property of the active citizens who, in relation to their slaves, are compelled to remain in this spontaneously derived form of association. For this reason the whole structure of society based on this communal property, and with it the power of the people, decays in the same measure in which immovable private property evolves. The division of labour is already more developed. We already find the opposition of town and country; later the opposition between those states which represent town interests and those which represent country interests, and inside the towns themselves the opposition between industry and maritime commerce. The class relations between citizens and slaves are now completely developed.

With the development of private property, we find here for the first time the same relations 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 . . . and proceeded very rapidly 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 is feudal or estate property. If antiquity started out from the town and its small 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 increases from the conquerors. In contrast to Greece and Rome, feudal development, therefore, begins over a much wider territory, prepared by the Roman conquests and the spread of agriculture at first associated with them. The last centuries of the declining Roman Empire and its conquest by the barbarians destroyed a considerable part of the productive forces; agriculture had declined, industry had decayed for want of a market, trade had died out or been violently interrupted, the rural and urban population had decreased. These conditions and the mode of organisation of the conquest
determined by them, together with the influence of the Germanic military constitution, led to the development of feudal property. Like tribal and communal property, it is also based 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 organisation was, just as much as the ancient communal property, 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.

This feudal structure of landownership had its counterpart in the *towns* in the shape of corporative property, the feudal organisation of trades. Here property consisted chiefly in the labour of each individual. The necessity for associating against the association of the 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.

Thus property during the feudal epoch primarily consisted on the one hand of landed property with serf labour chained to it, and on the other of the personal labour of the individual who with his small capital commands the labour of journeymen. The organisation of both was determined by the restricted conditions of production—the scanty and primitive cultivation of the land, and the craft type of industry. 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 the country, and masters, journeymen, apprentices and soon also the rabble of casual labourers in the towns, there was no important division. 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 in the individual trades 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 organisation 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. 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, however, of these individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they actually are, i.e., as they act, 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 at this stage still appear as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc., that is, 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.

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven. That is to say, not of setting 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; but setting out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the brains of men are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology as well as the forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus 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 actual world, also their thinking and the products of their thinking. It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness. For the first manner of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the
living individual; for the second manner of approach, which conforms to real
life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is consid-
ered solely as their consciousness.

This manner of approach is not devoid of premises. 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 fixity, 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, where real life starts, there consequently begins
real, positive science, the expounding of the practical activity, of the practical
process of development of men. Empty phrases about consciousness end, and
real knowledge has to take their place. When the reality is described, a self-
sufficient philosophy [die selbständige Philosophie] loses its medium of exis-
tence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing-up of the most
general results, abstractions which are derived from the observation of the his-
torical development of men. These abstractions in themselves, divorced from
real history, have no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the
arrangement of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate
strata.

... 

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the
class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its rul-
ing intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production
at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so
that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the
whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expres-
sion of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations
grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling
one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the
ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think.
Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and com-
pass of an historical epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole
range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas,
and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus
their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. For instance, in an age and in a
country where royal power, aristocracy and bourgeoisie are contending for
domination and where, therefore, domination is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an “eternal law.”

The division of labour, which we already saw above as one of the chief forces of history up till now, manifest itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labour, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the formation of the illusions of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), while the others’ attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves. Within this class this cleavage can even develop into a certain opposition and hostility between the two parts, but whenever a practical collision occurs in which the class itself is endangered they automatically vanish, in which case there also vanishes the appearance of the ruling ideas being not the ideas of the ruling class and having a power distinct from the power of this class. The existence of revolutionary ideas in a particular period presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class.

If now in considering the course of history we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence, if we confine ourselves to saying that these or those ideas were dominant at a given time, without bothering ourselves about the conditions of production and the producers of these ideas, if we thus ignore the individuals and world conditions which are the source of the ideas, then we can say, for instance, that during the time the aristocracy was dominant, the concepts honour, loyalty, etc., were dominant, during the dominance of the bourgeoisie the concepts freedom, equality, etc. The ruling class itself on the whole imagines this to be so. This conception of history, which is common to all historians, particularly since the eighteenth century, will necessarily come up against the phenomenon that ever more abstract ideas hold sway, i.e., ideas which increasingly take on the form of universality. For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to present its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and present them as the only rational, universally valid ones. The class making a revolution comes forward from the very start, if only because it is opposed to a class, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society, as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class. It can do this because initially its interest really is as yet mostly con-
nected with the common interest of all other non-ruling classes, because under the pressure of hitherto existing conditions its interest has not yet been able to develop as the particular interest of a particular class. Its victory, therefore, benefits also many individuals of other classes which are not winning a dominant position, but only insofar as it now enables these individuals to raise themselves into the ruling class. When the French bourgeoisie overthrew the rule of the aristocracy, it thereby made it possible for many proletarians to raise themselves above the proletariat, but only insofar as they became bourgeois. Every new class, therefore, achieves domination only on a broader basis than that of the class ruling previously; on the other hand the opposition of the non-ruling class to the new ruling class then develops all the more sharply and profoundly. Both these things determine the fact that the struggle to be waged against this new ruling class, in its turn, has at its aim a more decisive and more radical negation of the previous conditions of society than all previous classes which sought to rule could have.

This whole appearance, that the rule of a certain class is only the rule of certain ideas, comes to a natural end, of course, as soon as class rule in general ceases to be the form in which society is organised, that is to say, as soon as it is no longer necessary to represent a particular interest as general or the “general interest” as ruling.

Once the ruling ideas have been separated from the ruling individuals and, above all, from the relations which result from a given stage of the mode of production, and in this way the conclusion has been reached that history is always under the sway of ideas, it is very easy to abstract from these various ideas “the Idea,” the thought, etc., as the dominant force in history, and thus to consider all these separate ideas and concepts as “forms of self-determination” of the Concept developing in history. It follows then naturally, too, that all the relations of men can be derived from the concept of man, man as conceived, the essence of man, Man. This has been done by speculative philosophy. Hegel himself confesses at the end of the Philosophy of History that he “has considered the progress of the concept only” and has represented in history the “true theodicy.” Now one can go back again to the producers of “the concept,” to the theorists, ideologists and philosophers, and one comes then to the conclusion that the philosophers, the thinkers as such have at all times been dominant in history; a conclusion, as we see already expressed by Hegel.

© SELECTIONS

MARX AND ENGELS
MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (1848)

A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism. All the Powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies... It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the Spectre of Communism with a Manifesto of the party itself....

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature; it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

From the serfs of the Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed.

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonisation of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolised by closed guilds now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-
masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle class; division of labour between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labour in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionised industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages.

We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange. . . . 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. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. . . .

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before
they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and
man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life,
and his relations with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the
bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle, everywhere,
settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given
a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. . . .
All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being
destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction
becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that
no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the
remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home,
but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the
productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfac-
tion the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and
national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direc-
tion, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in
intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations
become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness
become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and
local literatures, there arises a world literature.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of pro-
duction, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all,
even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of its
commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese
walls, with which it forces the barbarians’ intensely obstinate hatred of for-
eigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt
the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls
civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one
word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has
created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as com-
pared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the popula-
tion from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent
on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries depen-
dent on the civilised ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the
East on the West.
The bourgeoisie keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralised means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralisation. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier and one customs-tariff.

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature’s forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?

We see then: the means of production and of exchange, on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder; they were burst asunder.

Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economical and political sway of the bourgeois class.

A similar movement is going on before our own eyes. Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products,
but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically
destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier
epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of over-production.
Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it
appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply
of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed;
and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsis-
tence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the
disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions
of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for
these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome
these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endan-
ger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society
are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the
bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of
a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and
by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving
the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing
the means whereby crises are prevented.

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground
are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself. But not only has the bour-
geoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into
existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working
class—the proletarians.

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e. capital, is developed, in the same
proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed—a class
of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work
only so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell
themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of com-
merce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition,
to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the
work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently,
all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and
it is only the most simple, most monotonous and most easily acquired knack,
that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is
restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for his
maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a com-
modity, and therefore also of labour, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases. Nay more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labour increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours by increase of the work exacted in a given time or by increased speed of machinery, etc.

Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the overlooker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is.

The less the skill and exertion of strength implied in manual labour, in other words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labour of men superseded by that of women. Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex.

No sooner is the exploitation of the labourer by the manufacturer, so far, at an end, and he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc.

The lower strata of the middle class—the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialised skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual labourers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they
smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

At this stage the labourers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequence of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover yet, for a time, able to do so. At this stage, therefore, the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, the petty bourgeoisie. Thus the whole historical movement is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie; every victory so obtained is a victory for the bourgeoisie.

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalised, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thenceupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trade Unions) against the bourgeoisie; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

Altogether collisions between the classes of the old society further, in many ways, the course of development of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times, with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of
political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat
with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

Further, as we have already seen, entire sections of the ruling classes are,
by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least
threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat
with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.

Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the
process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the
whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a
small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary
class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an ear-
lier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a
portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a
portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level
of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the
proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and
finally disappear in the face of Modern Industry; the proletariat is its special
and essential product.

In the conditions of the proletariat, those of old society at large are
already virtually swamped. The proletarian is without property; his relation
to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bour-
geois family relations; modern industrial labour, modern subjection to capi-
tal, the same in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has stripped
him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion, are to him
so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many
bourgeois interests.

All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their
already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of
appropriation. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive
forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropri-
ation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They
have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy
all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property.

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. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air.

Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.

In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat . . .

The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage-labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole? The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement . . .

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered by this or that
would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes. . . . The theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.

We Communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man’s own labour, which property is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity and independence.

Hard-won, self-acquired, self-earned property! Do you mean the property of the petty artisan and of the small peasant, a form of property that preceded the bourgeois form? There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it daily. Or do you mean modern bourgeois private property? But does wage-labour create any property for the labourer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage-labour, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labour for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage-labour. Let us examine both sides of this antagonism.

To be a capitalist is to have not only a purely personal, but a social status in production. Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion.

Capital is, therefore, not a personal, it is a social power. When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class character.

Let us now take wage-labour. The average price of wage-labour is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence, which is absolutely requisite to keep the labourer in bare existence as a labourer. What, therefore, the wage-labourer appropriates by means of his labour, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labour, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labour of others. All that we want to do away with is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the labourer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it.
In bourgeois society, living labour is but a means to increase accumulated labour. In Communist society, accumulated labour is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the labourer.

In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past. In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.

And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at. By freedom is meant, under the present bourgeois conditions of production, free trade, free selling and buying. But if selling and buying disappears, free selling and buying disappears also. This talk about free selling and buying, and all the other “brave words” of our bourgeoisie about freedom in general, have a meaning, if any, only in contrast with restricted selling and buying, with the fettered traders of the Middle Ages, but have no meaning when opposed to the Communistic abolition of buying and selling, of the bourgeois conditions of production, and of the bourgeoisie itself.

You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society. In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

From the moment when labour can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolised, i.e., from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment, you say, individuality vanishes.

You must, therefore, confess that by “individual” you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of such appropriation.

It has been objected that upon the abolition of private property all work will cease, and universal laziness will overtake us. According to this, bour-
geois society ought long ago to have gone to the dogs through sheer idleness; for those of its members who work, acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything, do not work. The whole of this objection is but another expression of the tautology: that there can no longer be any wage-labour when there is no longer any capital.

All objections urged against the Communistic mode of producing and appropriating material products, have, in the same way, been urged against the Communistic modes of producing and appropriating intellectual products. Just as, to the bourgeois, the disappearance of class property is the disappearance of production itself, so the disappearance of class culture is to him identical with the disappearance of all culture. That culture, the loss of which he laments, is, for the enormous majority, a mere training to act as a machine.

But don’t wrangle with us so long as you apply, to our intended abolition of bourgeois property, the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc. Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will, whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class.

The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into eternal laws of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property—historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production—this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you. What you see clearly in the case of ancient property, what you admit in the case of feudal property, you are of course forbidden to admit in the case of your own bourgeois form of property.

Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists. On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeois. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution. The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital. Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty.

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But your Communists would introduce community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie in chorus. The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere
instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women. He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

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The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationality. The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.

National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.

The charges against Communism made from a religious, a philosophical, and, generally, from an ideological standpoint, are not deserving of serious examination. Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man’s ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man’s consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life? What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class. When people speak of ideas that revolutionise society, they do but express the fact, that within the old society, the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence.

When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the 18th century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of con-
science merely gave expression to the sway of free competition within the
domain of knowledge.

“Undoubtedly,” it will be said, “religious, moral, philosophical and
juridical ideas have been modified in the course of historical development.
But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly sur-
vived this change. There are, besides eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice,
etc., that are common to all states of society. But Communism abolishes eter-
nal truths, it abolishes all religion and all morality, instead of constituting
them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical
experience.”

What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past soci-
ety has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that
assumed different forms at different epochs. But whatever form they may
have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one
part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness
of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within
certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish
except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms. The Communist
revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no
wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with tradi-
tional ideas . . .

We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working
class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle
of democracy. The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by
degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of pro-
duction in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the rul-
ing class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of
despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois
production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically
insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, out-
strip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and
are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of produc-
tion.

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When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disap-
peared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast asso-
ciation of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

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