

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

# Alienated dependence: The unfreedom of our social relations

**Tatiana Llaguno** 

Department of Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

**Correspondence**

Tatiana Llaguno, Department of Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands.

Email: [t.llaguno.nieves@rug.nl](mailto:t.llaguno.nieves@rug.nl)

**KEYWORDS:** alienation, capitalism, dependence, freedom, objectivity

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Modern individuals grapple with a paradoxical reality: their lives are characterized by a strong feeling of independence as well as by an intense social interconnection. In Karl Marx's words, this paradox is best described as individuals achieving "personal independence" under an "objective dependence" (1993, p. 158). This paper focuses on the notion of objective dependence, which has been insufficiently problematized in recent debates about social interdependence. By bringing to light a distinctively Hegelian-Marxist approach to the problem of dependence and to the problem of objectivity, the article aims at contributing to the ongoing scholarly debate on the ethical and political consequences of dependence as an acknowledged social condition. Starting from the inevitability claim, I push for an understanding of dependence that avoids its reduction to domination and that instead presents it as a complex reality that can be actively and freely experienced. Contrary to what a considerable number of political theorists have argued (see Macpherson, 1962), I hold that dependence per se does not lead to unfreedom; although, at present, many relations of dependence do. To understand why this is the case, I defend that the analysis of social dependence must be brought together with the critique of political economy. In fact, when looked from the perspective of our economic relations, the rejection of dependence is not entirely misguided: it points out to defective social relations that we need to untangle in order to criticize. In doing so, I respond to Renault's invitation to deploy dependence as a *critical* concept (2018, p. 36).

In what follows, I will delineate my own approach by way of a critical review of the accounts of dependence circulating in contemporary social and political philosophy, focusing

---

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2023 The Authors. *Journal of Social Philosophy* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC.

on their failure to integrate, to a greater or lesser degree, the specificity of modern relations of dependence, that is, their objectivity. I classify current approaches in two groups: one informed by discussions around care and vulnerability (which tends to provide little systematic understanding of how actual forms of generalized dependence are experienced under capitalist relations) and another informed by the critique of political economy (which tends to downplay the importance of dependence's objective nature). While the former risks offering a defense of dependence that remains blind to important axes of domination, the latter might appear oblivious about the specific nature of modern forms of social domination. The focus on the objective nature of dependence is sanctioned by two theses. First, I claim that when objectivity is taken into account, specific normative failures arise. Second, I believe that the emphasis on objectivity enables important conceptual distinctions. Thus, I will suggest that we need to criticize alienated objective dependence, rather than objective relations of dependence as such. In short, I will argue that the objective domination characteristic of capitalist societies is not the same as objective or objectivized dependence.

I present my argument in three sections. In Section 1, I review how dependence has been discussed in contemporary social and political philosophy. I present the arguments made in care and vulnerability studies, in order to understand the ways in which the lack of engagement with political economy undermines the critical potential of dependence as an analytical concept. Then, I survey the attempts at bringing together the study of dependence and the analysis of capitalist relations, including, among others, the work done by labor republicans. I delineate their contributions, as well as their limitations, and explain the explicit intervention that this paper aims at making in those discussions. In Section 2, I introduce Marx's notion of objective dependence and develop an account of the three forms it takes: the objectivity of exchange or money, the objectivity of capital, and the objectivity of machinery. In Section 3, I draw on recent developments in critical theory and contend that the issue with modern societies is that they promote an alienated and reified objective dependence, transforming our unavoidable social dependence into forms of objective domination. Although I am not able to work out a detailed alternative to that form of dependence here, I present some preliminary thoughts on the possibility of free, non-alienated relations of dependence. Finally, I sketch some reasons why, given the dialectical relation between independence and dependence, even those worried mostly about the former should also care about the latter.

## 2 | HOW TO THEORIZE DEPENDENCE

In the last decades, theorists have attempted to demystify the liberal imaginary of individual independence, suggesting instead a paradigm in which a shared condition of vulnerability and interdependence predominates. A first important milestone is Robert E. Goodin's book, *Protecting the Vulnerable*, in which we find a dependence- and vulnerability-based reformulation of social responsibility. Rather than a voluntaristic model of self-assumed commitments, Goodin advances a framework in which our social obligations toward others emerge from the fact that others are vulnerable to our actions and choices. Goodin understands that what is crucial in ethical terms, "is that others are depending on us" (1985, p. 11).

In *Love's Labor*, Eva Kittay engages with the work of John Rawls and concludes that the norms and values underpinning liberal egalitarianism exclude "concerns of dependency" in a problematic way (2020, p. 10). Informed by her own experience as the caretaker of a disabled daughter, Kittay explores the theoretical implications, both for political and social life, of cases

of fundamental dependence—cases in which the dependent person is unable to reciprocate and where the relationship between them and their caretaker is hardly one of equality (2020, p. xii). From that standpoint, Kittay enacts a dependency critique of equality and of society as an association of equals, suggesting that such individual and collective self-understanding ultimately “masks the inevitable dependencies and asymmetries that form part of the human condition” (2020, p. 18). Kittay’s alternative proposal is a conception of equality that emerges from our inevitable human interdependence, rather than from properties formally attached to individuals (2020, p. 58).

Legal theorist and political philosopher, Martha Fineman, argues in her book *The Autonomy Myth: A Theory of Dependency*, that dependence has been longtime stigmatized due to the foundational role that independence plays in our political discourse. According to Fineman, our veneration of notions such as autonomy and self-sufficiency has rendered the “specter of dependence” incompatible with the structuring myths of contemporary societies (2004, p. 34). In her work, instead of a negative assessment, Fineman offers a view of dependence as a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted phenomenon (2004, p. 35). She suggests a distinction between inevitable and derivative dependencies, whereby the former refer to the biological and physical dependencies characteristic of all human beings and the latter to the dependence experienced by those in charge of a dependent person (2004, p. 36). For Fineman, this second type, unlike the first, does not entail a universal experience of dependence. Such form of dependence is mediated by economic and structural dimensions and shows a tendency to assign correspondent responsibilities to private spheres such as the family. In lieu of the privatization of derivative dependence, Fineman proposes seeing caretaking as creating “a collective or social debt,” toward which all members of society are obligated (2004, p. 47).

An important recent addendum to the scholarly debate around vulnerability is Judith Butler’s book, *The Force of Non-Violence*. In it, Butler claims that social interdependence is one of life’s unavoidable traits, as well as a useful concept to understand how violence works: indeed, the latter is theorized precisely as an attack to the bonds that constitute our interdependence. The non-individualistic vision of equality that unfolds from Butler’s position, akin to Kittay’s, is not one that precedes the constitution of the self, but one that speaks to the fact that we are all interdependent and co-constituted. In Butler’s words, “equality cannot be reduced to a calculus that accords each abstract person the same value, since the equality of persons has now to be thought precisely in terms of social interdependency” (2020, p. 17). In earlier works, Butler had contended that we needed to grapple with this fundamental dependence because, ultimately, “no security measure will foreclose” it (2006, p. xii). For Butler, this embodied dependent subject must constantly confront the paradoxical nature of the social bond and the fact that this very condition of interdependency which enables life, holds in it a destructive potential, because it is simultaneously the condition of possibility for cooperation as well as for exploitation and violence (2020, p. 46). Finally, Butler is careful enough to admit the existence of a differential distribution of vulnerability, as well as to expand the notion of dependence, so that it includes social, material, and environmental requirements (2020, p. 41).

Despite the important insights of all these accounts—the starting point of all humans as dependent, the recognition of dependence’s ambivalent nature and the inequalities that permeate it—not much is said in any of them about the specificity of dependence under capitalist relations. Goodin’s contribution is certainly on point when it claims that because complete invulnerability is neither an ideal nor a realistic alternative, we must pay attention to how specific social arrangements create and maintain dependency relationships. He reveals an implicit danger in asymmetrical relations and concludes with the need to protect the vulnerable from

instances of exploitation—preferably, by preventing discretionary control over resources and power abuses from those in positions of power (Goodin, 1985, p. 202). The attention paid to economic relations of dependence notwithstanding, not enough is said in his approach about the specificity of relations of dependence under the capitalist mode of production. However, in my view, at the heart of any attempt to decenter independence lies the need to disrupt what we could call capitalism's fetishistic disavowal of dependence, that is, its enhancement but concurrent negation of social dependence. By being reliant on a system of social cooperation but also on the ideological figure of the independent individual—what Weeks has called capitalism's "dependence on independence" (2011, p. 56)—capitalist societies reproduce a profound contradiction. To fully understand it, our analysis of dependence needs to integrate the much-needed critique of political economy and pay more attention to the specific nature of our social relations.

That is precisely what a second group of authors, that I will now proceed to discuss, has done. The most serious attempt at theorizing dependencies as embedded in capitalist relations comes from Patrick L. Cockburn (2021), who by revising and extending existing terminology, has managed to build a serious conceptual framework capable of capturing the varieties of economic dependencies characteristic of contemporary societies. With the ultimate purpose of clarifying the moral and political debate on dependence, Cockburn proposes distinguishing between four senses of economic dependence: personal versus impersonal and structural versus practical. While personal relations of dependence refer to one's reliance on a particular individual, impersonal ones allude to one's reliance on unspecified or anonymous others. And while structural dependence explains how the need of a transfer of value is embedded in society's systematic institutional design, practical dependence describes relations in which one's access to a resource is directly determined by the discretionary power of another individual, their judgments and decisions. There is a relative overlap between the research on which Cockburn's account and my own account are based. In particular, I share Cockburn's call to broaden our view of economic dependencies and to make explicit the normative weight implicit in current understandings of who counts as independent and who does not (2018, p. 28). Also, by contesting "the usual suspects" of dependence (such as welfare recipients) and shifting the analysis to the economically powerful, his study provides an excellent starting point for ideology critique. Finally, I agree with his take on the limited usefulness of interdependence as an alternative term to dependence. As Cockburn explains, the emphasis of current literature on interdependence as a substitute of dependence risks replacing qualitative differences between our forms of dependence with an abstract notion of relatedness (2021).

Radical republicans have also produced valuable contributions to the examination of our dependencies in the context of capitalist relations (Casassas & de Wispelare, 2016; Cicerchia, 2022; Gourevitch, 2015; Leipold, 2022; Muldoon, 2022; O'Shea, 2020; Roberts, 2017; Thompson, 2019; White, 2011). By distancing themselves from conservative and centrist iterations of the republican tradition and by unveiling alternative genealogies, they have opened up a space for the emergence of a new republican theoretical apparatus, capable of grasping structural concerns and impersonal forms of domination. What differentiates labor republicans from traditional republicans is that while both remain preoccupied with freedom as non-domination, that is, with the possibility of falling under the arbitrary power of someone else's will, labor republicans amplify the scope of the analysis. Interested, above all, in challenging the assumption that because no intentional agency appears to be behind capitalist relations, no domination occurs therefrom, they set up a framework in which abstract and impersonal forms of domination are scrutinized as much as concrete and personal ones.

As a matter of fact, labor republicans see workers, prior to contract, as impersonally and structurally dominated by capitalists, but also personally dominated both at the moment of signing the contract and after it, at the workplace. Thus, Gourevitch identifies a “structural dependence” suffered by workers, who by virtue of not having access to society’s productive assets, remain dependent on capitalists. For Gourevitch, this dependence is structural because it pertains to the background structure of property ownership, which forces workers not to work for a specific individual but to work for property owners nonetheless (2015, p. 596). In his contribution, Roberts also explores impersonal forms of domination, such as the market, directing our attention to the arbitrary power that it exercises, affecting “capitalists and laborers alike” (2017, p. 102). In doing so, he addresses some of the critiques raised against republicans, targeting their alleged inability to perceive that, under capitalist relations, personal domination is connected to but also different from social domination. Roberts also makes substantial claims on the topic of dependence, which brings him closer to my argument. For instance, he asserts that Marx’s project is better identified as “a *republic without independence*” and that workers’ separatism relies on a fantasy of independence, “wholly internal to the Hell they seek to escape” (2017, p. 192). Importantly for my purposes, Roberts contends that it is precisely Marx’s examination of objective dependence what distinguishes his position from his contemporaries, more prone to moralizing critiques of capitalism (2017, p. 57). Finally, I identify in Thompson’s analysis of capitalism as a defective sociality, the republican position closest to the one I wish to put forward here. Thompson even claims, as I will do here, that “distorted relations of dependence” lead to alienation (2019, p. 400).

Let me now enumerate the reasons why the approach of this second group of authors—who do an excellent job in bridging the gap between the critique of political economy and the discussion of social dependence—seem to me analytically and normatively limited. Shortly put, these authors tend to pay too little attention to the *objective* nature of dependence. Cockburn’s rich conceptual framework does not provide an analysis of dependencies’ objectification. Although impersonal dependence explains how at times we depend on unspecified others, and structural dependence refers to the transfer of value from one group to another secured by institutional designs, none of these terms captures the specific objectification of social relations that occurs under capitalism. Gourevitch’s structural dependence only captures the dependence of one group of individuals (workers) toward another (capitalists), leaving the dependence of certain groups (unwaged workers or capitalists themselves) unaddressed. I find the republican discussion also partially unclear in its own terms. Although radical republicans have criticized neo-republicans’ emphasis on intentionality, they seem more committed to enlarge what counts as an intention than to assume the limits of the framework of intentions as such. Thus, Gourevitch claims that “the labor republican view takes a broader view of domination, both in terms of the relevant agents and the relevant sense of intentionality” (2015, p. 41). Although the structure itself cannot be said to be an agent, Gourevitch tells us, behind structural arrangements, there are dominating intentional agents. They might not intend to subjugate specific individuals or even a specific distribution of society’s productive assets, but they must intend the defense and legitimization of a structure of property relations based on unequal distributions of private property (Gourevitch, 2015, p. 602). Cicerchia (2022) complicates the debate on intentionality by giving it a structuralist turn, explaining intentions (the fact that we know what we are doing and why, even though we might not know the total social effects of our actions), through the incentives produced by social positions themselves.

Although this discussion lays beyond the scope of this paper, I take the problem of intentionality to be philosophically underdeveloped in republican thinkers (Artiga, 2012, p. 42).

While the problem of imputability is certainly relevant for political reasons, it is not clear that it constitutes the most useful framework for a critical analysis of contemporary societies. Roberts seems to be less preoccupied with intentions and discusses objective dependence in a direct manner. However, he also claims that Marxists authors' emphasis on impersonal and objective forms of domination, such as Postone's and Heinrich's, forgets that behind the domination of things, there are people dominating people (Roberts, 2017, p. 91). If that were the case, then both Postone and Heinrich would be falling prey to Marx's own critique of fetishism. I find that view rather implausible. As Heinrich explains, what Marxists theorists are trying to underline is Marx's attempt to understand not only what capitalist societies have in common with all societies (i.e., that economic relations and categories are ultimately expressions of relations among people) but rather how capitalist societies differentiate themselves from other economic and social arrangements (Heinrich, 2021, p. 159). Their specificity consists precisely in human and social relations being mediated by objects. Grasping the objectivity of these relations might allow us to see that they are not entirely reducible to relations among people. Claiming that they are not reducible to relations among people does not amount to claiming that they are not carried out by people themselves; but rather, that they embody an excess that the mere aggregation of relations among people cannot provide. For that reason, they cannot be simply traced back to them.

My intuition is that labor republicans focus on intentions, agency or people as important for the purpose of social analysis, is due to a specific concern: that without such claims, we end up mystifying social relations and maybe even deactivating social critique. Cicerchia declares that the problem with emphasizing unintentionality when talking about social structures that reproduce domination is that it "can actually mystify the social processes that lead to it" (2022, p. 12). Roberts further claims that "the critical theory of social domination has never clarified how abstractions can dominate people, or why we should care about abstract domination" (2017, p. 83). If this is the case, republicans' reservations are fair ones. Nevertheless, I would like to highlight two recent attempts at explaining the sort of power behind capital that despite not relying on agential accounts, enable a valuable critique and demystification of capitalist relations. The first is Vrousalis' contention that "structural domination under capitalism presupposes collective power but no joint agency or shared intentions on the part of the dominators" (2021, p. 40). According to Vrousalis, the capitalist economic structure is characterized by a triadic structure of domination, involving the dominators, the dominated and regulators—the latter being "any role holders or norms that contribute appropriately to the constitutive domination dyad" (2021, p. 52). He concludes that capital is "collectively power conferring but agentless" (2021, p. 50). Mau's recent theory of the economic power of capital also sees the impersonality of the domination as referring to "the power of a social logic rather than a person or a group of persons" (2021, p. 21). Mau explicates the mute compulsion of economic relations through the notion of emergent property, which is "a property of the system resulting from the organisation of its parts" (Malm cited in Mau, 2023, p. 44). Capital would then be an emergent property of social relations, irreducible to its parts but capable nonetheless of exerting causal power. The understanding of domination that unfolds from this view involves studying power "not only as a relation between social actors" but also as "a relation between actors on the one hand and an emergent property of social relations on the other" (Mau, 2023, p. 45).

In sum, radical republicans contribute to a better understanding of how dependencies are organized and experienced by contemporary subjects, but they tend to dismiss or downplay the objective nature of this dependence. Here, my aim will be to explore a concept that can help us illuminate the problem of social domination from the perspective of the social form rather than

from the perspective of the intentions of specific actors. Note however that I do not mean to suggest that the lenses of objective dependence are the only ones capable of addressing relations of dependence. I do, however, maintain that an abandonment of the concept of objectivity forecloses alternative ways of interpreting and transforming our dependencies. Finally, my normative critique of objective dependence will not stem from a republican notion of freedom, that is, it is not only concerned with domination from an arbitrary will. As Kandiyali (2022) has demonstrated, freedom as non-domination, while being useful to argue against personal forms of domination, is not always the best candidate (and certainly not the only candidate) to explain problems such as social domination.

### 3 | THE FRAMEWORK OF OBJECTIVE DEPENDENCE

Marx introduces the notion of objective dependence in the *Grundrisse*, where he suggests seeing “relations of personal dependence” as the dominant social form of pre-capitalist formations (where isolated production takes place) and “personal independence founded on objective [*sachlicher*] dependence” as the characteristic form of capitalist society (where universal relations are established) (1993, p. 158). Marx admits that by acquiring legal status, individuals purchase a form of independence, but he alerts against the thought that relations of dependence have been abolished; rather, he says, they dissolve “into a general form” (1993, p. 164). Thus, as an aspect of the predominant form of social relations, the notion of objective dependence holds an important key to Marx’s social analysis. According to Postone, it is precisely Marx’s interest in the nature of social relations that enables him to move from a “critique of exploitation, social inequality, and class domination” to a critique of “the very fabric of social relations in modern society and the abstract form of social domination intrinsic to them” (1993, p. 6). Although capitalism’s equation of personal independence with freedom complicates the unveiling of the logic of domination behind our social relations, Marx’s notion of objective dependence provides an excellent standpoint from where to uncover instances of unfreedom. But how exactly are we to understand this objective nature of our dependencies? Marx argues that:

These objective dependency relations also appear, in antithesis to those of personal dependence (the objective dependency relation is nothing more than social relations which have become independent and now enter into opposition to the seemingly independent individuals; i.e. the reciprocal relations of production separated from and autonomous of individuals) in such a way that individuals are now ruled by abstractions, whereas earlier they depended on one another

(1993, p. 164).

To begin with, under capitalism, objective relations of dependence appear as having acquired an autonomous life, separating themselves from the very subjects that bring them forth in the first place. Second, they confront subjects in a hostile manner—an important point if we aim at assessing, as I hope to do, what is normatively at stake. Before getting there, let me turn to Carol C. Gould’s study of the *Grundrisse* and in particular, to her discussion of the notion of objective dependence, which I shall use as the basis of my own account of the term. According to Gould, dependence under capitalism takes three objective forms: the objectivity of money or exchange, the objectivity of capital, and the objectivity of the machine.

Let us survey first the objectivity of money or exchange. As we know from Marx, products can be put in exchange with one another only by being related through an equivalent value, which to be truly universal inevitably needs to abstract from the concrete characteristics or use values of the products themselves. The “universal language” capable of bringing commodities in relation to each other is, through abstract labor, “value or its embodiment in a symbolic form of money” (Gould, 1980, p. 17). But money, Marx tells us, functions only under the presupposition of “the objectification [*Versachlichung*] of the social bond” (1993, p. 160). In a society characterized by a social division of labor, where individuals require and are dependent on a great number of interactions to survive, the self-perception of individuals as independent seems, at first sight, puzzling. Yet this need not bewilder us. First, because producers are indeed made to labor privately, independently from each other. Second, because as authors, such as Georg Simmel, have explained, it is precisely the scenario of objectified dependence that allows for the emergence of the modern feeling of independence. Indeed, for Simmel, the consolidation of the money-form entails a process of abstraction of our dependencies, that ultimately makes us “remarkably independent of every specific member of this society” (2004, p. 298). It is precisely this form of independence that Marx regards as an illusion (or rather, we should say, a necessary appearance); an illusion that passes for a reality only for as long as the conditions of possibility of independent existence remain unproblematized (1993, p. 164). When we avoid such abstraction, what we get is an image of our dependence objectified in money, of the social bond itself expressed in exchange. The individual, Marx famously declared, “carries his social power, as well as his bond with society, in his pocket” (1993, p. 157). Exchange, or its embodiment on money, is thus, the predominant form in which our social reliance on each other unfolds in capitalist societies.

Not only our social dependence is objectified in exchange; under capitalist relations, we are objectively dependent on the market. The idea of market dependence might sound counter-intuitive, considering how often the market is presented as an opportunity instead of a compulsion, as something with which we can freely engage instead of something with which we are forced to engage. But instead of assuming the market as the freedom-oriented institution *par excellence*, let us explore how we are rendered objectively dependent on it—at least within what Karl Polanyi has called “market societies,” that is, societies in which the market has become the predominant principle of social organization.<sup>1</sup> In such societies, we witness an isolation of economic activity, as well as the transformation of its *raison d'être* from subsistence to gain and profit (Polanyi, 1957, p. 71). Not only do market societies presume a gain-oriented behavior from individuals; they also demand trust, for the establishment of an “order in the production and distribution of goods,” in a self-regulating mechanism; that is, a vision of the economic realm as preferably controlled, regulated, and directed by market prices (Polanyi, 1957, p. 68). While Polanyi is interested in understanding how the commodification of all goods and services (even “fictitious” ones, such as labor, land and money) lead market societies to produce unsustainable effects that no society can endure without damaging its human and natural conditions of possibility, I am primarily concerned here with the emergence and the maintenance of an objective dependence on the market.

To understand the origins of this objective dependence, we can turn to Ellen Meiksins Wood's investigation on the role that the market played at the development of capitalist relations. Following Brenner's contributions, Wood claims that systemic pressures coming from the market “operated before, and as a precondition for, the proletarianization of the workforce,” suggesting that economic actors could be dependent on the market (that is, estranged from non-market access to the means of livelihood), “without being completely propertyless and even

without employing propertyless wage labourers” (2002, pp. 51–54). What is important to note here is that the market is not taken to be a mere sphere of circulation; rather, the market is understood as a social-property relation. In that sense, what differentiates capitalism from other modes of production is that “the relation of producers to the means of production, and of appropriators to the means of appropriation, as well as their relation to each other, is mediated, indeed constituted, by the market” (Wood, 2002, p. 85). Because the market is not a mere mechanism of exchange or distribution, but the general regulator of social reproduction, we achieve an unprecedented level of market dependence.

This market dependence produces a series of effects that are worth mentioning. First, it untangles, to a certain extent, social domination from class domination. When societies adopt a quasi-universal logic of equivalence, even individuals who are capable of retaining access to the means of production, are subjected to market imperatives. This will be true for capitalists themselves, as well as for workers’ cooperatives (Wood, 2017, p. 145, 195). Hence, the sort of market dependence that Wood is describing, affecting capital and labor, hints at a form of social power that exceeds for instance the structural domination resulting from an analysis of private property relations. Instead, it leads in the direction of objective and impersonal domination. Of course, this impersonal domination does not unfold in equal terms for everyone and, as a consequence, the market itself will become a “new terrain of class struggle”: even though both producers and appropriators are subjected to market forces, the market will assume the role of domesticating and disciplining labor, acting as “a new coercive instrument for capital” (Wood, 2017, p. 144). Second, market dependence produces a series of compulsions, such as the imperatives of competition, accumulation, and profit-maximization, as well as the constant necessity to develop the productive forces. Indeed, capitalism is characterized by its inherent need to “expand in ways and degrees unlike any other social form” (Wood, 2017, p. 97). Hence, we could say that a generalized objective dependence on the market reciprocates with the first form of objective dependence discussed so far, that is, the objectivity of money or exchange.

As Gould explains, the second form of objective dependence refers to the objectivity of capital. Workers are compelled to sell their labor force and engage in an act of exchange for a sum of money, and as a result, they enter a relation in which they are required to produce not only what is needed for their own reproduction, but also surplus value for the capitalist. In doing so, they participate in a process of objectification “in which labor forms objects in the image of its needs,” objects whose “value is objectified labor” (Gould, 1980, p. 18). Labor will “objectify itself in things not belonging to it” (Marx, 1993, p. 462), which will eventually appear as capital’s objective wealth and in turn confront the worker. Similar to the objective dependence on the market resulting in the objective domination of money, the objective dependence of workers on capital will result in the objective domination of capital over labor. But what does it mean to say that workers are objectively dependent on capital? Marx posits the existence of capital and wage labor on a historical dissolution that functions as their historical presupposition, namely, the separation—only suspended during the production process—of the individual’s relation to the soil as its “natural workshop” and to the instruments of labor, that is, to the objective conditions of production (1993, p. 471).

Before the worker can appear as a worker, he must emerge “as objectless, purely subjective labour capacity confronting the objective conditions of production as his not-property, as alien property, as value for-itself, as capital” (Marx, 1993, p. 498). Of course, the “nakedness” that characterizes the worker, its unfolding as pure activity, is a historical product, the result of an estrangement from the conditions of living labor, of the means of existence (Marx, 1993, p. 472). It is only by “freeing” both individuals and objective conditions that capital can

purchase them through an exchange relation for the purpose of value's self-realization. Paradoxically, the individual appears, at the same time, as suffering from an objective "absolute poverty" and as the subject whose activity enables "the general possibility of wealth" (Marx, 1993, p. 296). Devoid of access to their conditions of reproduction, individuals end up being structurally dependent on capital; certainly, nobody is dependent on particular capitalists, but all workers are dependent on the system of capital—what Lebowitz has named "*the dependence of wage-labour upon capital-as-a-whole*" (1993, p. 96). Although workers confront individual capitalists from an alleged position of independence, Marx claims that this is clearly not the case in "relation to the existence of capital as capital, i.e. to the capitalist class" (1993, p. 464). The disavowed truth behind political economists' understanding of exchange as taking place between equally independent owners of commodities (one as having labor power, the other money) is the absolute dependence of the worker due to his inability to access society's productive assets. It is important to note that the reproduction of this objective dependence on capital consists in the reproduction of a social relation, which is not affected by the worker receiving a better or worse paycheck. A raise of the worker's income might grant him a relatively better quality of life, but it does not "abolish the exploitation of the wage-labourer, and his situation of dependence, than do better clothing, food and treatment, and a larger *peculium*, in the case of the slave" (Marx, 1990, p. 769). Once capitalist relations are established, this condition of dependence does not need to be brutally enforced; the worker's dependence on capital is merely reproduced in perpetuity by the conditions of production themselves (Marx, 1990, p. 899).

We should add that many individuals who do not survive directly through wages are also rendered dependent on capital. Take the case of Gerard, who, in one of the many cyclical crises of capitalism, lost his job and due to his age finds it increasingly difficult to land a new one. He now relies on state transfers to survive and thus, one could think, he is technically not dependent on capital anymore. However, to the extent that the welfare state itself is dependent on capital's generation of profit, Gerard is ultimately still constrained by capital's power. As a matter of fact, the specific form of class domination characteristic of capitalist societies, when looked from the viewpoint of dependence, might be more accurately described through a notion of class defined by "the relation of a group of people to the conditions of social reproduction" (Mau, 2023, p. 129). Instead of the antagonism between capitalists and wage-laborers, we would have a much more encompassing conflict, since "the set of *people dependent on the market* is, in other words, not necessarily identical with the set of *people capital needs as wage labourers*," the latter being "only a subset of the former" (Mau, 2023, p. 128).

We have finally the last form of objective dependence, as it unfolds in the objectivity of machinery. As we have seen, capital relies on workers for the generation of surplus-value, for the revalorization of capital; but it also requires them to work in cooperation with each other, "together side by side in accordance with a plan, whether in the same process, or in different but connected processes" (Marx, 1990, p. 443). This social cooperation is what ends up embodied in the system of machinery, "the most extreme form" of the worker's objective dependence (Gould, 1980, p. 24). If in the objectivity of capital, we found objectified labor confronting the worker in the form of the product, in machinery, we find it in "the force of production itself" (Marx, 1993, p. 694). Machinery is the non-accidental development of the most adequate form of capital, the culmination of capital's incorporation of the means of labor: it positions workers themselves as merely the "conscious linkages" of an automaton that comes to possess the "skill and strength" of the worker, to act according to its own mechanical laws, and to consume the resources it needs for its own survival, "just as the worker consumes food" (Marx, 1993, p. 693). Marx claims that machinery is a necessary development of capital because it is in the nature of

the latter to increase the productive forces and to negate necessary labor to the greatest possible extent (1993, p. 693). Fixed capital is capital's way to overcome its immediate need of workers and to absorb the skills and the knowledge of general productive forces.

The productive forces objectified in the machine are claimed by capital and eventually enter the production process as means of production, as an attribute of fixed capital itself—the process appearing, therefore, as being “no longer dominated by living labor” (Meaney, 2002, p. 151).<sup>2</sup> Of course, fixed capital can only be maintained by continuously expropriating living labor (which offers the capitalist surplus labor and the maintenance of dead labor), but in its search to reproduce itself, it objectivizes productive forces in the materiality of the machine, giving the latter an apparent life on its own. Thus, the capitalist system of machinery makes “individuals interdependent in increasingly internal ways” (Gould, 1980, p. 24), but once again, through an objectification that dominates them. Current debates on the role that technology plays in articulating new forms of dependence, which touch on the dominating effects that, under capitalist conditions, such dependencies produce, illuminate the problem identified by Marx in the objectivity of machinery. In sum, so far, I have argued that relations of objective dependence have intensified and acquired a particular nature under capitalist relations, reconfiguring the social nexus. As I now hope to show, to the extent that this objective dependence leads to reified social relations and forms of domination, it becomes an *unfree* form of dependence.

#### 4 | ALIENATED DEPENDENCE

If dependence is an inescapable social condition, the pressing question is how capitalist relations generate forms of dependence that render us unfree. In what follows, I will draw on recent discussions on alienation (Jaeggi, 2014), to defend the claim that relations of dependence characteristic of capitalist societies suffer from a normative deficit in terms of freedom.<sup>3</sup> Before doing that, let me clarify that I am not articulating a critique of the objectification of dependence as such. Any Hegelian-Marxist approach to dependence must start from the recognition that objectification as such is not the problem; in fact, “objectification is the condition for human material existence” (Bernstein, 1999, p. 45). We objectively depend on nature and by transforming it (and ourselves), we engage in objectification; work itself, as a form-giving activity, implies objectifying the world around us (an idea that Marx takes from Hegel, see Sayers, 2011). To that extent, any attempt at eradicating objectification would be futile. Rather, my claim will be that alienation, as “a form of objectification” (Bernstein, 1999, p. 46), is the characteristic and unfree form of modern relations of dependence. That is, that under capitalist relations, we are alienated from our reliance on each other, rendered incapable of subjectively grasping our objective dependence. The underlying hypothesis of the following discussion is that only after identifying the ways in which certain forms of dependence constitute instances of unfreedom, we will be able to prefigure an alternative social dependence, constitutive not only of life, but of a *free form of life*.

So, how is our dependence alienated? Before all else, it might be worth noting that, from a Marxist point of view, alienation does not refer (or not only) to a subjective feeling. It is not primarily about one's impressions but about the objective conditions and relations under which we live—it is, in that sense, a condition that must be historically situated. Although Jaeggi ends her book, *Alienation*, by claiming that her study has been done from the perspective of the subject and that further analysis would be needed in order to approach the problem from the

perspective of social institutions, I would like to suggest that many of her insights are useful for the purpose of understanding the unfreedom characteristic of our objective dependence. This is because: Jaeggi understands alienation as a “relation of relationlessness,” as a deficient relation rather than an absence of relation (2014, p. 1). That is particularly pertinent in an investigation of objective dependence, where whatever is going wrong has less to do with the individual’s isolation and more with, as Marx would put it, the “ensemble of social relations.” In addition, Jaeggi’s formal theory of alienation carefully avoids problems such as essentialism, perfectionism, or paternalism—problems that my own analysis also wishes to circumvent. Indeed, my use of a critique of alienation does not intend to suggest that we will, at some point, with the right social transformations, obtain a restored unity, a lost wholeness. Less demandingly, it begins from the thought that “it is as ridiculous to yearn for a return to that original fullness as it is to believe that with this complete emptiness history has come to a standstill” (Marx, 1993, p. 162). So, rather than pointing to an inability to achieve a sense of full reconciliation with the world, alienation is to be grasped as a relation of appropriation going awry. Arguably, alienation complicates the problem of heteronomy; in alienation, we are an essential part of the social relation under scrutiny. As a matter of fact, the kind of social domination that takes place under capitalist relations is rather complex precisely because it is inhabited by this paradox: we are the creators of our social relations and hold the power to transform them; yet, at one and the same time, we are objectively dominated by them and structurally impeded to change them.

Having made those preliminary comments, I will now examine in turn the problems concomitant with the objectivity of exchange, of capital, and of machinery. When it comes to the social dependence created by general exchange, Marx tells us that despite being “a vital condition for each individual,” it appears to them as alien, autonomous, as a thing (1993, p. 157). Our objective dependence on money results “in the form of a natural relation, as it were, external to the individuals and independent of them” (Marx, 1993, p. 158). In his analysis, Marx alludes to those who claim that money has an important and necessary social role to play, because, in modern societies, people place a faith in it that they do not and cannot place in each other. Rather than refuting their claim, Marx reflects upon the reasons for people to act in such a way, and gives us a straightforward answer: people do it “only because that thing is an objectified relation between persons” (1993, p. 160). Marx does not believe that we do this in a fully conscious manner, but he is nonetheless interested in pointing out that money has this social power “only because individuals have alienated their own social relationship from themselves” (1993, p. 160). Surely, one of the most significant moves made by Marx was to distance himself from the Owenites (who blamed the evils of society on money), by showing that money was in fact a necessary and inevitable result of the exchange of equivalent values (Roberts, 2017, p. 58). Thus, for Marx, the objectification of the social relation in exchange, its alien and independent character, is what must be signaled as being at the origin of the problem.

To clarify this admittedly abstract idea by means of a (counter) intuitive example, think of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declaring that “there is no way in which one can buck the market.” Although it would have been unlikely for historical Thatcher to have put it in these terms, our fictitious Thatcher, when proclaiming so, is indeed corroborating the reified nature of exchange relations by suggesting a vision of them as something that we cannot really handle and that exists beyond our control. However, as it was argued above, markets occupy a privileged position in the establishment of modern relations of dependence, exerting a structuring force that shapes the grammar of our lives, allocating all the major inputs of production and directing the investment of social surplus (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018, p. 24). By accepting their self-regulated existence, we abandon our survival to a form of power that, by all appearances, takes

a life on its own. In short, rather than freely managed by us as our common wealth, social production ends up existing outside of us as our “fate” (Marx, 1993, p. 158).

The objectivity of capital is characterized by the same problem, as capital too becomes “an *alien power* that dominates and exploits” the worker (Marx, 1990, p. 716). Workers produce collective wealth, but the objectified form of this production, that is, capital, develops “into a coercive relation” that “compels the working class to do more work than would be required by the narrow circle of its own needs” (Marx, 1990, p. 716). In fact, workers end up not producing at all for the purpose of satisfying their needs; the latter being subsidiary to capital’s self-valorization. Finally, the objectivity of machinery culminates as well in a form of domination: workers are confronted by the machine—the objectification of their production forces—which acts upon them, again, as an alien power. Indeed, “in machinery, objectified labour confronts living labour within the labour process itself as the power which rules it,” materially opposing the worker, coming up against her, “physically as capital” (Marx, 1993, pp. 693–695). Thus, all three forms of objective dependence result in dominating social relations by an alien force. More specifically, following the framework provided by Jaeggi, we could claim that each of them is an instance of social alienation as reification and loss of control. Jaeggi argues that

Relationships can be described as alienated in which institutions appear as all-powerful or where systemic constraints appear to provide no place for free action. In this sense alienation or reification refers to a condition in which relations take on an independent existence (*Verselbständigung*) that stand over and against those who constitute them

(2014, p. 5)

As I have shown, under current forms of objective dependence, that is exactly the case. We engage in social processes that eventually end up existing (or so they appear to us) beyond our influence. Logically, this lack of influence over the nature of our social relations must come forth as unsatisfactory for modern self-determining subjects, since it naturalizes those relations, making us think that they respond to a logic that is not reversible or up for discussion. Let me stress here that the reification of our dependence under forms that appear beyond our reach is ideological, in the sense of being simultaneously true and false (Jaeggi, 2009, p. 66). To the extent that exchange, capital, and machinery become independent and acquire a life on their own, we are subjected to them; but to the extent that they are our own creation, they are alterable. Because, as I have asserted, the problem is not the objective nature of our dependence, but rather, that this objectivity under conditions of capitalism becomes a reified form of dependence, its alienation is a perfect case of individuals suffering “an impeded return out of this externalization” (Jaeggi, 2014, p. 15).

For Jaeggi, a further problem of instances of reification is rigidification, that is, the inhibition of practical questions; the fact that by disappearing as objects of decision, congealed relations “make themselves immune to further questioning” (2014, p. 59). For that reason, capitalism can be seen as reifying not only our social relations but also our productive agency, that is, as alienating our “rational power to produce for reasons” (Vrousalis, 2020, p. 265). Rather than “freeing” us from taking difficult decisions, this “pre-emptive removal of the most consequential matters from the scope of democratic-decision-making” (Fraser, 2020, p. 290), condemns us to reified forms of domination. Because laborers do not have access to the means of subsistence and need the money owned by capital to obtain them, they are structurally impelled to sell their labor force to it. Capital will (generally) provide labor with wages but only under the condition of revalorizing capital in the process. Thus, our dependence represents an

instance of alienation and a relation of domination, whereby individuals are subjected to the reified power of capital for the purpose of making profit. By imposing “its logic of valorisation on social life” (Mau, 2021, p. 6), the social form of capital eliminates the purpose of production from democratic deliberation.

To conclude, let me put forward a final thought on the dialectical relationship between dependence and independence. The analysis made so far assumes that “we need to question our received valuations and definitions of dependence and independence in order to allow new emancipatory social visions to emerge” (Fraser & Gordon, 2013, p. 110). It is my intuition that only after grappling with the problem of alienated dependence, we will be able to reconceive independence. As yet, the myth of independence has proved powerful, but it has systematically left individuals at the margins and has promoted a limited way of thinking about social, economic, and political relations (Glenn, 2002). More importantly, as currently experienced, independence itself could be understood as an instance of social alienation. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx claims that the independence attained under capitalist conditions is “merely an illusion, and it is more correctly called indifference” (1993, p. 163). For Jaeggi, when indifference does not allow us to identify and appropriate the world, it can become an instance of alienation as powerlessness. In fact, the things and situations to which we are indifferent in this alienated manner, have the consequence of dominating us “through this relation of indifference” (Jaeggi, 2014, p. 24). What is important to note here is that this indifference is not mere apathy, an unfortunate attitude that could be remedied if we decided to “care” more for others: it is the result of unfree social relations, not merely a subjective feeling but a structurally induced one. My claim is that to the extent that we continue to produce alienated forms of objective dependence, and to the extent that we cannot freely partake in its organization, our independence will, almost inevitably, be experienced as indifference. For us to attain an unalienated independence, we would need first to acknowledge and radically reconfigure our current relations of dependence—which are now deficient to the extent that they result in reified and exploitative relations of domination. Non-alienated socio-economic dependence might, for instance, enable (presently constrained) forms of “economic agency” (Herzog & Claassen, 2021), but for it to do so, it would need to remain detached from a system of private property or from ideals of material self-sufficiency (Bryan, 2021). For the moment, and despite the common association of independence with freedom, I would maintain that neither dependence nor independence are freely experienced. Arguably, a socialist society would reverse capitalism’s relation between dependence and independence. If capitalism starts with independent producers, only to retroactively construct, through exchange, the social nexus—moving from independence as a presupposition to dependence as a result—; socialism would begin with our condition of social and natural dependence, only to then produce a truer form of independence.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

I started this article under the contention that despite being a powerful achievement of modern societies, independence cannot fully explain the contours of our lives. In fact, modern societies should be seen as structuring “our economic dependencies in ways that we have forgotten about” (Cockburn, 2018, p. viii). Hence, dependence itself needs more attention. Indeed, if rather than the loss of communal ties, a “misapprehension of modern dependencies” is behind de-solidarisation (Jaeggi, 2001, p. 305), then it is vital for any critical theory of society to provide a framework in which these dependencies become recognizable. This has been my aim

throughout this paper. By putting back on the table a discussion that neither the uncritical acceptance nor the immediate rejection of dependence allows, and by bringing to light the objective but alienated nature of our relations of dependence, I have tried to build a critical theoretical framework that renders visible unfree forms of dependence. In particular, I have claimed that understanding the objective nature of dependence is important because it enables different debates than, for instance, an exclusive focus on structural dependence. Something more than property relations needs to change in order for social domination to be overcome and for our social dependence to be lived freely; the complex social form, enforcing the incessant self-valorization of capital, needs to be abolished. Certainly, the analysis proposed here only provides a place to begin. Much more needs to be said about other dimensions of our objective dependence, such as our dependence on reproductive labor or on nature. Indeed, I would claim that one of the advantages of objective dependence as a framework is that it opens up our understanding of dependence itself, facilitating a study of it that includes but also moves beyond relations of dependence at the level of production. Most probably, to serve its critical purpose, the framework of alienation should also be expanded down the road.

Although I have not been able to explore what a specific unalienated objective dependence would imply in this paper, let me nonetheless clarify that the case for unalienated relations must avoid relapsing into notions of complete mastery or transparency. I take that to be an important point if we are to think about the possibility of free objective relations of dependence. The free appropriation of our relations should be thought as a process of learning constituted by the constant negotiation between our freedom and the unforeseeable and uncontrollable aspect of our actions (Jaeggi, 2001, p. 65), as well as between our status as free subjects and our existence as natural beings. At the very least, the arguments presented here have aimed at disrupting the ideological role that the forgetfulness of our dependence plays. As Adorno and Horkheimer remind us, “all reification is forgetting” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002, p. 191), and yet, it should nonetheless be clear that a mere recollection will not be enough. The reification of our objective dependence is to be understood “neither as an epistemic category mistake nor as a transgression against moral principles” (Honneth, 2008, p. 52). Hence, cognitive corrections or moral condemnations would be insufficient responses. Rather, the profound transformation of our social relations, of the practices and mechanisms that produce and enable such forgetting, is required. It will always be worth remembering that it is precisely our dependence on one another what “calls for us to develop institutions of social justice and material welfare” (Hagglund, 2020, p. 11). The normative case for this transformation lies precisely in the possibility of being able to engage, *freely*, with each other, as dependent beings.

## ORCID

Tatiana Llaguno  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4459-4037>

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The predominant but not the unique principle, because as Fraser, inspired by Polanyi, defends, although societies can go pretty far in their commodification of life, they cannot be commodified “all the way down”—marketization being a self-destabilizing logic capable of threatening the market’s own conditions of possibility (Fraser, 2014).
- <sup>2</sup> Meaney presents a case for reading Marx’s *Grundrisse* as following the logical transitions in Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. In particular, he defends that “Marx’s is indebted to Hegel’s exposition of “Teleology” for the logical form of his presentation of the objectification of capital in fixed capital—its ‘material presence’” (p. 152).
- <sup>3</sup> For a classic study of alienation, see Meszaros (1970). For a more recent one, see Øversveen (2022).

## REFERENCES

- Adorno, Theodor, and Max Horkheimer. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Artiga, Marc. 2012. "The Limits of Freedom as Non-Domination." *Astrolabio: Revista Internacional de Filosofía* 13: 37–46.
- Bernstein, Richard J. 1999. *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bryan, Alexander. 2021. "The Material Conditions of Non-domination: Property, Independence, and the Means of Production." *European Journal of Political Theory* 22: 425–444. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14748851211050620>.
- Butler, Judith. 2006. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso.
- Butler, Judith. 2020. *The Force of Non-Violence*. London: Verso.
- Cicerchia, Lillian. 2022. "Structural Domination in the Labor Market." *European Journal of Political Theory* 21(1): 4–24.
- Cockburn, Patrick J. L. 2018. *The Politics of Dependence: Economic Parasites and Vulnerable Lives*. London: Palgrave.
- Cockburn, Patrick J. L. 2021. "Varieties of Economic Dependence." *European Journal of Political Theory* 22: 195–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14748851211001549>.
- Casassas, David, and Jurgen de Wispelare. 2016. "Republicanism and the Political Economy of Democracy." *European Journal of Social Theory* 19(2): 283–300.
- Fineman, Martha. 2004. *The Autonomy Myth: A Theory of Dependency*. New York: The New Press.
- Fraser, Nancy. 2014. "Can Society be Commodities all the Way Down? Post-Polanyian Reflections on Capitalist Crisis." *Economy and Society* 43(4): 541–558.
- Fraser, Nancy. 2020. "What Should Socialism Mean in the Twenty-First Century?" *Socialist Register* 56: 282–294.
- Fraser, Nancy, and Linda Gordon. 2013. "A Genealogy of "Dependency": Tracing A Keyword of the US Welfare State." In *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* 83–110. London: Verso.
- Fraser, Nancy, and Rahel Jaeggi. 2018. *Capitalism: A Conversation in Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2002. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Goodin, Robert E. 1985. *Protecting the Vulnerable: A Reanalysis of our Social Responsibilities*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gould, Carol C. 1980. *Marx's Social Ontology Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Gourevitch, Alexander. 2015. *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hagglund, Martin. 2020. *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Heinrich, Michael. 2021. *How to Read Marx's Capital*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Herzog, Lisa, and Rutger Claassen. 2021. "Why Economic Agency Matters: An Account of Structural Domination in the Economic Realm." *European Journal of Political Theory* 20(3): 465–485.
- Honneth, Axel. 2008. *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jaeggi, Rahel. 2001. "Solidarity and Indifference." In *Solidarity in Health and Social Care in Europe*, edited by Ruud ter Meulen, Wil Arts, and Ruud Muffels, 287–308. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Jaeggi, Rahel. 2009. "Rethinking Ideology." In *New Waves in Political Philosophy*, edited by B. Boudewijn de Bruin and Christopher F. Zurn, 63–86. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jaeggi, Rahel. 2014. *Alienation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kandiyali, Jan. 2022. "Should Socialists be Republicans?" *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2022.2070834>.
- Kittay, Eva. 2020. *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency*. New York: Routledge.
- Lebowitz, Michael. 1993. "Beyond Political Economy." In *Beyond Capital: Marx's Political Economy of the Working Class*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Leipold, Bruno. 2022. "Chains and Invisible Threads: Liberty and Domination in Marx's Account of Wage-Slavery." In *Rethinking Liberty Before Liberalism*, edited by Hannah Dawson and Annelien De Dijn, 194–214. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Macpherson, C. B. 1962. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1990. *Capital*, Vol 1. London: Penguin Books.
- Marx, Karl. 1993. *Grundrisse*. London: Penguin Books.
- Mau, Soren. 2021. "The Mute Compulsion of Economic Relations: Towards a Marxist Theory of the Abstract and Impersonal Power of Capital." *Historical Materialism* 29(3): 3–32.
- Mau, Soren. 2023. *Mute Compulsion: A Marxist Theory of the Economic Power of Capital*. London: Verso.
- Meaney, Mark E. 2002. *Capital as Organic Unity: The Role of Hegel's Science of Logic in Marx's Grundrisse*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Meszáros, Istvan. 1970. *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. London: Berlin Press.
- Muldoon, James. 2022. "A Socialist Republican Theory of Freedom and Government." *European Journal of Political Theory* 21(1): 47–67.
- O'Shea, Tom. 2020. "Socialist Republicanism." *Political Theory* 48(5): 548–572.
- Øversveen, Emil. 2022. "Capitalism and Alienation: Towards a Marxist Theory of Alienation for the 21st Century." *European Journal of Social Theory* 25(3): 440–457.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1957. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Postone, Moishe. 1993. *Time, Labour, and Social Domination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Renault, Emmanuel. 2018. "Dependency." *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy* 2: 36–38.
- Roberts, William Clare. 2017. *Marx's Inferno: The Political Theory of Capital*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sayers, Sean. 2011. *Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes*. London: Palgrave.
- Simmel, Georg. 2004. *The Philosophy of Money*. London: Routledge.
- Thompson, Michael J. 2019. "The Radical Republican Structure of Marx's Critique of Capitalist Society." *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 47(3): 391–409.
- Vrousalis, Nicholas. 2020. "Free Productive Agency: Reasons, Recognition, Socialism." *Philosophical Topics* 48(2): 265–284.
- Vrousalis, Nicholas. 2021. "The Capitalist Cage: Structural Domination and Collective Agency in the Market." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 38(1): 40–54.
- Weeks, Kathi. 2011. "The Problem with Work." In *Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- White, Stuart. 2011. "The Republican Critique of Capitalism." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 14(5): 561–579.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 2002. "The Question of Market Dependence." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 2(1): 51–54.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 2017. *The Origin of Capitalism*. London: Verso.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Tatiana Llaguno** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Groningen. She obtained her PhD with distinction from the New School for Social Research in New York. She specializes in 19th-century European philosophy (esp. Hegel and Marx), social and political philosophy, critical theory, feminist theory, and environmental ethics and politics.

**How to cite this article:** Llaguno, Tatiana. 2023. "Alienated Dependence: The Unfreedom of Our Social Relations." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12551>