Philosophy of Marx

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1. MARX

[Images of Karl Marx]
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STRAND 1: THE ENLIGHTENMENT

1. The Autonomy of Reason;
2. The Idea of Progress and Perfection;
3. Only through reason can knowledge be attained;
4. The principles governing nature, humanity and society can be understood through reason;
5. The reason must be “sharpen” through education;
6. Opposition to any authority denying reason;
7. Cosmopolitan solidarity of the enlightened individuals (internationalism);
8. “The uniqueness of individual and the oneness of mankind” (Polanyi);
Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another.

This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another.

Sapere Aude! [dare to know] "Have courage to use your own understanding!"—that is the motto of enlightenment.
The German “Expressivism” (Taylor 1975: 547-58; 1979: 50-51, 141-52; Berlin 1963: ch. 4):

Expressivism (ranging from Leibnitz’s “monadology” to the metaphysical historicism of Herder and Hegel) was basically a reaction to the eighteenth century French and British Enlightenment tradition characterized by its heavy empiricist, mechanist, determinist, atomist and utilitarian leanings about nature and human life.

Human activity and history should be seen as human self-expression, within which human freedom is given a primary role as the authentic form of this expression. Expressivism emphasizes that human action and life is directed towards self-realization, in the sense of both the embodiment of the essence in reality, and the clarification of human purposes so that each individual can realize her own essence in a way different from her fellow human beings (Taylor 1975: 16). Thus, life itself is guided by human values.
Expressivism sees human nature as a whole, as a “single stream of life, or on the model of a work of art, in which no part could be defined in abstraction from the others” (Taylor 1975: 23). Freedom, not simply in the sense of being free from external constraints, but in the sense of authentic self-expression is a basic aspiration of expressivism (Taylor 1975: 24).

Therefore, expressivism has four demands: (Taylor 1975; 28)

1. the unity of human being as forming an indivisible whole so that the separation of different levels (like life as against thought, sentience as against rationality, knowledge as against will) is rejected;
2. freedom;
3. communion with human beings;
4. Communion with nature.
The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it...

*Marx, 11th Thesis on Feuerbach*
Dialectical and Historical Materialism
1. the “economic base,” the “relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production,” determines the “legal and political superstructure” and “definite forms of social consciousness” which correspond to the “economic structure of society” (p. 20).

2. This economic structure of the society is independent of consciousness and will of the individuals living in this society: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (p. 21).

3. Social change is to be explained by the conflict between forces and the relations of production:

   “At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms—with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution (p. 21).
FIGURE 10-1
Marx's "social pyramid," in which the structure of society owes its origin to the basic facts of economic production.
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Dialectics: Contradiction

Aristotle’s Rules of Logic:

1.  \( A = A \) (*Identity*)
2.  \( A \neq -A \) (*Difference*)
3.  *Either A, or – A; not both* (*Excluding the Middle*): Principle of Non-Contradiction

*Contradiction: Both A and –A at the same time…*
Contradictions in The Human Realm:

1. Between individuality and sociality.
   “The human being is in the most literal sense a ζώον πολιτιχόν [political animal], not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society” (Marx 1973: 84).

2. Between Freedom and Necessity.
   Human beings “make their own history”, but not “under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” (Marx 1963: 15).
3. **Between Agency and Structure:**

   Although human history is being continuously made by intentional actions of individuals, unintended effects of these actions is the reproduction of social structures, independent of individuals’ purposes. Human purposive activity always presuppose preexisting social relations for it is the existence of these relations which makes the coordination and integration of individual acts possible and thereby makes the process a social one. Yet, these very social relations, which are prerequisites of individual action, are themselves the end result of the collective activities of the individuals involved in the process. Therefore, social relations, which both enable and constrain individual intentional actions, are continuously created and recreated by individual actions (Hunt 1979a: 285).
4. Between Human Essence and Existence (*Alienation*)

Marx, like Aristotle, considers human essence as referring to ‘the inherent development potential of every human being when that development proceeded in the natural or proper way’ (Hunt 1986: 97). However, if the conditions within which they exist do not permit them to realize their own potential, their existence is in contradiction with their essence (Hunt 1986: 97).
Human Essence: Species-Being

Man is a *species-being*, ‘not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species ... his object, but also ... because he looks upon himself as the present, living species, because he looks upon himself as a *universal* and therefore free being’ (Marx 1975: 327).

A person is a species-being in two senses, though these two senses are in effect identical:
1. ‘because of the nature of human perceptual and conceptual faculties and human life-activity’, and,
2. ‘because of the social nature of human activity’ (Hunt 1986: 97, 98).
That is, a person is a unity of individuality and sociality, or more appropriately, the individual is the social being; even her very existence is a social activity (Marx 1975: 350).

And, it is the species character of human beings that differentiates them from mere natural beings, for man ‘must confirm and realize himself both in his being and in his knowing’ and, consequently, he ‘has his process of origin in history.’

But for him history is a conscious process, and hence one which consciously supersedes itself. History is the natural history of man’ (Marx 1975: 391).
In other words, human life activity, i.e. human history, takes the form of an interaction with nature in a social setting; it is ‘either a society-mediated interchange with nature or a nature-mediated interchange with other humans’ (Hunt 1986: 99).

This activity, or *praxis*, is a social one mediated through labor in which human beings transform both nature, the ‘inorganic body’ (Marx 1975: 328), and themselves.

Only through this activity is human essence *objectified*: ‘The object of labour is therefore the *objectification of the species-life of man*: for man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself has created’ (Marx 1975: 329).
Although the object that labor produces should be considered as the ‘objectification’ of labor, under specific social relations this process also gives rise to the fact that ‘the object that labour produces, its product, stands opposed to it as something alien, as a power independent of the producer’ and, ‘this realization of labour appears as a loss of reality for the worker, objectification as loss of and bondage to the object, and appropriation as estrangement, as alienation’ (Marx 1975: 324).
Four ‘vantage points’ of Alienation (Hunt 1979a: 304):

(1) the relation of man to the product he produces,
(2) the relation of man to his own productive activity,
(3) the relation of a man to his own ‘species-being’, and
(4) the relation of man to other men.

The relation between man and his product, according to Marx, is similar to the relation between man and God: ‘The more man puts into God, the less he retains within himself. The worker places his life in the object; but now it no longer belongs to him, but to the object’ (Marx 1975: 324).
The “Human Condition” in Marx

1. Human beings are social beings, who appropriate nature in a social setting.

2. The terms ‘labor’ and ‘production’ refer to a general activity; what we have here is ‘production of life’ rather than merely material goods production. Above all, this activity, or the ‘labor process’ is a general condition: ‘It is the universal condition characterizing the metabolic interaction between man and nature, the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence’ (Marx 1976: 290); therefore it is independent of all specific forms of human existence. Labor is common to all forms of society because it is the process through which human beings realize their own essence; it actually characterizes what is human…
Labor vs. Labor Power

‘Labor’ is a process within which labor power is used;

‘Labor power’ is to be defined as ‘the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being’ (Marx 1976: 270),

Then, labor should be understood as the ‘objectification’ of human essence. Here, the term ‘labor’, as referring to the creative activity of human beings, rests on essential powers of human beings, namely, on the labor power, and the development of human energy becomes ‘an end-in-itself’ which also includes the possibility of creating conditions in which labor becomes ‘life’s prime want’ (Bhaskar 1993: 295).
Conclusions:

1. “Historical materialism” should be taken, not as a “historico-philosophic theory of the *marche générale* imposed by fate upon every people” (Marx; quoted in Manicas 1987: 115), but as a crude first approximation to the human life activity as embracing the material and mental, emotional and aesthetic aspects of human existence (Hunt 1979a: 291-92).

2. Historical materialism is actually a “fusion” between (material) causality and teleology; that is, teleology in the sense of purposive human action is encompassed in the causal framework (Colletti 1973: 212; Hunt 1979b: 115). Human volition and freedom is always restricted by the “realm of necessity” (Marx 1981: 958-59).
3. Although human history is being continuously made by intentional actions of individuals, unintended effects of these actions is the reproduction of social structures, independent of individuals’ purposes. History, in short, can be comprehended as a whole series of the unintended consequences of intentional human action.
4. Although the object that labor produces should be considered as the “objectification” of labor, under specific social relations this process also becomes a form of alienation, in the sense that “the object of that labour produces, its product, stands opposed to it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer” (Marx 1975: 324), which is a chief cause for the loss of freedom.

The whole of human history, independent of some specific social and economic forms, can be seen as a constant interplay or a contradiction between the objectification and the alienation processes, or between freedom and the loss of freedom. As long as human beings’ own products, as the specific forms of objectification of their essences, are appropriated by other individuals because of private property, this antinomy arises.