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Private property,  
labour and the transformation  
of Political Economy in *1844 Manuscripts*

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**Abstract**

This paper intends to show that, from a methodological point of view, the *1844 Manuscripts* are an integral part of the Marxist corpus and not an "epistemological break". Marx thematizes the object of Political Economy (*1844 Manuscripts*) by transforming its discourse. Then, proceeds to the analysis of the capitalist economy (*Capital*), using the revised categories of Political Economy. However, a necessary condition for such a reading is the non-ignorance of Marx's *ontology*. Marx *reverses* the Hegelian dialectics based on the relationship between man and nature. Starting from the *social practice* (labour), Marx sublates the *contradictions* between private property and labour, on the level of content, and that between Political Economy and Philosophy (necessity and freedom), on the level of discourse. Their mutual passage renders possible the transfer of the object to *reality* as a reflection or as a product of thinking (a *real* thing). Thematising the *political-economic fact*, Marx returns to *social being*, sublating social *oppositions* too.

**Keywords:** Ontology, Dialectics, Negation, Alienation, Sublation, Science, Philosophy, Political-economic fact

## Introduction

The *1844 Manuscripts*<sup>1</sup> are classified as belonging to Karl Marx's early writings, probably the most controversial in the history of his thought because the humanism, Marx promoted, was considered too abstract and universal to be "consistent" with the later "scientific socialism" or "historical materialism". Consequently, Marx sought the fundamental principles of Political Economy without any parallel critical elaboration of its accusations. This raises the question of the *discontinuity* of Marxist thought. The point of this theoretical and political controversy was the influence of Hegelian thought on Marx,<sup>2</sup> as part of a general tendency of disengaging Marx's philosophical thought from Hegelian logic and epistemology, during the 1960s and 1970s. Émile Bottigelli, who edited the French edition of the *1844 Manuscripts* in 1962, considers the Political Economy, presented by Marx, as a kind of phenomenology that expresses an alienated reality. The latter, has already been accepted by the bourgeois Political Economy without criticizing it.<sup>3</sup> Louis Althusser, in 1965, also underlined the "theoretical humanism" [*humanisme*

<sup>1</sup> The original document is being kept at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. It consists of two notebooks (first and third Manuscript), two separate sheets, that is, four pages (second Manuscript) and a double sheet of a four-page continuous text (fourth Manuscript). In their handwritten form, they include a total of 76 pages. The title "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" does not exist in the original document. All the titles were given by the publishers of MEGA in 1932 (first complete edition) and reproduced, until today, in the known form.

<sup>2</sup> According to Marcello Musto, the changes that took place in Marx's manuscripts, in order to be published in 1932, either in Germany by Siegfried Landshut & Jacob Peter Mayer or in Moscow by MEGA, played an important role in this controversy which ideologico-political developments fueled throughout the 20th century. Musto M., "The 'Young Marx' Myth in Interpretations of the Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844", *Critique. Journal of Socialist Theory* 43, no. 2 (2015): 233-237, doi: 10.1080/03017605.2015.1051759.

<sup>3</sup> Bottigelli É., "Présentation", in Karl Marx, *Manuscripts de 1844 (économie politique & philosophie)*, trans. É. Bottigelli, Editions Sociales, Paris 1972, xli.

*théorique*]<sup>4</sup> that characterizes the *1844 Manuscripts*.<sup>5</sup> For Jacques Rancière, Marx's theoretical approach is an *amphibology* since, behind each economic law, Marx reveals an anthropological law as its true significance or as an expression of human essence. This approach, for Rancière, is completely different from that of *Capital* where Marx reveals the "inner-determination" of the economic phenomena which their phenomenal form encloses. This determination, which is disappeared in the object (or commodity), is a *social relation of production*.<sup>6</sup>

In the "Preface"<sup>7</sup> of *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx refers to the broader goal which is to publish individual works that critique the state, law, ethics, political life, etc., and the theoretical treatment of material by scientists. It also includes the publication of an overall project which will highlight the relation between them, a sub-goal that was never completed. Then, he explicitly states that *Manuscripts* focus on highlighting the internal connection that characterizes Political Economy with these different parts to the extent that is related to them.<sup>8</sup> The revelation of the internal connection or relation between the society of needs (economy) and of State (politics-ideology) makes their combination possible, avoiding the essentialist approach of idealism and the materialism of

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<sup>4</sup> Althusser led the ideological controversy over humanistic interpretations of Marxism with his famous position "Le marxisme est un anti-humanisme théorique" (Marxism is a theoretical anti-humanism) formulated in Althusser L., *Pour Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster, Maspero, Paris, 1965. There is, of course, an extensive controversy over the next decade in Thompson E. P., *The Poverty of Theory or an Orrery of Errors*, Merlin Press, London 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Althusser, *For Marx*, 227-231.

<sup>6</sup> Crane J., "Notes on Rancière's 'Concept of Critique and the Critique of Political Economy'", *Red Leaves* (blog), May 26, 2021, <https://redleaves.blog/2021/05/26/notes-on-rancieres-concept-of-critique-and-the-critique-of-political-economy/>.

<sup>7</sup> The "Preface" was part of the third Manuscript, but MEGA publishers placed it at the beginning to state Marx's intention to engage in the critique of political economy and to show that the text formulated according to this reasoning. Musto, "The 'Young Marx'", 236.

<sup>8</sup> Marx K., *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. M. Milligan, Prometheus Books, New York 1988, 13-14.

Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach, that is to say, the substantiation of concepts.<sup>9</sup> Due to the inadequacy of Political Economy and the inherent inability of philosophy to explain together the modern social reality, Marx aims at the *self-understanding* of Political Economy based on social practice and Hegelian dialectics. Thematising the *political-economic fact* [*Nationalökonomisches factum*], he highlights its importance for the transformation, not only of the Political Economy, but also of the society.

Re-reading the *1844 Manuscripts*, I attempt to show that Marx's initial thought is not being cut off from the latter scientific analysis of the capitalistic economy or critique of the economic concepts. Thus, the economic phenomenon or fact is not alienated from the *social relation of production*. The main purpose of Marx in *1844 Manuscripts* is to form the basic structure of the methodology of a transformed Political Economy which, at the same time, constitutes a "positive critique". Through the category of "private property" [*Privateigentum*] and of "alienated labour" [*Entfremdete Arbeit*], Marx provides the presuppositions for the thematization of the real object of Political Economy. Furthermore, through the "labour of negative", he manages to thematize the political-economic fact (as production and as ideology) in order to sublate,<sup>10</sup> not only the inner-contradiction of economic phenomena, but also the opposition between theory and praxis. Putting the foundations of a "positive critique", Marx suggests the methodology which will be used

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<sup>9</sup> In *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx acknowledges the importance of Feuerbach's religious critique, but points out that it is not differentiated from Hegelian idealism. Feuerbach begins his analysis by substituting beings with concepts, i.e., the person with Man, an imaginary being without the real characteristics that make up his existence. In Marx's view, idealism concludes in the same abstract result since it does not understand the concepts as philosophical constructions and substantiates them in its attempt to arrive at a conclusion about the structure and the relation of human thought and action. The accusations that make up human existence (the individual subject) are not attributed to him, but to an Idea.

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, there is no English word which can replace accurately the Hegelian "Aufhebung". The Hegelian term has three distinct senses: "to raise", "to preserve", and "to eliminate". The English translation chooses the term "superside" while this paper chooses the term "sublation".

in *Capital* for the analysis of the capitalistic phenomenon, as the object of a transformed Political Economy. The analysis presented below follows the structure of *1844 Manuscripts*.

### 1. The private property, the labour, and their latent relation

Focusing on the economic category of "private property" and "alienated labour", in the first Manuscript, Marx attempts to show, on the one hand, that economists do not understand the importance of economic phenomena and, on the other, that highlighting their importance requires a different methodology, suggesting the need for transformation in Political Economy.<sup>11</sup> For Marx, the main problem is the separation of philosophy from the natural sciences which leads to the thematization of a fragmented science, abstract and idealistic, cut off from the real world. Aiming at a *practical critique*, Marx seeks to escape from the idealistic usage of concepts that gives to the categories of Political Economy an abstract content.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> As Michael Evans points out, Marx's interest in Political Economy began when he worked as the publisher of the independent and radical newspaper *Rheinische Zeitung*. The newspaper focused on material conditions and discussions on issues related to free trade and protection. Marx's thoughts on Political Economy were influenced by Friedrich Engels's book, *Outline of a Critique of Political Economy* (1843). In this book, Engels refers to the development of Political Economy in a period of radical changes in economy. Moreover, he refers to the elaboration of the economic categories and the laws of private property, in the broader context of the development of industry and commercial order, by Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and David Ricardo. Nevertheless, he argues that Political Economy is a form of "licensed fraud" because impoverishes and dehumanizes humanity instead of articulating the laws of private property. Evans M., "Karl Marx's first confrontation with political economy: the 1844 manuscripts", *Economy and Society* 13, no. 2 (1984): 115-116, 121, doi: 10.1080/03085148300000017.

<sup>12</sup> Even before the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx comes up against any abstraction of the *real* man. Mészáros I., *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, Merlin Press, London 1970, 220-221. Indicatively, we mention that in the book *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'* (1943), Marx stresses that "man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is *the world of man*, the state, society". Marx K., *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*,

Trying to explain the phenomenon of wealth of the owners at the expense of the workers, Political Economy starts, according to Marx, from a "fictitious primordial condition", taking the movement of the category of "private property" and its abstract forms as laws. Based on the analytical method, economists fail to explain the division between capital and labour, thus attributing the phenomenon of alienation [*Entfremdung*] to private property. Political Economy does not examine the material conditions that determine the appearance of private property, reaching the point of accepting what is supposed to be explained,<sup>13</sup> thus reproducing the contradiction. The method that the Political Economy follows for the definition of economic phenomena moves from the most concrete to the most abstract concept. As Marx's analysis of the category of "alienated labour" shows below, the analytical method is half of the path that someone has to cross (genetic method) since the return is pending, that is, the movement from the most abstract to the most concrete concept (dialectical method).<sup>14</sup>

Marx, however, starts from the case of Political Economy on the division of the categories "labour", "capital" and "land ownership", follows its methodology, and examines the empirical elements of this distinction. In other words, he follows the movement of "private property"<sup>15</sup> in order to decide whether experience itself legitimizes the position of Political

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trans. A. Jolin – J. O'Malley, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, 131.

<sup>13</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 69-70. As Soner Soysal points out, if the laws of Political Economy are to be true, their universal validity and necessity must be proved, just as the laws of the natural sciences are. That is, the wage-profit relation must not be explored as it is, i.e., as a result of the capitalists who make a profit. Such an approach leads to a reduction in wages in order for capitalists to make a profit. What is necessary and what Political Economy does not do, according to Marx, is the explanation of private property. Soysal S., "1844 Ekonomik ve Felsefi El Yazmaları'nda Yabancılaşma ile Özel Mülkiyet Arasındaki İlişki", *Possible Journal of Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2022): 143.

<sup>14</sup> Rubin I. I., "Abstract labour and value in Marx's system", *Marxists Internet Archive*, 1927, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/rubin/abstract-labour.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 69-70, 81.

Economy on division. For Marx, as for David Ricardo, the main task of Political Economy is to determine the proportion of the total product belonging to the class of landowners, capitalists, and workers.<sup>16</sup> Based on this, he examines the fluctuations of workers' wages and the situation in which the worker falls, when society is in a state of decline, increased wealth, and fullness of wealth. In the latter two cases, a generalized wealth of capital and income would logically lead the majority of people to happiness. Nevertheless, the opposite happens: the majority of people live in misery.<sup>17</sup> In short, the worker does not own the total product of labour, as Adam Smith claims, but only a minimal percentage which allows him to exist as a worker and not as a human being.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to wages, Marx examines the profit of capital and the land rent, concluding that economists see the unity between capital and labour as a unity of individuals, such as that between the capitalist and the worker, which is characterized as incidental, emerging from external factors. The same goes for the dispute between them. For Marx, capital, which exists in the form of bonds or stocks bringing profit to the owner, arises from the division of labour and the growing role of human labour in the formation or production of the commodity. In cases of increased wealth, labour demand exceeds supply, leading to overwork among workers. However, the accumulation of a large amount of labour increases capital accumulation (multilateral accumulation). Subsequently, the competition between the capitalists leads to the accumulation of capital in a few hands (unilateral accumulation).<sup>19</sup> After all,

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<sup>16</sup> Korsch K., *Karl Marx*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2016, 71. Karl Korsch points to later and explicit reports of Marx about the duty of Political Economy. As main idea, it is also present in the analysis of *1844 Manuscripts*.

<sup>17</sup> According to Marx, the last possible degree of wealth is the culmination of a developing economy characterized by the overproduction of products, resulting in either a reduction in the number of workers or a reduction in their wages. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 21-24.

<sup>18</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 24-25.

<sup>19</sup> The accumulation of small and large capital and the competition between them refers to the relation between *fixed capital* and *circulating capital*. Fixed capital concerns what is used for land improvement, the



only large capital (industry) can cope with competition among capitalists either in the case of increased wealth, which results in higher wages and lower prices for consumer goods, or in the case of wealth fullness, where both wages and earnings are low. Is the overproduction and the need for multifaceted expansion which, combined with *productive forces*, turns capitalists or industrialists in search of large tracts of land, creating higher rents for the benefit of property owners. As a result, traditional disputes and competitions between capital and land (land ownership) are reduced.<sup>20</sup> Eventually, the two terms come together as workers' misery increases, allowing the domination of abstract labour<sup>21</sup> or the "objectification" of labour.<sup>22</sup> In other words, Marx finds that capital is accumulated labour,<sup>23</sup> while impoverishment is the result of the domination of capital over the products of labour produced by someone else (alienation).

Political Economy, according to Marx, is unable to explain the opposition because it falls into an error of an ontological nature. Considers labour a source of wealth, but substantiates its value, thus treating it as a *thing*.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, labour is

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purchase of machines, tools, etc. Circulating capital concerns the production, manufacture or purchase of goods, for the purpose of reselling them and making a profit. The accumulation of large capital requires the accumulation and simplification of fixed capital, i.e., a kind of organization of the means of labour which can not be undertaken by the small capitalist. That is why, according to Ricardo, the accumulation of capital precedes the division of labour. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 44-45, 48-50.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 26, 40-42, 49-51.

<sup>21</sup> As Marx highlights, the worker lives only from his work and, in particular, from one-sided, abstract labour, which makes him nothing more than a worker. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 27. Abstract labour is a paid employment relationship. The worker produces for a wage, but the activity he develops, during the production process, can not be sold or bought. Nevertheless, when this activity gets a price, then its value, which is none other than the "essential relation of labor", is objectified. For more details, see the analysis below.

<sup>22</sup> Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 144.

<sup>23</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> For Marx, however, the value of labour should be determined by the "essential relation of labour" which is summed up by the relation of the worker to the production (as the output of products or commodities and

transformed into means, i.e., a form of activity that “occurs only in the form of wage-earning activity”.<sup>25</sup> As a result, is being sold and bought like commodities. The same goes for the worker, who is thrown into the market, reaching the point where the demand of the people necessarily regulates the production of the people.<sup>26</sup> The cause of objectification of labour is the dominance of socially homogenized labour that results from the exchange of a product of particular labour with any other product. This process facilitates the division of labour,<sup>27</sup> which derives from the equality of labour at the level of production, determining its value according to the quantity of labour expended in the production of a commodity. However, if the consumed labour takes the form of the quantity of product value, produced in measure of time, then the characteristics of the labour are "objectified": through the exchange of products, labour takes on the value of

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as an act). Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 73. This determination is hiding behind the two discourses Marx articulates clearly in *Capital*, concerning: a) the apparent motion of commodity (price) and b) the "real" motion of value which disappears into the commodity. The two motions become one in Volume 3 (Chapter 9) where Marx examines the transformation of commodity values into prices of production. In the first case, the commodity itself contains the quantity of paid labour, shaping its cost price. In the second case, the commodity contains the total quantity of labour (paid or unpaid), shaping its value. The concealed difference, which comes up from the unity of the two motions, is the "essential relation of labour", transforming into- or externalizing to- the price of production as the form or expression of the total social capital. That is why, in practice, the cost of price of the commodities is always “less than their value, or than the price of production which is identical with this value for the total mass of commodities produced”. Marx K., *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy, Volume III*, trans. D. Fernbach, Penguin Books, London 1981, 265.

<sup>25</sup> Wage is a deduction from the product of labour which land and capital provide to the worker as an aid. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 26-28.

<sup>26</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 20-21.

<sup>27</sup> Division of labour exists in all the systems of social organization. Nevertheless, in the case of commercial society, it does not concern the division of labour among several individuals but that each individual is obliged to do the same work which consists of uniformly repetitive functions. It concerns, in short, the multiplication of the same work. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 26, 133-134.

commodities.<sup>28</sup> Money, in this case, transforms imperfections and fantasies (desires) into substances themselves, allowing the exchange of even physical-human qualities.<sup>29</sup> It is, in other words, the means of unity and separation of man from

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<sup>28</sup> Marx cites some excerpts from other studies related to abstract labour and the measure of the time of the output of a product, based on which the income of the worker is estimated. He also mentions the consequences of the concentration of time due to mechanization and its combination with the simple (numerical) division of labour at the expense of the mental and physical condition of the worker. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 28-30. In *Capital*, Marx manifests that money is the common measure of the value of commodities. The conversion of objectified human labour, i.e., of commodities as values, to money “as a measure of value is the necessary form of appearance of the measure of value which is immanent in commodities, namely labour-time”. Thus, it’s not money that renders the commodity commensurable. Marx K., *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, trans. B. Fowkes, Penguin Books, London 1982, 187.

<sup>29</sup> According to Rancière, in *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx understands the objectification of the relations of production as objectification of the subject’s predicates because he confuses the alienation [*Entfremdung*] of the relations of capital with the subject’s substantial alienation. In other words, he confuses *Verkehrung*-inversion with *Verkehrung*-reversal, allowing the intervention of the worker and the capitalist. As he mentions, “In Manuscripts, the subject (the worker) invests an object with his essence. This object increases the power of the alien entity (capital) which poses itself as subject in the movement of reversal and reduces the worker to being the object of his object”. However, in *Capital*, “the thing in which the relation has disappeared then presents itself as an automation-subject”. Rancière J., “The concept of ‘critique’ and the ‘critique of political economy’ (from the 1844 Manuscript to Capital)”, *Economy and Society* 5, no. 3 (1976): 360, 362, doi: 10.1080/03085147600000016.

nature.<sup>30</sup> Ignoring the "*real*/individual activity",<sup>31</sup> capital affects the whole existence of the worker. However, the latter, can neither be sold nor bought. Nor can labour be valued in the form of wages or remuneration if it constitutes active human property.<sup>32</sup> For Marx, the mediation of private property - exchange - division of labour eliminates the possibility of a non-mediated relationship of man with nature and with himself. Any form of institutional mediation leads, on the one hand, to the preservation of the worker and, on the other, to the disappearance of man as the creator of his history.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 138-139. This basic ontological dimension of alienated labour does not appear before the third Manuscript. According to Mészáros, the chapter on *money* was not included in this manuscript. His original position was after the chapter "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole". This shows that *1844 Manuscripts* are a system *in statu nascendi*, focusing on alienated labour. The discovery of the "money system" will be later the basis for the complete elaboration of the theory of value. Nevertheless, even towards the end of the Manuscripts, it seems that the "money-system" is the last means of any alienated mediation starting from- or focusing on- the alienated labour. In other words, the "money-system" is part of the broader ontological framework of human realization through labour. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 97-99.

<sup>31</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 31. As Marx mentions in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, objectified general working time obliterates any particularity of concrete labour. Therefore, the labour differs only quantitatively. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. S. Ryazanskaya, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1999, 31, eBook (*Marxists Internet Archive*).

<sup>32</sup> In *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx makes clear that "price" is the expression of the exchange value (of commodities) with unique equality of the various commodities, with a particular commodity, that is, gold (= measure of values). This general equivalent takes the form of money. He points out, however, that the true measure between commodities (exchange value) and gold (as a measure of values) is labour itself. Marx, *A Contribution*, 31.

<sup>33</sup> As Istvan Mészáros mentions, Marx does not reject all mediation, but the "mediation of mediation" (INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY - EXCHANGE - DIVISION OF LABOUR), that is a set of secondary mediations of the ontologically fundamental self-mediation of man-nature relation which has an alienated form. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 78-79, 83. For Marx, institutional law (legislation) intervenes in such a way that maintains the capital which rules, through its purchasing power, the labour and its products. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 35-36.

Political Economy may attribute the properties of wealth to subjective activity, but it continues to see labour as a means of making money, even after the appearance of abstract labour (wage labour), reserving the subject-object relation. We see this reversal, according to Rancière, in *Capital* as a double movement: the objectification of the social determinations of production and the subjectification of things in which the social determinations are represented and concealed.<sup>34</sup> Rancière argues that Marx, in *1844 Manuscripts*, cannot see the difference or the “gap” between these movements. Consequently, he cannot make a distinction between the *product* as a real movement in the process of production (value) and the *thing* as it is given (appear) in perception as an economic phenomenon. The last one conceals the real movement of the inner-determination of the relation of production.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, Marx’s methodological choice, beginning with the *1844 Manuscripts*, points to this very confusion which is the other error of Political Economy: the real and the concrete, from which economists start, are inseparable from the ways that thinking appropriates it.<sup>36</sup> The

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<sup>34</sup> Rancière, “The concept of ‘critique’”, 360.

<sup>35</sup> This “gap” or disappearance of real motion in the movement of an economic phenomenon and its appearance to the agents of production, as an economic phenomenon, is “constitutive of fetishism”. Crane, “Notes”.

<sup>36</sup> According to Mészáros, Marx does not start “from an actual economic fact”, as economists do. He is interested in revealing the relation of the individual to the whole, explaining the special relation of the form to its content in terms of becoming. An economic fact, such as wage labour (abstract labour), can not be taken as a starting point, that is, as a physical form of the terms that constitute labour. Labour should be analyzed in a wide historical framework because it encloses the relation between man the nature. Mészáros, *Marx’s Theory of Alienation*, 123-124. Marx raises the question of method. For him, the relation between man and nature should not be mediated by abstract and empty categories or concepts, like those the Political Economy uses. In order to reveal the unity and fluidity that characterizes the cycle of life, Hegel also challenges and denies every given truth, not only in terms of knowledge (what it is), but also in terms of way of thinking (how do I know that is), raising the question of the legitimation of knowledge, that is, of a scientific method. For Hegel, each philosophical question “is not exhausted by stating it as an aim, but by carrying it out, nor is the result the actual whole, but rather the result together with the process through which it came about”. However, there is no need of

causal approach, adopted by the Political Economy, identifies them. Due to this formal identity, i.e., an indifferent identification, Political Economy ends up at a dead-end by receiving the requested (*petitio principii*). In *Grundrisse*, Marx makes clear that labour, as a simple economic category, is a real and concrete fact, a subtraction of the category "labour", from which Political Economy begins its analysis. This abstraction is practically true and appears where "there is the richest growth, where one thing appears common to many, common to all". Thus, an economic category makes its appearance only in modern societies, completing labour as a concept.<sup>37</sup> Marx implies this process in *1844 Manuscripts* since he introduces the category of "abstract labour". Identifying these two movements, Political Economy defines labour abstractly, as a thing, as a one-dimensional form of activity that maintains the capital-labour opposition. Proposals, like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's, that focus on improving or equating wages,<sup>38</sup> simply reproduce and conceal it. For Marx, improvements oriented solely to economic activity cannot sublimate the contradiction between private property and labour or the opposition that their relation entails.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, what matters is the revelation of the existing opposition which the Political Economy itself seeks to eliminate,<sup>40</sup> establishing

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checking the result, because "notion and object, the criterion and what is to be tested, are present in consciousness itself". For Hegel, "once the dialectic has been separated from proof, the notion of philosophical demonstration has been lost". Hegel G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1977, 2, 40, 53-54.

<sup>37</sup> Marx K., *Grundrisse. Foundations of the critique of political economy*, trans. M. Nicolaus, Random House, New York 1973, 104-105.

<sup>38</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> Marx radicalizes "Aufhebung" through a real contradiction, based on the primordial difference of the terms that constitute it. Through *praxis*, Marx extricates himself from the status of ideas and, at the same time, restructures the structure of dialectics by activating and reversing the contradictions.

<sup>40</sup> Marx is referring to the post-Ricardo version of the Political Economy which, in any real development (social contradictions and struggles) on capitalist production, seeks to eliminate contradictions. Korsch, *Karl Marx*, 73-74. Identifying private property with the subject, the Political Economy itself is alienated from man. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 95.

the dominance of one-dimensional abstract labour (wage labour), that is, depriving workers of the possibility of freedom. In this sense, categories should not be treated as abstract objects, empty of identities, that is, free from the terms of *becoming*,<sup>41</sup> but as a process of understanding and knowledge of their dialectical movement.<sup>42</sup> If the division between private property and labour exists, as economists claim, then empirical facts and categories are related in some internal way (with interdependencies and necessary relations), which a causal approach, limited to “external and fortuitous circumstances”, cannot reveal.<sup>43</sup>

Starting from the assumptions of Political Economy, Marx raises a double concern. The first one, is related to the ontological relationship of man with nature, which in the context of industrial production has been reversed, deforesting the active property of man (labour) from its qualitative properties (aesthetic and intellectual). Although nature is the source of worker’s labour,<sup>44</sup> Political Economy ends up thematizing labour as a simple economic category that cannot be understood as a product of human intellect (elaboration of perception and presentation of ideas into concepts). This assertion leads us to the second concern, which is related to the identification of reality with thinking, by Political Economy, thus making impossible the transformation of the object to reality or actuality and its manifestation as a political-

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<sup>41</sup> Karl Korsch talks about the “formalistic anaemia” of post-Ricardo economics, emphasizing the absence of any practical significance and applicability. Korsch, *Karl Marx*, 67-68.

<sup>42</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 70. The methodologies adopted by the sciences are written according to the rules of formal logic failing, at the level of language, to save the meaning of a concept: they isolate and immobilize the qualitative characteristics, properties and aspects of the things. This reasoning, which is limited to the repetition of the same terms, constitutes a tautology. Lefebvre H., *Dialectical materialism*, trans. J. Sturrock, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2009, 25. Marx is referring to the organic phenomenon. According to Gaston Bachelard, in these cases, the real is proved through the revelation of the object as an interplay of relationships. Bachelard G., *The new scientific spirit*, trans. A. Goldhammer, Beacon Press, Boston 1984, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Soysal, “1844 Ekonomik ve Felsefi”, 144.

economic fact (real or actual phenomenon). The analytic approach makes impossible the expression of objectified labour as a relation of man to himself, to his labour and the product of his labour as well as to other people, to their labour and to the products they produce.<sup>45</sup> The distinction between reality (praxis) and thinking (theory), on which Marx insists, does not render reality independent from man, as Allen Wood claims.<sup>46</sup> Wood neglects Marx's ontology which lies behind his methodology<sup>47</sup> and explores *how something* exists *into* beings.

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<sup>45</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 78, 122.

<sup>46</sup> Wood A. W., *Karl Marx*, Routledge, New York 2004, 189-190. Wood argues that Marx's practical materialism consists of contents that are not revolutionary. As far as epistemology is concerned, they "consist only in the familiar tenets of common-sense realism" and "common-sense realism holds that material objects and the natural world generally have an existence distinct from anyone's consciousness of them and that the qualities they have do not depend on the mental activity through which they may be conceived or known". In this sense, Wood insists that is absurd for someone to think that Marx "does not believe in a reality independent of man's practical consciousness of it". He cites several theorists who have expressed different views, considering the latter to be anti-realist or idealistic interpretations. To stand for his argument, Wood refers to György Lukács, who spoke of "ontological objectivity of nature", from the moment that *1844 Manuscripts* appeared, but he seems to miss the signification of "ontology".

<sup>47</sup> The relationship of man with nature is unique. Man is part of nature and depends on it to survive. This dependency has two sides. The first one has practical character and refers to a relation which is necessary for his physical existence. The other one has theoretical character and it is necessary for the realization of his mental inorganic nature. As Soysal points out, man cannot distance himself from nature because is a direct part of it: "Nature is man's inorganic body-nature, that is, insofar as it is not the human body" (Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 76). But "the whole character of a species, its species character is contained in the character of its life-activity; and free conscious activity it's man's species character" (Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 76). According to Marx, an animal is "immediately identical with its life-activity '...' Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity '...' Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity. Or it is only because he is a species being that he is a Conscious Being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity" (Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 76). Man aims at his freedom from all necessities, but only as self-conscious being has the ability to overcome



Consequently, he misses the significant role of negation in Marx's critique. Negation generates the process of the formation of reality "as an object of knowledge, judgment and transformation", as Judith Butler notices.<sup>48</sup> This perspective justifies Marx's statement in *Grundrisse*, according to which, it is through thinking that the real and the concrete can exist as one-sided and abstract relation of an already given and living *concrete totality*. Only the movement from the abstract to the concrete can reveal this relation, reproducing *concrete totality*.<sup>49</sup>

The methodology that Marx proposes for the definition of the object of Political Economy, in *1844 Manuscripts*, does not differ from the one he proposes in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and *Grundrisse* and is none other than the dialectical development of economic categories.<sup>50</sup> The emergence of the interiority of a political-economic phenomenon (already existing relation) and its exteriority (objectification of the existing relation) is ensured by the dialectical movement of "private property" (capital) which

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necessities or to escape of absolute determinism. Thus, labour appears as the activity which provides the possibility of shaping both himself and the world he lives in freely. Re-shaping nature, man reflects himself in nature, thus permeating his existence into nature. This means that he is producing labour and nature, applying his creative activity on nature. Soysal, "1844 Ekonomik ve Felsefi", 145-149. Soysal's analysis is based on Judith Butler's examination of Marx's distinction between the organic [*Leib*] and inorganic [*Körper*] human body, its relation with nature, its implications in understanding labour and laboring body and its account for the contemporary discussion about the critique of critique. Butler J., "The inorganic body in the early Marx. A limit-concept of anthropocentrism", *Radical Philosophy* RP 2, no.06 (2019): 3-17.

<sup>48</sup> Butler, "The inorganic body", 3.

<sup>49</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 100-101.

<sup>50</sup> For Rancière, this theoretical approach concerns the subjectification of things. Both, in *1844 Manuscripts* and *Capital*, the motion of the things maintains the concepts of a previous domain. It constitutes an anthropological discourse once it is referring to "the essence of subjectivity". For Rancière, objectification is that which can provide "a rigorous conceptual determination" of the social relation of production. For him, Marx manages to correlate these two different discourses or the "inner-determination" of economic phenomena to its form only in *Capital*. Rancière, "The concept of 'critique'", 361.

manifests itself either in the form of capital–land unity or in the form of capital–labor opposition. Its manifestation, through the common term of "abstract labour", can sublimate their separation which is necessary, essential, and destructive only for the worker.<sup>51</sup>

## 2. Alienated labour: the cause of private property

The question of the manifestation, presentation, or expression of an economic category in reality as a conceived world, is put at the center of Marx's investigation in *1844 Manuscripts*. In the fourth chapter of the first Manuscript entitled "Estranged Labour" Marx focuses on the manifestation of the category of "alienated labour" as man's relation to himself, other people and nature. For him, man's objective and real relation to himself arises only through his relation to other people while the product of his labour is objectified labour. In this sense, alienated labour is manifested in practice since a man, not only produces his relation to the object and himself, but also the relation of other people to his production and his product and his relation to others.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Marx's theory differs from the theory of Political Economy which approaches the relation of the worker to production (product, labour) externally, superficially, that is to say, without distinguishing the direct, necessary, and essential relation which exists between them.<sup>53</sup> However, Rancière argues that Marx uses uncriticized concepts of Political Economy, without distinguishing them from the previous referential context, thus maintaining the classical image of alienation.<sup>54</sup> Althusser also points out that Marx does not criticize the categories of Political

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<sup>51</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 122.

<sup>52</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 78.

<sup>53</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 69-71.

<sup>54</sup> Rancière notices that Marx does not criticize the difference between the vocabulary of *1844 Manuscripts* and that of *Capital*. He argues that, in *Capital*, Marx uses new concepts, but he uses the same words for the anthropological concepts. He thinks that Marx did not see a difference between the discourse of Young Marx and that of *Capital*. Rancière, "The concept of 'critique'", 361, 364-365.

Economy, emphasizing the radical dominance of philosophy over content, which will soon become independent.<sup>55</sup>

Marx follows the analytical method of Political Economy, for which labour's realization is its objectification: "In the conditions dealt with by political economy this realization of labour appears as *loss of reality* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and object-bondage*; appropriation as *estrangement, as alienation*".<sup>56</sup> The loss of reality leads the worker to starvation. The loss and enslavement of the object imply the deprivation of all necessary means for its survival, even of the labour itself. Finally, the appropriation of the object (product, labour) submits him to the domination of the product, i.e., the capital. Then, Marx gives to it a mental form (concept): "*estranged, alienated labour*" [*Entfremdete Arbeit*]. Nevertheless, the consequences of such a realization (of labour) do not explain, according to Marx, the reasons for its creation. The cause of alienation is not the "movement of private property" as the Political Economy wants to present it.<sup>57</sup> Proceeding to the internal development of the economic category of "alienated labour", Marx moves in the opposite direction, from the abstract concept to the concrete one. In his analysis, Marx examines the alienation of the worker and his production, that is, an economic fact, from two aspects: a) the relation of the worker and the product of his labour, and b) the relation of the worker and the act of production. In this way, he reveals the "secret" of private property's movement: that it is the product of alienated labour and the means of this alienation, i.e., its realization.

<sup>55</sup> Althusser, *For Marx*, 159. Althusser attempted to distinguish the Marxist science of history (historical materialism) from philosophy (dialectical materialism). The function of a critical philosophy supports the scientific task by distinguishing scientific concepts from ideological ones in order to let the scientific practice elaborate the scientific facts freely. Lung D., "Humanist and Anti-Humanist Discourse after Marx", *SSRN*, September 11, 2017, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2961428](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2961428).

<sup>56</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 71. Alienation and appropriation are two sides of the same coin. Alienation expresses labour and appropriation expresses capital. Could C., *Marx's social ontology. Individuality and community in Marx's theory of social reality*, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge 1978, 145.

<sup>57</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 81-82.

Marx analyzes an economic event through the transformative function of labour since without its mediation the element of matter is "incapable of creating wealth".<sup>58</sup> The internal development of the concept of "labour" facilitates the self-revelation of political-economic fact, i.e., the latent unity which characterizes the terms that constitute it as an object. Their internal connection maintains the individual which, at the same time, can be sublated, not to an *inner* and *silent* universality, as Feuerbach believes,<sup>59</sup> but to a new universality which the *concrete totality* condenses, representing the transition from the individual to the universal or *from fact to value*.<sup>60</sup> On this universality, which incorporates the concrete without identifying it with the totality, the value of labour is determined by the "essential relation of labour", that is, the relation of the worker to production both as the production of products and as an act.<sup>61</sup> The contradictions that arise from this relation, in the commercial society, are externalized by taking, at the level of material reality (material alienation), the form of opposition while at the level of consciousness, they

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<sup>58</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 47.

<sup>59</sup> Marx K. – Engels F., "Theses on Feuerbach", in Marx K. – Engels F., *Collected Works Marx and Engels 1845-47*, Vol. 5, trans. C. Dutt – W. Lough – C. P. Magill, Lawrence and Wishart, London 2010, 4.

<sup>60</sup> In his analysis, Isaak Rubin mentions that Marx's method moves "from physiologically equal labour to socially equated labour, and from socially equated to abstract universal labour" from which the category of value follows. Rubin, *Abstract labour and value*, 30. Although Rubin's analysis does not refer to *1844 Manuscripts*, the main idea of Marx's methodology remains the same.

<sup>61</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 34, 59. For Marx, the reification of human substance or the change of the world presupposes the constant passage of *praxis* through *poiésis* and vice versa. This connection between "free" and "necessary" action is based on the innovation and revolution of the Marxist view. Balibar É., *The Philosophy of Marx*, trans. C. Turner, Verso, London – New York 1995, 40-41. As Butler points out, the whole theory of alienation is based on the theory of value which arises from the fact that man has an organic and inorganic body, i.e., it is an existence which, on the one hand, is bound by material needs while, on the other, it is *free* due to its consciousness. As she puts it, "Human consciousness is that which, through labour, seeks to externalize itself in a natural object for the purposes of gaining a reflection of its own value in the object that it transforms by labour". Butler, "The inorganic body", 6.

constitute religious alienation (ideology) and take the form of contradiction. Following the Hegelian critique (Phenomenology), Marx moves beyond Feuerbach's religious critique and the indeterminate equation of humanism-naturalism because alienation also includes the experience of consciousness and its movement as a mutual passage and as a subject-object linking. Marx, like Hegel, seeks the reconciliation of being and thinking,<sup>62</sup> facts and predicates, based on the essence of being [*Wesenhaftigkeit*].<sup>63</sup> The comprehension of concepts coincides with the revelation of the real content of the *human essence*, contributing to the understanding, on the one hand, of science itself and, on the other, of historical reality.

For Rancière, the economic structure of a capitalistic society is based on the *social relation of production*, thus the object is not transparent and it cannot be revealed through a phenomenological method or practice.<sup>64</sup> However, the difference between Marx and Hegel is that, for Marx, the object is not an idea or an empty concept. It is the product of historical conditions. The thematization of the concepts and the revelation of their content carries a third term which provides the possibility of completing a concept as a relation of opposite and complementary terms. Based on this term (*Aufhebung*)<sup>65</sup> it is possible to analyze economic categories, to

<sup>62</sup> In the case of Hegel, "pure Being is the same as pure thinking, not that thinking and Being, in general, are the same". Inwood M., "Commentary", in Hegel G. W. F., *The phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. M. Inwood, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2018, 461.

<sup>63</sup> This reconciliation, in Hegel, results from the "essentiality" of things [*Wesenheit*] which is equating, as Michael Inwood points out, "with 'determinations of reflection', i.e., pairs of concepts that are 'reflected' into each other and thus, constitute each other, such as identity/difference, positive/negative, subject/object. These concepts are 'circles' since each of the pair directs us to the other, which then returns us to the first again". Inwood, "Commentary", 347.

<sup>64</sup> Rancière, "Notes".

<sup>65</sup> This is the Hegelian third term which arises from the determinate negation that goes beyond the contradiction while maintaining what was defined within them (*Aufhebung*). Its existence allows the emergence of the relation between the contradictory terms and intervenes in it by denying the negation and limitation of the first term, aiming at the release of its content through a higher definition, i.e., concept. Lefebvre, *Dialectical materialism*, 19-22.

evaluate and re-evaluate the real, i.e., the social relations because this term results from an existing abstraction. In this case, the one-sided abstract labour [*abstrakte Arbeit*], which is the “essence of today’s labour”, has turned up through the dialectical subtraction from the concept of “labour” to which all previous forms of labour have been reduced. Under this point of view, the concept of “labour” becomes true in practice and is legitimized from the moment that the people, who embody it as a general or universal in the context of industrial production, make their appearance against skilled labour. Dialectical abstraction is the social relation itself that exists between the worker and other people in the productive process. In this sense, labour is socially determined. In *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx clearly states that labour becomes social “only by taking the form of its immediate opposite, that is, by taking the form of abstract generality”. This community “prevents the labour of the individual from being an individual labour and his product being an individual product”.<sup>66</sup> He does not mean anything different when in *1844 Manuscripts* mentions that the appearance of industry, which incorporates and absorbs land ownership, confirms the existence of a relation of opposite and complementary terms. The general form of labour encompasses the subjective essence of individual property, i.e., agricultural labour. Thus, industrial capital is nothing, but a fully developed objective form of private property.<sup>67</sup> This means that the relations, which are developing during the process of production, may not be explicitly referred to as “social relations of production” in *1844 Manuscripts*, however,

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<sup>66</sup> Marx, *A Contribution*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> The appearance of industry and the commercial system dissolved feudal property and altered the land-agriculture relation, removing from the matter the greatest degree of universality within the limits of nature, because only through labour, that is, agriculture, is there a land for man. Thus, before the capital – labour opposition the property – non-property opposition is indifferent. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 95-97. This opposition is not “real” because the capital “is not yet fully developed”, that is to say, it has not yet taken its abstract, pure, form. It is still captive by local and political prejudices. Mészáros, *Marx’s Theory of Alienation*, 138.

they are already present, suggesting the appearance of what György Lukács will name as "social being".<sup>68</sup>

Divisions and dualisms do not arise, according to Marx, from contradictions at the level of language and thinking. It is the result of its very being, of reality (production), since man is being alienated from the product, from other individuals, from his species-being, i.e., from himself and nature.<sup>69</sup> On the level of production, the product is a derivative of labour and the worker's relation to the product and himself produces the relation of other people to production as well as the relation between them. However, the mediation of exchange and trade makes the product independent of the worker. The product is being transformed into an autonomous force [*selbstständige Macht*] that dominates the worker because the human qualities and senses have been transferred to a foreign object (objectification). Nevertheless, from the moment it is transformed into a commodity, the relation between them has been reversed: the matter's properties have been transferred to the subject, abolishing man's self-mediating ability as a socially determined being which is realized through labour (subjectification).<sup>70</sup> The alienation of the worker from the

<sup>68</sup> Lukács G., *The ontology of social being. 2. Marx*, trans. D. Fernbach, Merlin Press, London 1978, 7-9.

<sup>69</sup> According to Jean François Lyotard, Marx never loses sight of the loss of immediacy which characterizes the relation of man with nature. In *Libidinal Economy* (1974), he highlights that *nature*, in Marx's thought, encloses the proper body, the social body and the body of the earth. The worker's *organic* body is bound up with the earth's *inorganic* body and this relationship is *given*, not produced. Also, the 'labouring' body enters into productive relations with the earth as a member of a commune. This bound is also *given*, not produced. As Lyotard mentions, "it is within this nature that 'production' is carried out, or rather, this 'production' is nature reproducing itself". Lyotard J. F., *Libidinal Economy*, trans. I. Hamilton Grant, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1993, 130-132.

<sup>70</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 72-74, 76. According to Rancière, the difference between *1844 Manuscripts* and the *Capital* is related to the intervention of the subject in the double reversal which takes place in the capitalistic system. He argues that this reversal [*Verkehrung*] constitutes "the enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world", as Marx points out in *Capital*. The objectification of the capitalistic relations in *Capital* is not understood as objectification of the subject's predicates and the subjectification of the thing has to do with the "motive power" of the

object takes the form of opposition between the worker and the capitalist since the other is already there. From the moment he appropriates the product and the labour of the worker, the capitalist excels and dominates him.<sup>71</sup>

In addition, man is alienated from man himself since he is a universal being, in the sense that his relation with nature is dialectical and attempted through his own physical and spiritual activity. Nevertheless, the revelation of this unity and the realization of man, as a conscious being, is not possible when his very species' existence, i.e., the subject's objective action, which constitutes the only true objectivity,<sup>72</sup> is substantiated.<sup>73</sup> For Marx, labour is a free conscious activity that composes the whole character of the human species so what emerges is a universal alienation. This means that every human being is alienated from others and that everyone is alienated from the essence of man. Thus, the alienation from the object is nothing but the result of the worker's alienation from himself or the negation of himself since, in the act of production, he does not develop his mental and physical activity, which labour expresses, freely.<sup>74</sup> Hegel leads the way: the subject, in his attempt to identify the object of his thought, captures it as independent from him. Perception substantiates the object and consciousness perceives it as a sensible object.

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relations, constituting an "autonomous subject" and not with the attributes of the subject. Rancière, "The concept of 'critique'", 360-362.

<sup>71</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 79-81.

<sup>72</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 76-77.

<sup>73</sup> As Mészáros points out, man is the only being who can have a "species consciousness" to which he belongs. To put it in another way: man is the only being who can be aware that, in the context of capitalist production, his essence does not coincide with his individuality. During the production process, human-nature mediation or self-realization (social) is abolished. The abstract concept of the individual dominates, suggesting that human nature is a predicate, that is, a universal category and not something specifically human. In short, Marx's characterization of man as a "species-being" does not refer to the "natural state", reducing the human essence to a simple individuality (biological) but to its distinction and realization through self-mediating human activity. According to Mészáros, Marx's interpretation of alienation not only agrees with Friedrich Engels's earlier statement that it is the "unconscious conditions of mankind", but also broadens it. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 77-78, 81-82.

<sup>74</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 71-75.



Thus, two objects are created: one as it exists and another as it appears in consciousness (division).<sup>75</sup> Labour, is divided too between what exists and what appears, that is, between labour as active property and liberating activity of man and labour as a thing. The problem, however, does not lie in the object itself, but in the rigidity of the concept of "labour" and in the autonomy of one of the terms that constitute it (since it is not perceived in its entirety as a relation). This misconception makes labour compulsory and degrades it into a means of maintaining the worker as a natural subject for continuing to exist as a worker. At this point, Marx introduces the concept of "self-alienation" [*Selbstentfremdung*].<sup>76</sup> In short, the contradiction between labour and private property is interpreted as the contradiction of alienated labour with itself. This contradiction has a latent form since the abstract labour is the man himself, in whose existence the individual property is transferred, leading to the elimination of the subject himself. Finally, since private property is directly related to the man himself and his activity is nothing else but the result of existing alienated labour and not the other way round.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 58-59. Judith Butler highlights the importance of Hegel's negation in constituting a non-positivist critique based on the immanent consideration of the relation between nature and life. Butler, "The inorganic body", 4. Mitchell Aboulafia also focused on Hegelian negation. He refers that "There must be a self that can negate, can 'see' what is the opposite of a 'thing' in question, i.e., recognize contradictions, become aware of appearances that were once thought to be the truth. History 'needs' the presence of negation and mediation, the activity of the Subject that can come to know itself as the substance of 'reality' through its own endeavors. 'Something' can become fully known only after it has entailed its opposite, (so that it has returned from its 'otherness'), i.e., only after it has been alienated and 'reintegrated'. All development hinges on alienation, the ability to become other, i.e., the opposite of what appears in order to be fully comprehended; without this process the relations which make something what it is would never be fully known. It might be said that an unconscious 'thing' really is not or only potentially is in retrospect. To be human is to be conscious at some time". Aboulafia M., "Hegel's dialectic and Marx's Manuscripts of 1844", *Studies in Soviet Thought* 18, no. 1 (1978): 35-36, doi: 10.1007/BF00832927.

<sup>76</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 72-75.

<sup>77</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 74-79, 81-83, 94.

The dialectical development of the concept of "alienated labour" opens the restoration of the "private property" category, to which Marx returns in the second Manuscript, defining it as a relation. Private property is its relation to labour, to capital and the connection between these two. The latter constitutes the relation of private property, which is a latent state, since abstract labour forms an abstract existence (worker) without its physical and social qualities.<sup>78</sup> This relation is transformed into alienated labour due to the unilateral dominance of an abstract term that has become autonomous and independent instead of existing in relation to the other as a term that is opposite, but complementary. Nevertheless, capital and labour constitute an internal unity of mutual interdependence and freedom, based on their identity and otherness. The movement of this relation is captured in two phases. The first one is characterized by the unity of the two which is direct or mediated. The second one is characterized by their separation which leads to a double opposition: a) opposition of the two, autonomy and exclusion of each other, and b) opposition of each one to himself.<sup>79</sup>

### **3. The overcoming of private property, the sublation of alienation and the transformation of the Political Economy**

Once the internal relation, between private property and labour, has been revealed, Marx proceeds to the third Manuscript on the question of the abolition of private property. The "positive" overcoming of the latter ensures the revolutionary concept of "alienation" [*Entfremdung*] and the revelation of the fundamental contradiction between human (existing) substance and human subject. This separation, based on the alienated labour, that private property fulfills, also contains the solution: *sublation*. The latter is carried out at both, the level of production (opposition) and that of

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<sup>78</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 87.

<sup>79</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 92.

consciousness (contradiction), aiming at the “emancipation of all human senses and attributes”<sup>80</sup> (“positive critique”).

The “positive” overcoming of private property is the result of dialectics as the procedure of a “positively” oriented negative which, on the one hand, negates and, on the other, affirms. The activation of the positive function of negation of dialectics is intertwined with the idea of progress as the mutual passage from one term to the other, from the sensible to the conceivable, or from the quantitative to the qualitative. In any case, dialectics is related to the element of change and the conception of “being” with terms of “becoming”. Nevertheless, becoming, in Marx, is conceived without transcendental reductions, as a natural and human process, i.e., as a social activity. Marx turns to subjective registration of the motion of thinking as a reflection of the object’s real movement. The dialectics, he uses, is not that of the idea or concept, but that of the real or praxis that is incorporated in theory.<sup>81</sup> For Marx, the motion of thinking is the simple presentation that *exists* in man and the presentation as it is for him outside of him as a *real object*.<sup>82</sup> Hegel identifies being with thinking, i.e., the real subject with the predicate, rendering the real object fantastic. For Marx, this identification prevents the change of the palpable world. For him, being is the subject and thinking is the predicate. Marx attempts to emphasize the specific subject in the given primordial (material or real) relations in order to avoid the transformation of the active element of social life into a passive one. Consequently, he presents alienation as a connecting link between individuals. Alienated labour is the result of real social conditions and not something fantastic. It derives from the lack of rational human dominance of praxis, which represses creativity, leading to ideology or religion. The comprehension of becoming or of real motion of thinking encloses the objective and the subjective: objectivity lies in the

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<sup>80</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 83, 107.

<sup>81</sup> For Marx, theoretical oppositions between subjectivity and objectivity, spirituality and materiality, activity and passivity, can be sublated only through the practical energy of man within the social frame. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 109.

<sup>82</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 139.

subject's objective action.<sup>83</sup> Marx remakes theory to practice through a constant critique of reality. In other words, he revolutionizes everyday relations by "radicalizing" the primordial productive force of the human world, aiming at a practical critique.

The revolutionization of the real aims at the de-ideologicalization of both, science and philosophy, i.e., at the repulsion of being's substantiation, through dialectics. According to Hegel, dialectics contains negativity, alienation, and de-objectification. It also perceives the objective man as the result of his labour.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Marx frees theory from the one-dimensional conception of the real, realizing the role of contradictions in which the theoretical subject itself is involved as a constitutive element. Practice does not emerge unless the sublation of contradictions and the unity of theory and practice obey the logic of historical becoming. Thus, Marx raises the question of changing the world through the entry of the negative into the positive and vice versa. For Marx, the motion of thinking does not consist in method, but in reversal, in reality itself, contributing to the transformation of the conditions of production and creation. In short, the overcoming of the contradiction between necessity and freedom is attempted through the social-human existence since man participates, with all his essential forces, in the thematization of human reality. The activation consists in the

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<sup>83</sup> Self-objectification is intertwined with the approach of the organs of individuality (sight, hearing, emotion, desire, activity, love) which have a communal form towards the object. This relationship of man with the world is characterized by the sense of having (possession). The sublation of private property aims at the emancipation of all human senses and attributes, making them rational in their immediate practice. As Marx puts it, "They relate themselves to the *thing* for the sake of the thing, but the thing itself is an *objective human* relation to itself and to man and vice versa". Only in this way does the thing become a human object and the human being becomes objective, i.e., when he does not lose himself in it. When objects confirm his individuality, then he himself becomes the object. In order not to lose himself in the object, the thing must become a social object for man and man a social existence for himself. Only then does the object become a social being. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 106-107.

<sup>84</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 149-150.

objectification [*Vergegenständlichung*] of oneself, i.e., of its existence as a subject (existing substance).<sup>85</sup>

The whole world (real objective) is conceived as a process, as a constant movement of transformation and change, as a place of contradictions, and as a system of multiple relations. Unlike Hegel, these relations are not internalized in Marx's thought. They are not a purely subjective element but the result of composition among objective beings and creative activity (labour). This latent state of the real subject is the real essence of the existing thing and not its sublation, as Hegel believes.<sup>86</sup> In other words, the abolition of alienation allows Marx to turn negative criticism into a positive one as long as is not limited to the private property – labour contradiction (negative side), but also includes the *social necessity* of the oppositions arising from this contradiction (positive side). For Marx, human life “now needs the abolition of private property” but it “needed private property for its realization”.<sup>87</sup> Marx talks about the (ontological) necessity of a *real* sublation which escapes economists. Therefore, their theoretical systems are characterized by a deficit of social dynamism and historicity

<sup>85</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 99-111.

<sup>86</sup> Hegelian sublation, for Marx, keeps politics under the authority of State which remains abstract universal and particular during the passage from civil-bourgeois society to the State. Marx, in his early writings, argues that in-between them there must be a “break”, a discontinuity, a revolution. Politics is a matter of *practices*, i.e., a process which goes beyond institutions and transforms social life or activity. For Marx, Hegel does not manage to bring the contradictory movement to the concept. On the contrary, he gives it the appearance of a dialectical deduction from the concept. Marx argues that State in Hegel is not the Thing of the Logic, as it should be, but The Logic of the Thing. Hegel errs in empiricism, using Logic as proof of the State instead of doing the opposite. For Marx, State is an “organism living”, producing new life as a result of the “association of men free who mutually educate each other” which is subordinated, on the one hand, to the rational and, on the other, to the public forms of its existence. Kouvélakis E., “Marx 1842-1844: de l'espace public à la démocratie révolutionnaire”, in Kouvélakis E., (ed.) *Marx 2000*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 2000, 89-102.

<sup>87</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 133.

which arises from the competition between private property and labour.<sup>88</sup>

The "positive" overcoming of private property, in terms of dialectics, includes two negations. The *first negation* arises from the concealment of objectified labour, as a necessary relation of unity and separation, leading to universal alienation. It's the socialization of capital (primitive communism) which merely contributes to the transformation of the workers' relation to their labour, as well as of the whole community, into an abstract capitalist. It's the "logical expression of private property '...' in the form of envy and the urge to reduce to a common level"<sup>89</sup> which leads to a "fantastic universality" through the equalization of wages. It's the first positive abolition of private property and it's placed in the future, far ahead of the political action that will create the necessary conditions for the abolition of universal alienation.<sup>90</sup> The *second negation* consists in the sublation of otherness, based on which the identity of the subject is constituted (for-itself), restoring the relationship with the object, i.e., the product or commodity (in-itself). Nevertheless, its content or essence remains to be comprehended as a reflection of the real motion in thinking and not just as a concept (self-consciousness). Thus, Marx defines the essential dimension of human existence, based on the social practice itself, as a grid of materialistic relations that mediate this relation, keeping the distance between the *object* (product or commodity) and the *thing* (phenomenon).<sup>91</sup> The transition to socialism, which

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<sup>88</sup> For Marx, according to Mészáros, Political Economy can -at best- recognize the subjective side of the conflict between private property and labour, that is, the conflict at the individual level over "goods" and/or "property." Such an approach reproduces alienated social relations because it attributes the causes of the conflict to "egoistic *human nature*". For Marx, on the contrary, is the examination of the social side of the conflict that exacerbates competition, hastening its annihilation (social necessity). Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 112-114.

<sup>89</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 101.

<sup>90</sup> Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 129.

<sup>91</sup> Aboulafia points out that Marx maintains the differentiation between concrete and totality unlike Hegel, where the movement of thinking 'contains' all the moments of the past. However, he argues that Marx misunderstood the concept of Hegel's "alienation". Marx thinks that Hegel

marks the beginning of world history as a self-mediating process, requires a double formation or displacement. On the one hand, that of a theoretical and practical sensorial consciousness of man (universality) since “thinking and being are ‘...’ no doubt *distinct* but, at the same time, they are in *unity* with each other”<sup>92</sup> and on the other, that of a “positive human individual consciousness”, i.e., of individual consciousness which is sublated in the universal.<sup>93</sup> In conclusion, private property (capital) and its movement (production-consumption) is a material, sensorial, expression of alienated life while institutions, laws, science, art, religion, etc., are simply “modes of production” subjected to its principles. The “positive” overcoming of private property requires the positive overcoming of individual alienation and the return from each of these modes of production to social existence. As Marx points out, the positive sublation of private property reveals the way in which “man produces man – himself and other man ‘...’ Likewise, however, both the material of labour and man as the subject, is the point of departure as well as the result of the movement (and precisely in this fact, that they must constitute the point of departure, lies the historical necessity of private property). Thus, the *social* character is the general character of the whole movement: *just as* society itself produces *man as man*, so is society produced by him”.<sup>94</sup>

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conceives it “as an abstract reflection of an alienated mode of production”, thus identifying objectification with alienation. Aboulafia, “Hegel’s dialectic”, 41, 44.

<sup>92</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 105-106.

<sup>93</sup> As Marx highlights in *Capital*, “The capitalist mode of appropriation, which springs from the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of its proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a natural process, its own negation. This is the negation of the negation. It does not re-establish private property, but it does indeed establish private property on the basis of the achievements of the capitalist era: namely co-operation and the possession in common of the land and the means of production produced by labour itself”. Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, 929.

<sup>94</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 104.

Although *1844 Manuscripts* are indeed “an evident expression of a position in movement”, as Marcello Musto claims,<sup>95</sup> Marx’s aim and methodological approach are concrete. Starting from a real economic fact, “private property”, Marx arrives at the thematization of the economic category of “alienated labour”, just as Political Economy does. Nevertheless, through the dialectical development of the concept of “labour”, he reveals the essence or content of the political-economic fact, returning to a transformed Political Economy, as the basis of every revolutionary and transformational movement.<sup>96</sup> Under this perspective, it seems that in *1844 Manuscripts* we can trace what Lukács points out for the mature Marxist studies: Marx’s economics starts from the totality of the social and returns to it.<sup>97</sup> But, in *1844 Manuscripts*, is obvious that Marx’s economics have incorporated the experience of consciousness. In short, the mental determination of the object of Political Economy is the result of its very movement (self-relation) which, through dialectical negation, division, duplication of opposites and self-reflection within the other, leads to the thematization of the political-economic fact as a product of historical conditions (becoming). Aiming at the connection between theory and practice, Marx seeks to transform Political Economy into a “human science”. If the industry is the historical (external) relation of nature and, consequently, of natural science to man, then the natural essence of man or the human essence of

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<sup>95</sup> Marcello Musto adds that manuscripts are “not homogeneous or even closely interconnected between their parts”. Musto M., “Marx in Paris: Manuscripts and notebooks of 1844”, *Science & Society* 73, no. 3 (2009): 392.

<sup>96</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 82, 103. Louis Althusser criticizes this return which is attempted, through the removal of Political Economy and Philosophy, because Marx resolves the contradiction between them through “alienated labour” and the conception of Man (the essence of man). Althusser, *For Marx*, 229-230. On the contrary, according to Herbert Marcuse, Marx’s positive critique of the Political Economy lies precisely in offering the foundation of a real political economy which, in a completely transformed way, forms the scientific background of the communist revolution. Marcuse H., *Studies in critical philosophy*, Beacon Press, Boston 1973, 5.

<sup>97</sup> Lukács, *The ontology of social being*, 12.



nature can be understood. Such an orientation can lead to the replacement of human science with natural science and vice versa.<sup>98</sup> In this case, we can talk about “a single science” with genuine content,<sup>99</sup> because the existing essence of this historical relation coincides with the human subject itself which is always in the human mind as a prerequisite. In other words, the subject is no other than the “object” of the activity itself. It is reality itself as a product of history. Its movement, and not the movement of the concept, as Hegel believes,<sup>100</sup> is the one that constitutes the real and the concrete as a thought. The

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<sup>98</sup> For Marx, the fragmentation of science renders necessary the mutual passage of Political Economy in Human Science (Philosophy) and vice versa. This process leads to a transformed Political Economy, through dialectics. Dialectics is the key to the analysis and transformation of the capitalistic economy. It runs through the whole corpus of Marx’s work, even the third volume of *Capital*, which is the most controversial. This mutual passage explains why the assumption of classical Political Economy “that the cost price of a commodity equal[s] the value of the commodities consumed in its production” does not work in the framework of a revised Political Economy. Marx repeats: “if the cost price of a commodity is equated with the value of the means of production used up in producing it, it is always possible to go wrong”. Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy, Volume III*, 265. Price and value are two different entities. Price is the expression of the worker’s relation with the labour (as an individual being) while value is the latent form of the worker’s relation with the labour as a product and as an act (as a social being). Determining the cost price of a commodity is one thing and it is what Political Economy does, identifying the value with the price. This analysis begins from a real fact (concrete category) towards an abstractive category, mediated by money. The determination of the value of the produced commodities is another thing which requires the attribution of dialectics in order to reveal the non-mediated “essential relation of labour”. It goes backwards: from the abstractive category towards the fact (concrete category). Actually, through dialectics Marx sublates the opposition between the two motions, constituting the “political-economic fact”. What results from the synthesis of the two movements or discourses, is the reflection of the product or commodity in thinking as a *concrete totality*, i.e., as a *product* and as a *thing*, making possible the determination of the price (or the value) of production (as a whole). This process signifies the return to a revised Science, as Political Economy and as Human Science, providing the criterion or principle (concrete totality) of any comparison or evaluation among proposals about the capitalist economy and its inequalities.

<sup>99</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 110-111.

<sup>100</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 28.

understanding of this movement, in Marx, coincides with the sublation of contradictions and the transformation of reality.

## Conclusions

In 2015, Marcello Musto argued that in *1844 Manuscripts* Marx “had scarcely begun to assimilate the basic concepts of political economy, and his conception of communism was no more than a confused synthesis of the philosophical studies he had undertaken until then”.<sup>101</sup> However, the above analysis shows that, although Marx’s thought has not yet been completed, regarding the details and the categories of Political Economy that constitute his later critique, he manages to outline the methodological preconditions for the transformation of Political Economy and society.

For Marx, the dialectical development of economic categories, which includes the analytical approach, explains their change through the revelation of their contradictory structure and the opposition that characterizes the capitalist economic system. Moreover, dialectics facilitates their sublation because dialectics, in Marx, starts from the social being and returns to it. Based on social practice, he reveals the essential content of economic categories, i.e., the relations that are developing during the production process, the realization of which incarnates the human labour. These relations are already there, thus what Marx cares most about is rendering possible the realization of the “essential relation of labour”, i.e., of the subject in terms of becoming. Self-realization requires the manifestation or expression of the relationship of man, as a human being, with nature both, in the sense of subjectivity (interiority) and objectivity (exteriority). It also requires their mutual passage from one term that thematizes the object to the other that thematizes the thing (i.e., the motion of thinking). This (double) movement presupposes a methodology capable

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<sup>101</sup> Musto, “The ‘Young Marx’”, 258.

of revealing the common term which holds together in opposition the terms that thematize the object as sensible and as conceivable, as concrete and as a totality. For Marx, the real motion of thinking encloses the subjective and the objective, allowing the mutual passage from practice to theory and vice versa since objectivity is none other than the subject's objective action. The difficulty that arises is to maintain the distance between the object and the thing, as a constitutive element of a practical critique.<sup>102</sup>

Based on social practice and through dialectics, Marx concludes that "private property" is the relation between capital and labour, not only as separation, but also as unity. Nevertheless, if labour is the existing relation of the worker to the product, to the others (workers – owners), to himself and nature, then "abstract labour" is the common term that separates and unites the capital and the labour. By introducing the negative definition of labour in relation to capital, that is, "alienated labour", Marx aims at a "positive critique" ensured

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<sup>102</sup> Nowadays, some even talk about humanist and non-humanist tendencies in Marx's discourse which arise from the relationship between Man and Nature, i.e., their separation and unity. This relationship, apart from the ethical responsibility to nature, raises the question about "the necessary and inextricable unity between humanity and nature" which should be part of politics. Lakha F., "Mensch, or (Laboring) Nature: Reading Marx's 1844 Manuscripts in the Era of "Posthumanism"", *Academia.edu*, [https://www.academia.edu/33406808/Mensch\\_or\\_Laboring\\_Nature\\_Readin\\_g\\_Marx\\_s\\_1844\\_Manuscripts\\_in\\_the\\_Era\\_of\\_Posthumanism](https://www.academia.edu/33406808/Mensch_or_Laboring_Nature_Readin_g_Marx_s_1844_Manuscripts_in_the_Era_of_Posthumanism). Nevertheless, this tendency is not new. Through deconstruction, Jean François Lyotard, examines, in *Discourse, figure* (1971), the formation of a non-articulated discourse as a resistance to the dominant discourse which reproduces the capitalistic system. Through a (double) *silent* negation, he reveals the existence of non-salaried relations within salaried relations. The silent expression of their difference constitutes a real critique or anti-speech. Lyotard J. F., *Discourse, figure*, trans. A. Hudek – M. Lydon, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis – London 2011, 30-31. Applying the deconstructive strategy in *Libidinal Economy* (1974), Lyotard re-reads Marx's *Capital* by integrating non-capitalistic activities into the discourse of Political Economy. For him, the concealed liaison between them ensures the necessary distance of a constant critique, causing an economico-political crisis, like those of 1821 and 1929. Their repetition brings the capitalistic system to a dead end. Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 227-240.

by the negation of the negation, i.e., the universal sublation of alienation and the contradictions of the capitalist system. This positivity derives from the real movement of the object in thinking as reflection. Reconciliation between being and thinking is a complex process, a set of materialistic relations and mediations. If taken into account, it provides the possibility of revealing the inner-determination of the economic phenomena (which in capitalism reverses the relations of production-objectification). Furthermore, their consideration makes possible the transfer of this determination (of the reversed relations), i.e., its expression or presentation, into reality as a reflection, thematizing the real object of Political Economy. Through the category of “alienated labour” and the simultaneous movement of negative and positive, Marx reveals the “essential relation of labour” as the appropriate criterion or principle for understanding, critiquing, and sublating the contradictions of Political Economy.

Integrating praxis in theory in such a way, Marx manifests his interest in both the empirical and the theoretical basis, as parts of a revolutionary movement which can be found in the movement of private property.<sup>103</sup> In other words, Marx’s economics are in direct connection with politics. As he points out in *Capital*, “it is in each case the direct relationship of the owner of the conditions of production to the immediate producers ‘...’ in which we find the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social edifice, and hence also the political form of the relationship of sovereignty and dependence, the specific form of state in each case”.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the sublation of private property and the transformation of society requires a double transformation: on the level of economy (necessity) and the level of consciousness (freedom).

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<sup>103</sup> Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 103.

<sup>104</sup> Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy, Volume III*, 927.

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# SPINOZA, THE EPICUREAN

Authority and Utility  
in Materialism

Dimitris Vardoulakis

Spinoza Studies

