

Asger Sørensen

Alienation. Recuperating the Classical Discussion of Marx et al.

Abstract

After years of neglect, alienation has again reached the agenda of critical thought. In my case, I recognize alienation as a challenge for education in contemporary societies. To obtain conceptual resources to overcome this challenge, I have revisited the comprehensive 20th century discussion of alienation. Today, alienation is naturally discussed as an existential condition of human being, but still in the 1980s, there was a strong Marxist current that claimed alienation to be implied by capitalism, in particular by the institution of private property and the social division of labor, and that alienation therefore should be criticized as part of the critique of capitalism and political economy and possibly overcome. Today, under the hegemony of neo-liberal capitalism, this critical and processual concept of alienation is more relevant than ever. Hence, in the present work I argue that the basic logic of Marx's idea of alienation still has critical potential. The argument forms a long engagement with mainly 20th century literature, departing from the very idea of capitalism, considering the ideas of history, education and democracy, discussing how to distinguish and translate key terms, considering why alienation became an object of controversy among Marxists, offering an interpretation of Marx's critique relevant for contemporary society, thus considering alienation a consequence of working under conditions of private property, i.e. being a human being in a capitalist society, and finally presenting Marx's idea of communism as relevant to the contemporary educational agenda.

Key words

Alienation; Marxism; existentialism; private property; social division of labor; human nature; work; critique of capitalism; critique of political economy; education; Entfremdung; Enttäuschung; humanist Marxism; communism; André Gorz; Herbert Marcuse; Rahel Jaeggi; Karl Marx

Abbreviations

- ALI Richard Schacht, *Alienation: with an Introductory Essay by Walter Kaufmann* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970).
- CCC Nancy Fraser and Rachel Jaeggi. *Capitalism: a conversation in critical theory* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018).
- DBE Joachim Israel. *Der Begriff Entfremdung. Zur Verdinglichung des Menschen in der bürokratischen Gesellschaft*, trans. Marga Kreckel and Hans-Joachim Maass, 2 ed., RoRoRo Wissen 412 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1985).
- ESM Margaret Alice Fay. *Einfluss von Adam Smith auf Karl Marx' Theorie der Entfremdung. Eine Rekonstruktion der Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte aus dem Jahr 1844*, ed. Johannes D. Hengstenberg, trans. Karl-Heinz Benz, et al., Campus: Forschung 456 (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1986).
- FRG Federal Republic of Germany
- GDR German Democratic Republic
- MDH André Gorz. *La morale de l'histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1959).
- MEGA *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe*
- MEW *Marx-Engels Werke*
- MTA István Mészáros. *Marx's Theory of Alienation* (1970). London: Merlin Press, 2005.
- NQG Herbert Marcuse, "Neue Quellen zur Grundlegung des Historischen Materialismus (1932)," in Marcuse, *Schriften*, vol. 1 (Springer: zu Klampen Verlag, 2004).
- ÖPM_{GA} Karl Marx, "Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte," 2 ed., in Marx: *Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe. März 1843 bis August 1844*, ed. Inge Taubert, Ileana Bauer, and Bernhard Dohm, MEGA, Erste Abteilung, Bd. 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009 (1982)).
- ÖPM_w Karl Marx, "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844," in *Ergänzungsband. Schriften, Manuskripte, Briefe bis 1844*. Erster Teil., Bd. 1, MEW 40 (Berlin: Dietz, 1968).
- RAR Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (1941/1955), 2nd UK ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).
- USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Introduction

Today, in the traditional homelands of Western modernity, there is a widespread experience of a global crisis. Main material challenges are mostly presented as economic and ecological, but within many societies there is also an increased perception of social, political and cultural malaise. To conceptualize adequately the perceived misery, it has again become common to refer to the classical critique of modern society in terms of alienation,¹ and this is the point of departure for the present argument. As a critical expression of discontent, alienation has proved to retain a strong intuitive appeal, and it is therefore worth looking more into its potentials for normative critique.

Hence, it is not difficult finding people saying that alienation have become ever more acute due to the material challenges of neo-liberal capitalist estrangement, reification and commodification. Moreover, the alienation towards contemporary realized democracy brings to memory the alienation towards what was in the 20th century called 'realized socialism' or 'real-existing socialism,' i.e. Soviet Russia and its affiliates around the world.² In this sense, the alienation experienced in modernity can thus be directed towards social and political realities conceived of as pathological.

However widespread alienation is perceived to be, taking seriously the responsibility for raising coming generations, we must insist on conceiving alienation as possible to overcome or mitigate, conceptually and historically, through theoretical work as well as through praxis. Passing on reality to those to come, if conceptualizing critique in terms of alienation, we must provide a concept that is possible to negate, and thus sublimate, by some kind of human activity, be that through revolution, political reform or education. In other words: As educators we must insist on the possibility of empowering and raising collective consciousness that enables us to govern ourselves in a rational and reasonable way, be that in the family or in the workplace, in the village councils or in the parliament or the general assembly of the United Nations. This is what education in a democracy is for.

That being so, education is not restricted to children. Continued education such as democratic citizenship education forms a necessary condition for realizing and sustaining a genuine and robust social democracy. Being partly inspired by Habermas, I have already argued elsewhere that democratic citizenship education must combine insights from both socialism, liberalism and republicanism,³ but also that the successful education to real social democracy must transcend these well-established social and political agenda, ultimately endorsing a very broad conception of the political that stimulates added

¹ See, e.g., Emil Øversveen, "Capitalism and alienation: Towards a Marxist theory of alienation for the 21st century," *European Journal of Social Theory* (2022 [forthcoming]), David Harvey, "Alienation," in *The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Chris Caruso (Pluto Press, 2020), Rainer Forst, "Noumenal Alienation: Rousseau, Kant and Marx on the Dialectics of Self-Determination," *Kantian Review* 22, no. 4 (2017), Sebastian Kuhn and Markus Tausendpfund, "Entfremdung in der Schule der Demokratie? Informationen und Beteiligungsmöglichkeiten bei lokalen Planungen aus Sicht von Bürgern und Politikern," *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 47, no. 2 (2016). and Peter Armstrong, "Alienated consumption, the commodification of taste and disabling professionalism," *ephemera. theory & politics in organization* 13, no. 2 (2013).

² Allow me to thank Charles Taylor for calling my attention to this parallel at the Copenhagen seminar in June 2022 on Craig J. Calhoun, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, and Charles Taylor, *Degenerations of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).

³ See Asger Sørensen, "Bildung as Democratic Opinion and Will Formation. Habermas Beyond Habermas," in *Rethinking ethical-political education*, ed. Torill Strand, Contemporary Philosophies' and Theories in Education 16 (Berlin: Springer, 2020).

emphasis on cultural and aesthetic issues.⁴ My overall philosophical ambition is thus to facilitate conceptually education, and especially citizenship education, for social democracy, the assumption being however that in the real world this ambition is challenged by alienation. Nevertheless, the assumption is also that alienation can be conceived of as something that can be coped with, and this assumption draws in particular on conceptual resources from the German tradition of humanist educational thought.⁵

Recuperating the idea of alienation in such an educational perspective, one must relate to the fact that alienation has been a crucial element in different kinds of critical reflections on the human predicament of modernity and that consequently, there has been strong disagreement about what the term 'alienation' is supposed to signify. Of course, alienation refers to something presumably well-known becoming alien or unfamiliar, but when further specification is undertaken, almost immediately principled conflicts surface.

At the time of writing, one could encounter the following statement with graphical emphasis in an article in the leading intellectual weekly in Denmark: "Alienation is not a Marxist concept, but a real and deeply felt experience."⁶ On the one hand, a statement like this refers and adds to the common denigration of theoretical thought; on the other, it reminds about the experiential content that gives alienation its normative force and that has also been made the object of important empirical research.⁷ In fact, rather than normative potential, often the express ambition of defining alienation more precisely is to enhance its explanatory power.⁸ However, referring to a classical Marx-quotation of my youth, I will deny that this should be a necessary conflict at stake here:

It is clear that the arms of criticism cannot replace the criticism of arms. Material force can only be overthrown by material force, but theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses. Theory is capable of seizing the masses when it demonstrates ad hominem, and it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp things by the root. But for man the root is man himself.⁹

Hence, even though my overall intent is practical, my present argument stays within theory, or rather, philosophy, recognizing alienation as a genuine experience, but admitting beyond the commonly accepted subjective aspect also the possibility of alienation as something existing objectively whether it is experienced or not.

At first, apparently three major conceptions of alienation are typically referred to. Firstly, for Sartre, the problem is the existential absurdity of human existence *per se*: "it is absurd that we are born; it is absurd

⁴ See "Educating Citizens through Bildung. Didactics and Pedagogy in the service of Democracy," *Eğitim Felsefesi ve Sosyolojisi Dergisi / Journal of Educational Philosophy and Sociology* 2, no. 1 (2021). Or, in Spanish: "Educar a los ciudadanos a través de bildung. Didáctica y pedagogía al servicio de la democracia.," in *Democracia en estado de alarma. Sujetos emergentes y esfera pública*, ed. Joaquín Valdivielso (Madrid: CSIC, 2022 (forthcoming)).

⁵ See, e.g., Günther Buck, *Rückwege aus der Entfremdung : Studien zur Entwicklung der deutschen humanistischen Bildungsphilosophie* (München & Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink & Ferdinand Schöningh, 1984).

⁶ Anna Raaby Ravn, "På ryggen af en snegl," *Weekendavisen*, March 4th 2022.

⁷ See, e.g., Johan Alfonsson, *Alienation och arbete : unga behovsanställdas villkor i den flexibla kapitalismen* (Lund: Arkiv förlag, 2020).

⁸ See, e.g., Øversveen, "Capitalism and alienation: Towards a Marxist theory of alienation for the 21st century.," 3.

⁹ Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie (1843)," 16 (13) ed., in *1839 bis 1844*, Marx-Engels-Werke 1 (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2006).385.

that we die," and "this absurdity is presented as the permanent alienation of my being-possibility which is no longer my possibility, but that of the Other."¹⁰ The problem can however also be more specific. Hence, in the second place, the problem can be the inauthenticity of life in a modernity characterized by specialization and technology, which is how it is perceived by, say, Jaspers.¹¹ Finally, the problem can be the material conditions of human life in a capitalist society characterized by assembly line work, exploitation and injustice, which is how Marx would see it, and which is also my main focus below.

Hence, in the 20th century philosophy discussing alienation, typically two different philosophical leanings or approaches can be detected as potentially in conflict, namely, on the one side, various kinds of existentialism and phenomenology, and, on the other side, various kinds of Marxism. Both within the two camps and across camps, subjectivity and objectivity are issues to consider in the discussions. When rounding up the present work, in the Danish weekly just mentioned, there was an encyclopedic column simply titled "*Fremmedgørelse*," i.e. alienation, where the first statement states that it "is a fundamental human condition," i.e. the most classical existentialist statement. Later, however, it is said that in Marxist theory, it is "one of the evils of capitalism." One does not own one own "workforce," but sell it piece by piece, and at the assembly line, one does not understand, what one produces, only that somebody else will have the "profit."¹² These distinctions, i.e. between subjectivity and objectivity, empirical work and philosophy, and within philosophy, between existentialism and Marxism have been around for decades,¹³ and may be considered classical for the discussion of alienation.

Today, there is of course continued discussion of alienation within phenomenology and existentialism,¹⁴ and in general, the existential conception sometimes appears hegemonic. However, there are also an increasing number of substantial contributions to the discussion from the Marxist camp, in particular from Critical Theory.¹⁵ Being myself mostly inclined to refer to the latter, I have recently discussed critically two major contributions to this field from, respectively, Rahel Jaeggi and Hartmut Rosa.¹⁶ As I have argued, with their experiential approach and individualistic emphasis, giving prominence to subjective rather than objective issues, they have allowed themselves to be influenced decisively by

¹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and nothingness : an essay in phenomenological ontology (1943)*, edited and translated by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Citadel Press, 1968), 523; see also Teodor I. Oiserman, "Kritik des Marxismus an der bürgerlichen Entfremdungsphilosophie (1963)," in *Entfremdung*, ed. Heinz-Horst Schrey (Darmstadt: : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 235-36.

¹¹ See, e.g., "Kritik des Marxismus an der bürgerlichen Entfremdungsphilosophie.", 241.

¹² Linea Maja Ernst, "Fremmedgørelse," *Weekendavisen*, 29th July 2022.

¹³ See, e.g., Heinz-Horst Schrey, "Einführung," in *Entfremdung*, ed. Heinz-Horst Schrey (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), ix-x. and Rahel Jaeggi, *Entfremdung : zur Aktualität eines sozialphilosophischen Problems*, Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie und Sozialphilosophie 8, ed. Axel Honneth (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005), 29-40.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Dan Zahavi, "Second-Person Engagement, Self-Alienation, and Group-Identification," *Topoi* 38, no. 1 (2019). And Patrizia Breil, *Körper in Phänomenologie und Bildungsphilosophie: Körperliche Entfremdung Bei Merleau-Ponty, Waldenfels, Sartre und Beauvoir* (Leverkusen-Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2021).

¹⁵ See, e.g., Jaeggi, *Entfremdung.*; Hartmut Rosa, *Resonanz : eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016). And Nancy Fraser and Rachel Jaeggi, *Capitalism : a conversation in critical theory* (Cambridge, UK ;: Polity Press, 2018), 134-36.

¹⁶ See my Asger Sørensen, "Alienation Reconsidered. Criticizing non-speculative anti-essentialism," *Eikasia Revista de filosofía* 89, no. (Monográfico: Narrativas de crisis y nuevos sujetos) (2019).

existentialism and phenomenology rather than Marx and Marxism,¹⁷ and that is a problematic way to take for Critical Theory.

Contrary to the current fashion in social and political philosophy,¹⁸ in the present argument for reintroducing the critique of alienation I will take seriously a speculative and metaphysical focus on history, economy and philosophical anthropology, bringing to the fore aspects of the original Hegelian-Marxist analysis of alienation that have not, to my knowledge, been sufficiently taken into consideration in contemporary philosophical discussions. In contrast to Jaeggi, Marx's concept of human flourishing and alienation certainly demonstrates a certain 'thickness,'¹⁹ and even though in some Marxist discussions the question of human nature may be still considered controversial,²⁰ as I have argued elsewhere,²¹ classical humanism is worth developing also today, not least in relation to education.

Having in addition already discussed the pre-Marxist origins of the idea of alienation, in particular as they appear in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*,²² in this work I want discuss the Marxist approach to alienation. My hope is that adding substance to a comprehensive conception of alienation will stimulate a constructive normative critique of the aforementioned malaise of contemporary modernity in a way that will raise the interest in education. This being the project, in the present argument much attention will be attributed to the *locus classicus* with regards to Marx's concept of alienation, the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*,²³ also known as the *Paris Manuscripts*, first published in 1932 and sometimes recognized as the first draft of Marx's system.²⁴

As a cultural Marxist preoccupied with Critical Theory and the critique of capitalism, I have been raised with a special preoccupation regarding the basic detrimental logic of alienation and how is accentuated

¹⁷ See, e.g., Hartmut Rosa, "Kritik der Zeitverhältnisse. Beschleunigung und Entfremdung als Schlüsselbegriffe der Sozialkritik," in *Was ist Kritik?*, ed. Rahel Jaeggi and Tilo Wesche (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2009), 33-34.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy. An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). And Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, eds., *A Companion to Political Philosophy (1993)*, Pb. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

¹⁹ See, e.g., Jonathan Wolff and David Leopold, "Karl Marx," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Department of Philosophy, Stanford University: The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2020).

²⁰ See, e.g., Søren Mau, *Stum tvang : en marxistisk undersøgelse af kapitalismens økonomiske magt*, 1. ed. (Aarhus: Klim, 2021), 84-95.

²¹ See, e.g., Sørensen, "Educating Citizens through Bildung."

²² See "Aliénation, Entfremdung – and Alienation. Hegel's Solidary Displacement of Diderot," *Filozofija i društvo / Philosophy and Society* 32, no. 4 (2021). and "Not Work, but Alienation and Education. Bildung in Hegel's *Phenomenology*," *Hegel Studien* 49 (2015), also published as Ch. 5 in *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique. Studies in Economy and Dialectics (Dialectics, Deontology and Democracy, vol. I)*, ed. Lisbet Rosenfeldt Svanøe, *Studies in Moral Philosophy* 13, ed. Thom Brooks (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2019).

²³ See Karl Marx, "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844," in *Ergänzungsband. Schriften, Manuskripte, Briefe bis 1844. Erster Teil.*, vol. 1, Marx-Engels-Werke (MEW) 40 (Berlin: Dietz, 1968), *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, ed. Michael Quante (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015). . And "Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte," 2 ed., in *Karl Marx: Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe. März 1843 bis August 1844*, ed. Inge Taubert, Ileana Bauer, and Bernhard Dohm, Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA) Erste Abteilung, Band 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009 (1982)). The following references to this text of Marx will be indicated in brackets in the text as ÖPMWAG_{WGA}, nn/nn (X,NN), providing thus first the MEW/MEGA² page numbers, and when available, in addition in the inner brackets also the original Roman numerals of the sheets of Marx's manuscript, distinguishing for convenience between the two notebooks, 'S' for the Smith notebook and 'H' for the Hegel notebook. About the notebooks, see further section J below.

²⁴ See, e.g., István Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation (1970)* (London: Merlin Press, 2005), 16-18. Henceforth quoted in the text in brackets as (MTA, nn).

and brought to extremes as capitalist modernity matures, increasing reification, commodification and ultimately commodity fetishization. Modern capitalism totalizes the form of the commodity and thus private property to all aspects of societal life. Today this insight may be considered a commonplace, but the original exposure of this phenomenon I have learned to attribute to Marx. Within this horizon and in hindsight, I have identified two pillars as constitutive for my social philosophical endeavors, namely economy and dialectics,²⁵ and having now for the first time in decades studied in detail a longer text by Marx himself, I realize that the young Marx could have formulated a similar identification. As I will return to below, in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* Marx has two primary references, Adam Smith and G.W.F. Hegel, criticizing the alienation implied by both national economics and dialectics, both of them presupposing material conditions that are not admitted in their analyses.

As Joachim Israel recognized in the 1980s,²⁶ I also recognize in Marx a preoccupation with Critical Theory directed against common prejudicial presuppositions in philosophy, economy, social science and common sense, i.e. what I as a student in those years learned to characterize as ideology critique.²⁷ However, whereas Israel calls Marx's theory of alienation sociological (see DBE, 41), I consider it a fine example of social philosophy. As Israel recognizes, the Critical Theory of Marx has a clear positive normative and conceptual agenda defined by moral-political criteria such as justice and freedom (see DBE, 16-17), and within the Frankfurt tradition of Critical Theory such traits are the hallmarks of philosophy. Recognizing my own preoccupations also in this aspect, I suspect that the *Zeitgeist* of my intellectual formation may have been more active behind my back than I would have thought possible, but this I have chosen to accept as my destiny. As it will be noticed, I have thus found relevant for my present argument quite a number of works from the 1980s.

As an almost classical subject, alienation relates to a plethora of discussions in social and political philosophy. As an introduction, I situate my approach in relation to the current Critical Theory discussion about capitalism (A.), history and division of labor (B.), arguing in continuation for the necessity of politics and education for social progress (C.).

In continuation, I discuss some contemporary definitions of alienation stemming from different languages and point to some problems related to the multilingual roots of the present subject matter. This is however not merely conceptual history, descriptive analysis or clarification; it is the first indication of the normative and critical potential for guiding political action of employing the concept of alienation, namely to make it part of a critique of capitalism and political economy, emphasizing that alienation in its most comprehensive sense has a legal as well as a pathological aspect, the combination of which I believe to fuel social critique and potentially political action (D.).

Following Herbert Marcuse's path-breaking interpretation from 1932 of Marx's *Manuscripts*, firstly, I argue to distinguish between alienation, renunciation, reification and estrangement (E.). Secondly, recognizing the complication due to the translation of a German language discussion into English, we should continue considering alienation the key issue to discuss rather than estrangement, just as we

²⁵ See Sørensen, *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique.*, 2-5.

²⁶ See Joachim Israel, *Der Begriff Entfremdung. Zur Verdinglichung des Menschen in der bürokratischen Gesellschaft*, trans. Marga Kreckel and Hans-Joachim Maass, 2 ed., RoRoRo Wissen 412, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1985), 10. Henceforth quoted in the text in brackets as (DBE, nn).

²⁷ See, e.g., Asger Sørensen, "Dussel's Critique of Discourse Ethics as Critique of Ideology," *Public Reason* 2, no. 2 (2010); "From Critique of Ideology to Politics: Habermas on *Bildung*," *Ethics and Education* 10, no. 2 (2015). And "Critical theory, immanent critique and neo-liberalism. Reply to critique raised in Copenhagen," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 48, no. 2 (2022).

should uphold a conceptual distinction between alienation and renunciation, preferring in both cases the former due to its comprehensiveness, its intuitive critical appeal and its promise of practical transcendence (F.).

In order to pursue this practical philosophical project, I commend Marcuse's interpretations of Hegel and Marx from the 1930s and 40s, and consequently also his classical philosophical approach to Critical Theory, i.e. metaphysical realism, subject philosophy and philosophy of consciousness. Having elsewhere defended classical Critical Theory and distanced myself from the post-metaphysical agendas of contemporary Critical Theory,²⁸ and in particular the proposed universalization of the experience of alienation in modernity,²⁹ I endorse the Hegelian idea of work in Marx's expressivist philosophical anthropology and his criticism of forced labor, connecting the critique of alienation with the critique of capitalism (G.). That makes it relevant to consider the relation between alienation, renunciation and exteriorization, since conflating them as all expressing fundamental existential living conditions implies a concept of alienation that threatens to make political and educational initiatives towards a better world appear as futile (H.)

In continuation, I revisit the late 20th century Marxist controversy concerning alienation, showing why it became such a crucial issue for the so-called real-existing socialism of the bygone Soviet-bloc. The problem was that if alienation could not be criticized as intrinsically and exclusively linked to capitalist relations of production, there was less reason to accept the all too obvious deficiencies of allegedly socialist Soviet-regimes (I.). Still, beyond the political apologetics, if alienation is a universal human condition, or is provoked by the division of labor and modern technology and not the existence of private property and commodities, as it was in fact argued by humanist with reference to Marx, then the radical and transformative critique of capitalism would appear less relevant and socialism be less attractive in terms of the good life. Today, when the desirability and legitimacy of capitalist relations of production are rarely contested, I therefore propose to take seriously the worries of the Soviet-side of the discussion (J.).

Moreover, instead of thinking of the critique of alienation and of political economy as mutually exclusive, with the inspiration from the *Manuscripts*, I take them to be two aspects of the same critique of capitalism. As I argue, human being is understood as becoming alienated under capitalism mainly by being deprived of the product of work due to societal enforcement of private property rights. Alienation is thus implied by capitalist exploitation, and as such it should be handled through democratic politics, economy and law, i.e. as an objective societal condition in need of change, not merely as a subjective human experience regarding the meaning of life or technological innovation (K.).

An important step in this direction is to reconstruct the *Manuscripts* in a way that facilitates the understanding of the crucial role that alienation plays in the critique of political economy. Almost all editions of the *Manuscripts* organize the text making Marx's analysis of alienated work appear as an independent chapter after the critical analyses of the three components of price in Smith's national economics, wage, profit and rent. In fact, however, Marx developed the critique of alienation within the critical analysis of the latter three categories, ultimately arguing that alienation is not only the worker's experience of the object and the work process becoming alien, and man becoming alien to himself and his fellow human beings, but also the unjust transfer of value from the producer to the proprietor due to property rights (L.).

²⁸ See *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique.*, 65-67.

²⁹ See "Alienation Reconsidered.", 160-62.

Hence, for Marx criticizing alienation implies criticizing the political economy of capitalism. When it comes to wage, this is the result of struggle between worker and capitalist, where the former is destined to lose. Basically, value is produced by the utility added through work. The worker thus produces the value, but in a capitalist society, due to property rights, value is alienated to the capitalist where it is accumulated. The fundamental contradiction of Smith's national economics is that it purports to contribute to the wealth of the nation, but in reality, it leads to the misery of the majority of society, namely the working class (M.). As an expression of human being, work itself is exteriorizing and objectifying and thus potentially estranging. However, under capitalism the renunciation of the product makes possible private property and thus the alienation of the produced value. Economic alienation due to private property relations thus involved both the alienation of the produced product in relation to the worker and the alienation of surplus value from the worker to the proprietor (N.).

The critique of alienation, however, transcends technology and economy, the answer to the challenge of economic alienation being thus at first political. Maybe surprisingly, however, Marx's idea of communism reveals a very comprehensive concept of politics that does not emphasize the question of distributive justice, but recognizes societal life as ideally enriched democratically by education, arts and scholarship, and this is a conception of politics that merits continued attention, also when reformist social democracy is preferred to revolutionary communism (O.).

To conclude, I argue for a metaphysical realist understanding of alienation in terms of the unfulfilled promises of capitalist and militarist modernity. Hence, employing the rich Hegelian philosophical anthropology, metaphysical concepts become available to understand the possibility of coming to self-consciousness through more or less radical consciousness-raising processes of experience, in particular politics and education. Instead of reducing human nature to be definable merely in terms of production and appropriation encountered in some Marxist literature, and the resulting understanding of alienation in terms of labor and technology, ultimately, I will thus suggest a broader idea of alienation that can also grasp the discontent experienced in not just economy, but also politics and ultimately human relationships in general.

Politics necessarily implies transferring – i.e. alienating – sovereignty from the citizen to the state, and ideally this is a democratic state with division of powers. In this case, one can argue that the solution of alienation may be even more alienation. Still, real-existing democracy is not ideal. In real-life politics, the sovereign rights of the individual that are said to be inalienable are alienated to the state. Hence, establishing power on one side of a political relation implies impotence on the other, be that in real-life parliamentary politics or military interventions.

This lays the conceptual basis for criticizing the alienation of a highly developed modern society, stressing how capitalism and militarism violates human substance, but also – again – indicating that this detrimental challenge may be overcome. The comprehensive political-economical critique of alienation implies the need for continued public education, including citizenship education. The critique of alienation, however, also implies expanding the idea of education to make it appear both meaningful and attractive, even to alienated citizens of real-life capitalist democracies. Hence, with such understanding of alienation and education, it becomes possible for educators, pupils and citizens at large to recognize the potentials for humaneness of existing societal reality and maybe even conceive of some kind of reconciliation with societal reality.

A. Alienation is to be Criticized as part of the Critique of Capitalism

Up until the late 1980s alienation was broadly used as a general term to designate social, psychological and existential pathologies of modernity, and already at that time, one could in hindsight speak of a certain inflation with regards to the use of alienation (see DBE, 33).³⁰ As mentioned, however, I want to pursue in particular the alienation of capitalism. Assumed is thus, as emphasized by Marx *et al.*, that in the short run, on a day-to-day basis, capitalism produce alienation and injustice, stimulating selfishness, instrumental and strategic thinking, accumulating dead labor as capital and thus generating and increasing social misery and cultural stupification. Criticizing alienation thus implies criticizing capitalism.

Still, it is not clear how we should conceive of capitalism. Interestingly, for example, we will look in vain for a standard definition or even an entry in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Since I deliberately pursue a concept of alienation, the critique of which should contribute to the critique of capitalism, it becomes crucial what is to be meant by the term ‘capitalism.’ Fortunately, in this regard I can benefit from a recent conversation in Critical Theory on precisely this subject between Nancy Fraser and Rahel Jaeggi.³¹ Of course, there are many other good books on capitalism, but this particular book reflects to a high degree the current discussion as I know it as part of Critical Theory. It therefore fits very well my present purpose, i.e. clarifying a little more what I mean by ‘capitalism,’ not least since it has been part of my philosophical vocabulary for decades.³² As Fraser, and in contrast to Horkheimer and Adorno in the famous *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I consider capitalism the problem, not “civilization or enlightenment” (CCC, 215).³³

First of all, capitalism has something to do with economy, the definition of which is clearly political. Economy may thus be said to be about satisfying needs, generating growth or developing the forces of production (see CCC, 118). For me, however, economy is about the production, circulation and distribution of goods. Goods that are attractive have value, and producing attractive goods thus creates value. In capitalism, however, the produced value seems continuously to be distributed unequally. As is the case with Fraser (see CCC, 4-5), my interest in criticizing capitalism means an interest in political economy itself, i.e. not just in redistributing value as an outcome of the black box of economy, but also in transforming, overcoming or at least taming capitalism’s continued reproduction of social inequality.

Understanding capitalism within Critical Theory means, as Jaeggi points out, understanding the role of economy in society in a wider sense (see CCC, 8). In contrast to Fraser and Jaeggi, however, I would refrain from expanding the idea of capitalism to the whole wide web of dynamics which is society (see CCC, 28-29), i.e. from “redefining capitalism as an institutionalized social order” (CCC, 61). Hence, I do not share Fraser’s ambition of developing “a single critical theory of capitalism” (CCC, 144). My goal is a critical understanding of capitalist economy, i.e. understanding capitalism as an economic order through the critique of it, thus combing normative critique and analytical explanation or social theory (see CCC, 58-59, 121-22). As Jaeggi stresses (see CCC, 116), critique of capitalism can come in at least three guises, one related to functioning of capitalism, one related to social justice and one related to the possibility of a good life, and I am interested in all three of them, assuming that what is alienating by capitalism is its proper functioning, the injustice continuously produced, and the real misery experienced.

³⁰ See also Christoph Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2015), 19.

³¹ See Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*; henceforth referred to in brackets in the text as (CCC, nn).

³² See, e.g., Sørensen, *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique*.

³³ For my discussion of the *Dialectic*, see the Interlude in *ibid*.

Initially, capitalism can be characterized by property owners contracting free labor to add value to their possessions, their idea being to bring the manufactured goods to the market and sell them for a value that exceeds the costs of the production and distribution. The product produced thus assumes the form of a commodity or simply becomes a commodity, and commodification can therefore be considered the central process of capitalism. In principle, capitalism means that labor is exploited by the transfer of value from the producer to the non-producing proprietor, and capital is the accumulated surplus value of the proprietor. In addition, the freedom to sell and buy labor creates a labor market that turns labor also into a commodity. Jaeggi sums up capitalism to be defined by private ownership of means of production, class division between owners and producers, market allocation of resources, including a free labor market, and capital accumulation orientated towards profit and further expansion rather than consumption (see CCC, 15,28). Capitalism has thus famously been characterized as the system where congealed past or even dead labor dominates living labor, human beings (see CCC, 133),

In Smith's economics, or what is often called classical political economy, free market enterprise is idealized as leading to the wealth of the nation, and many liberals still believe that this is the case. However, in reality, and obviously since Marx undertook his critique of political economy, capitalism has clearly created far more wealth for a minority of a given nation than for the great majority. A classical answer from liberals has been to recognize this as an anomaly that simply proved that there was still not sufficient economic liberty, i.e. that deregulation should proceed even further, claiming that in the long run, everybody would benefit from this freedom and social justice ultimately prevail. However, as John Maynard Keynes became famous to remark almost a century ago, in the long run we are all dead.

This kind of critique aims at revealing conditions of capitalism that liberal economics ignores or deliberately conceals to appear more legitimate and attractive. Continuing Marx's critique of political economy, such a critique of ideology reveals those more or less presentable preconditions that are necessary for capitalist economy to function smoothly, i.e. without too much unrest or uproar from the workers, when they realize that they are being exploited of the value of their labor. As Fraser stresses, struggles between capital and labor over the rate of exploitation is characteristic all capitalist societies (see CCC, 69). Hence, continued exploitation and transfer of value is only possible, when possessions are protected effectively through a legitimate enforcement of private property rights, i.e. a recognized legal system and a powerful executive authority. In general, the private power of capital is developed within the framework of public power (see CCC, 76-77). However, as Fraser calls attention to, capitalist "economy simultaneously relies on and destabilizes public powers" (CCC, 39).

Behind the economic foreground, capitalism thus presupposes non-economic background conditions (see CCC, 48). Crucial is, for example, the progressive realization of liberty. As a necessary condition of capitalism, Fraser and Jaeggi follows Marx in calling attention the increased freedom of workers, namely to their ability to sell labor on the labor market (see CCC, 16-17). This freedom of the workers was achieved historically when the feudal rights of the landed nobility over the peasant serfs of their land were weakened, most famously, as it happened through the abolition of such right in the French revolution. Elsewhere, things happened differently, but in general, the increased freedom of the workers to sell their labor implied the freedom of the entrepreneur of any responsibility for the workers apart from the salary. Being thus abandoned by authorities responsible for their care, the increased freedom proved fatal for many poor people. As Marx pointed out, the freedom of labor thus comes a double sense, freedom to work and to starve, if they do not enter a contract (see CCC, 16).

In addition, property was also freed from restrictions, making property and thus value movable and transferable rather than tied to specific locations and families. Together these freedoms constitute a system of contractual relations that Fraser believes Marx could recognize as reflecting some kind of

intra-systemic justice, even though in a broader sense, the system is clearly unjust (see CCC, 124). Regarding justice, the narrow liberal conceptions must give way to broader social conceptions (see CCC, 126); Fraser even stresses that capitalism also becomes a system of “political injustice” (CCC, 132).

Certain historical stages can be detected in the realization of necessary preconditions of capitalism, one of them being increased freedom, both of individuals and of property. Since Marx capitalism has thus been defined both historically and by certain traits. Certainly, one can detect a particular historical development from feudalism to capitalism, and as Fraser, I would also recognize a subsequent historical development within Western capitalism from 18th century mercantile capitalism over 19th century liberal capitalism and 20th century state managed capitalism to present-day financialized capitalism (see CCC, 64). Furthermore, in the history of capitalism, Marx has famously pointed out the significance of the pre-capitalist primitive accumulation, which is normally understood as a rather brutal, pre-legal or extra-legal transfer and accumulation of value to become the private property of non-producers, not recognizing any rights of the exploited producers. Primitive accumulation thus happens through conquest, plunder and theft, e.g. by enslaving people, dispossessing them of their land, or other kinds of non-contractual and violent acts.

It has been discussed, if primitive accumulation is only a historical precondition of capitalism, or it is a structural condition that accompanies capitalism throughout its history, and as Fraser (see CCC, 43), I suspect that the legal and the extra-legal accumulation continuously works hand-in-hand. Criticizing the ideology of liberal economics, it thus makes sense to add to the front story of capitalist exploitation through legal transfer of value from free labor, the less presentable backstory of continued primitive accumulation that Fraser euphemistically betitles ‘expropriation,’ which is when land, person and labor is seized “without paying their cost of reproduction” (CCC, 41).

Expropriation typically takes place in the periphery of the system, whereas exploitation takes place in the central heartlands (see CCC, 42). However, recognizing the continued reality and necessity of expropriation for capitalist accumulation, it makes sense to unite “the two exes” in a “exploitation-expropriation nexus” (CCC, 103). Even within the foreground of contractual exploitation, the existence of working poor demonstrates the possibility to pay workers less than they need for their reproduction (see CCC, 107). Fraser calls attention to a range of examples going from direct colonial confiscation over racialized and engendered societal relations to the plundering of nature.

Racialized people are more likely to suffer all kinds of societal ills, becoming victimized by crimes or as sex slaves (see CCC, 108). Capitalist accumulation benefits from racial inequality, making it possible to force people into unequal contracts and in some cases even to expropriate their produced value, since the rights of racialized people are not effectively protected by political authorities. Still, as Fraser (see CCC, 110-11), I would hesitate to determine racism as constitutive of capitalism.

The same is the case with sexism. Racial and gender-based domination persist (see CCC, 112), but I would not consider them constitutive of capitalism. Surely, production, commodification and thus capital accumulation benefit from the unpaid housework provided by women in families all over the world since the beginning of time. Within the jurisdiction of the *pater familia*, women and children reproduce the workforce, providing shelter for the husband and care for the coming generations. As Fraser stresses, capitalism relies on an institutionalized division of waged male production and unwaged female reproduction (see CCC, 33). Finally, when it comes to nature, in each location limited resources such as clean air and water and various types of power are expropriated continuously to add value to the production.

It has been remarked that wealth is most effectively acquired by theft, which minimizes cost and maximizes profit. As I see it, increase in wealth and misery are both consequences of market failures, i.e. that the markets are not in equilibrium. When both the labor market and the market for produced goods are in equilibrium, little capital is accumulated. What today is called 'windows of opportunities' are precisely the possibilities to exploit a specific failed market, i.e. a market, where the buyers of the products have few other options. A really cruel example is the private provision of potable water for a specific society, i.e. something necessary that is difficult to replace. Or the opportunity may be created deliberately by producing commodities, where the producers of value have insufficient means of protecting and retaining the value produced due to their weakness on the labor market. This opportunity may even be improved by crushing attempts to organize labor in unions.

The critique of political economy thus reveals the front story of capitalism in economics as ideology that serves to legitimate the official exploitation through in principle free contracts and to conceal the necessary contribution of the shady extra-legal expropriation. Critique of political economy calls attention to hidden preconditions that are necessary for the functioning of capitalism. In continuation, however, the point can also be made that capitalism is contradictory since it annihilates its own preconditions, and this is clearly reflected in Fraser's and Jaeggi's conversation; as Luise Li Langergaard emphasizes, their focus is the "contradictions and self-destabilizing tendencies of capitalism as a social system, which is characterized by consuming its own natural conditions of possibility," "treating nature, social reproduction and public power as 'free gifts', which are inexhaustible, possess no (monetary) value, and can be appropriated ad infinitum without any concern for replenishment."³⁴

Already Rosa Luxemburg criticized capitalism for its functional contradictions, pointing out that capitalism implies a continued commodification of reality, and that this in turn implies the continued existence of non-commodified parts of reality that can be included in the economy. Since in principle, reality may thus become fully commodified, this shows capitalism to be contradictory. As it was pointed out already decades ago, "much like contemporary limits-to-growth theories, catastrophe will ensue and capital, theoretically, will destroy itself in one fell swoop-though in 'reality' its catastrophic demise will occur before the theoretical limit is reached."³⁵ However, as capitalist commodification has unfolded throughout history, it has been able to exploit both material and ideal reality, including imagination and dreams, and apparently there is no end to the creation and invention of new products that can be commodified. Unlike Fraser (see CCC, 162), however, I do not consider this a problem specifically for Critical Theory.

Still, the idea of capitalism functionally contradicting itself by annihilating its own preconditions can also be extended to other aspects of the process, such as the necessary natural resources or the reproduction of work power. In general, as Fraser puts it, "capitalist economy simultaneously relies on and tends to destabilize its own social-reproductive conditions of possibility" (CCC, 35). Work is provided by human beings, who are natural beings, and who may die not just of socially inflicted hunger, but also of lack of potable water, eatable food or sufficient rest. The threat to profitability by depleting resources and spewing waste has thus been characterized as capitalism's "second contradiction" (CCC, 94). As Langergaard poignantly puts it, "capitalism's free-riding on nature comes across as capital's annexation

³⁴ Luise Li Langergaard, "A Critical Theory of Economy? Sustainability and Emancipation," in *New Economies for Sustainability: Limits and Potentials for Possible Futures*, ed. Luise Li Langergaard (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 233.

³⁵ Stephen Rousseas, "Rosa Luxemburg and the Origins of Capitalist Catastrophe Theory," *Journal of Post Keynesian Economics* 1, no. 4 (1979), 16.

of nature, both as a 'tap' to provide resources/input to production and as a 'sink' to absorb the latter's waste."³⁶

Regarding the relation to nature, despite her commitment to historicism and anti-essentialism (see CCC, 68), Fraser takes a realist position, stressing that this background is not simply created by the foreground: nature is "definitely there" (CCC, 150). And I agree. Natural limitations are increasingly in sight at various locations around the world. Expanding capitalist exploitation and accumulation by intensifying expropriation, or plundering, of resources ultimately endangers the natural reproduction of the workforce, and consequently also society's power to consume and thus its effective demand. Expropriating apparently free externalities of economy thus ultimately comes with a cost. Of course, this presupposes a global ecological perspective; the free rider will continue exploiting and expropriating as long as nobody stops him.

B. Critique of Alienation is not about Division of Labor, but Property

Of course, Fraser is right that state-managed capitalism was no golden age (see CCC, 84), and that the synthesis of marketization with social protection required a large system of international state coordination (see CCC, 214). Still, I would argue that the political management of economy by states in international cooperation is preferable to leaving over economy to transnational finance. As I argue, critique of alienation should be made part of a political critique of capitalism and political economy.

However, critique of alienation is often conceived of primarily in relation to the social division of labor, the producer thus being alienated by being unable to get a full grip of the objects produced or having to identify with only one profession. Marx thus famously dreamed of a situation where he could hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, herd in the evening and be a critic after dinner.³⁷ Such dreams often imply an idea of returning to a past ideal situation, where the modern kind of alienation was not a necessary living condition, the implication being in turn, as Peter Trawny has recently emphasized, a romantic longing for an innocent historical past.³⁸ This is however not a line of thought that I will pursue.

Jaeggi reminds us that critique of capitalism comes in different forms, some progressive and emancipatory, others "conservative, nostalgic and even reactionary" (CCC, 127). However, when it comes to history, as Fraser I am not so happy about universalist conceptions of history (see CCC, 157), including Marx's historical materialism. As André Gorz in post-WWII France, I also remember how the idea of "historical necessity" was severely compromised by the "terror of realism" waged by Stalinized communist parties, although, of course, this does not mean that history develops as a "succession of coincidences and whims."³⁹ Still, I will not make any argument about any supra-human direction of history. As Marcuse emphasizes: "Not the slightest natural necessity or automatic inevitability

³⁶ Langergaard, "A Critical Theory of Economy?," 234.

³⁷ See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Die deutsche Ideologie (1845-46)," in *1845 bis 1846*, Marx Engels Werke (MEW) 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1969), 33.

³⁸ See Peter Trawny, *Der frühe Marx und die Revolution : eine Vorlesung*, Klostermann Rote Reihe 5, ed. (Vittorio Klostermann, 2018), 113-17

³⁹ André Gorz, *La morale de l'histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1959), 23. Henceforth referred to in brackets in the text as (MDH, nn).

guarantees the transition from capitalism to socialism;" when we speak of socialism as necessary, it is necessary for the "realization of freedom and happiness."⁴⁰

As Gajo Petrović could observe from bygone Yugoslavia already half a century ago,⁴¹ in contemporary societies one can detect both progressive sublation of alienation and an increase in alienation, and I also find it difficult to decide whether we are at a point in history where alienation can be thought of as maybe coming to an end or on the contrary is in the process of becoming more widespread and deeply entrenched. What I do know is that critique in terms of alienation has a strong intuitive appeal, that Marx is one of our substantial sources to a critical idea of alienation, and these issues I find it worth pursuing.

It is well known that Marx recognized two sources to alienation, division of labor and private property (see, e.g., DBE, 66, 84).⁴² Rather than discussing alienation nostalgically as the experience of loss generated by the division of labor and modern technology, I will emphasize the crucial role for alienation of real-life economy, law and politics. The point is not, as it is sometimes seen,⁴³ to deny that Marx also acknowledged technological advances in capitalism as a source of alienation. Rather, my ambition is to wage a critique of alienation that implies a critique of social injustice, exploitation and exclusion due to state-enforced private property rights, that is, primarily a critique of capitalism and political economy, but in addition also a critique of authoritarian politics.

Agreeing with E. M. Sitnikow from the equally bygone USSR, I thus deny that it should be "unimportant whose property an enterprise is," and that "the abolition of private property does not change much regarding alienated work."⁴⁴ Of course, as Iring Fetscher answered him from the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), i.e. back then only the western part of Germany, having the state's formally take over the property of factories, does not necessarily sublimate alienation for the worker;⁴⁵ in fact, it may be argued that precisely the bureaucratic state socialism of the USSR proved that there is more to alienation than can be sublated by institutionalizing "common property,"⁴⁶ and this question of alienation in relation to politics I will return to. However, in continuation of Marx I will still retain that property relations are decisive with regards to alienation. Critique of alienation is therefore part of the critique of capitalism.

Of course, criticizing alienation implies presupposing some idea of non-alienation.⁴⁷ This does not, however, as Trawny seems to think,⁴⁸ imply that Marx should be taken to express a romantic and potentially conservative longing for a non-alienated historical past that could be attributed existential reality, rather the exact opposite. Firstly, as I will return to, Marx's idea of alienation was not primarily defined by the division of labor. Social division of labor was only an intensification of the basic

⁴⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (1941/1955)*, 2 UK ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 317-18. Henceforth referred to in brackets in the text as (RAR, nn).

⁴¹ See Gajo Petrović, "Gibt es noch Entfremdung in sozialistischen Systemen? (1967/1969)," in *Entfremdung*, ed. Heinz-Horst Schrey (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 281-82.

⁴² See also Iring Fetscher, "Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung. Eine Polemik zwischen E.M. Sitnikow und Iring Fetscher (1967)," in *Entfremdung*, ed. Heinz-Horst Schrey (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 323. And Buck, *Rückwege aus der Entfremdung*, 194-95.

⁴³ See, e.g., Wolff and Leopold, "Karl Marx."

⁴⁴ Sitnikow in Fetscher, "Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.", 306.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 324.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 334-35.

⁴⁷ See Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung*, 21 and Trawny, *Der frühe Marx und die Revolution*, 69.

⁴⁸ See *Der frühe Marx und die Revolution*, 97, 116-17.

exploitation of natural differences by means of private property rights. Secondly, Marx idea of a life beyond alienation was an idea to realized by history to come, not a nostalgia for a lost past. Marx's answer to both the material challenges of capitalism and to alienation was progressive as indicated by the famous idea of the proletarian revolution (see, e.g., RAR, 287-88).⁴⁹

As Marcuse reads Marx, capitalism is not simply a political or economic crisis that can be handled with economic and political reforms. As he later told Douglas Kellner,⁵⁰ with his revolutionary experiences by the end of WWI, he followed Rosa Luxemburg's idea of a total revolution.⁵¹ Hence, capitalism is a catastrophe that "demands the catastrophic sublation [*Aufhebung*] of the factual state through the total revolution." According to Marcuse, Marx's analysis of capitalism thus contributes to the "positive theory of the revolution" that aims to "sublate reification" and "private property."⁵² This ambition, however, I would still consider a political ambition; the difference between the revolutionary and the reformist is a matter of strategy, the latter thus stressing the possibility of imposing partial and gradual restrictions on the rights to private property in a relatively peaceful way.

Interestingly, Emil Øversveen has recently pursued an ambition rather similar to mine regarding the concept of alienation, but exclusively with reference to Marx's *Grundrisse*, that is, to a text that is written much later, i.e. in 1857–61, which can be considered a preparation for the *Capital*, of which the first volume was published in 1867. As I will return to, for some strands of Marxism-Leninism, this is an important issue, since Marx by then should be way beyond his youthful idealism and philosophical anthropology, i.e. from what Øversveen considers the "inconsistencies" of the *Manuscripts*. In this spirit, Øversveen thus aims to

(a) explain alienation as a specific feature of capitalist societies rather than a universal condition of human existence, (b) detail how alienation arises as an objective process from the organization of production and (c) be compatible with a progressive political vision of a more socialized and less alienated form of society.⁵³

For Øversveen, the main problems regarding alienation are those of semantic overload, essentialism, conservatism and paternalism, and in this specification I am in less agreement with him. In general, and especially after reading closely the *Manuscripts*, I consider these problems results of misunderstandings and ideology, for most part due to the current domination of postmodern liberal thought. Let me, however, acknowledge the way he clarifies the two meanings of 'capital' that the mature Marx employs, the product of labor under capitalism both appearing objectified as "alien property," and as an "alien power" that compels labor to the continued production of "surplus value and the capital-labor relationship." This means in turn that the producers are alienated in two ways, "firstly by being appropriated as private property, and secondly by being transformed into a social force that operates

⁴⁹ See also Marx and Engels, "Die deutsche Ideologie.", 33-36; Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der KPdSU, "Vorwort," in *1845 bis 1846 (1958)*, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, Marx-Engels-Werke 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1978), viii; and Trawny, *Der frühe Marx und die Revolution.*, 133-35.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 400-01.

⁵¹ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 85.

⁵² Herbert Marcuse, "Neue Quellen zur Grundlegung des Historischen Materialismus (1932)," in *Marcuse, Schriften*, vol. 1 (Springe: zu Klampen Verlag, 2004), 536. The following references will be indicated in brackets in the text as NQG, nn. See also *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 64-65.

⁵³ Øversveen, "Capitalism and alienation: Towards a Marxist theory of alienation for the 21st century.", 5.

outside the producers' control and against their interests."⁵⁴ This opens up for discussing political aspects of alienation that I will now turn to.

C. Politics and Education are Necessary for Overcoming Alienation

Following Marx, in my argument I thus admit speculative sources of knowledge as well as empirical evidence. In contrast to him, however, and with the benefits of hindsight, acknowledging in particular the achievements of popular movements since his analysis almost two centuries ago, I will insist on the possibility in practice to resist and change the alienating relations of production as a result of relatively peaceful formation of consciousness. Already in the existing society, at least some of us can be formed to become socially responsible human beings and active social democratic citizens rather than merely competitive producers and insatiable consumers.

As I will return to below, Marx reminds us in the *Manuscripts* that, by nature, human being transgresses by far competing, calculating, producing and consuming, and therefore I assume that, due to this splendid nature, real human beings do not have to succumb completely to alienation, not even in capitalist and militarist modernity. In fact, if this was not the case, if there was not just an inkling of humanity realized in us already, the desired progressive social, historical and educational process could not even begin.

Hence, in addition to the critique of alienation with regards to economy, i.e. distributive, productive and reproductive injustices, I also recognize a critique of alienation with regards to politics, i.e. a critique of real-life politics. In particular, this critique can of course be directed against 20th century authoritarian regimes referring to beautifully phrased ideals such as the USSR,⁵⁵ as well as their contemporary inheritors and counterparts, where in reality the "formulation of the decisions" of people are "the task of specialist, authorities and the party."⁵⁶ Fraser recognizes the importance of planning in the socialist society, but insists with explicit reference to the experiences with "orthodox Communism" that it should be "democratic" (CCC, 183).

Alienation due to politics can however also become the case in relation to parliamentary social democracies. The challenge for social democracy is not to let, using a contemporary vocabulary,⁵⁷ epistemic democracy regress to epistocracy. Hence, in principle and as history has demonstrated, beyond anarchy or chaos and however well intended, all kinds of political guardianship are susceptible of sliding into not just paternalism and patrimony, but also domination, power and military aggression. However, the contemporary preoccupation with paternalism,⁵⁸ I consider a consequence of a too narrow liberal ideal of individual negative freedom, i.e. of an ideology, that threatens to discourage us from searching political solutions together with, but also on behalf of others.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Fetscher, "Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.", 324-25.

⁵⁶ Sitnikow in *ibid.*, 308.

⁵⁷ See, e.g. Ivan Cerovac, "The Authority Tenet," in *Epistemic Democracy and Political Legitimacy*, ed. Ivan Cerovac (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Jaeggi, *Entfremdung.*, 47-49 and Øversveen, "Capitalism and alienation: Towards a Marxist theory of alienation for the 21st century.", 4-5

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Asger Sørensen, "Approaching Political Philosophy through the Critique of Liberalism," *Acta Politologica* 6, no. 3 (2014).

Regarding politics, Marx may have been right that politics alone cannot overcome alienation (see, e.g., MTA, 75), distinguishing thus the total “social revolution” against “dehumanized life” from the merely political revolution, which is about the power of “the state.”⁶⁰ However, in the same context Marx admitted that without politics, it is impossible to direct deliberately collective forces. In a similar spirit, Fraser express little faith in democracy’s potential under capitalism (see CCC, 113, 172), but still admits that democratic politics may initiate real transformation (see CCC, 174-75), just as she recognizes principles of freedom and equal citizenship as normative resources available for people at large (see CCC, 179).

Referring affirmatively to Marx and Marxists, one has to relate to suspicions regarding the authoritarianism often associated with Marxism and the famous idea of proletarian dictatorship. Here Gorz offers an interesting reflection, providing an extensive Marxist analysis of alienation departing from the experiences with the realpolitik of not just the Soviet Union under Stalin, but also the democratically elected socialist government in 1950s France (see MDH, 7-46). It is the experience of having alienated one’s own existential freedom to something that subsequently reveals itself to follow the logic of something or someone else (see MDH, 48-50). Hence, political reality was supposed to become realized as an expression, or a part, of oneself according to one’s own idea and will, but in fact it is experienced as following strange, alien or even hostile rules of a system defined by other people. In short, the “human praxis objectifies itself in the matter and turns against the agents as an anti-human power” (MDH, 45).

Hence, for Gorz, political dictatorship can only appear the solution to a society, when people become alienated to a degree that they consider their popular will, or sovereignty, as illusory, when they come to doubt its very existence. This happens when society appears to be unable to realize its objectives by democratic means. However, dictatorship solves nothing for society. The absence of democracy, and the resulting absence of critique and discussion, means that society becomes ignorant of itself, and ultimately, the dictator will, in Gorz’s words, be “alone and isolated in the grand silence that he himself has organized” (MDH, 42).

Hence, with politics, I mean a constitutionally guaranteed political freedom to express opinions and form parties to participate in democratic elections, where the prospective representatives have to seek the favor of the people. In all likelihood, such a system will never lead to communism in the way Marx conceived of it – I will return to his conception below in section O – but, as it was noted in by Fetscher, this kind of political freedom may just prevent the “conservation of the old ‘capitalism’.”⁶¹

Political ambitions imply educational ambitions. In his 1970s analysis of Marx’s theory of alienation, István Mészáros thus insist on the possible “positive transcendence of alienation,” which in his view must be “an educational task” that is conceived of within “a socialist educational strategy” (MTA, 24, 289-90). As Gorz explains, much of what Leninist Marxists call politics, has the character of education, namely to reveal to the masses their true needs, leading them in the direction of “the radical transformation and reappropriation of the entire society,” convincing them that their needs cannot be “truly satisfied within the framework of the existing society” (MDH, 34-35).

Under the great French revolution, Friedrich Schiller dreamed of achieving the social achievements of the revolution without a revolution, but through aesthetic education. Such dreams Marxists such as Mészáros have often ridiculed as utopian (see, e.g., MTA, 290), but as an educationalist, I cannot simply

⁶⁰ Karl Marx, "Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel „Der König von Preußen und die Sozialreform. Von einem Preußen" (1844)," 16 (13) ed., in *1839 bis 1844*, Marx-Engels-Werke 1 (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2006)., 408-09.

⁶¹ Fetscher, "Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.", 327.

accept this dismissal. Even though I agree that genuine aesthetic education requires a socialist society transcending the alienation of capitalism (see, e.g., MTA, 292), as I have argued elsewhere, I still think that education may contribute with something worthwhile for humanity already on the way to realizing such an ideal society.⁶²

As Gorz, I recognize "human relations" as having a certain "autonomy," and this is what education is about. Hence, as Gorz recognizes, modern capitalism has successfully improved human relations at the workplaces, easing the alienation experienced by employees, making the employers less brutal and arbitrary in the exercise of power. Of course, this does not "put an end to the alienation of industrial labor," and neither does it make the hierarchy of the tasks disappear. Under capitalism, real social equality and voluntary cooperation does not exist, but the mimicry of them, if they may be characterized as a "comedy," creates a "good mood in human relations" that may "simply be enjoyed" (MDH, 70).

As a philosopher of education, I insist in particular on the real possibility through education of countering the detrimental socialization of existing societal ideology, understanding education as including the more or less intentional consciousness formation that takes place also outside educational institutions, e.g. the beneficial influence of families and friends, unions, political parties and NGOs, as well as play, arts and leisure in general. Again Gorz: "The continued diffusion of an idea is in-itself part of the condition of its realization," the "intellectual" work of "information" and "education" being also both "real and material" (MDH, 38).

Hence, as an educationalist, I want to retain radical and revolutionary ambitions, but adopt less violent means, opting thus for the kind of staunch and uncompromising social democratic redistribution of power and wealth that guided many popular movements in the 19th and 20th century. Militancy does not have to imply physical violence, at least not if the ruling classes allow for free education and can be made to renegotiate the social contract. Situating my position in relation to a helpful specification of the distinction between ideal and non-ideal political theory, I would opt for a transitional theory rather than an end state theory, being satisfied with partial compliance rather than full, and being finally realist rather than utopian.⁶³

I thereby trust, as also the mature Marx did,⁶⁴ that in the long run, on the epochal level or in the perspective of world history, globalized capitalist society may in fact create the conditions for the future realization of a more just society, materially as well as culturally, objectively as well as subjectively, i.e. in terms of both societal structure and consciousness. For Marx, a prominent example was the capitalist emancipation of feudal serfs to become free peasant and industrial workers,⁶⁵ just as he acknowledged

⁶² See, e.g., Asger Sørensen, "Durkheim: The Goal of Education in a Democratic State is Autonomy," in *Politics in Education*, ed. Peter Kemp and Asger Sørensen, Philosophy of Education 2 (Paris/Berlin: Institut international de philosophie/Lit Verlag, 2012)., "Pour un élargissement de l'éducation à la citoyenneté démocratique à travers la Bildung: Klafki défiant le 21^{ème} siècle," *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* 15, no. 3 (2020)., "Bildung as Democratic Opinion and Will Formation.", "Educating Citizens through Bildung." And "Ohne Kapitalismuskritik keine Sozialdemokratie. Über kritische Theorie, Ideologiekritik und die Notwendigkeit von Kritik," *Zeitschrift für kritische Theorie* 54 (2022 (forthcoming)).

⁶³ See, e.g., Laura Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-ideal Theory: A Conceptual Map," *Philosophy Compass* 7, no. 9 (2012).

⁶⁴ See, e.g., John E. Elliott, "Marx's 'Grundrisse': Vision of Capitalism's Creative Destruction," *Journal of Post Keynesian Economics* 1, no. 2 (1978)., 149-52 and Øversveen, "Capitalism and alienation: Towards a Marxist theory of alienation for the 21st century.", 9-10.

⁶⁵ See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie : (Rohentwurf) 1857-1858 : Anhang 1850-1859*, Marx-Engels Werke (MEW) 42, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1974)., 401-06.

that the capitalist growth of the productive forces and wealth in general was the basis of the increased development of science.⁶⁶

Again, this assumption of progress does not imply an idea of a supra-individual history being determined teleologically and realized automatically. What it does imply, however, is, as Marcuse also stresses, the necessity, and the possibility, of engaging as conscious and conscientious subjects in the cooperative creation of history (see, e.g., RAR, 318). When it comes to education, this implies making all subjects of the present society genuine partners in collective human interaction and formation. Moreover, the resulting enlightened social democracy is assumed to be a precondition for overcoming not only alienation, but also global economic and ecological challenges.

As Israel, I thus recognize both economical and political alienation (see DBE, 49). However, I will insist that even under the present circumstances, i.e. even in highly developed capitalist and militarist modernity and in existing real-life democracies, we have the space, or at least a few cracks, that enables us to stimulate the human being of each other rather than merely reduce our life to instrumentalizing, obeying or killing each other, while producing and consuming non-human things. As mentioned, logically, progress through deliberate and conscious action would not be possible without. It is in these spaces and cracks we must nurture and culture the seeds for reason and autonomy, this is where we educate each other continuously while realizing a prosperous future for humanity.

D. Alienation is a Comprehensive Critical Concept

At the height of its 20th century popularity, i.e. in the 1970s and 1980s, alienation was found interesting to discuss and relevant to inquire into in a wide range of different disciplines within theology, arts and humanities, and the social sciences. Alienation was thus recognized as an important, sometimes even a crucial, issue to deal with in social and political philosophy, in political science, in psychiatry and even in mainstream economics.⁶⁷ The most important discipline for the discussion of alienation was sociology, where this particular phenomenon was widely discussed in the intersection between sociological theory and social philosophy,⁶⁸ in some cases being even recognized as constitutive of sociology as such.⁶⁹ The discussions of alienation even spread outside the academic world. The social democrats of FRG could thus emphasize alienation in relation to unemployment and environmental degradation,⁷⁰ and the former social democratic prime minister and Nobel peace prize laureate, Willy Brandt discussed the

⁶⁶ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 439.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., William C. Bier, ed. *Alienation : plight of modern man?*, The pastoral psychology series (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972)., Frank Johnson, ed. *Alienation : concept, term, and meanings* (New York: Seminar Press, 1973)., Heinz-Horst Schrey, ed. *Entfremdung, Wege der Forschung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975). And Paul A. Samuelson, *Economics*, 10 ed. (Tokyo: McGraw-Hill Kogakusha, 1976)., 52-54.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., David Schweitzer and R. Felix Geyer, eds., *Alienation Theories and De-Alienation Strategies : Comparative Perspectives in Philosophy and the Social Sciences* (Northwood: Science Reviews, 1989).

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung.*, 19.

⁷⁰ Kurt van Haaren, Hans-Ulrich Klose, and Michael Müller, *Befreiung der Arbeit: Strategien gegen Arbeitslosigkeit, Naturzerstörung und Entfremdung*, Forschungsinstitut Der Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung. Reihe: Arbeit: Sonderheft 6, ed. Werner Fricke (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1986).

alienation of being unemployed referring to Marx's distinction between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom.⁷¹

Despite this prominence – or maybe in fact owing to it – alienation is not easy to define, neither as a word nor as a concept, and as a real phenomenon, it is not that easy to grasp either. As mentioned, it has been made part of many kinds of critical reflections, and there is definitely a problem of semantic overload.⁷² Adding to the complexity is the origin of the word used to demarcate the subject matter at hand, since its semantic meaning comprises traces of multiple translations and displacements between different languages that began more than 200 years ago and are still going on, some of which I have already discussed elsewhere.⁷³ However, I must admit that I continue to be troubled by the relationship between the languages that are used by the primary participants in the discussion of alienation, hence apart from English, primarily German, but also French, and of course my own native tongue, Danish.

With regards to alienation, we thus have a vocabulary of English, German and French words that cannot always be paired in straightforward and comprehensible ways. Before proceeding further with the main argument, let me therefore pause to outline and discuss the subject we are dealing with in rather general terms, indicating various peculiar aspects as well as some of the historical and etymological roots of the term discussed. As mentioned, however, the present project is not historical; hence, the ambition is to indicate the potential of alienation for constructive normative critique.

Today, as the word 'alienation' is used in social and political philosophy, it is typically meant to signify some feeling or experience of discomfort or unease. Allen Wood thus points to "various social or psychological evils" that are characterized by "separation, disruption or fragmentation". Still, it is not perfectly clear what kind of evils that are referred to, or to whom these evils may pertain and why they occur. Wood adds that people can be "alienated from one another," when "there is an interruption in their mutual affection or reciprocal understanding", just as they can be "alienated from political processes when they feel separated from them and powerless in relation to them."⁷⁴

However, as it becomes clear below, even though this seems like a rather broad characterization, it is in fact only a part, or an aspect, of what can be said about this subject, focusing rather on psychological, social and existential issues than on political, legal and economic. As indicated, 'alienation' can have an even broader, diverse and context sensitive meaning in everyday language. A foreigner is thus an alien, so is a monster from outer space, and just as we – consciously or unconsciously, subjectively and/or objectively – can be suffering from alienation, we can also, even deliberately and actively, alienate other people by our actions or expressed opinions.

In addition, however, alienation can also mean 'disposing of' or 'being deprived of' something, hence, e.g., the expression 'inalienable rights.' That some rights can be inalienable, however, means that other rights can be alienated, or even that all rights can be alienated. For Rousseau the *Social Contract* thus requires the "total alienation of each associate of all his rights to the community."⁷⁵ This way of understanding points to a more specific technical meaning within law and legal theory, namely understanding 'alienation' as the "transference of some possession" being held legally and legitimately,

⁷¹ Willy Brandt, "Vorwort", in *ibid.*, 7.

⁷² See, e.g., Øversveen, "Capitalism and alienation: Towards a Marxist theory of alienation for the 21st century.", 3.

⁷³ See Sørensen, "*Aliénation, Entfremdung* – and Alienation.."

⁷⁴ Allen W. Wood, "Alienation," in *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁷⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social : précédé de Discours sur l'économie politique ; et de Du contrat social, première version ; et suivi de Fragments politiques (1964)*, ed. Robert Derathé, Folio/Essais ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1993), 182-83 (bk. 1, ch.vi).

i.e. "handling over some entitlement."⁷⁶ Alienation in this legal sense thus means that in the transfer of my possessions I become alienated from my property.

From this political and legal use of 'alienation', a link can be made to the idea of being deprived of something very specific, namely being deprived of reason, i.e. being foolish, out of one's mind, or outright insane. In the 20th century, the use of the word as referring to a psychological pathology was said to be infrequent in English,⁷⁷ but in French, this use was quite common. As one of Sigmund Freud's important precursors, Pierre Janet explains in French, 'alienated' – i.e. *aliénée* – is not a scientific term, neither a medical term, but part of the "popular language", signifying an "individual who is dangerous to others or himself, without being legally responsible for the danger he causes"⁷⁸. Hence, being deprived of reason means being held unaccountable, and that may, by legal implication, mean being deprived of one's basic legal right to freedom, thus as a consequence being alienated from one's inalienable rights as a human being.

Being alienated in this emphatic sense can thus be taken to mean being alienated, not just from one's possessions or surroundings, but also from one's better self, and by this detour into French language, we approach the German term usually used to translate 'alienation', namely '*Entfremdung*' (see, e.g., DBE, 33). Interestingly, as Trawny has emphasized, in German the prefix '*Ent*' would normally signal the removal of what follows, but in this particular case, it means bringing forth what follows, i.e. strangeness.⁷⁹ Etymologically, '*Entfremdung*' is thus closer to 'estrangement' than 'alienation,' 'strange' thus being '*fremd*' and '*Ent-fremdung*' – with added hyphen for clarity – therefore 'e-strangement.' Still, 'alienation' is the most commonly used equivalent to '*Entfremdung*.'

Alienation in this Germanized sense means the process of being confronted with something as alien or strange that one was once, or is still supposed to be, familiar with. Hence, the problem is not merely being confronted with something strange; as it been remarked, one simply cannot live or develop as a human being without being confronted with and appropriating something alien and unknown.⁸⁰ Moreover, this is what stimulates curiosity, science and bears promises of happiness. Hence, disregarding the distinction between alien and alienation, it has been argued that alienation must be an ambivalent phenomena.⁸¹ Still, most common is the well known critical notion of alienation, i.e. the process of being deprived of something specific that one thinks of as rightfully possessing, e.g. being deprived of the sense of homeliness, of the sense of belonging to the community that one assumed to be part of or integrated in, or simply being robbed of a specific thing or an object possessed.

By implication, this may also be extended to mean being deprived of one's common sense or of reason as a human being. In general, the object of alienation can thus be something real that one experiences as confronting subjectively as slipping away into a pathological relation of absence. Consequently, being alienated can therefore also mean becoming, as a subject, a person or a human being, unsatisfied, or

⁷⁶ A. S. Hornby, *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English (1974)*, 3 ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 21-22.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Richard Schacht, *Alienation : with an Introductory Essay by Walter Kaufmann* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 2-3. Henceforth quoted in the text in brackets as (ALI, nn).

⁷⁸ Pierre Janet, *Les Médications psychologique*, vol. 1 (Paris: F. Alcan, 1919), 112; here quoted from André Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, 18 ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), 36-37.

⁷⁹ See Trawny, *Der frühe Marx und die Revolution.*, 80.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Alfred Kurella, "Zu einigen methodischen Fragen der Entfremdungsproblematik (1964)," in *Entfremdung*, ed. Schrey. Heinz-Horst (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 256-57.

⁸¹ See, e.g., Schrey, "Einführung.", ix-x.

unable to identify completely, with one-self. This is the idea of self-alienation that presupposes a divided self that relates to itself, finding as the former it's relation to the latter unfulfilling.⁸²

As Trawny reads Hegel's *Phenomenology*, the spirit becomes alienated from itself by becoming an object to itself, i.e. by becoming objectified as something else. By becoming in the same process both subject and object of itself, the spirit demonstrates its reflexive structure, being thus able to turn towards itself. In this reflexive mediation, what was experienced as immediately given, or maybe not made an object of experience at all, becomes mediated and thus objectivated as something alien, although it may still reappear as given through the mediation of something else. What was experienced as familiar thus becomes destroyed in the process of alienation, but this alienation may be sublated by yet another appropriation, namely the reflexive self-conscious appropriation of reality. Alienation in this sense may thus be said to be necessary for the ultimate experience of something real, for an experience that also demonstrates self-consciousness.⁸³

Still, as an experience, alienation is typically understood as conveying sentiments of unease, the situation being experienced as challenging, unpleasant or uncomfortable. Disregarding the possibility of mediation and amelioration, the experience in itself is not far from the '*Unbehagen in der Kultur*' made famous by Freud, i.e. the discontents referred to in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.⁸⁴ At its height, even more dramatic situations may emerge, if we permit the conceptual slide from alienation into either anxiety in a very strong existential sense, i.e. *Angst*, as we say in Danish, or mental illness or psychological suffering, the soul being torn apart in a way that sometimes even implies outright pain.

As I have argued elsewhere, these latter more dramatic aspects of alienation, i.e. the alienating experiences of the monstrous fragmentation in modern civilization due to unequal wealth and power, were also emphasized by Hegel in the *Phenomenology*, in particular in chapter six on the spirit.⁸⁵ And this is recognized by Marx. Marx thus praises the *Phenomenology* as containing in relation to alienation "all elements of critique," "prepared and elaborated," although in an "alienated form," manifesting a "hidden, still unclear and mystifying critique." And in this recognition, he specifically refers to this, the most dramatic figure in chapter six, "the fight between the noble and the vile consciousness" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 573/285 (H,XVIII)), which according to my argument is the core in the *Phenomenology* from which Hegel develops his comprehensive idea of alienation.

In the discussion so far, many have been the possibilities as to who is alienated from what. In his classical treatise on alienation, Richard Schacht thus calls attention to the difference between actively alienating and passively being alienated, and that the process may go from positive feelings to antagonism or hostility, but also indifference (see ALI, 4). In addition, he mentions the crucial difference between considering the object of experience alien or alienated, when separation has taken place, and referring to the subject as becoming alienated by the experience of separation (see ALI, 41). Moreover, whatever is taken to be the case, referring to the sobering reflections of Petrović,⁸⁶ it is worth keeping in mind, whether we talk about individual or collective or even societal alienation, whether, for instance, capitalist society as such is alienating, or becoming alien, to any human being living within such an economic regime, or only some typical roles such as the worker and the capitalist. Furthermore, a general question is to distinguish between being alienated in the relation to one-self and something, or somebody, else. In the former case, it could make a difference whether one is being alienated to one's

⁸² See, e.g., Petrović, "Gibt es noch Entfremdung in sozialilistischen Systemen?.", 277-79.

⁸³ See Trawny, *Der frühe Marx und die Revolution.*, 81-83.

⁸⁴ See, e.g., Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and civilization : a philosophical inquiry into Freud (1955/1966)*, 2 ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974)., 78 ff. (SM 5, p. 72 ff).

⁸⁵ See Sørensen, "*Aliénation, Entfremdung – and Alienation..*", 603-06, 610-13.

⁸⁶ See Petrović, "Gibt es noch Entfremdung in sozialilistischen Systemen?.", 274-76.

self, body, feelings or needs, or one's own possibilities in life. When the latter is the case, i.e. when alienation is not directed towards myself, one can also expect some difference whether the alienation is directed to, e.g., nature, or to other human beings, and if they are simply other individuals, or collectives, or expressing institutions.

I will not argue for any general conclusion regarding these distinctions. However, from my present purpose, the critical potential of alienation is best developed with an idea of alienation being a pathology of individual life in a society dominated by a capitalist economy, having objective as well as subjective aspects. Hence, in the Marxist perspective that I presently adopt, I want to avoid psychologizing alienation, maintaining both psychological and sociological, subjective and objective as well as normative and descriptive aspects (see DBE, 34-36). Alienation can thus be characterized in general as "a distinct kind of social ill, involving a separation between a subject and an object that properly belong together," referring typically to "some baseline unity or harmony that is frustrated or violated by the separation in question."⁸⁷ Rather than simply being separate, in one sense alienation thus involves a process of separation "where unity once prevailed" (ALI, 36).

In the most comprehensive sense, the word 'alienation' thus covers ground that goes from losing one's mind to transferring one's possessions to someone else. Although we often allude to the former clearly pathological aspect of alienation, as I will argue presently, it is important to keep in mind the entire scope of connotations, thus maintaining alienation as a phenomenon possibly encountered also within the limits of mental normality, although in a pathological situation. Just like Jaeggi, when recognizing the real-life resentment of alienation, I want to avoid the ideology of the "home," the "homeland" and the "loss of home" that blurs "the real causes of being alienated" (CCC, 219).

E. Critical Key-terms Should Not be Conflated

With such a conceptual, linguistic and phenomenal complexity, alienation thus crossing over and sliding between disciplines, cultures and languages, it is a overwhelming task to provide a comprehensive and coherent account of the subject in general. Hence, rather than trying to fulfil such an arduous task that has been the intention of other good works,⁸⁸ in the present argument I will limit myself to pursue a specific concept of alienation, namely one that can facilitate a constructive criticism of existing capitalist and militarist modernity. Moreover, since there is no one-to-one semantic correspondence between the relevant German, French and English words, I will pursue the semantic and conceptual potential in the English word 'alienation,' but still drawing on the content provided in particular by German words, but ultimately also by French words.

As mentioned, I want a concept of alienation that facilitates social criticism that may be perceived as radical, acknowledging the alienation, reification and commodification of capitalist modernity and recuperating what I recognize as the classical 20th century discussion of alienation, but that nevertheless purports to provide conceptual basis for the constructive formation of consciousness to social democracy through politics and education, an ambition I have tried to flesh out elsewhere.⁸⁹ The idea is to conceive of alienation as possible to overcome, i.e. to transcend or rather negate, and thus sublimate,

⁸⁷ Wolff and Leopold, "Karl Marx."

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Schacht, *Alienation*., Jaeggi, *Entfremdung*. And Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung*.

⁸⁹ See, e.g., Sørensen, "Educating Citizens through Bildung." And "Ohne Kapitalismuskritik keine Sozialdemokratie."

by experience and formation to become a lasting result, be that through revolution, reform or, as I would prefer, education, including adult education such as citizenship education.

Initially, I turn to Marcuse, who was one of the standard references in the late 20th century discussion of alienation.⁹⁰ Marcuse thus made alienation the object of an extensive and detailed reflection spreading over more than three decades, i.e. from “The Foundation of Historical Materialism” over *Reason and Revolution* to *One-Dimensional Man*, published, respectively, in 1932, 1941 and 1964. In fact, it was the original publication of Marx’s *Manuscripts* in 1932 that set Marcuse in motion, making them the object of an extended analysis that was published the same year.

Despite the continuity and relative coherence of Marcuse’s philosophical work, we still encounter some complications with regards the translations of the key terms that can be considered exemplary for the general discussion. Originally, Marcuse thus wrote in German, later in the USA he began writing in English, and even later – but still during his active years – some of his early writings in German were translated into English, just as some of his later works written in English were translated into German. Hence, the 1932 analysis of the *Manuscripts* was written in German and only translated into English for publication in 1972.⁹¹

In his analysis, Marcuse presents Marx’s theory as criticizing a well-known whole, i.e. capitalism, by focusing at relational processes that are characterized by the three German terms, ‘*Entäußerung*,’ ‘*Entfremdung*’ and ‘*Verdinglichung*.’ As Marcuse puts it, the question is how Marx at this early stage of his theoretical work interprets these processual terms (see NQG, 512), and for my present purpose, this question is most relevant. Even though my argument is conducted in English and aims at developing the conceptual content of the English term ‘alienation,’ it still draws a lot on 20th century Marxist discussions, where German language terms naturally play a prominent role. When conducting the discussion into English, considering the concepts just mentioned therefore becomes indispensable.

The translation of the first term is seldom contested, ‘*Verdinglichung*,’ thus being understood as ‘reification’. Regarding the other two terms, for ‘*Entfremdung*’ the most generally used equivalent is ‘alienation’ in the sense already discussed, whereas ‘*Entäußerung*’ can mean ‘surrender,’ ‘disposal,’ ‘renunciation,’ ‘relinquishment,’ ‘transference’ or even ‘alienation.’ Though neither a native of English language nor of German, I can nevertheless recognize both an overlap and a difference between the latter two terms. Deciding the nature of their relation became a question that came to mar many 20th century Marxists, and there is still much confusion surrounding the terms. This I will start discussing in the next section; here I just have to mention initial two points.

Firstly, despite being foreign to the languages that we are dealing with, I will still claim that all the three German terms are different. This is an important point, since many participants in these discussions have argued that not all of them had to be distinguished. Hence, in the Soviet era some simply stated that reification was “one of the meanings of Marx’s concept of alienation,”⁹² and many have claimed

⁹⁰ See, e.g., Heinz Meyer, *Alienation, Entfremdung und Selbstverwirklichung*, Studien und Materialien zur Geschichte der Philosophie 8, ed. Yvon Belaval and Gerhard Funke (Hildesheim, Zürich & New York: Georg Olms, 1984), 175-78, and Hermann Schuller, *Die Logik der Entfremdung: Versuch zu einer wissenschaftlichen Grundlegung der Entfremdungstheorie*, Theorie und Forschung 136, ed. (Regensburg: S. Roderer, 1991), 321-35.

⁹¹ See Herbert Marcuse, “The Foundation of Historical Materialism (1932),” trans. Joris de Bres, Pb. ed., in *Marcuse, Studies in Critical Philosophy (1972)* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973),

⁹² See, e.g., Davydov, “A. Lefevr i ego 'kontseptsiia otchuzdeniia,’” *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 1, 1963, pp. 92-93 (according to Murray Yanowitch, “Alienation and the Young Marx in Soviet Thought,” *Slavic Review* 26, no. 1 (1967), 46).

that Marx used 'Entäußerung' and 'Entfremdung' interchangeably or as synonyms.⁹³ In contrast, others have argued that omitting the distinction between the latter two terms was habitual for Hegel (see ALI, 46-47), or even that this error of Hegel's was remedied by Marx (see, e.g., MTA, 117-19). Fortunately, however, yet others have believed it to be important simply to distinguish between these key terms, both with regards to Marx (see, e.g., ALI, 72)⁹⁴ and to Hegel (see, e.g., MDH, 54).

Secondly, of the three terms mentioned, only the last two of them were in fact used systematically by Marx and Hegel themselves. Reification is mentioned in passing in the third volume of the *Capital* (see DBE, 93),⁹⁵ and it only became an accepted part of the Marxist vocabulary, when György Lukács made it a key term in one of the essays in *History and Class Consciousness* that was published in German in 1923.⁹⁶ Relating in particular to the well-known line of thought in Marx's *Capital*, in Lukács's book, there is no discussion of alienation.⁹⁷ However, as indicated by the reference to Marcuse above, after the publication of Marx's *Manuscripts* in 1932, it became habitual in 20th century Marxist discussion to relate alienation to reification (see, e.g., DBE, 92-97), and this discussion still continues.⁹⁸

As Marcuse explains, capitalist society makes all personal relation take the form of "objective relations between things." However, as he himself emphasizes, what labor produces is not things, but commodities: "The system of capitalism relates men to each other through the commodities they exchange." Commodity production has this "mystifying result, that it transforms the social relations of individuals" (RAR, 278-79), reducing them to relations between commodities with a certain exchange value, making money the common denominators of literally every-thing. Being both in the service of the capitalist and bought as work power at the labor market, the worker is reduced to a commodity, and this has detrimental effects on human existence. Hence, rather than waging a critique of capitalism in terms for objects, things and reification, i.e. in German *Verdinglichung*, following Marcuse the proper process to criticize would be commodification.

Some have argued that in capitalist society alienation is, or manifest itself as, reification (see, e.g., DBE, 25), and in Critical Theory associating alienation and reification have traditionally led to rather depressing conclusions, pointing to the ideological fallacies, falsities and dead-ends of the totally reified modern industrial society. As it is well known, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Horkheimer and Adorno do not give much reason to rationally hope for any kind of politics or education to resist societal reification.⁹⁹ In the present context, however, that is for me sufficient reason to dispose of their argument. The assumed practical task is to develop an understanding of citizenship education capable of

⁹³ See, e.g., Karl Marx, *Early writings*, edited and translated by T. B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963)., xix (according to ALI, 72)., Kurella, "Zu einigen methodischen Fragen der Entfremdungsproblematik.", 257 and Gerhard Falk, "Entäußerung" und "Entfremdung" in den Pariser Manuskripten (1844) von Karl Marx (München: Arbeitsgruppe Psychologie, 1978)., 48. and Michael Quante, "Kommentar," in *Karl Marx: Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, ed. Michael Quante, Studienbibliothek 15 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2009)., 237, 248.

⁹⁴ See also Martin Milligan, "Translator's Note on Terminology," 2 ed., in *Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961)., 11-12

⁹⁵ See also Karl Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie. Dritter Band. Der Gesamtprozeß der kapitalistischen Produktion (1894)*, ed. Friedrich Engels, Marx-Engels Werke (MEW) 25, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1964)., 838, 887.

⁹⁶ See György Lukács, "Die Verdinglichung und das Bewußtsein des Proletariats (1923)," in *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein. Frühschriften II*, Lukács, Werke 2 (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1968).

⁹⁷ See, e.g., Petrović, "Gibt es noch Entfremdung in sozialistischen Systemen?," 269.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Rosa, *Resonanz*., 307.

⁹⁹ See, e.g., Sørensen, *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique*., Interlude, sect. C.

resisting and overcoming the real alienation produced by capitalism, and for that purpose we need a more constructive interpretation of the basic conceptual frame of reference than what was provided by Horkheimer and Adorno; for the same reasons, as I have argued elsewhere, one also have to dismiss Adorno's idea of half-education, i.e. *Halbbildung*.¹⁰⁰

However, turning instead to Marcuse, we find conceptual resources, or fractures, for developing reasonable hopes for the future of humanity.¹⁰¹ Moreover, as Helmut Dubiel has brought to our attention, in various remarks and minor works Marcuse in fact endorses liberal and social democracy.¹⁰² Hence, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* he affirms that "enlightenment, democracy and psychoanalysis may mitigate the typically feudal and bourgeois conflicts and perhaps even change the outcome,"¹⁰³ just as he offers the fruitful idea of a "second alienation"¹⁰⁴, namely the artistic alienation from the alienated society, thus conceptualizing a conscious negation of capitalist alienation. Hence, Marcuse offers in his critical analysis both the classical enlightenment to democracy and the dialectical figure of a negation of a negation, sublating what was negated to become part of a progression.

Allegedly, Adorno should have favored the concept of reification rather than alienation that he found to be too much associated with the mystification of man being fallen from an original paradise.¹⁰⁵ As mentioned, I also prefer to avoid too much romantic nostalgia, but I find the idea of reification too often associated with an unlikely totalization that discourages political action. Instead, I prefer to retain a critique in terms of alienation, and to criticize the implications of property relations rather than the division of labor. From such an idea of alienation, I think there is still a lot gain for politics and education. Hence, for my present purpose, it is primarily the former two terms, '*Entfremdung*' and '*Entäußerung*,' and their mutual relations that are interesting.

F. *Entfremdung* and *Entäußerung* are Overlapping, but Different

Considering first '*Entfremdung*', as mentioned above, in English 'estrangement' could seem like the natural choice given the etymology of the constitutive linguistic elements. In addition, '*étrangement*' was the translation of '*Entfremdung*' that Jean Hyppolite chose in relation to Hegel's *Phenomenology*,¹⁰⁶ and 'estrangement' has also been used in the translations of Marx's *Manuscripts* and Marcuse's 1932 analysis of the *Manuscripts*.¹⁰⁷

However, in Marcuse's *Reason and Revolution* that was originally published in 1941 as a work in English, first we get an initial definition of "alienation" as a translation of "*Entfremdung*," "signifying that the world of objects, originally the product of man's labor and knowledge, becomes independent of man and comes to be governed by uncontrolled forces and laws, in which man no longer recognizes his own

¹⁰⁰ See "From Critique of Ideology to Politics.", 258-59.

¹⁰¹ See *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique.*, ch. 7, sect. C and D.

¹⁰² See, e.g., Helmut Dubiel, *Kritische Theorie der Gesellschaft* (Weinheim & München: Juventa, 1992)., 65-73

¹⁰³ Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt.*, 109.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., Schrey, "Einführung.", xiii.

¹⁰⁶ See Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel. I-II* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967)., II, 372; *Genesis and structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of spirit*, Northwestern University studies in phenomenology and existential philosophy (Evanston 1974)., 385, 607.

¹⁰⁷ See Milligan, "Translator's Note on Terminology.", 11-12. and Marcuse, "The Foundation of Historical Materialism.", 6.

self.” However, immediately afterwards Marcuse adds: “At the same time, thought becomes estranged from reality and the truth becomes an impotent ideal preserved in thought while the actual world is calmly left outside its influence” (see, e.g., RAR, 23-24).

In his English-language argument Marcuse thus, in the same passage, explicitly translates ‘*Entfremdung*’ to ‘alienation’ and links it to the idea of thought being estranged from reality. This could suggest a systematic distinction between ‘alienation’ and ‘estrangement,’ alienation thus resulting from a kind of unfortunate renunciation or disposal, producing a kind of exaggerated or even pathological estrangement. However, consulting the German translation by his longtime friend and Critical Theory associate, Alfred Schmidt of the passage in *Reason and Revolution*, the issue is blurred again, ‘alienation’ thus being translated to ‘*Entfremdung*,’ while ‘estranged’ is translated into ‘*entfremdet*.’¹⁰⁸ And returning to English, when “man is overpowered by things he has himself made,” for Marcuse the result is the “total ‘estrangement’ of consciousness” (RAR, 260); but “the form of labor in modern society” constitutes “total ‘alienation’ of man” (RAR, 273).

Being non-native in these languages, and being puzzled by Marcuse’s use of single quotation marks, I will refrain from proposing a final answer to this conundrum. However, when passing over from categorical restrictions posed by German language in this specific context to develop the concept of alienation in English, one has to make some choices for the sake of clarity and consistency. Ultimately, Marcuse apparently preferred ‘alienation’ as the general term in English to define the discussion, and so have many other people and authorities; Schacht thus deems their meanings “very similar” (ALI, 5). Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere,¹⁰⁹ considering that the Marxist discussions of alienation can be traced back to Hegel’s reading of Goethe’s translation of Diderot, and that the chain of equivalents from French over German to English, i.e. ‘*aliénation*,’ ‘*Entfremdung*,’ ‘alienation,’ has been well established for decades, maybe even centuries, so should we. Moreover, as I will explain below, introducing ‘estrangement’ as the standard translation of ‘*Entfremdung*,’ displaces and confuses the general discussion of alienation.

Taken into consideration has also been that in my present argument, I pursue a comprehensive critical concept of alienation, where I want to make use of a broad range of connotations. As I understand it, in English the meaning of ‘estrangement’ is close to that of ‘alienation,’ but it is more specific and thus more limited in its connotations. Something similar can be said about the relation between *Entfremdung* and *Entäußerung*, namely that the terms are overlapping, but that the latter is more specific than the former, alienation thus implying renunciation, but not the other way round.

However, in the translations of Marx and Marcuse mentioned above, ‘*Entfremdung*’ and ‘*Entäußerung*’ are translated into, respectively, ‘estrangement’ and ‘alienation,’ and this displacement is not uncommon.¹¹⁰ Referring to the semantics of the German terms, it has thus been argued that precisely because ‘*Entäußerung*’ means ‘renunciation’ or ‘surrender,’ it is well suited to account for the legal aspects of alienation, i.e. the transfer of a legally held possession,¹¹¹ whereas ‘*Entfremdung*’ allegedly does not have “the legal-commercial undertones of ‘alienate’” and therefore cannot be used to “describe a transfer of property.”¹¹²

Against this, however, it can be pointed out that even though in Goethe’s translation of the French ‘*aliénation*’ to ‘*Entfremdung*,’ the emphasis was on the pathological aspect, in Hegel’s hands the idea of

¹⁰⁸ *Vernunft und Revolution (1941)*, trans. Alfred Schmidt, Schriften 4, ed. (Springer: zu Klampen Verlag, 2004). 32.

¹⁰⁹ See Sørensen, “*Aliénation, Entfremdung – and Alienation..*”, 609-10.

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., Stig Børsen Hansen, *Philosophers of Technology* (De Gruyter, 2020), 28.

¹¹¹ See, e.g., Forst, “Noumenal Alienation.”, 254.

¹¹² See, e.g., Milligan, “Translator’s Note on Terminology.”, 11-12

Entfremdung clearly exhibited also legal aspects, and according to Schacht, such aspects were indeed integrated in older German language (see ALI, 5). In the chapter on the spirit in the *Phenomenology*, first alienation is the result of Antigone being torn between divine and human law, and then alienation is the framework of conflicts regarding power, government and wealth that culminates in the dramatic pathology already mentioned.¹¹³ As I will return to below, such aspects became even more pronounced in Marx's *Manuscripts*, namely when considering the transfer of value and private property. As Mészáros stresses in his analysis of Marx, the question of alienation is directly related to the issue of surplus value (see MTA, 140). However, in contrast to Hegel, for Marx *Entäußerung* became a crucial element in the analysis of alienation, and as I will argue, to express in German the comprehensive concept of alienation, one may have to combine the two words '*Entfremdung*' and '*Entäußerung*;' at least, this appears to be, what Marx did.

Turning to the pathological connotations of '*Entfremdung*,' they are more uncontroversial. As was the case already by Goethe, they are retained by both Hegel and Marx. The point here is that changing to English, as already mentioned, in the term 'alienation' both the legal and the pathological aspect can be recognized. Hence, considering the semantics of the relevant German terms only adds to my preference for 'alienation' – i.e. the specific term as it appear in languages such as English, French and Spanish – as the term best suited for my present purpose, i.e. developing alienation as a comprehensive critical concept that adds to the intuitive critical content.

However, already from the beginning of the present article, I assumed that 'alienation' was the best term to comprise the connotations of '*Entfremdung*,' and that in many cases the two terms could even reasonably be juxtaposed semantically as referring to similar issues. As already mentioned, today this is also the most common use of language, and in my criticism of Jaeggi's and Rosa's discussions of *Entfremdung*, I simply took it for granted.¹¹⁴ With the precision just achieved, I must therefore add, that in fact the semantic meaning of 'alienation' transcends that of '*Entfremdung*,' and they cannot be used interchangeably.

These reflections considering translation are of course only interesting due to their consequences with regards to content. In interrelated webs of meaningful terms, possible translations are always limited, especially when we are dealing with interconnected terms. Hence, when in Marx's *Manuscripts* '*Entäußerung*' is translated into 'alienation,' and we do not want to conflate the key terms, then '*Entfremdung*' has to become 'estrangement,' and that tends to displace the English language discussion in the direction of subjective experiences and pathologies. In contrast, speaking of, respectively, 'renunciation' and 'alienation' in combination keeps the discussion close to the issue of justice concerning the transfer of entitlements, e.g. rights or values, and it is the political potential of the latter to reintegrate alienation in the critique of capitalism, political economy and realized democracy that I pursue.

This I consider in line with Marcuse's reading of Marx, where classical political economy is an ideology that justifies scientifically, and thereby conceals ideologically, the alienation and devaluation of human reality under capitalism (see NQG, 512). As Marx argues, what in Germany was called 'national economy,' but which I prefer to call 'national economics,'¹¹⁵ conceals the alienation in labor by not considering the immediate relation between worker and production: "Labor produces wonders for the rich, but for the worker privation. It produces palaces, but for the worker hovels. It produces beauty, but

¹¹³ See, e.g., Sørensen, "Aliénation, Entfremdung – and Alienation..", 608-13.

¹¹⁴ See "Alienation Reconsidered."

¹¹⁵ On the difference between 'national' economy and 'political' economy, see, e.g., my remarks in *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique.*, Ch. 1.

for the workers deformity" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 513/237 (S,XXIII)). Hence, Marx's critique of political or national economy is ideology critique, i.e. a critique of ruling thought to be merely the thought of the rulers, being to the benefit of the capital, not to the workers, and thus not in general valid or truthful.¹¹⁶

With these short remarks I do not intend to close a terminological discussion that at its height in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s generated heated intellectual debates internationally; in fact, I will continue the discussion both in the next section and further below. Furthermore, trying to cope with in English the details of a German language discussion of how to relate two key terms of course adds to the complexity and possible confusion. However, in order to present a relatively coherent English language vocabulary from the outset, I have found it appropriate to relate to and cut through issues that have generated confusion, discussion and controversies for decades, some of which I will return to later. Hence, so far, I have simply acknowledged the dispute as a matter of fact and provided some initial reasons for distinguishing the way I do. In the following sections, and again in section N, I will argue that when it comes to the Marx's *Manuscripts*, they also provide good reasons to distinguish between the two terms in the way I have done.

In general, however, when it comes to the present English language argument, we should continue considering alienation the key issue to discuss rather than estrangement, just as we should uphold a conceptual distinction between alienation and renunciation, preferring in both cases the former due to its comprehensiveness and its intuitive critical appeal. Alienation can clearly draw on the conceptual content of both estrangement and renunciation, but in the present argument, I will emphasize the latter rather than the former, since today, even when Marx is the main reference, the issue of private property is often ignored or overlooked,¹¹⁷ globalized capitalist society increasingly being dominated ideologically by discourses developed under the hegemony of liberal thought. As Michael Quante rightly emphasizes, according to Marx alienation occurs primarily due to "the social institution of private property to the means of production and the workforce being a commodity."¹¹⁸

G. Alienation and Renunciation Presupposes Exteriorization

Hence, as I argue, ultimately, we should aim for a comprehensive critical concept of alienation. Having as mentioned considered the pre-Marxist origins of alienation elsewhere, now it is time to approach Marx's *Manuscripts*. Here I will again turn to Marcuse, and his original analysis of the *Manuscripts*. As mentioned above and discussed further below, apparently 'Entfremdung' and 'Entäußerung,' i.e. alienation and renunciation overlap and can be understood as two distinct, but related parts or aspects of one whole. Accepting the distinction makes it important to avoid another common displacement, namely to understand 'Entäußerung' as 'exteriorization.'¹¹⁹

Explaining 'Ent-äußerung' – and here I again add the hyphen for clarity – in the *Manuscripts*, Marx initially employs the constitutive element of the word and characterizes work for the workers as 'äußerlich,' i.e. exterior, not belonging to their human nature. In the work, the workers feel exterior to the work and exterior to themselves (see ÖPM_{WGA}, 514/238 (S,XXIII)). However, here it is important to observe, as Marcuse also does, that Marx characterizes labor critically as *Ent-äußerung* rather than simply *Äußerung* (see NQG, 517), i.e. as renunciation rather than utterance or exteriorization. Moreover,

¹¹⁶ See also my "Critical theory, immanent critique and neo-liberalism."

¹¹⁷ See, e.g., Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung.*, 123-28.

¹¹⁸ Quante, "Kommentar.", 249.

¹¹⁹ See, e.g., Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung.*, 17.

according to Mészáros, Marx distinguishes between ‘*Lebens-äußerung*’ and ‘*Lebens-ent-äußerung*’ (see, e.g., MTA, 91), respectively ‘expression of life’ and ‘renunciation of life,’ where the former is the case when I work according to “inner necessity,” whereas the latter is the case, when I work in order to live, i.e. according to “external necessity.”¹²⁰

The latter happens in most historical examples of societies. Characteristic of capitalism is that the workers sell their workforce freely of the labor market, and here German language complicates matters by facilitating an additional etymological arguments, offering thus the word ‘*Ver-äußerung*’ that means ‘sale.’ It can then be claimed that Marx sometimes, e.g. in the *Capital*, juxtaposed ‘*Ver-äußerung*’ with ‘*Ent-äußerung*’ (see, e.g., MTA, 313), but this issue I will not go further into.

Important for my argument is that Marx contrasts renunciation and utterance, and considers renunciation a negation that has to be sublated by a negation of the negation to become “a real utterance” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 586/304 (H,XXII)). And this wording is no coincidence: Marx is very careful in his elucidation, when it comes to the legendary Hegelian idea of sublation, i.e. “*Aufheben*,” recognizing almost classically that in this concept “the denial and the preservation” is tied to “the affirmation” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 581/299 (H,XXIX)).

Already in relation to Hegel, Schacht affirms that alienation is to be distinguished from objectification or exteriorization, “even though the former presupposes the latter” (ALI, 55) and as Schacht argues, something similar should be recognized in relation to Marx, who “clearly distinguishes between externalization or objectification and the alienation of the product” (ALI, 85). It is therefore misleading to state the problem of alienation as being that “the exterior remains exterior and then becomes alien.”¹²¹ Still, Marx does not simply adopt Hegel’s concept of alienation.¹²² Schacht argues that, in contrast to Hegel in the *Phenomenology*, Marx does not consider the discordant relationship between individual and society in terms of alienation (see ALI, 84). However, even if this is true in relation to society as such, still, when it comes to capitalist society, as I will stress below, for Marx the relationship is clearly strained due to the specific property relations, and this critical nerve I propose to retain. Still, to specify the difference, one may note that whereas Marx links alienation closely to work, this is not the case for Hegel.

Being human thus means being conscious, consciousness in German literally being conscious-being, *Bewußt-sein*. Being conscious about one-self, one can become self-conscious, and in general, this becoming, i.e. this developmental aspect of reality, is a crucial element of Hegel’s philosophy. As Marx argues, for Hegel, human being is self-consciousness, i.e. self-conscious being, and therefore alienation is simply “alienation of the self-consciousness” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 575/294 (H,XXIV)). Hegel thus recognizes the problem of the alienated object and the need to sublimate this alienation through the reappropriation of the object. According to Marx, however, Hegel’s answer is sublating “objectivity” as in-itself “negative” rather than the “determinate character of the object” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 580/298 (H,XXVII)), i.e. rather than the pathological character of the object due to capitalist working conditions.

Marx assumes the Hegelian concept of work as the exteriorization and objectification that realizes human being. Work is a conscious practical activity projecting and integrating an idea into reality, in the process of creation thus exteriorizing, objectifying and ultimately estranging oneself from the resulting product. Work is “the act of self-creation of human beings” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 584/301 (H,XXX)). As Mészáros poignantly puts it, “a non-externalized, non-objectified activity is a non-activity” (MTA, 91). However, as

¹²⁰ Karl Marx, “Auszüge aus James Mills Buch „*Elements d’economie politique*” (1844),” in *Ergänzungsband. Schriften, Manuskripte, Briefe bis 1844. Erster Teil*, Marx-Engels-Werke (MEW) 40 (Berlin: Dietz, 1968)., 463.

¹²¹ Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung.*, 17.

¹²² See, e.g., Quante, “Kommentar.”, 247.

Marcuse emphasizes, within “the historical facticity of capitalism” work is not “free activity” aiming for the “self-realization” of human being, but simply a “commodity” (NQG, 533). Under capitalism, Marx stresses, the work not only produces commodities, but also “itself and the worker as a commodity” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 511/236 (S,XXII)); work is not realization, “*Verwirklichung*,” rather it is the “de-realization [*Entwirklichung*] of the worker,” *in concreto* the “starvation to death” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 512/236 (S,XXII)). In German, it thus makes sense to add ‘Alienated Work’ as an editorial title to Marx’s analysis of alienation (see ÖPM_{WGA}, 510 (MEW)).

Fortunately, and in contrast to German language, English allows us to distinguish between ‘work’ and ‘labor,’ such as it was famously exploited by Hannah Arendt.¹²³ Although Marcuse apparently does not distinguish systematically (see, e.g., RAR, 276-79), he does emphasize the difference between “free work” and “alienated labor” (RAR, 282), and this emphasis I will make mine in the present argument. Hence, labor is not a free activity, i.e. not “the natural condition of human existence;” labor is a forced activity. Wage labor is, as Marcuse puts it, “forced work” “in the service of the capitalists” (NQG, 513), i.e. a “specifically social form of labor” (Marx in RAR, 299). It is the forced production of commodities through labor that distorts human being, not work as a free, creative and formative activity. Hence, the reality of labor must be recognized, but work is essential. As Marcuse puts it: “Wage labor is a fact, but at the same time it is a restraint on free work that might satisfy human needs.” Or, more in general, emphasizing the dialectical logic that points beyond existing reality: “Every fact is more than a mere fact; it is a negation and restriction of real possibilities” (RAR, 282).

It is sometimes argued that Marx’ concept of alienation may confuse by being at odds with an alleged “standard usage” (ALI, 96-97). However, the point is rather, as I see it, that Marx suggests a critical analysis to explain the occurrence of alienation in capitalist society that makes valuable products produced through work and labor key elements. Marx’s basic understanding of work and labor presupposes a certain philosophical anthropology that considers work and objectification ontological traits of human being. As Marx readily recognizes, it is Hegels’ *Phenomenology of Spirit* that determines “self-creation of human beings” as a “process of objectification [*Vergegenständlichung*]” implying “renunciation,” conceiving thus of “real human beings as results of their own work” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 574/292 (H,XXIII)). According to Marx following Hegel, work is thus the “for-it-self-becoming of man”, his “act of self-creation or self-objectification”, “man’s coming-to-be for himself,”¹²⁴ in German his “*Selbstvergegenständlichungsakt*” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 584/302 (H,XXXI); see also NQG, 519).

For Marx, Hegel’s analysis contains, as mentioned, all the necessary elements of critique, though in an alienated form. As Marcuse emphasizes, this cannot be otherwise, since human history has been one long history of alienation. The objects that human being meet in social reality are “exterior, alien,” and its universal and free reality is only possible – if at all – as the “sublation [*Aufhebung*] of renunciation, as the return from alienation” (NQG, 544). Marx thus recognizes the possibility of a “sublation” of the renunciation in a “withdrawing movement,” an “appropriation of the objectified nature through the sublation of its alienation” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 583/301 (H,XXX)). Hence, the “sublation of alienation always happens from the form of alienation, which is the ruling power” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 553/288 (H,XVIII)). Alienation and renunciation can thus be overcome, namely, as it is famously phrased, through a “negation of the negation” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 586/302 (H,XXXII)). As Quante puts it in precise Hegelian terms, in the sublation of

¹²³ See, e.g., Hannah Arendt, “Labor, Work, Action,” in *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*, ed. S. J. James W. Bernauer (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1987).

¹²⁴ Marcuse, “The Foundation of Historical Materialism.”, 13.

alienation one should not forget the experience of alienation;¹²⁵ what is negated is still preserved in the result.

In Hegel's philosophical anthropology, work means expressing and exteriorizing oneself in a creation, which however as an object gets an identity and independency of itself, be that a physical object or something conceived of or imagined.¹²⁶ Ultimately, through work and objectification one thus becomes conscious of oneself, i.e. through objectifying the idea of consciousness to become an object *in-it-self*; hence, through something exterior to oneself one becomes self-conscious. For Hegel, as self-conscious consciousness is therefore *for-it-self* in work. Moreover, one can only realize oneself as a self-conscious human being through work; through work in this sense human being can negate and sublimate itself from being merely an empirical singular conscious being to become a species of a potentially universal and free being, i.e. a self-conscious and truly human being, a being of the human species, *in-and-for-it-self*. As Marx puts it, human being becomes a "living species," when it relates to itself as a potentially "universal, and therefore free nature" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 515/239 (S,XXIV)).

Charles Taylor has remarked that Marx bases his theory of alienation on both Enlightenment humanism and Romantic expressivism.¹²⁷ Recognizing in Marx's *Manuscripts* such an expressivist anthropology, I presently emphasize how expressing yourself through work and other creative activities is an expression of human nature. Hence, the expression of ideas becomes an exteriorization or objectification, for instance as it happens in the production of things, be they material or intellectual. As Schacht stresses, for Marx "'religion, the family, the state, law, morality, science art, etc.' are also 'human products'" (ALI, 79). They are all essential for human being. Work in this wide sense is what makes a human being human; as Israel puts it, exteriorization is "normal" (DBE, 95). For Marx work is for human being the "conscious life activity." The "species character of human being" is "the free conscious activity" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 516/240 (S,XXIV)), or, as Marcuse prefers it with his Heideggerian formation, the "existential activity" (RAR, 275).

As Marcuse reads Hegel and Marx, the free creation of reality constitutes human freedom as such. Integrated in the argument is therefore Hegel's republican contention that the nature of human being lies in its "universality." As Marx states in the *Communist Manifesto*, "the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all."¹²⁸ In Marcuse's rendering, human being is only free if all human beings are free and exist as "universal beings;" only then can human being realize the "potentialities of the genus." Referring to Marx, he thus argues that human being is free, if one "recognizes" oneself in a world that one has oneself "made" (RAR, 275).

For Marx, human being affirms itself as "species being" in the "adaption" of the "objectified world." This "conscious life activity" makes "nature" present itself through "work and reality." The "practical creation of an object world" is the "proof of human being as a conscious species being." In contrast to animals that "produces under the domination of immediate physical needs," human being produces in "freedom," relating "freely" to the product. Human being "knows" how to produce according to "the measure of every species," assuming the "inherent measure of the object" to form according to "the laws of beauty" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 516-17/240-41 (S,XXIV)). This idea of species-being has been accompanied by accusations of a certain ambivalence, being thus on the one side something natural and corporal, on the

¹²⁵ See Quante, "Kommentar.", 259.

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Andrew Buchwalter, "Hegel and the Doctrine of Expressivism," in *Artifacts, Representations and Social Practice*, ed. C.C. Gould and R.S. Cohen (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994).

¹²⁷ See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 388-89.

¹²⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifestes der Kommunistischen Partei," 8 ed., in *1846 bis 1848*, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der KPdSU, Marx-Engels-Werke 4 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1977 (1959)), 482.

other a self-conscious and free being, at the same time an animal and the negation of animals.¹²⁹ As I see it, however, this is the whole point: being human means being an animal that freely negates itself through creative work.

As we know, however, under capitalism most workers do not have that privilege. In capitalist production human being tends to be reduced to only production and consumption, the former being forced labor and the latter, i.e. “eating, drinking and begetting”, the only feeling of freedom, ultimately reducing human being to just an animal – as Marx phrases it: In the functions constitutive of man, he is “nothing but an animal. The animal becomes the human and the human the animal” (RAR, 278). Marcuse sums it up neatly in continuation of Marx, stating that “economic conditions appear as the complete negation of humanity”. The “mode of labor perverts all human faculties, accumulation of wealth intensifies poverty, and technological progress leads to the rule of ‘dead matter over the human world’” (see, e.g., RAR, 281-82).

As Marx argues, labor as renunciation of course presupposes the exteriorization of work, but in a pathological sense. Renunciation of the object produced presupposes the fundamental exteriorization or objectification in human work, and one may even say that there is a tendency that exteriorization leads to renunciation. Still, they are not the same; according to Marx, renunciation has a special relationship to private property, the former thus being both the means to producing or realizing the latter and the result or the realization of the latter (see ÖPM_{WGA}, 520/244 (S,XXV)), i.e. in a way both cause and effect (see DBE, 79).

Exteriorization may thus be said to tend to become renunciation, and according to Israel, under certain circumstances exteriorization may also become reification (see DBE, 94). For the worker, labor is exterior in the sense that he does not “confirm,” but “deny,” that he does not feel “well,” but “unhappy,” that he does not develop any “free physical or spiritual energy,” but in both aspects becomes “ruined.” His work is not “voluntary,” but “forced labor.” Labor becomes a “means” for satisfying “needs,” manifesting pure “alienity [*Fremdheit*],” even when there is no actual force involved. And as a final aspect of the pathological exteriority of labor, Marx mentions, almost in passing, that it belongs to “someone else” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 514/238 (S,XXIII)). This is the aspect of alienation, i.e. its relation to property, that I will make the most of in the present argument.

As Israel stresses, in general theories of alienation – explicitly or implicitly – presuppose ideas of human nature and the relation between the individual and society (see DBE, 42). In the case of Marx, the theory of human nature implies a certain ideal of work (see DBE, 64), and alienated work can therefore be said to reveal the alienation from the ideal of work (see DBE, 126). Marx thus clearly assumes Hegel’s metaphysical anthropology of human being as expressing oneself self-consciously through the exteriorization and objectification involved in the work process. Hegel’s metaphysics constitutes the creative and productive nature of human being. However, the ontology of human being interacting with and within reality also means a receptive human being capable of suffering, both with regards to body and soul, and this is what enables Marx to argue that capitalism as a historical formation of society is distorting human being, human beings typically having to renounce their own creations as products owned by somebody else, becoming thus estranged and ultimately alienated from their own creations, from their activities, from each other and even from themselves as human beings. As Israel puts it, alienation is the gap between what human being is under capitalism and what it could be (see DBE, 19).

¹²⁹ See, e.g., Mau, *Stum tvang.*, 87-88.

H. Alienation is a Capitalist Pathology, not an Existential Condition

As Marx has become famous to claim, alienation can thus occur in at least four relations, and it not uncommon to identify his conception of alienation with these four instantiations or dimensions.¹³⁰ Firstly, the worker can relate to the product of his work as an “alien and overpowering object.” Secondly, this relation can be extended to the work itself, to his “activity as something alien that does not belong to him” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 514/238 (S,XXIII)). Thirdly, the consciousness that a human being has of human species life is changed by this alienation, since the “species life has become a means” for the mere “physical existence.” The human species being thus appears to oneself as an “alien nature [Wesen],” alienating human being from “its own body, the nature outside itself, as well as its spiritual nature, its human nature.” Finally, this self-alienation also implies the “alienation of human beings from human beings,” i.e. “other human beings” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 517-18/241-42 (S,XXIV)).

Keeping in mind all four aspects of alienation, as Petrović has called attention to, Marx’s humanist idealism of course gives rise to all kinds of conceptual challenges when details about alienation have to be specified.¹³¹ This however, I will not go further into. Suffice to say presently that Marx’s critique of capitalism is not about exteriorization, or objectification. The basic exteriorization belongs as objectification to the “essence of man – as its naturalness” (NQG, 524), as Marcuse puts it. Nor is it merely about renunciation or estrangement due to the ontological independency of the object produced. Ultimately, the critique is about alienation in the comprehensive sense mentioned initially, as a legal pathology of capitalism that may be experienced as such or not.

Now we are ready to confront more directly the terminological issue mentioned initially in the previous section that that has mystified many discussions of alienation. Some readers of Marx’s *Manuscripts* thus prefer to translate ‘*Entäußerung*’ to ‘exteriorization,’¹³² ‘externalization’ (see MTA, 313),¹³³ or ‘objectification’ (MTA, 313), sometimes even juxtaposing explicitly ‘*Entäußerung*’ with ‘*Vergegenständlichung*’ (see MTA, 313), i.e. ‘objectification,’ or, alternatively, collapsing the latter two with alienation, as Marx and Marcuse allegedly accuse Hegel of doing.¹³⁴ Or one may encounter claims that Hegel identified ‘alienation’ and ‘objectification’ (see, e.g., DBE, 95; MTA, 84, 116), or that he did not distinguish between ‘*Entfremdung*’ and ‘*Objektivierung*,’ Hyppolite however reassuring that Marx did,¹³⁵ as we have just ascertained. Being now aware of the Hegelian anthropology assumed by Marx and the role that *Entäußerung* as renunciation plays in relation to alienation, we can explain why these rather common translational displacements have serious implications regarding content.

Given that the term ‘alienation’ has almost unavoidable pathological connotations, that the *Entäußerung* of labor for Marx is the renunciation of the product due to property right, and that exteriorization and objectification according to Hegel and Marx have a fundamental ontological character for human being, displacing the vocabulary in the way mentioned threatens to displace Marx’s

¹³⁰ See, e.g., Jaeggi, *Entfremdung*., 29-31, Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung*., 109-23 and Hartmut Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration*, NSU Summertalk 3, ed. Claus Krogholm (Malmö: NSU Press, 2010)., 83.

¹³¹ See, e.g., Petrović, "Gibt es noch Entfremdung in sozialistischen Systemen?.", 278-79

¹³² See e.g., Simon Skempton, *Alienation after Derrida*, vol. 191, Bloomsbury Studies in Continental Philosophy (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Gordonsville, 2011)., 4, and Lucio Cortella, *The Ethics of Democracy. A Contemporary Reading of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. Giacomo Donis (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016)., 43

¹³³ See also Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*., 402, Wood, "Alienation.", 24 and "Alienation," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online* (Taylor and Francis, 1998), <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/alienation/v-1.>

¹³⁴ See Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*., 402.

¹³⁵ See, e.g., Oiserman, "Kritik des Marxismus an der bürgerlichen Entfremdungsphilosophie.", 248.

critique of alienation and renunciation from being a critique specific of the pathologies of the property relations of a specific historical formation that can be overcome, namely capitalism, to being an existentialist critique of the inherent tragedy of human being *per se*. Gorz states it quite clearly: "The individual cannot refuse his social identity, his alienation. But that does not imply that he does not experience his alienation as alienation and refuse to accept it" (MDH, 86).

As Teodor I. Oiserman (in Russian Теодор Ильич Ойзерман) argued in Soviet Russia, of course, one cannot deny human tragedy, but one should insist on "historic optimism,"¹³⁶ i.e. that we as human beings do not have to submit to spontaneous forces of capitalist "society," but that we collectively should take control of our "destiny."¹³⁷ As a political philosopher of education, this is a line of thought that I feel obliged to continue, and I am happy to see a similar line of thought expressed by Fraser (see CCC, 222).

As explained, Marcuse thus presents Marx as endorsing Hegel's anthropology and his expressivist account of human being as such, stressing only the need to criticize the pathology encountered under capitalism and implied by political economy in terms of 'Entäußerung' and 'Entfremdung.' If, however, 'Entäußerung' at the same time refers both to a pathological, potentially alienating renunciation and to objectivation as 'man's coming-to-be for himself,' then human being is alienating *per se*, i.e. an existential tragedy and as such pathological in its normality, leaving little hope for politics or historical change.

That would bring Marx close to, say, Ortega y Gasset, who is said to claim that every society dehumanize, depersonalize and levels personality, and that no reasonable change of societal life is therefore possible or required.¹³⁸ In other words, with such a translational displacement threatening to make the fundamental ontological exteriorization a pathology, we risk ending up with an ontology where human being as such is alienating and thus pathological, and at least in an educational perspective, this is alarming.

Finding this conclusion both inaccurate in relation to Marx's *Manuscripts* and unacceptable for the reasons mentioned, I maintain that alienation is something inescapably pathological, which becomes especially acute under capitalism as a historical formation. Hence, exteriorization must not be identified with alienation; alienation is not merely the "from-the-inside-stepping-out."¹³⁹ Hence, when continuing the argument of Marx, it is alienation and renunciation that must be criticized, transgressed and preferably overcome, not exteriorization or objectification, and the critique of alienation should indicate how alienation can be transgressed.

Moreover, when conceived of as transgressible, alienation must be determined, described and explained in ways that makes such developments possible, likely and attractive. In general, we should thus avoid categories, concepts, descriptions and explanations that universalizes or naturalizes alienation, making irrational the ambition to mitigate, transgress or overcome it. This is what happens when the distinction between exteriorization and alienation is blurred, be that in fusing the translations or by simply assuming that there is no difference in German, or that Marx or Hegel did not distinguish.

This is also why I criticize Jaeggi and Rosa, namely because their post-metaphysical anti-essentialism seems to imply emphasizing alienation as a universal human experience.¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, however, with their choice of examples they suggest a much more limited scope for alienation, presenting alienation as

¹³⁶ Ibid., 238.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 245.

¹³⁸ See, e.g. ibid., 239-40.

¹³⁹ Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung.*, 14.

¹⁴⁰ See Sørensen, "Alienation Reconsidered.", 160-62.

a challenge typical for the life of individuals in privileged Western modernity. For Jaeggi, at first it thus appears as if alienation mainly arises as a consequence of choices of lifestyle or career in contemporary middleclass life.¹⁴¹ However, in the discussion with Fraser, she argues more explicitly that market and commodity exchange are structuring forces of our social life (see CCC, 23), i.e. that “indifference and impersonality” accompanies “money, marketization and commodification” (CCC, 128).

Nevertheless, Jaeggi distances herself explicitly from “Marx’s theory of alienation” and any idea of an “anthropological given,” preferring instead to define alienation in terms of “the loss or blockage of freedom,” insisting though on “a very rich notion of social freedom not yet realized in history” (CCC, 134). The critique of alienation should thus be “formal” rather than “substantial,” making no references to who we really are or ought to be as human beings, instead focusing on how “we conceive of and relate to our own deeds,” whether our “wishes and deeds” are “distorted or non-distorted” (CCC, 135).

For Rosa, even though the point of the departure is well known experiences of a middle class intellectual academic, there is clearly something more dramatic at stake. Alienation is threatening to distort human existence and to result in a “damaged subjectivity,”¹⁴² as he puts it, thus approaching the classical sense of alienation mentioned above, i.e. losing oneself pathologically and dramatically. However, as I argue, alienation should not be limited to a more or less dramatic experience of individual existential or psychological discontent with life in a modern society. Moreover, overcoming or mitigating alienation should be possible as a lasting result; it is not sufficient, as Rosa suggests, to postulate as the only possible transgression of the generalized misery of alienation the exceptional and momentary resonance as it can be achieved in experiences of music, poetry, nature or religion.¹⁴³ Interestingly, in the revolutionary existentialism of Gorz, there is also an emphasis that it is only in “the rare ‘moments of history’” when individuals find themselves alienated by society and unify to raise against it, that “the social alienation disappears momentarily” (MDH, 90). In this case, however, idea is clearly political.

Hence, for the reasons just given, with all of its inescapable pathological connotations, alienation should not be understood, and *de facto* accepted, as a generalized existential experience of human being *per se*. Neither should alienation be limited to the loss of freedom or the experience of not being able to relate. Alienation is recognized as especially acute in capitalist and militarist modernity, which however, as a historical formation both could be otherwise and overcome. Hence, modernity is also a normative project of enlightenment and democracy, and just as Habermas famously argued ages ago,¹⁴⁴ modernity thus contains more cultural and political promises for humanity than simply globalizing capitalism and militarism and generalizing discontent or anxiety. Or so it must be for education, where being more ambitious with regards to humanity is simply a duty.

By implication, the present argument thus intends to continue my earlier critique of the conceptions of alienation presented by Jaeggi and Rosa,¹⁴⁵ insisting as an educationalist that transgression of alienation must be possible as more than merely momentary and exceptional exceptions of resonance. As I argue, part of the problem is the widespread contemporary agenda of anti-essentialism and post-metaphysical thought that leaves phenomena such as alienation and the critique of it unanchored in historical, societal and human reality.

As mentioned, in her attempt to redefine capitalism, Fraser takes pride in being historicist and anti-essentialist in her approach, and even far more than Habermas (see CCC, 68). This agenda – that could

¹⁴¹ See, e.g., Jaeggi, *Entfremdung.*, 63-182.

¹⁴² Rosa, *Resonanz.*, 35.

¹⁴³ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 294-98, 435-500.

¹⁴⁴ See Jürgen Habermas, "Die Moderne – ein unvollendetes Projekt," *Die Zeit*, no. 39 (1980).

¹⁴⁵ See Sørensen, "Alienation Reconsidered."

also be called empiricist, positivist, constructivist or post-modern – is in stark contrast to the original realist conceptions of Hegel and Marx, and to regain the lost metaphysical anchoring I propose again to take seriously again ideas both of human nature and of history, politics and education as enabling the realization of this nature, all of them in various combinations providing some normative guidance for our practical endeavours. What we are dealing with may at first hand thus appear to be just a matter of distinguishing analytically or translating one way or the other, but when the conceptual implications of these displacements with regards to content are drawn, it becomes clear that there was a reason why it attracted so much interest in the 20th century Marxist discussions, and also why it should also interest us today.

For Marx, the critique of alienation thus applies to the relation to product as well as to the production, in turn affecting one's relation to oneself as a human being, i.e. one's human nature, and, by implication, also the relation to other human beings. Hence, under the present historical working conditions, work is not possible as a free expression of oneself, but as we shall see, there is more to alienation than this.

In a capitalist society, work mostly becomes forced labor, i.e. the production of a product for another. In a capitalist society, labor is conditioned by the distorted form of renunciation due to private property rights, where the renouncement of the product produced implies estrangement and ultimately also alienation as the alienating alienation of the value produced. Under capitalism neither the product nor the production is typically owned by the producer, and this legal fact we would want to negate and sublate in a future society. This is the idea of a real-life alienation that can nevertheless be overcome that I am pursuing in the present argument.

I. Marx's Analysis of Alienation was a Challenge to Real-Existing Socialism

Here it is important to recognize the political and ideological reality before the fall of the Berlin wall in late 1989. In the 20th century ideological offensive against the Western world during the Cold War, the core asset was the critique of capitalism, and for this venture, within most communist parties on both sides of the wall, Marxism-Leninism was the only acceptable point of departure. According to mainstream Marxist-Leninists, Marx was thus the respectable social scientist who wrote the *Capital* that gave the critique of capitalism a validity beyond mere normative quarrelling. The "scientific communism" was created by "the genius scientists Marx and Engels," and "its true nature and the methods and goals of the struggle for it" was appropriated by the "proletariat" in its "party."¹⁴⁶

Recognizing the genius of Marx, however, made it relevant what this genius had written already at the age of 26 (see, e.g., MTA, 76), just as it was relevant how it should be interpreted. After the publication in 1932 of the *Manuscripts*, alienation had to be recognized as indisputably of concern for Marx as a young philosopher, and also that this was somehow related both to the critique of political economy and to the historical establishment of only two classes, "the working class and the capitalist class" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 505/229 (S,XVII)). That generated a heated discussion about the proper interpretation of Marx's idea of alienation between various kinds of Marxist-Leninists and less orthodox Marxist lasting almost half a century and developing into polemical debates on the borderline between philosophy and politics.

¹⁴⁶ Sitnikow in Fetscher, "Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.", 303.

On the one hand, these debates implied the recognition that philosophical thinking regarding alienation was crucial for the global ideological struggle. On the other hand, this recognition meant that philosophical argument became intertwined with political rhetoric and ideological conflict, apparently generating a fear to admit any weaknesses in the life and death struggle of the Cold War, even when consistency and truth would call for more reflection.

The importance attributed to the discussion of alienation is indicated by the official philosophical 1974 dictionary of the bygone German Democratic Republic (GDR), where the thirteen columns entry on the term *Entfremdung* consists of two separate and almost independent parts. In the first part of the entry we find a relatively straight forward account of the term as it allegedly is used by Hegel, Marx and Engels, arguing that the sublation of capitalist exploitation and subjugation will eventually lead to the sublation of alienation.¹⁴⁷ In the second part, the word is given to the prominent GDR-philosopher Manfred Buhr to discuss his contemporaries, and his statements leave no doubt about the perceived urgency of the subject. Buhr thus denounces Marcuse's discussion without much ado as "bourgeois and revisionist,"¹⁴⁸ and in general Buhr recognizes the concept of alienation as in particular a central issue for the "bourgeois criticism of Marx", implying ultimately the "liquidation of the theory of the socialist revolution."¹⁴⁹

This line of thought is also reflected in the official 1968 preface to the *Manuscripts* by the GDR Institute of Marxism-Leninism. To be criticized are those "bourgeois ideologues," for whom "the concept of alienation" understood as an "unhistorical, eternal category" rather than a "material relation conditioned on capitalist private property." They use the "contradiction" between the "philosophical anthropology and idealism" of the young Marx and his later work in order to "falsify Marx's teaching." These "bourgeois 'critics of Marx'" are said to use "methods of forgery of the early writings" to construct "a 'true' Marxism" and to "manipulate with" and "devalue" Marx's "later writings." Just like I may be blamed to do presently, such critics give "special attention" to the *Manuscripts* without "taking the trouble to get acquainted with and understand the whole of Marxism."¹⁵⁰

For Mészáros, it was thus important to underline that he makes no attempt to reconstruct Marx's work on the basis of the *Manuscripts*; on the contrary, an "interpretation and evaluation" of the *Manuscripts* ignoring the "totality of Marx's work" can be "no more than a caricature" (MTA, 22). Moreover, as Mészáros's discussion demonstrates, in this intellectual climate it was also important to demonstrate that Lenin had in fact appreciated the work of the young Marx, and that charges against the latter of humanism and idealism would thus also implicate the former, i.e. Lenin. That being simply inconceivable, however, would – by the implication of a *reductio ad absurdum*– then liberate Marx of such any suspicions (see MTA, 93-96).

Hence, for Marxist-Leninists, to emphasize non-economic aspects of alienation meant that it could be a reality also in socialist states. As Luka Marković explains in his account of the controversy from the

¹⁴⁷ See Werner Schuffenhauer, "Entfremdung [1]," 10 ed., in *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 1, ed. Georg Klaus and Manfred Buhr (Berlin: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1974), 324-26.

¹⁴⁸ Manfred Buhr, "Entfremdung [2]," 10 ed., in *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 1, ed. Georg Klaus and Manfred Buhr (Berlin: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1974), 328.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 326; see also Schrey, "Einführung," xiii.

¹⁵⁰ Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, "Vorwort," in *Ergänzungsband. Schriften, Manuskripte, Biefe bis 1844. Erster Teil.*, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, Marx-Engels-Werke 40 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1968), xx-xxi.

1980s, humanist Marxists could therefore be regarded as “treacherous revisionist.”¹⁵¹ Hence, when someone like Marcuse made allegedly erroneous claims concerning the Marx as a humanist, the problem was not primarily that he was wrong, but rather that he was considered as deliberately falsifying Marx,¹⁵² and that he was therefore a traitor.

Now, whatever may be meant precisely by this bygone polemic and the derogatory labels, e.g. bourgeois, reformist, revisionist, idealist etc., and ignoring the specific accusations, there is no doubt that the intention of the labeling was to stigmatize the issue of alienation as such as a threat to or, at least, as irrelevant for the continued real-existing socialist project. Emphasizing the concept of alienation could arguably reduce Marx to, in the best case, a humanist critic of early capitalist modernity, thus reducing the importance of his social scientific analysis of capitalist economy that had arguably revealed the laws of history, society and economy. Hence, rather than taking the risk trying to understand Marx’s philosophical concept of alienation, by labelling the entire discussion of it as a youthful deviation, the mature scientist Marx could be saved from possible oblivion among the immense crowds of concerned moralists and philosophical idealists, and, by implication, so could also his role as providing legitimacy to the ruling system behind the Iron Carpet as being exemplary of realized socialism.

For this reason, i.e. for the legitimacy of real-existing socialism, as apparently was the official Soviet label (see DBE, 212), it was crucial that the mature Marx’s criticism of capitalism could be said to rest firmly on solid scientific grounds, not on speculative metaphysical postulates about the possible alienation of the human nature, and that the so-called realized socialist states therefore were the result of real historical progress following the logic of historical materialism. Moreover, Marx famously expressed his contempt of philosophers having only interpreted reality, where the point is to change it.¹⁵³ While still in the GDR, Ernst Bloch was thus criticized by the Marxist-Leninists who stressed that what was important for the socialist project was to support “the real socialist efforts of the working class,” not to argue “the mystical idea of a sublation of any possible alienation.”¹⁵⁴

Taking seriously however as a professional philosopher something similar to this despicable idea, I cannot help being put off by the apparent unwillingness of the Soviet-style proponents to go into serious conceptual argument with both real opponents and possible allies concerning the issue of alienation. In Soviet academic culture, it seems to have been acceptable to perceive and handle discursive interchanges as a political conflict bordering armed class war. As Fetscher concludes, criticism of Soviet society was often perceived as simply being apologetic for bourgeois society, thus relieving Soviet philosophers of any duty to take the points made seriously, and on the other side, following the same logic, conservatives in the western world did not see the need to consider points that could be attributed to “world communism.”¹⁵⁵

However, substituting interpretation and argument with polemical labelling and exclusion is simply not a fruitful way to investigate important issues of common concern, neither with regards to democratic politics and education, nor with regards to social and political philosophy, and it is no wonder that today, in the renewed philosophical discussion of alienation, this 20th century heritage is mostly ignored.

¹⁵¹ Luka Markovic, *"Entfremdung"und "Aufhebung der Entfremdung"bei Karl Marx und der "Praxis"-Gruppe*, Philosophie 6, ed. (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1987)., 4.

¹⁵² See *ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵³ See Karl Marx, "[Thesen über Feuerbach] (1845)," in *1845 bis 1846*, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, Marx Engels Werke (MEW) 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1969)., 535.

¹⁵⁴ Rugard Otto Gropp in Norbert Kapferer, *Das Feinbild der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR 1945-1988* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990)., 116.

¹⁵⁵ Fetscher, "Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.", 336.

Both with regards to form and content it seems to be out of touch with current academic discourses. The uncompromising revolutionary communist discourse, however, is still alive. Hence, on the homepage providing the pdf-scans of MEW that many of us still uses for academic purposes, the peaceful way to socialism through education and politics that became the official line of the USSR after the death of Stalin, is denounced as not being in accordance with Marx and Engels, but a “forgery” of the “Chruschtschow-Brezhnev-revisionists.”¹⁵⁶

J. Humanist Marxists blur the link Between Capitalism and Alienation

Philosophical argument, however, must transcend unsavory rhetorical techniques and political conflict. In other words: Important issues of content should not be discarded just because of the way they have been formulated by various proponents or opponents. And the perceived challenge from humanist Marxism and Critical Theory to the Marxist-Leninists was not without reason. Hence, in a discussion of alienation by the young Habermas in post-WWII Germany, he refers casually to Marx, but the main point is that the economical aspect of alienation is only “the exterior of the phenomenon.”¹⁵⁷ Acknowledging conceptual inspiration from Heidegger and Arnold Gehlen, Habermas’s argument serves as a good example of how a humanist while referring to Marx could still universalize alienation in a Jasperian way as following from experiential or existential aspects of human being as such and its relationship to modern technology.

As Habermas argues, even when the proletariat no longer has to slave for a starvation wage, even when it can enjoy bourgeois pleasures, the “‘alienation of the human world’ continues. [...] cinema, transistor radio and the banging scooter brings together with piecework an alienation” that he claims “was always included” in Marx’s thought, but never distinguished clearly from the misery due to “starvation wages.” This “insidious alienation” come allegedly about when automatization creates a distance between people, when machines become self-sustaining, and when we follow the “rhythm of the machines.”¹⁵⁸ For Habermas, there is no doubt that alienation is implied by technique and technology, in particular when it comes to “largescale industrial production.”¹⁵⁹ Alienation thus being unavoidably connected to “technical and economic progress,” he has no problem considering it “universal.”¹⁶⁰

In a similar post-Stalian spirit, Gorz also insists on Marxism merits being considered a kind of humanism, criticizing thus that human beings are “alienated” by a “material system” turning against them, adding, however, that to understand that they are alienated, one must assume the “point of view of their praxis.” Only in this way is it possible to recognize how the “status as a thing” conferred to human being by the system is “in contraction with human reality” (see MDH, 44-45). Gorz thus approaches alienation primarily in terms of subjective experience. There is alienation, when the “objectification of human work” makes “this activity appear as the opposite of what it is,” when you “invest your freedom in a work, just to realize that ultimately the result, nourished by your anxiety and pain, is something else, the thing of somebody else [...], that the free objectification is an objectification that negates you and makes

¹⁵⁶ See <https://marx-wirklich-studieren.net/marx-engels-werke-als-pdf-zum-download/>

¹⁵⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Die Dialektik der Rationalisierung. Vom Pauperismus in Produktion und Konsum,” *Merkur* VIII, no. 8 (1954), 702.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 702-03.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 704.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 721.

your liberty an instrument of your enslavement." Hence, as Gorz argues, "alienation is not imposed on us by the brutal force; it is left over to each of us to realize 'freely' the necessity that constitutes for itself and for others An-other, where we cannot recognize ourselves as the author" (MDH, 48-49).

For Gorz, our work is alienating when it becomes "an objectification that finds itself objectified in a way that negates its own finality to the benefit of a strange finality" or even an "inhuman finality." Referring casually to Hegel and Marx, Gorz recognizes the moral connotations of Marx's idea of alienation, emphasizing however as in particular alienating the inability to "recognize oneself in one's objectivity" and thus to "be authentically" (MDH, 53-54). Moreover, Gorz stresses that alienation comes to exist due to "what we have done by our action, even when it escapes us and delivers us to the Other." Even if doomed to alienation due our original conditions, i.e. due to "race, ethnic collectivity, or simply [being] women in feudal or bourgeois societies," even if alienation "presents itself [to us] as the impotence to realize [our] own goal under the given conditions" (MDH, 55). Gorz points out that one cannot ignore that in modern bourgeois society, "there is a contradiction between theory and practice between right and reality." In the traditional society, one's status was divinely given from birth as "noble or bourgeois," but in in the modern society, there is "no justification for the social difference that persist in reality" (MDH, 91). Still the fundamental assumption is that "every one of us begin by being complicit in our own alienation," (MDH, 55-56) that the "sovereign individuals" has "come to produce this alienation" (MDH, 92).

For Gorz it makes sense to adopt a kind of methodological individualism, departing from the "most simple aspect of alienation," the "alienation of one person by another," in order to understand the "alienation of every individual by its own activity as an Other" (MDH, 59). In the most Hegelian classical way, like Marcuse Gorz explains human objectification in terms of negation: "who says subject says negativity, that is, the activity of negating and objectifying oneself through one's work and works." Emphasizing even more the existential aspect, Gorz states that "to say that human being is what it does," this means that human being "is not; it exists" (MDH, 60). In contrast to Marcuse, in Gorz's existentialist theory of alienation objectivity is to be understood in terms of subjectivity, and this is also the case regarding the supra-individual legal aspect of alienation, i.e. economy or rights.

As Gorz explains, "alienation can only exist in a world inhabited by other subjects;" only an-other "can turn my acts against me as an armament that I provide him with" (MDH, 60-61). In the most classical Sartrean way, Gorz argues the look of another to be alienating, "negating the activity by which I transcend my flesh, making me an inert object [...], a thing." There is a "permanent ground of alienation in our reciprocal recognition" that cannot be overcome neither through "world, language or flesh." There is a "permanent inadequation" between the activity by which I objectify myself and our objectification through the other. It is impossible to recognize the other in all of what he says, and what I say is open to "many interpretations." This "defeat is experienced by us as solitude; it is perceived by the other as part of the silence that persists as the ground of our speech." (MDH, 62) Pursuing my proper goals, I transcend the objects, the others do the same, we are all objects to each other, and due to this "impossibility both practical and ontological," we cannot know the intentions of the others, "not even those of one single other" (MDH, 63).

Moreover, Gorz emphasizes that the "good will of individuals" are incapable of providing a "universal reconciliation;" as individuals they are inescapably alienated in relation to each other, and everybody in the capitalist production process are alienated by their roles and professions, the worker as well as the directors; from "the bottom to the top of the latter, there is nothing but individuals alienated by the demands of the things" (MDH, 68). In fact, the mutual alienation of the individuals stems from the "material demands of the practical field," first of all "the economy" (MDH, 69).

Still, Gorz does not provide any details regarding economy. It is just assumed as a black box. More important is the “tyranny of the machine,” and that the “salaried worker” has to succumb to the goals of other people. Still, even though everybody has to “succumb to the petrified praxis,” everybody also “produce and perpetuate this tyranny by their alienated work” (MDH, 72). He even criticizes the Marxist theory of “economic alienation” for making the “individual product of a condition and a socio-economic process that develops beyond them as a natural process,” insisting that “in reality, the individuals are the producers of their own condition and the socio-economic processes” (MDH, 84). He recognizes a “contradiction between the goals of the individuals and the result they produce” (MDH, 94), but the example is traffic congestion that makes individual transport in private cars less rational than public transport (see MDH, 95-100).

Both Habermas and in particular Gorz thus enrolls Marx as a humanist in an argument for universalizing alienation as a fundamental human condition, integrating thus alienation in an existentialist philosophical anthropology. As a contrast to these rather pessimist humanist critiques of post-WWII modernity, we can consider Guy Kirsch’s humanist argument from the 1980s. Here alienation is also recognized as something universal, but in quite another way. As a dedicated liberal, Kirsch recognizes the challenge of alienation in capitalist society, but criticizes “the Marxist illusion of a society free of alienation.” Instead, he argues that we should strive for realizing human being in a “alienation-free sphere,” i.e. in a sphere beyond the alienation of the market and the state, not determined by supply and demand, neither by being “comrade or citizen,” but simply by being “human.”¹⁶¹

However, pessimistic or optimistic, all of these humanist ideas of alienation are ahistorical, and as Oiserman argues, “apologists of capitalism strive to eternalize alienation.”¹⁶² Even though this is clearly not the conscious intention of the arguments referred to, as I argue, consciousness may still be false and beliefs also; hence, the ideological function of their arguments may still be apologetical. As Oiserman continues, if alienation is accepted as simply a human condition, bourgeois ideologists can conclude, that, yes, the capitalist world is not perfect, but there is no reason to believe that it could be much better: The “earthly paradise is simply not possible.”¹⁶³

Moreover, as Marković emphasizes, if alienation is something universal that is primarily related to modern technology, within the logic of the Cold War it could then be conceived of as taking also place in a real socialist state despite the collective ownership of the means of production.¹⁶⁴ Technically speaking, the means of production in the socialist states were very similar to those of the neighboring capitalist states.

The implication of tying conceptually alienation to existence, division of labor and technology was that the pain of being alienated in relation to one’s society and oneself would be encountered both under socialism and capitalism alike. Hence, if alienation was indeed a major source of human suffering, that would cast doubt on the historical strategy of establishing by authoritarian measures allegedly realized socialist states as the true way to communism. In the West, Fetscher recognized that the discussion of alienation easily lead to discussing crucial political question such as the democratic content of socialist

¹⁶¹ Guy Kirsch, *Entfremdung - der Preis der Freiheit? : liberale Variationen über ein Thema von Marx*, Vorträge und Aufsätze, 99 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983)., 67-69.

¹⁶² Oiserman, "Kritik des Marxismus an der bürgerlichen Entfremdungsphilosophie.", 251.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 243.

¹⁶⁴ See Markovic, "*Entfremdung*" und "*Aufhebung der Entfremdung*"., 4.

societies,¹⁶⁵ and on Marxist grounds Israel even concluded that “real-existing socialism represented the total alienation” (DBE, 212).

Recognizing Marx’s critique of alienation as humanist thus posed a serious challenge for realized socialism that required a convincing answer, and this was in fact argued explicitly by humanist Marxists in Yugoslavia,¹⁶⁶ who in some periods in the 1960s and 1970s enjoyed a higher degree of academic and intellectual freedom than in other real-socialist countries.¹⁶⁷ From the USSR, Oiserman thus answered that problems with alienation were due to the fact that socialism of course contained “remains” from capitalist class society, and that this would be overcome by “communism.”¹⁶⁸ However, the continued legitimacy of realized socialism as the way to communism depended on understanding alienation as a social psychological pathology encountered only in capitalist societies with their particular property relations, and Oiserman therefore added that in fact, in socialism there was nothing like what Marx had called alienation, i.e. a problem connected to production under the condition of capitalism.

However, disregarding Oiserman’s apologetic intention, I cannot help sharing some of the concerns of the Soviet mainstream Marxists, i.e. that the focus on human alienation could draw away attention from the critique of political economy and the critique of capitalism. In my argument for the necessity of criticizing and overcoming alienation I thus contest the current societal mode of globalized production that favors the accumulation of capital protected by private property rights and thus increasing social inequality. However, as I see it, the critique of political economy implies a critique of alienation. Finding such critiques more pertinent and urgent than ever before, I thus recognize the critical potential of the bygone debates of alienation for contemporary politics and education.

K. Private Property Alienates rather than Human Being and Technology

For mainstream Marxist-Leninists, the problem with the humanist approach was thus that the recognition of “bourgeois and reformist conceptions of alienation” threatened to blur Marx’s fundamental critique of capitalist property relations. As they saw it, these conceptions of alienation therefore had to be acknowledged as some of “the main ideological weapons in the struggle against Marxism-Leninism.”¹⁶⁹ The problem was that a humanist critique of capitalist modernity emphasizing the sufferings of alienation rather than injustice and exploitation threatened to undermine the scientificity of the critique of capitalism as a historical societal formation that was necessary for continued progress of humanity.

Challenged by the issue of alienation, one can reconstruct three successive Marxist-Leninist strategies for dealing with the issue. An initial strategy was thus to make alienation less attractive in critical thought by pointing to the ideological illegitimacy of the subject as such. Such a strategy may have influenced the editorial decision in the 1950s not to include the *Manuscripts* in the official MEW edition in the volumes dedicated to the writings of Marx and Engels from 1844, despite the fact that they had

¹⁶⁵ See Fetscher, "Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.", 294.

¹⁶⁶ Markovic, "Entfremdung" und "Aufhebung der Entfremdung"., 5

¹⁶⁷ See Fetscher, "Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.", 335.

¹⁶⁸ Oiserman, "Kritik des Marxismus an der bürgerlichen Entfremdungsphilosophie.", 249-50.

¹⁶⁹ See, e.g., Yanowitch, "Alienation and the Young Marx in Soviet Thought.", 38.

already been published in the first MEGA edition. Petrović thus affirms the widespread resistance to discussing alienation as such.¹⁷⁰

Still today, in some Marxist discussions the very notion of alienation is made suspicious by allegedly being “strongly tied to romantic humanism.”¹⁷¹ Such suspicions of guilt by association have been extended to humanist Marxism in general, the claim being that criticizing the alienation of human nature in bourgeois society implies the political project of “reestablishing a natural order,”¹⁷² i.e. some kind of conservatism. In fact, in the critical vocabulary of Marxism-Leninism, ‘romanticism’ takes up a prominent place on par with ‘positivism’ and revisionism,’ associated with irrationalism, mysticism and restoration to constitute in Buhr’s words a “restorative bourgeois-feudal ideology,”¹⁷³ i.e. not just a conservative, but an outright reactionary ideology.

Having however to recognize that the genius Marx had in fact in his youth been rather preoccupied with human alienation, and finally publishing in 1968 the *Manuscripts* again in a supplementary volume to MEW, a second Marxist-Leninist strategy was to insist that the true identity of Marx was the mature social scientist who wrote *The Capital* and who had laid the basis of the Marxist-Leninist ideology of communist parties, that is, not the young philosopher. At first, the “comrades” thus argued that the young Marx’s interest in alienation were simply “remains of Hegelian idealism and Feuerbachian anthropology.”¹⁷⁴

Obviously, in Marx’s writings there is a clear development from philosophy to economy, or, as it was officially phrased, “from idealism to materialism and from revolutionary democratism to communism.”¹⁷⁵ The second strategy was therefore more successful, but it did not close the issue either, being thus met with the answer that there had to be some continuity in thoughts and concepts from Marx’s humanist idealism to his materialist critique of capitalism. As Luka Marković explains, this possible continuity became a key issue in the discussion about alienation raised by Yugoslav scholars. Mihailo Marković thus argued explicitly for a continuity from the *Manuscripts* to *The Capital* specifically in relation to the idea of “alienated work,”¹⁷⁶ detecting from beginning to end in the thoughts of Marx the same four well-known aspects of alienation, i.e. alienation from the product, from the productive activity, from human nature and from other human beings.¹⁷⁷

According to Luka Marković, intellectuals, who argued for a continuity in the thought of Marx, claiming that the mature social scientist still expressed the same line of thought as the young humanist philosopher, were perceived as an ideological threat to Soviet rule.¹⁷⁸ As a principled and conceptual discussion within Marxism writ large, the discussion of continuity therefore developed into a global controversy that also became crucial both for other kinds of Marxist-Leninists and for the so-called New Left. In addition to the conflict mentioned between mainstream Marxist-Leninists and the Yugoslav

¹⁷⁰ See Petrović, "Gibt es noch Entfremdung in sozialistischen Systemen?.", 269.

¹⁷¹ Mau, *Stum tvang.*, 95.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁷³ Buhr in Kapferer, *Das Feinbild der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie in der DDR 1945-1988.*, 248.

¹⁷⁴ Oiserman, "Kritik des Marxismus an der bürgerlichen Entfremdungsphilosophie."

¹⁷⁵ SED, "Vorwort.", xvii.

¹⁷⁶ M. Markovic in L. Markovic, "*Entfremdung*" und "*Aufhebung der Entfremdung*", 39.

¹⁷⁷ See *ibid.*, 50.

¹⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 13.

humanists, one could also contrast, for instance, the French structuralists with Frankfurt School Critical Theory or the so-called Budapest School,¹⁷⁹ which included Lukács and Mészáros.

Hence, from Argentina Atilio A. Boron could recognize in Spanish the role played by French structuralist Marxists affiliated with the communist party, in particular Althusser, in spreading and sustaining scholarly the “legend of the two Marxs” by arguing for the so-called epistemological break between the young “‘ideological’ Marx” and the mature “‘scientific’ Marx.”¹⁸⁰ And as Israel confirmed from Scandinavia to his German readership, the discussion of alienation was central for the question of continuity in Marx’s work, i.e. whether there was one or two Marxs. For Israel himself, though, there was no doubt that Marx continued be a humanist and a Hegelian dialectician (see DBE, 14-15). This legend and the attempts to ignore or downplay alienation thus became constituent parts of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy for decades in many parts of the world, being sustained by both communist party-officials and Marxist-Leninist philosophers, and in some contemporary discussions, the alleged break of Marx with a certain form of humanism is still recognized.¹⁸¹

Interestingly, the distinction between the humanist philosopher and the scientific economist can also be used by those, who want to save Marx from dogmatist stupor and scientific reductionism, such as it was attempted by the early Critical Theory of the 1930s. Criticizing this aspect of Critical Theory, Neil McInnes revealed the possibility of another and almost inverted answer from the Marxist-Leninist side, namely to recognize the continuity in Marx’s thinking, but denying a continued humanist idealism and instead insisting on Marx being scientific right from the start.

This interpretation I take as constituting a third strategy of Marxism-Leninism. Hence, in the aforementioned GDR preface to the *Manuscripts*, the legend of “an unsurpassable border” between the *Manuscripts* and the later work, i.e. the second strategy, is said to be “forgery” in the “bourgeois and anti-communist spirit” that silences “important elements of the new revolutionary worldview” and negates “the process of formation and further development of the teachings of Marx.”¹⁸² In addition, structuralist Marxists could also be accused of being anti-dialectical, mechanical and reflecting a vulgar economic determinism (see, e.g., MTA, 116).

Following this line of thought, i.e. the third strategy, McInnes criticizes Critical Theory, and in particular Marcuse, of generating an “anti-scientific and irrationalist reading”¹⁸³ of the young Marx denouncing science and technology as “reification.”¹⁸⁴ Moreover, for McInnes this reading of the young Marx was originally “coeval with Nazism,” which arguably could explain why the Marcusean New Left of the 1960s was especially prone to “‘fascist’ style [...] reasoning.”¹⁸⁵ The final polemics are difficult to take serious, which in turn makes it difficult to take serious the overall argument, but as a whole, it gives an impression of the intellectual climate that surrounded these discussions.

Whatever one may think of the vocabulary, there is no doubt that the issue of alienation represented a threat to the legitimacy of Marxist-Leninist politics that needed to be answered. In the Soviet Union, the perceived threat was that ultimately Marx would become victim of a thoroughgoing “Hegelianization,”

¹⁷⁹ See, e.g., Falk, “Entäußerung” und “Entfremdung” in den Pariser Manuskripten (1844) von Karl Marx., 4.

¹⁸⁰ Atilio A. Boron, “Filosofía política y crítica de la sociedad burguesa: el legado teórico de Karl Marx,” 2 ed., in *Filosofía política moderna. De Hobbes a Marx*, ed. Atilio A. Boron (Buenos Aires: Luxemburg, 2012), 292-93.

¹⁸¹ See, e.g., Mau, *Stum tvang.*, 85.

¹⁸² SED, “Vorwort.”, xxi.

¹⁸³ Neil McInnes, “The Young Marx and the New Left,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 4 (1971), 144.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 150

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 155.

where the “self-consciousness of the proletariat” would be “divinized” to the “figure of the absolute world spirit,” denying in the same vein the “necessity” of the “leadership” of “the proletarian communist party.”¹⁸⁶

As I reconstruct the process, since none of the first two strategies for coping with alienation were successful, Marxism-Leninism was left with the third strategy. As Petrović mentions, worldwide many Marxist would recognize the identity of the younger and the mature Marx,¹⁸⁷ and in the third strategy, Marxist-Leninists proposed to understand alienation in a way that recognized the continuity of thought in the development of Marx and the continued importance of both alienation and economy. The point was, however, focus on the potentiality of the seed rather than the actuality of the roots, recognizing thus in the *Manuscripts*, as the GDR editor put it, “important elements of the scientific communism.”¹⁸⁸ Hence, in this reading it was emphasized that Marx contested the “abstract universal concept of alienation,” inquiring into “alienation’s economic content and historical character,” in particular taking serious the “alienation of work.”¹⁸⁹

Taking in addition inspiration from a less well-known figure, Margaret Alice Fay and her impressing work with Marx’s *Manuscripts* published posthumously in the 1980s,¹⁹⁰ this is the approach to discussing alienation that I will pursue, i.e. understanding alienation as generated primarily by laboring for the benefit of the capitalist proprietors of the production and the products. This understanding takes seriously that the young Marx’s idea of alienated work was developed in direct continuation of his critique of national economics, considering thus Marx’s concept of alienation the link between his critique of national economics and the philosophy of his epoch (see ESM, 19).

In relation to the discussion of continuity, Fay takes a moderate and reasonable position, arguing that there are both continuity and breaks in the development of Marx: continuity thus all the way from the bourgeois political economy in Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* to Marx’s *Manuscripts* and his mature critique of political economy in *The Capital*; breaks between the latter two, since the mature conceptual analysis of commodity and work takes up issues not even conceived of by the young Marx (see ESM, 256-57).

As many traditional Marxist-Leninist, I will thus distance alienation from considerations about the existential conditions of human being *per se* and the possible pathological effects of modern technology, resisting the tendencies to existentialization and psychologization of alienation. Following this line of thought, when Arendt proposes the idea of world-alienation,¹⁹¹ I understand why it is denounced as “sheer mystification” (MTA, 36). However, in contrast to many Marxist-Leninists, I insist on the continued importance of criticizing alienation, namely by tying it tightly to the critique of political economy and in particular to the issue of private property.

¹⁸⁶ Sitnikow in Fetscher, “Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.”, 296-97.

¹⁸⁷ See Petrović, “Gibt es noch Entfremdung in sozialilistischen Systemen?.”, 269.

¹⁸⁸ SED, “Vorwort.”, xxi.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, xix.

¹⁹⁰ See Margaret Alice Fay, *Einfluss von Adam Smith auf Karl Marx’ Theorie der Entfremdung. Eine Rekonstruktion der Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte aus dem Jahr 1844*, ed. Johannes D. Hengstenberg, trans. Karl-Heinz Benz, et al., Campus: Forschung 456, ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1986); *ibid.*, The following references will be indicated in brackets in the text as ESM, nn.

¹⁹¹ See, e.g., David Macauley, “World Alienation and The Search for Home in Arendt’s Philosophy,” in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Gratton and Yasemin Sari (London, UK: Bloomsbury Press, 2020).

With inspiration from Marx's *Manuscripts*, human being is understood as becoming alienated under capitalism mainly by being deprived of the product of work due to societal enforcement of private property rights. Alienation is thus implied by capitalist exploitation, and, as I will return to in section O, as such it should be handled through politics, economy and law, i.e. as an objective social condition in need of change, not as a universal subjective human experience regarding the meaning of life or the experience of technological innovation.

Furthermore, according to this rather objectivist conception of alienation, one can be alienated without knowing or experiencing it, being thus possibly also the victim of false consciousness, although the latter was sometimes held separate from the former.¹⁹² Again, even though this line of thought has been integral for securing the legitimacy and relative stability of authoritarian regimes of allegedly realized socialism, and as such criticized for paternalism, as already indicated, I must admit that I find it relevant today for the critique of neoliberal globalized capitalism to claim that many people act against their interests, thus suffering from false consciousness. In the following I will turn to Fay to substantiate the argument concerning alienation in this objective sense, and I ask you beforehand to forgive my digressions into philological details, hoping that you can see that they add to the conceptual argument.

L. The *Manuscripts* as a Whole is about the Critique of Political Economy

In hindsight, Marx's *Manuscripts* constitute maybe the most discussed philosophical work in the 20th century (see, e.g., MTA, 11), and I have no ambition of covering all aspects of the work. Rather, my ambition is to recuperate this discussion to reconstruct a convincing idea of alienation that, on the one hand, emphasizes its intimate and critical relation to capitalist modernity and, on the other hand, makes it possible to overcome, be that – as already said – through revolution, reform or education. My errand is thus systematic, critical and political argument rather than merely interpretation of the works of historical philosophers, but I have nevertheless tried to make my textual interpretations of the main inspirations, the writings of the young Marx as convincing as possible. Without such an interpretation, there is no real recuperation.

When a subject is the object of such sustained and passionate interest in the public sphere, we sometimes get fantastic examples of scholarship that would never have been undertaken under normal circumstances. One such example is the outstanding work of Fay with regards to the textual history of Marx's *Manuscripts*. With such an impressive scholarly effort, the obvious presupposition left unmentioned is that we are dealing with testimonies of unquestionable value despite the condition they are found in; stemming from the hand of the master, they merit the most detailed scrutiny possible.

Hence, what makes Fay's work truly fascinating, is the way she intensely and convincingly argues, meticulously and in minute details, how Marx's manuscripts must be reconstructed – both physically and conceptually – in a different way than it was done in all of the classical editions, i.e. not only the first MEGA (*Marx Engels Gesamt Ausgabe*) edition, published in the USSR in 1932, and the MEW edition published in GDR in 1968, but also the second MEGA edition from 1982, also published in GDR.¹⁹³

¹⁹² See, e.g., Ron Eyerman, "False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory," *Acta Sociologica* 24, no. 1-2 (1981).

¹⁹³ The latest official MEGA edition of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* was thus published well before the publication of Fay's work in 1986. Fay herself, however, had died already in 1979.

The general view since the first MEGA edition has been that the *Manuscripts* must be considered a collection of fragments (see, e.g., NQG, 509; MTA, 12), and this is still the general view.¹⁹⁴ Being well aware of this fact (see ESM, 82), Fay argues that a careful reconstruction of the original manuscripts will reveal a much greater unity and consistency of the text than what is normally assumed (see ESM, 20-21), in addition revealing that besides a Hegelian Marx, we can also talk of a “Smithian Marx” (ESM, 9-10).

In general, it is recognized that before the *Manuscripts*, Marx only referred to the economy rather vaguely as an aspect of the socio-political relations (see, e.g., MTA, 80). Fay’s claim is that in the *Manuscripts*, the “critique of national economy” leads directly to the “category of alienation” (ESM, 64-65). Moreover, as also indicated by Marx himself (see ÖPM_{WGA}, 467-68/317 (H,XXXIX-XL)), Smith provides the material on which Marx applies “Hegel’s dialectical-critical method” (ESM, 83), and Fay argues that the way Marx’s argument is structured on different sheets of paper reflects the three layers in Hegel’s method as it is presented in *Encyclopedia*, § 79, i.e. the abstract understanding, the dialectical negativity and the speculative positivity of reason (see ESM, 86).¹⁹⁵ As Fay argues, for Marx Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* provided only a preliminary and thus abstract understanding of national economics (see ESM, 89-91), and this is what Marx purports to rectify.

Having had access to Marx’s original *Manuscripts*, Fay considers very closely the 76 handwritten pages and argues that the original MEGA editors seem to have overlooked the importance of the way the writing was originally structured by Marx, i.e. the way these sheets were ordered, folded and numbered to become the notebooks that contains the work as a whole and the way the spatial layout on the sheets of paper was used. An important point of Fay’s is that apparently Marx himself made the notebooks by folding sheets of paper in a peculiar way, the implication being that understanding the original physical structure of the papers in the notebooks is a condition for understanding the structure of the content of Marx’s argument.

Normally, the collection of paper sheets left by Marx are taken to form three manuscripts that in turn are taken to compose three notebooks, although the second manuscript is only a pair of sheets (see ESM, 27). Disagreement persists regarding the composition of the specific notebooks and their mutual relations, but Marx himself indicated an overall structure of the manuscripts as consisting of two primary notebooks, the first and the third, that Fay calls, respectively, the “Smith notebook” and the “Hegel notebook” (ESM, 26-27). So far, in my discussion of the basics of human being according, I have primarily referred to this third notebook, following also in this aspect Marcuse; however, when it comes to the understanding of the role of economy for alienation, the first notebook becomes more important.

Fay calls attention to a fourth manuscript of only four unnumbered pages that was in fact by Marx himself placed in the center of the third notebook, i.e. the Hegel-notebook. It was placed within his self-made binding, but it was nevertheless left out of the first MEGA edition of the *Manuscripts*, and have been largely ignored ever since, one of the few exceptions being the Landshut-collection of the writings of the young Marx (see ESM, 23).¹⁹⁶ This fourth manuscript contains Marx’s rather extensive summary of

¹⁹⁴ See, e.g., Andreas Vieth, "Philosophische Schriften," in *Marx-Handbuch: Leben - Werk - Wirkung*, ed. Michael Quante, David P. Schweikard, and Matthias Hoesch (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2016), 40-41.

¹⁹⁵ See also G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften (1830)*, vol. I, Werke in zwanzig Bänden. Theorie Werkausgabe (TWA) 8, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), 168.

¹⁹⁶ See also Karl Marx, *Der historische Materialismus : die Frühschriften (1932)*, ed. Siegfried Landshut and Jakob Peter Mayer, 2 ed., vol. 1-2, Kröners Taschenausgabe 91-92, ed. (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner, 1952).

the last chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology* on the absolute knowledge, in which Hegel argues for the possibility of overcoming alienation, and as Fay argues, this supplements Marx's rather abrupt critique in the Hegel-notebook on this subject (see ESM, 253). Interestingly, neither in the Hegel literature on absolute knowledge is this work of Marx found worth discussing.¹⁹⁷ I have, however, not pursued this issue, but I mention it to add credibility to Fay's general argument.

All three of the primary notebooks are numbered on the pages with their own set of Roman numerals. The Smith notebook thus consists of pages numbered I-XXVII, while the Hegel notebook consist of pages numbered I-XLIII. These numbers are provided by most publishers for reference, and I will also use them presently, indicating for clarity also the concerned notebook as, respectively, S and H. However, in both cases some pages appear to be left without numbers, the order of the numbers sometimes seems to conflict with the order of the content, just as pages could appear to be missing (see ESM, 25-29). Finally, the rather short second notebook is numbered XL-XLIII and given any name by Fay. When referring to it, I have therefore refrained from adding any letter of identification to the Roman numerals.

What complicates reading and reference even further, however, is the fact that much of Marx's original text is written in consecutive columns, i.e. columns where the text continues on the next numbered page, not in the next column, and that both the number of columns and their titles change along the way. Hence, in the first notebook, the Smith notebook, in the beginning and towards the end, there are three such columns on the pages (see ESM, 260-97 (S,I-XII), 318-33 (S,XXII-XXVI)). In between, however, some pages have only two columns (see ESM 298-309 (S, XII-XVI)), and on some of the three column pages, two columns appear to be left empty (see ESM, 310-17 (S,XVII-XXI)).

Transforming Marx's self-made notebooks with text in columns to normal book pages has been a challenge to generations of editors and publishers with regards to both form and content. Fay's approach to textual history resembles what is sometimes called experimental archeology,¹⁹⁸ and as far as I know, the Appendix of the book by Fay published in 1986 is still the only place to find a presentation in print of the entire text of the Smith notebook in columns (see ESM, 259-337), including the section on alienation (see ESM, 318-37; see also S,XXII-XXVI). The Appendix thus consists of a 77 pages reconstruction of the complete manuscripts of the first notebook that uses the column structure provided by Marx himself, indicating also for each column the original headings that he chose for them. The headings themselves vary in their formulations (see ESM, 39-41), but the basic partition reflects the three components that for Smith together constitutes the price, or the exchange value, of a commodity, i.e. wage, profit and rent.

Fay's claim is that one key to understanding the coherence of the manuscript is precisely to understand the relation between the abovementioned bi-partition and tri-partition (see ESM, 25). The latter partition thus reflects Smith's general distinction (see ESM, 24), and Fay's claim is that the idea of writing the text in columns is not to compare them, or as the original MEGA editors indicate, to establish a parallel (see ESM, 74), but to facilitate the conception of the "structure of the whole" (ESM, 72). In his analysis, Smith thus himself opens up for the possibility that price can be determined merely by two or even only one of the constituent components, and for this reason, in some parts of the Smith notebook, Marx can continue his discussion in two columns or only one column. The latter is the case when

¹⁹⁷ See, e.g., Jørgen Huggler, *Hegels skeptiske vej til den absolutte viden : en analyse af Phänomenologie des Geistes* (København: Museum Tusulanum, 1999)., 219.

¹⁹⁸ For a visual reconstruction of Marx's creation of the Smith notebook, see the video dedicated to Fay by Johannes D. & Maximilian J. Hengstenberg, dated 2014-04-14, on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iUNliEHZmM>

discussing feudal economy, since for that particular historical formation, one component is overwhelmingly important, namely the rent of land (see ESM, 42-43). Fay convincingly argues that the original MEGA editor's limited knowledge of Smith's political economy may explain obvious errors in the transcription and overlooking citations without explicit references to Smith (see ESM, 45-46). And the point is that in the case of other authors, the editors have made concise notes of hidden references.

The most serious error in relation to the present argument, however, is that the original MEGA editors choose to treat Marx's argument concerning alienation as a fragment of its own, meriting the extraction of the texts from the original columns and providing it with its own editorial title "[The Alienated Labor]" (see also ÖPM_w, 510-22), thus presenting it as an analysis rather independent of the critical analysis of Smith's political economy (see ESM, 76-77). Ever since, the extraction from the columns has been the preferred editorial strategy, the result thus being a printed text, where the chapter with the said title follows three chapters with the titles that Marx used for the columns, i.e. "Wages of Labor", "Profit of Capital" and "Rent of Land" (ÖPM_w, 471, 484 & 497).

Admittedly, when discussing alienation, Marx apparently displaces the basic structure of the analysis, pursuing now this particular aspect of his critique across the three categories wage, profit and rent, writing no longer in consecutive columns, but filling out the three columns on one page before proceeding to the next. However, that cannot be taken to imply, as the original MEGA editors did, that the columns and titles have "completely lost their meaning" (MEGA quoted in NQG, 513), or, as Marcuse continues, that that it constitutes a decisive break (see NQG, 513). As Fay emphasizes, extracting the analysis of alienation from the general tripartite structure of the text, and ignoring that the columns continues to be titled as before, blurs and leaves unexplained the close connection between this analysis and the critique of political economy, and as a consequence, it has become common to consider the discussion of alienation as something separated from the analysis of Smith's economy (see ESM, 183).

There is a discussion about the relation between the two MEGA edition that I will not go into,¹⁹⁹ since I have not consulted the first MEGA. Important for me is that the second MEGA edition presents two versions of the manuscripts, one with columns with the headings provided by Marx and one without columns and headings, editorially reconstructed in the way just described to form an ordinary book with sections with editorial titles. The editorial principle of the latter version was adopted in the MEW edition, whereas the most recent Suhrkamp edition mainly follows the principles of the former version.²⁰⁰ As in the 1982 MEGA edition, in the Suhrkamp edition only the first three sections of the Smith notebook are structured in columns,²⁰¹ not the last two, i.e. not the important section on alienation,²⁰² and for some reason left unexplained, when it comes to latter two sections, the Suhrkamp edition has omitted the column headings provided by the MEGA edition.

Even though Quante in his editorial commentary to the Suhrkamp edition recognizes Fay for calling attention to both Smith's influence on Marx and the editorial problems of the original MEGA-edition, and also recognizes that there are still unsettled editorial questions,²⁰³ Fay's editorial argument has apparently had no influence on his own edition of Marx's text; in fact, the omission just mentioned indicates the opposite. To obtain from Marx's *Manuscripts* a comprehensive critical concept of

¹⁹⁹ See, e.g., I. Taubert, "Die neue Edition der "Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte", " *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 31, no. 2 (1983).

²⁰⁰ See Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte.*, 8.

²⁰¹ See *ibid.*, 10-73.

²⁰² See *ibid.*, 82-98.

²⁰³ See Quante, "Kommentar.", 333.

alienation connected to the critique of political economy, I have therefore to a large extent relied on Fay's account of the Smith notebook, including her reconstruction of the text itself.

M. Capitalism is Life-Threatening to Workers and Nature

With this in mind, we are ready to take a closer look at how Marx develops the critique of alienation as part of his critique of political economy, emphasizing as the GDR editors of the *Manuscripts* "the anti-humanist nature, the dehumanizing effects of the capitalist order."²⁰⁴ When it comes to the four aspects of alienation specified by Marx, Fay considers them a sequence where one element necessarily implies the next (see ESM, 187), and the final result is the private economic agent, i.e. the famous economic man. For Smith this is a precondition of his political economy, including the labor theory of value, and for Marx this is a result that implies egoism and alienation between fellow human beings (see ESM, 218). In contrast to existentialists such as Gorz et al., the alienation between individual human beings is not the simple point of departure, but a fact that is explained.

As mentioned, Fay argues that in Marx's analysis one can detect the use of Hegel's dialectical method. For knowledge to become science, it must traverse three stages, the abstract stage thus being followed by the dialectical or negative stage, culminating finally in the speculative or the positive stage of reason (see ESM, 86). Smith's account of price as constituted by three basic components, wage, profit and rent, is the first stage, and Marx's immanent critique of the contradictions in Smith's account of price the second stage. This second stage of Marx's argument can also be identified in a particular organization of the sheets of the manuscript, just as this is possible with regards to the final positive stage (see ESM, 92-96), but this issue of form is not something that I will go further into. Now it is about conceptual content.

When it comes to the first component, wage, or the price of labor, Marx is refreshingly blunt, stating initially that it is determined by "the hostile battle between capitalist and worker" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 471/189 (S,I)), and this is no coincidence: "Everywhere in the national economics, we encounter the recognition of the hostile opposition of interests, the struggle, the war as the foundation of societal organization" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 499/195 (S, III)). As Fay mentions, for Smith the system of commodity production is a consequence of the natural freedom of human beings, and laws governing the system are therefore assumed to be "timeless truths" (ESM, 81). Within this system, national economics considers labor "abstractly" as a commodity with a price determined by competition: When the price is high, it is in demand, when it is low, it is not, and the competition to be considered to determine the price includes both the competition between "capitalist and worker" and between the "workers" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 481/224 (S,XIII)).

As Marx shows, for economics competition is conceived of as the "perpetual war" that is "the only means to peace" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 482/226 (S,XIV)). However, as he has become famous to argue, because of competition the already minimal wage will be further reduced, and this "will necessarily lead to revolution" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 510/234 (S,XXI)). Against Smith who assumed that both capitalist and worker could defend their proper interests equally, Marx thus calls attention to their unequal conditions. As Fay stresses, making labor a commodity implies making the worker more dependent on the capitalist (see ESM, 117).

²⁰⁴ SED, "Vorwort.", xix

As Fay demonstrates, Marx's ideology critique of the classical political economy is what brings in the critique of alienation. Political economy presupposes – and assumes natural and uncontroversial – two ideas, namely the idea of private property and that of the rational egoistic actor. Against that, Marx' argues that these two assumptions are in fact results of the historical development that has brought capitalism into being. This being the case, one may have the hope that this could be otherwise, property thus something less private and exclusive, human nature less selfish than what appears in economic transactions. This is what brings Marx to the critique of alienation. What makes the argument so hard to decipher, is that Marx – as I see it – employs a very rich and comprehensive notion of alienation that covers the scope from law to psychological pathology.

In the basic question of value, Marx's point of departure is the labor theory of value that was formulated already by Locke.²⁰⁵ Hence, according to national economics, only work increases "the value of the product of nature." Moreover, "everything is bought with work, and capital is nothing else but accumulated work." Therefore, as Marx stresses, "originally and according to its concept, the entire product of the work belongs to the worker" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 475-76/204-05 (S,VII)). But in fact, the more wealth the worker produces, the poorer he becomes. The more commodities the workers produce, i.e. the more efficient they are, the less is the demand for their work, and the cheaper they become themselves as commodities. The workers thus produce value that in the same process due to property relations escape them and add to the capital of someone else. Or, to make to point even more clear, value is alienated from the producers to be accumulated as the property of somebody else.

In addition this fundamental economical contradiction, Marx stresses that human being is a "sensuous conscious being" with "sensuous needs" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 543/272 (H,IX)). As he puts it: "Hunger is a natural need." Human being is a "natural being" capable of "suffering, conditioned and restricted," but also "a passionate being" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 578-79/296-97 (H,XXVI-XXVII)). Hence, unlike other "commodities," when "supply" exceeds "demand," part of the workers will as human beings become beggars or victims of "starvation" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 471/191 (S,I)). The constant challenge for the worker is to retain his humanity. "Eating, drinking, procreating etc. are also real human functions." In capitalism, however, the threat for the worker is that "the brutish become human and the human becomes brutish" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 514-15/239 (S,XXIII)). The worker's creation of value in things thus produces a "devaluation of the human world" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 511/235 (S,XXII)).

Hence, when capitalists loose, workers also loose "by necessity", but when capitalists profit, that does not imply that "workers profit" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 472/193 (S,II)), in fact quite the contrary. This is the fundamental contradiction of Smith's national economics, namely that it purports to contribute to the happiness of society, as indicated by the title *The Wealth of Nations*, but in reality it leads to the misery of the majority of society, revealing the real "goal of national economy to be the unhappiness of society" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 475/203 (S,VI)).

In addition, being also in this aspect in tune with Hegel,²⁰⁶ Marx affirms that the division of labor makes labor evermore "one-sided," workers being reduced to machines and forced to confront "the machine as competitor" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 474/201 (S,V)). While "division of labor" increases "the production power of labor, the wealth and the refinement of society," it reduces the worker to a machine and makes him "ever more dependent on the capitalist" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 476/206 (S,VII)). Furthermore, "monotonous

²⁰⁵ See, e.g., Asger Sørensen, "Value, Business and Globalisation - Sketching a Critical Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Business Ethics* 39, no. 1-2 (2002), 162-63.

²⁰⁶ See, e.g., Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke* 19, Leipzig 1932, 239 (see Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung*, 215).

activity” is of course detrimental for “spirit as well as body,” the result of “division of labor” being “higher mortality among factoryworkers” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 479/220 (S,X-XI)).

The social division of labor is thus to be considered within the framework of capitalism; as Marcuse stresses, the social division of labor takes place “according to the laws of capitalist commodity production” (RAR, 273). Hence, in contrast to what is sometimes claimed, criticizing capitalism is not just a matter of political economy, but also of the material consequences of competition such as the increased division of labor and development of technology. In *The German Ideology* completed just a few years after the *Manuscripts*, Marx and Engels criticizes the division of labor as alienating for human nature,²⁰⁷ thus adding credit to humanist interpretations of his critique. And as he says in the *Manuscripts*, the result of accumulation and industrialization is the production of still “greater quantities of trash,” i.e. “overproduction” that either puts large portions of the worker out of job, or reduce their wages to the “most miserable minimum” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 475/201 (S,V)). “Hence, in this competition the necessary consequence is general deterioration of commodities, falsification, pseudo-production, and general toxification as it shows in the big cities” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 490/214 (S,IX)).

However, although Marx’s critique of alienation is not limited to economy, I will nevertheless insist that criticizing alienation due to the social injustice enabled by private property is the most basic issue. As mentioned initially in response to Trawny, the division of labor under capitalism is an intensification of the economic exploitation: “The division of labor is the national economic expression of the social character of work within alienation” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 557/309 (H,XXXV)). Referring to Smith, Marx states that “division of labor springs from the propensity to exchange, so it grows and is limited by the extent of exchange, i.e. of the market” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 561/312 (H,XXXVII)), and that “the accumulation of capital” necessarily precedes “division of labor” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 495/223 (S,XIV)). Moreover, “the division of labor and the exchange depend on the private property” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 561/313 (H,XXXVIII)), not the other way round, and the division only increases with “the expansion of the market” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 559/310 (H,XXXVI)).

Even though I reject the idea of the basis determining the superstructure, I would still recognize questions of economy as preceding those of social organization and technology. Inspired by a remark by Mészáros (see MTA, 142), I propose to distinguish the social character of work from the particular social division of labor developed within competitive economy, emphasizing that without the right to private property and capitalist competition, in another kind of society alienation may be superseded, work being thus socially divided, but not in the capitalist way. As Jaeggi suggests, division of labor may be a good thing, if we have come to it “via a process of collective self-determination and also controlled the allocation of the surplus gained” (CCC, 27).

Finally, following Marx I will also call attention to the connection between money, richness and alienation. As I have related elsewhere, in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* the modern self-conscious and reflexive subject is inescapably in distress, lacerated, dismembered, and alienated, education (*Bildung*) being able to provide consciousness with a clear conception of the multiple conflicts and contradictions, but not more.²⁰⁸ As I have argued in continuation,²⁰⁹ Hegel clearly relates these alienating processes to questions of power and wealth (see, e.g., ALI, 57), offering a radical social critique of the material and corporal sufferings due to inequality and the necessity of obtaining money to survive.

²⁰⁷ See Marx and Engels, “Die deutsche Ideologie.”, 22-34.

²⁰⁸ See Sørensen, “Not Work, but Alienation and Education.”, 69-75; *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique.*, Ch. 6, sect. B.ii.

²⁰⁹ See “*Aliénation, Entfremdung – and Alienation.*”

As Fay explains, for Marx money represents the most universal form of wealth, the complete independence of restrictions and thus the full realization of movable property (see ESM, 169). From the feudal “*nul terre sans seigneur*,” we get the “modern proverb, *l’argent n’a pas de maître*” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 507/231 (S,XVIII)). Marx has obviously been fascinated by the power of money, quoting extensively narratives of what money can buy from Goethe and Shakespeare and providing himself vivid descriptions and reflections. The gist of it is this: What I *can* is determined by what I *have* rather than what I *am*. Relying rather on having than being (see MTA, 148-49), and due to the “mephistophelic power of money,”²¹⁰ I can be awful, but still “buy myself a lovely wife.” I am lame, but get feet, I can be a “bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, dull,” but when money is “the real spirit of all things,” how can their possessor be “without spirit?” Money is the “alienated, renounced and disposable species nature of human being. It is the renounced ability of humankind” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 564/319-20 (H,XLII)). For the worker who has alienated the value produced, the offensive wealth of the rich capitalist, i.e. the accumulated value as a product produced, thus turn against the producer as a hostile reality.

According to the economic logic expounded by Marx, one way or another, the capitalists gain while the workers will lose. When society becomes poorer, so do the workers, when it becomes richer, they still become poorer, and when society has become prosperous, they end up in “stationary misery” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 475/202 (S,V)). Of course, the rise of wages is possible, but it presupposes the accumulation of produced value to capital, which means that “the product of labor presents itself as ever more alien to the worker” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 474/200 (S,V)). One way or the other, work under capitalism is alienating in the most comprehensive sense.

N. Alienation of Value Presupposes Renunciation of the Product

This is where it is important to remember the width of semantic meaning covered by the term ‘alienation.’ Alienation is not only about experiencing the product as alien, but also about value being alienated from the producer to the proprietor of the product. As Israel mentions, ‘alienation’ has a certain “double meaning,” and one must be attentive to the tendency to “psychologization” (DBE, 33-24). Considering the economy of the production process, work creates value, since the resulting product becomes more useful and enjoyable and therefore also attractive to consume or buy on the market. Work thus creates use-value, exchange-value and ultimately capital. However, when the right to private property applies to both raw materials, means of production, products and capital, this alienates the produced value, which is transferred to the property owners.

The worker’s forced renunciation of his product due to property rights means that outside him, there comes to exist an independent, alien “power,” and that “life” from where the object arise, presents itself as “hostile and alien” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 512/236 (S,XXII)). In general, Marx thus stresses that what is produced, things as well as value, when renounced and disposed of as independent entities, can become alien and hostile, thus turning towards the producers. This happened historically under feudalism as well capitalism, in latter case most acute with the accumulation of capital, resulting for instance in the offensive wealth just described.

As Marx argues, recognizing the right to private property, the workers alienate the value of their work to the capitalists. The process, however, also goes the other way round, and this is, where the different

²¹⁰ Trawny, *Der frühe Marx und die Revolution*. ,67.

connotations of *'Entfremdung'* and *'Entäußerung'* become relevant. Private property is thus created as a "result, the necessary consequence of renounced work" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 520/244 (S, XXV)). This is the basic dialectics of national economy, which means that work as a process of exteriorization tending towards renunciation also enables alienation in the legal sense just used and ultimately also in the pathological sense. It has been noticed that alienation implies a "spatial separation,"²¹¹ but that is already the case with the renunciation of the product.

Hence, when Marx claims that the "concept of private property" can be found through the analysis of "the concept of alienated, renounced work" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 521/244 (S,XXV)), he does not, as Marcuse and Fay may lead us to think, identify the two terms (see NQG, 514; ESM, 96,162), rather he refers to two separate processes, or two different aspects of the same process, i.e. process that may be parallel or sequential, one being metaphysical, the other economical. It is the renunciation, or surrender, of the product in time and space that enables transferring the value added by the work, but the two processes are not the same. They must be distinguished analytically, even though in the detailed and precise dialectical analysis, they must be considered both apart and together as part of the same totality. As Fay stresses, through Hegelian dialectics Marx synthesizes what empirically are separate phenomena.

Regarding renunciation, as already indicated above, initially Marx follows Hegelian metaphysics and anthropology, where work is exteriorization of oneself into an object that gets its own identity and independency. However, what was initially only exteriorized through work and objectified as a result of work, i.e. as an independent product, now has to be surrendered by the producer due to private property rights of another. Objectification and the independency of the product in itself are thus sources of distance, separation and estrangement, and having to renounce the product produced due to its being owned by somebody else adds to the basic estrangement, objectively as well as subjectively, the result being ultimately alienation as both a legal transfer and a pathology, a pathological legal transfer, since capitalism with its system of law is a historical pathology that must be overcome. In Marx's words, the "objectification presents itself as a loss of the object, that the worker has been robbed of the necessary objects, not only for life, but also for work" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 512/236 (S,XXII)). Hence, as Marcuse argues, already in the initial exteriorization there is a tendency to surrendering the final products, already in objectification there is a tendency to reification. Hence, "reification and renunciation are not merely contingent historical facts" (NQG, 543-44).

Regarding alienation, there are also subjective as well as objective aspects. Alienation arises from the fact that "my provisions for living" are "another's," that what is my "wish" is the "property of another" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 554/290 (H,XX)). Hence, due to recognized and enforced property rights, of the value added by my work to the value provided by nature, a substantial part of it is transferred to the proprietor, namely the value that exceeds the value of my waged labor. "Wage is an immediate consequence of the alienated work, and the alienated work is the immediate cause of private property" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 521/245 (S,XXVI)). The alienation of surplus value is accumulated as capital, and therefore, ultimately, capital is also the product of labor.

Both renunciation and alienation are processes that take place in reality and can be experienced as such; as Christoph Henning stresses, through my renunciation something happens "in the world."²¹² Both cases can be considered ontologically and epistemologically, calling attention to historical, existential or phenomenological issues. None of them can therefore be reduced to simply being individual subjective experiences or psychological pathologies. The processes are real as determining metaphysical and

²¹¹ Falk, "Entäußerung" und "Entfremdung" in den Pariser Manuskripten (1844) von Karl Marx., 48.

²¹² Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung.*, 16.

economic processes, especially in a capitalist society, but one can be more or less aware of them. Hence, one can have a more or less clear consciousness of the reality of alienation, and therefore also have a false consciousness about being alienated, typically due to the discursive hegemony of the ruling ideology. As I have argued recently, classical ideology critique is still important, and the critique of political economy is a prime example of this genre.²¹³

Finally, recognizing the differences of the two issues, when criticizing capitalism, I still believe that alienation is what we should focus on rather than renunciation, i.e. '*Entfremdung*' rather than '*Entäußerung*.' As Marx argues, private property is "the material, resumed expression of renounced work" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 522/246 (S,XXVI)). Had Marx argued in English, he could have used 'alienation,' but in German, he had to use '*Entäußerung*' instead of '*Entfremdung*.' Ultimately, renunciation is thus the material and logical precondition of private property, but when Marx considers the relation between worker and "non-worker" that he considers pathological, then "the appropriation presents itself as alienation, the self-activity as the activity of another, the liveliness as self-sacrifice of the life, the production of objects as the loss of objects to an alien power, an alien human being" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 522/246 (S,XXVI)). Hence, where Marx used two words, in my English language project, I need only one. Hence, the comprehensive idea of alienation has huge critical and normative potential, comprising separation, estrangement, hostility, pathology and the loss of value that are the results of forced labor due to private property under capitalism. This is why we should make the critique of alienation, with all its intuitive appeal, a core issue in the critique of political economy.

In the legal sense, alienation is the transfer of value from one person to another, but alienation is also something inescapably pathological. Overcoming alienation thus means overcoming the capitalist pathology of the legal transfer of value, changing thus the basic property relations of society. In his critique of capitalism, Marx calls attention to the fact that producers do not have to surrender their products; those who add value to the things provided by nature do not have to alienate this value to others. It is only due to the actual societal recognition and enforcement of private property rights that free work becomes alienated as forced labor, transferring value to be accumulated as capital elsewhere. It is the capitalist conditions of production that makes normal the transfer of value from the one who in fact adds value to the things to the one who merely owns the things, the worker thus creating surplus value and accumulating capital for the non-worker. This is why the product of labor, i.e. both the specific product and the value produced, presents itself as alien to the worker.

The merit of Marx is to point out the historical character of the private ownership to the means of production necessary for human being. As Fay points out, Marx argues that Smith in his national economics overlooks both that it is a specific kind of generalized unrestricted private property that is a necessary condition for national economics as such, and that this specific kind of private property is a historical relation that has developed from feudal property of land. Smith thus fails to realize that most the fundamental categories of his national economics are historical (see ESM, 94-95), whereas Marx clearly states that "landed property is the first form of private property" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 533/260 (H,II)).

Workers in capitalist society as free persons are thus constituted by a historical process of alienation, being first alienated from their land by the feudal seizure of land that included the seizure of the people that lived on the land. This grand theft made the feudal lord the proprietor of both land and people, the latter thus being robbed by the former and thus alienated from it. Subsequently, however, in the process people were alienated again in process leading from feudalism to capitalism, this time being alienated by being robbed of their access to the land as their livelihood, that is by becoming –

²¹³ See Sørensen, "Critical theory, immanent critique and neo-liberalism.", 186-92.

sometimes by force – free labor. This sets into motion a final process of alienation, namely within capitalism where the worker becomes alienated in the famous four senses, a process that is accelerated by the social division of labor.

Marx thus reconstructs the historical constitution of feudal property that was initiated by robbing the farmers of the land they worked on (see ÖPM_{WGA}, 497/189 (S,I)), i.e. alienating man from land, even though land with its vital resources is and should be, as Mészáros emphasizes, “absolutely inalienable from man” (MTA, 134). This is a process of alienation in a very comprehensive sense, the farmers thus being firstly alienated from both their means of production and their means of subsistence by the brutal theft of the feudal lords (see ESM, 206), secondly subdued forcefully into the process of alienation just described, exteriorizing and objectifying themselves through work turned into labor, surrendering and renouncing of the product (see ÖPM_{WGA}, 505-06/229-30 (S,XVII)), and in the process also alienating the value produced to the feudal proprietors (see ESM, 173).

Marx emphasizes the particular determinate character of the feudal renunciation, where agriculture is the only productive labor, where nature is the source of value rather than abstract labor and capital (see ÖPM_{WGA}, 532/259 (H,II)). As he makes clear, we are dealing with a historical development:

The difference between capital and earth, between profit and land rent, and between both and wages, between industry and agriculture, between immovable and movable private property is a historical difference, a fixed historical moment in the formation and development in the conflict between capital and labor (ÖPM_{WGA}, 525/252 (XLI)).

When Marx celebrates capital’s “civilized victory” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 528/255 (XLIII)), he recognizes the structural strength of capitalism in relation to feudalism (see MTA, 126-27), emphasizing thus the progression of the historical process. As Fay stresses, for Marx private property itself exercises an alien power over human beings, which has historical roots in the feudal society (see ESM, 155). Neither private property nor alienation began with commodity production and the market for private sellers and buyers; they both go back to the separation of producers from the means of production that was institutionalized under feudalism (see ESM, 163, 168). Hence, there is also continuity in the development of alienation from feudalism to capitalism (see ESM, 30), and since this development is a result of human action, it can also be changed by the same means (see Fay, 154).

Moreover, as a Hegelian, Marx considers history a dialectical process of sublating contradictions. According to Fay, the third speculative stage in Hegel’s method reveals the hidden unity of a contradiction, and for Marx this means unifying issues, which at the abstract stage, e.g. by Smith, are considered independent empirical phenomena, i.e. private property and alienated work (see ESM, 97). As Marx emphasizes, national economics takes the fact of private property for granted, it does not explain it; “national economy” thus only gives an “abstract” account of the “material process”, it does not “conceive” of the “law” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 510/234 (S,XXII); see also ESM, 156), i.e. the laws that govern capital and market (see, e.g., ALI, 87).

As Fay emphasizes, for Marx property and alienation are processes that are intimately linked to each other and to the objective material working conditions. The movement of the one is also the movement of the other, and as she argues, this unity of opposites becomes a Hegelian unity at the third speculative stage (see ESM, 185). What national economics takes for granted, i.e. private property and production, Marx explains as historical phenomena, which in turn ultimately explains the real and material “contradiction” of political economy, namely that work creates wealth as accumulated “dead labor”, but as it was already noticed by Smith, that “living work”, i.e. the “working class”, is characterized by

“misery and impotence” (ESM, 200). This is the consequence of the products being governed inhumanely by laws just mentioned rather than by the workers themselves. Workers are therefore alienated by capitalism in the most comprehensive sense possible.

O. Communism is the Political Solution that Continues Human *Bildung*

Marx’s famous solution to the misery of capitalism is communism. As Mészáros explains, for the reformer who accepts the fundamental capitalist structures, an economic analysis calls for economic reforms; for Marx, the economic analysis calls for political action to annul alienation of production in its most comprehensive sense (see MTA, 148, 157-161), both as the legal transfer of value and as the creation of a hostile system of private property. Marx is quite explicit that the “emancipation of society from private property etc.” is “political” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 521/245 (S,XXVI)). That the positive transcendence of alienation is political means that it is anticipating future social and economic development, mediating between present and future states of society. In this sense, politics may be radical, stressing the discontinuity of the mediation, or conservative, stressing the continuity of the mediation, advocating reform and education. Ultimately, socialist economy is a political economy that has strong moral aspects (see MTA, 126-28).

Hence, for the young Marx, communism is the “completely conscious return of human beings for themselves as societal, i.e. real human beings, remaining within the whole of wealth produced by the development hitherto.” This implies the “positive sublation [*Aufhebung*] of private property as human self-alienation and thereby the real human appropriation of the human essence through and for the human beings” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 536/263 (H,IV)). Instead of the alienated form of property, it is the realization of the true form of property, the “truly human property” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 536/246 (S,XXVI)). As Schacht explains, this does not mean that property should be abolished; in the Hegelian sense, it should be sublated,²¹⁴ i.e. realized in a better way, reflecting the very concept of property. For Marcuse this means, again with his Heideggerian heritage, that property should be the “ready-of-hand” of all the objects that “human being needs to the free realization of its essence” (NQG, 539).

Furthermore, according to Marx, communism is both “complete humanism” and “complete naturalism,” representing the “true dissolution of the conflict between human beings and nature, existence and essence, between objectivation and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the dissolved riddle of history and knows itself as this solution” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 536/263 (H,IV)).

However, according to Mészáros, ultimately for Marx alienation has to be overcome in the economical sphere, i.e. in production, circulation and distribution; the political action only provides the conditions for the positive transcendence of alienation to get started (see MTA, 129). This being the case, we should remember the socialist experiments in bygone Yugoslavia with a “concretization of common property” of specific workplaces, where the workers could exercise collective autonomy in the control of “management.”²¹⁵

Here it is helpful as Israel to distinguish between economic and political alienation. Hence when considered politically, overcoming economic alienation liberates human being from natural necessity,

²¹⁴ See Schacht, *Alienation.*, 77.

²¹⁵ Fetscher, “Die Sowjetgesellschaft und das Problem der Entfremdung.”, 335.

from the interfering illegitimate power of other human beings, and in relation to the full exercise of essential human powers. In this sense, economic alienation is the negation of human freedom in a very comprehensive sense (see, e.g., MTA, 154), as it was remarked by Jaeggi, although Marx clearly accepts an essentialist philosophical anthropology that determines the ideal human nature.

Exploiting the semantics of the term 'nature,' the natural existence of human beings can thus be said to be the existence according to human nature (see DBE, 125), which is not just biological, but also reasonable and societal. As Marx stresses, we should avoid to fixate society as an abstraction confronting the individual. The individual is societal by nature. The point is that human expression of life should not be considered simply social or communal, but "an expression [*Äußerung*] and confirmation of the societal life" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 538-39/267 (H,VI)).

As Israel points out, for Marx there is, in principle, i.e. conceptually and ultimately, no contradiction between human being and society; human being is societal being (see DBE, 46). As the ideal societal mediation, communism also represents a harmonious self-conscious mediation of nature and humanity. As Marx states, the "sublation of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and qualities; and it is this emancipation precisely thereby that these senses and qualities have become human subjectively as well as objectively." "The need or the pleasure have thereby lost their egoistical nature and the nature of their mere utility, utility having thus become human utility" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 540/269 (H,VII)). As Schacht argues, for Marx egoism is "the consequence of living in civil society," but this he finds "implausible" given Marx's "own belief in the possibility of solidarity [...] within the framework of capitalist society" (ALI, 98). However, the structural encouragement to egoism within capitalism, does not mean that it is the only encouragement, nor that everybody succumb to it completely and mechanically.

The point is, as Mészáros explains (see MTA, 148-49), that ultimately egoism will reveal itself as a historical product of capitalist relations of production in need of explanation rather than, as Smith assumed (see, e.g., ESM, 218), an essential trait of human nature. Communism means that human nature will be liberated from the institutionalized egoism, working freely as a social being rather than being conscribed to forced labor. However, as a result of totalizing ideology, egoist freedom is taken for granted in economics as a natural propensity to exchange and barter. When this is questioned and criticized, to liberal economics this threat to capitalism is perceived as a threat to humanity as such (see MTA, 89-90).

Marx takes great pains to emphasize that the objectivation in human activity under communism means an emancipation of humanity in all of its splendor. Again Marcuse: Work will be the "universal and free appropriation" of reality, the true "versatile self-realization and exteriorization" (NQG, 540). The supersession of capitalism transcends mere economy, implying a future political mediation that stresses ethical and in particular aesthetical aspects. The senses to be emancipated are all the senses a "total human being," "each of its human relations to the world, seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, feeling, thinking, intuiting, perceiving, wanting, acting, loving" (ÖPM_{WGA}, 539/268 (H,VI)). Israel rightly recognizes that Marx employs the idea from German romanticism of a total human being appropriating reality (see DBE, 120), and for me that is fine. Marx's romantic idea of communism is not a longing for something past and lost, but something to come. One could thus call the young Marx a progressive romantic.

Reflecting ideas of education similar to those promoted by Schiller,²¹⁶ including his critique of the “the fragmented existence in modernity,”²¹⁷ for Marx communism implies a human being that recognizes the importance of the “richness of human nature unfolded through objectification.” The “human eyes” will be educated to enjoy “the beauty of form,” the “human ears” will be awakened with music to become a “musical ear” with a “sense for music,” the “powers of human nature,” “will, love, etc.” will be developed, in general unfolding the ideal of a “sensuous humanity” in harmony with “nature made human” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 541/269-70 (H,VII-VIII)). Hence, in contrast to what is often argued, Marx does not subsume education under the idea of alienated work,²¹⁸ quite the contrary. As he recognizes, the “education [*Bildung*] of the five senses is the work of the world history hitherto” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 541-42/270 (H,VIII)), and this autonomous development of education in history he obviously appreciates. In a communist world the development can therefore expected be continued: The society must ultimately become “the true resurrection of nature, the consequent naturalism of human beings and the consequent humanism of nature” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 538/267 (H,V)). As Fraser remarks, Marx was certainly conscious of “capitalism’s environmental contradiction *avant la lettre*” (CCC, 91).

Now, appreciating how the idea of communism for centuries has motivated human beings to overcome enormous challenges, as an educationalist, and just like Marcuse,²¹⁹ I cannot help being moved by the glory and splendor expressed in Marx’s holistic vision, especially considering the societal relations to nature that presently rule the world. Israel distances himself from Marx’s vision calling it “messianic” (DBE, 110-11), and this I find misleading. As a philosopher, I accept this beautiful vision as a positive idea of reason implied by the critical analysis of the detrimental implications of private property, both presupposing and implying alienation. However, from the viewpoint of a demystified 21st century modernity, of course I find it difficult to imagine precisely how society could suddenly, through a revolution, unfold this unity of naturalism and humanism; still, such phantasies may also inspire social democratic reforms.

20th century modernity demonstrated that capitalism can be regulated politically and that educational, cultural and civilizational achievements are possible even within capitalism. Moreover, already two centuries ago, the revolutionary Marx could refer affirmatively to the existing “world of education and civilization” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 535/262 (H,III)). The social democratic modernity of the Western world enabled human flourishing on a unprecedented scale, allowing masses of ordinary people live well, in all likelihood encouraging Taylor to incorporate ordinary life as a key-constituent of the modern self.²²⁰

Hence, rather than taken for granted the young Marx’s apparent disdain for politics, be it “democratic or despotic,” and the famous call for the “sublation of the state” (ÖPM_{WGA}, 536/263 (H,IV)), I believe that also for Marx the best strategy to overcome alienation is political, i.e. endorsing democracy to establish and maintain social democratic welfare states of law. Marx calls for the sublation of the state, not the abolition, thus ideally negating the existing state to realize the political potential of its idea, i.e. justice. With the legitimate power of the social democratic state of law, renunciation can be modified and alienation of value restricted, balancing private property rights with the common good, thus enabling a human life with more culture and science and less alienation.

²¹⁶ See, e.g., Henning, *Theorien der Entfremdung zur Einführung.*, 71-72.: see also

²¹⁷ Buck, *Rückwege aus der Entfremdung.*, 196; see also ALI, 15-17.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 197-98.

²¹⁹ See, e.g., Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt.*, 63-69.

²²⁰ See, e.g., Taylor, *Sources of the Self.*, 495-96.

The critique of alienation under capitalist economy can only be met with political answers. As Rainer Forst, and in contrast to Honneth, Rosa, Jaeggi et al.,²²¹ I thus argue to keep in mind the moral and political aspect of the discussion of alienation, in particular the issue of justice. As Marx argues, the alienation under capitalism is due to the economic organization of society, primarily the predominance of private property, the market and the commodity form. The economic structure of capitalist society is institutionalized politically in a state that disposes of legislative, judicial and executive powers for the enforcement of the established structure. It is these institutions that must be sublated to a higher level, not just abolished.

It is therefore misleading, when Schacht claims that for Hegel, social solidarity requires the mediation of societal institutions, whereas for Marx sociality requires that “interpersonal relationships” should be “direct and personal” (ALI, 81). For the same reason, I am also skeptical about Forst’s claims that “Marx envisioned a liberated and non-alienated society beyond a state-like structure of government,” and that “in his later writings Marx is guided by a notion of social rather than political autonomy,” the difference being “that social collective autonomy is not mediated by political institutions.”²²²

Already in the *Communist Manifesto*, the young Marx called for democracy as the first step in the communist revolutions that should eventually break with capitalist property relations.²²³ Later, in *Grundrisse* the mature Marx emphasized that “human being is in the most literal sense a *zoon politikon*, not just a social animal, but an animal that can only individualize in the society,”²²⁴ and Israel point out that in the same work, Marx recommends working hours to be minimized and the free time dedicated to the free development and schooling in arts, sciences and similar areas (see DBE, 32-33). Finally, in the *Capital*, Marx famously calls for the “associated producers” to bring production under societal control to realize the “reign of freedom,” the shortening of the working day being explicitly mentioned as “the basic condition.”²²⁵

With reference to Marx’s idea of communism, we can thus retain a radical critique of capitalism as alienating, while recommending real social democratic reforms of existing capitalist society, both to develop our formation as political citizens and to continue our education as human beings in fine arts and science, i.e. in both cases trusting *Bildung*. We may be critical about existing parliamentary democracy, but the answer is to develop and expand democracy, both in relation to politics and economy, both in public and private aspects of life. As Israel puts it, “all human beings should have the possibility to participate in decision processes that affect their everyday life, so that they can assume responsibility for their own decisions” (DBE, 245). This is the ideal, I have pursued elsewhere, both with regards to politics and education,²²⁶ recognizing though the reality of alienation under capitalism,²²⁷ but hoping to overcome it by expanding democracy in scope and depth to make it even more attractive and legitimate.²²⁸

²²¹ See Forst, "Noumenal Alienation.", 524-25.

²²² Ibid., 539, 543.

²²³ See Marx and Engels, "Manifestes der Kommunistischen Partei.", 481.

²²⁴ Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie.*, 20.

²²⁵ Marx, *Das Kapital. Dritter Band.*, 828.

²²⁶ See, e.g., Sørensen, "Durkheim.", and "From Critique of Ideology to Politics."

²²⁷ See, e.g., "Alienation Reconsidered."

²²⁸ See, e.g., "*Bildung* as Democratic Opinion and Will Formation.", "Educating Citizens through *Bildung*." and "Ohne Kapitalismuskritik keine Sozialdemokratie."

Conclusion

Critique of alienation should be conducted as political critique of capitalism and ideological critique of liberal political economy. Hence, the answer to the alienation of capitalist economy is politics and education. There has, however, been reluctance to draw this conclusion. In general, politics as it has been realized throughout history in various societies has given rise to criticism of alienation. The setback of real-existing democracy in the Western world experienced in the last decades reminds us that disdain of real-existing politics and education is widespread.

With regards to politics, critique of the dominance and suppression of fascist regimes cannot surprise, and as already discussed, charges of political alienation have been a huge challenge for the authoritarian systems of the so-called real-existing socialism. There has, however, also been persistent critique of political alienation in real-existing liberal democracies and even in social democratic welfare states, some being focused on paternalism and patronization, others being focused on the inability to decide and effectuate. Politics includes both ideals and practical capacity. It therefore involves power, both in theory as a concept and in real-existing societies, and sometimes legitimate and civilized exercise of power develops into force and armed conflict, also for modern democratic states. In a critical perspective, that is why I, in addition to a capitalist modernity, also talk of a militarist modernity.

Even though both of these critiques of course are based on real experiences that must be recognized, as I see it, they have also strong ideological elements that should not just be taken for granted. The first mentioned thus implies a strong liberal idea of negative freedom that makes state interference through institutions in principle illegitimate. The second in contrast often implies that instead of parliamentary talk and bureaucratic handling we should get things done and for that we need somebody to cut through the crap, i.e. the classical strong mand. In mainstream academia, the first critique is commonly accepted as part of liberal commonplaces, whereas the second critique is mostly denounced as authoritarian and populist.

Rejecting and displacing both of these common critiques of real-existing politics, I suggest to focus rather on the legal concept of alienation, thereby reminding about the critique of alienation in real-existing democracies in terms of injustice, primarily with regards to social welfare, but also with regards to political rights. As I will claim in this concluding section, the comprehensive concept of alienation developed in relation to the real-existing economic logic of capitalism can also be applied in relation to political alienation.

As I have argued, the capitalist relations of production give rise to alienation in a comprehensive sense. First, the enforcement of private property rights means that the non-owning producer becomes separated from the product, becoming as already Marx explained, alienated both from the product and the production process, both being determined by the property rights of the non-producing capitalist. Since exteriorization and objectification of oneself through work is an essential human trait, this also implies becoming alienated from oneself as a human being and from one's fellow beings. Moreover, the process implies that part of the value produced is transferred and thus alienated as surplus value from the laborer to the capitalist, enabling for the latter the accumulation of produced value to capital. Hence, the worker becomes alienated by being separated from both the realized idea and the produced value of the product.

Shifting the focus to politics, the idea of inalienable rights is rightly famous. Taken literally, however, that would make politics as the collective coordination of common issues impossible. When meeting at

an assembly for deciding, the political rights are transferred by accepting to vote about what should be done. And when we talk about representative democracy, this alienation is of course even more profound. As already Rousseau made clear, politics assumes the alienation of the sovereign rights of the individual to some kind of supra individual communal entity; the question is only if the sovereign right of the individual can be divided and if so, how much of it should be transferred and conferred to the collective entity, i.e. how much alienation is ideal? Or in other words, when do we have to recognize alienation as necessary and when do we have to criticize it as surplus alienation?

As it was famously argued by Marcuse, one may distinguish between a pathological surplus repression of instinctual drives that should be avoided as pathological and the basic repression necessary for civilization and culture. Continuing this line of thought, it has been proposed to distinguish similarly in relation to nature between a surplus alienation to be avoided and a basic alienation necessary for human life.²²⁹ As I see it, however, even though I recognize that alienation has almost inescapable pathological connotations, this distinction is also applicable to the comprehensive critique of alienation that I defend, i.e. not just with regards to political, but also economic alienation.

In the former case, one can distinguish between the basic, but still unpleasant, alienation of sovereign rights necessary for democratic decision making in politics and outright pathological political alienation as in the case of authoritarian regimes, tyranny and dictatorships. In the case of economic alienation, the basic alienation of the surplus value produced is the condition of communal and societal property; the problem in capitalist and militarist modernity is the predominance of surplus alienation of value and property. Hence, alienation is not pleasant, and therefore it has been identified as a pathology as such, as I have also done. However, ultimately a certain amount of unpleasantness is necessary for living together as human beings.

Outlining thus this comprehensive concept of alienation, I believe it to be possible to understand more in depth why exteriorization through the forced renunciation due to property rights becomes especially estranging and thus alienating in a capitalist society. Alienation is not simply a matter of relating to the world and experiencing it as mute and deaf, as Jaeggi and Rosa would have it.²³⁰ Moreover, rejecting also their principled post-metaphysical anti-essentialism, I insist that it is the creative and receptive openness of human being that allows us to rationally hope for viable futures for justice and democracy, making it possible to rationally hope also for the general support of citizenship education and democratic formation.

Interestingly, despite conceiving of alienation as implied by the fundamental solitude of human being, as a dedicated humanist Gorz still allows for openness, receptivity and reciprocity as part of his existentialist conception of human being. When I present an object for you, you may understand my objectification in a way that reveals it as more beneficial or having more potential than I myself had thought. "Thanks to you I discover myself as more intelligent;" "your liberty will reveal and enrich my own liberty and provoke me to transcend myself." You have "recognized me as liberty through your attitude; and in recognizing me in what I am for you, I recognize you." Your attitude demonstrates "generosity," i.e. that is the "intention to take my (or the) liberty as a goal, to interpret me maximally." And if we are in "homologous situations," we may experience "reciprocal recognition" (MDH, 64-65).

²²⁹ See, e.g., Andrew Biro, "Herbert Marcuse: Basic and Surplus Alienation (2005)," in *Denaturalizing Ecological Politics: Alienation from Nature from Rousseau to the Frankfurt School and Beyond* (University of Toronto Press, 2016). and Bram Büscher, "The dangerous intensifications of surplus alienation, or why platform capitalism challenges the (more-than-)human," *Dialogues in Human Geography* 12, no. 1 (2022).

²³⁰ See Sørensen, "Alienation Reconsidered."

Gorz thus takes pains to emphasize that he does not deny the “possibility of a voluntary union of individuals for the purpose a common action” (MDH, 81).

Of course, all of this must be scrutinized more closely and in detail. However, to cut things short, one can say that Marx’s employment of Hegel’s anthropology enables understanding human being in reality as an active social being in open material interchange with the rest of reality, where work as exteriorization or objectification is the fundamental and essential activity for being human. The point is that this anthropology provides the conceptual framework for the creative refinement and enjoyment of reality, natural as well as cultural, material as well as intellectual. Hence, the same anthropology also leaves open human being for reciprocity and communality, as well as detrimental experiences such as alienation. Hence, human being is both influential and vulnerable in relation to the reality encountered, both when it comes to nature and culture.

Here one may introduce an idea of the young Hegel, stressed by both Habermas and Honneth, namely that the essential activity of human beings is not just work, but also communication. I have criticized the specific ways in which the idea is developed by Habermas and Honneth,²³¹ but the basic idea I think is sound, and conceived of in another way, it may strengthen the conceptual possibilities for human flourishing already indicated to above with the help of Marx, Marcuse et al. This idea I have developed further elsewhere;²³² for now I will just conclude that, yes, even now when thing may seem rather gloomy, we have reason to maintain rational hopes for humanity.

Despite the fact of alienation in capitalist modernity, accepting the realist anthropology of Hegel, I thus insist on the possibility to conceive of citizenship education as stimulating in society what is specifically human, countering in this way the equally real reification and commodification that is forced upon us by the mode of production, especially by the dominance of economics, technology and mere entertainment, i.e. the culture industry.

Citizenship education is not just about learning the basics of the existing constitution, the possibilities of democracy or the idea of human rights. As human beings we are only free as citizens and this freedom we must use as human beings, i.e. striving, as encouraged by Marx, to develop our human sensibility for the highest achievements within not just fine arts, but science and politics, insisting that these aspects of human life is what really makes life worth living. Only then may citizenship education counter the alienation caused by capitalism.

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²³¹ See section D. and E. of the interlude in *Capitalism, Alienation and Critique*.

²³² See "Educating Citizens through Bildung."

anchoring. This overall argument was developed through presentations in English, Spanish and Danish throughout 2017: in a workshop at Oslo University, Norway, at the annual meeting at the Danish Philosophical Society, Aarhus University, Denmark, in a workshop in the research unit Education for a Viable Future, again Aarhus University, at the annual Conference Philosophy and Social Science in Prague, Czech Republic, at the Institute of Education in London, UK (thanks to Paul Standish), at the second congress of *Red española de Filosofía, Universidad de Zaragoza*, Spain, as a lecture at my own School of Education, again Aarhus University, at the Fourth Latin American Congress of Philosophy of Education, *Universidad San Martín, Buenos Aires*, Argentina, at the seminar *Transformacions de l'Esfera Pública, Universitat de les Illes Balears*, again Spain (thanks to Joaquin). The development continued in 2018, in particular at two winter symposiums of the Nordic Summer University at the University of Copenhagen (thanks to Mogens Chrom Jacobsen, Karolina Enquist Källgren and Anders Ramsay), and, finally in 2020, as an invited guest lecture at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden (thanks to Johan Söderberg). Along the way, the general argument was expanded and detailed into two articles,²³³ just as the resulting preoccupation with alienation was also expanded and detailed to become two other articles, one criticizing the contemporary discussion of alienation and one going back to Hegel.²³⁴ All of these works point explicitly in the direction of the present article, but they have also all of them been presented and reviewed in their own right, receiving stimulating critique, corrections and comments, orally as well as in writing. The long process has benefitted greatly this final study, and for the generosity experienced, I wish to thank again all those good people that are acknowledged in the articles already published.

²³³ See "*Bildung* as Democratic Opinion and Will Formation." And "Educating Citizens through *Bildung*.", in Spanish, "Educar a los ciudadanos a través de *bildung*."

²³⁴ See "Alienation Reconsidered." And "*Aliénation, Entfremdung* – and Alienation.."

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