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## MARX'S PROMETHEAN HUMANISM

### 1. Introduction

'A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism.'<sup>1</sup> When Karl Marx wrote those words in 1848, little did he realize that a century later that 'spectre' would be haunting the whole world 'in a form resembling only in outline the plan of its former master.'<sup>2</sup> For world-wide Communism today includes millions of people from a variety of religious, cultural, racial and geographical backgrounds and in its local manifestations the message of Marx has merged with elements of cultures they represent. 'Red monks and hajjis were and are commonplace in many parts of rural Southeast Asia.'<sup>3</sup> Nationalist leaders in many countries in Asia and Africa forged Marxist doctrine into a powerful weapon for their attacks on colonialism and imperialism.

It is, of course, a mistake to identify Marx at every point with what goes under the name of Marxism. But it would be equally wrong to disregard the uniquely Marxian strain that is running through this movement, namely Marx's Promethean humanism. 'Behind the basic-appetite appeal of communism lies a remarkable reserve of humanism, highly articulated and thoroughly unified in the writings of Marx himself.'<sup>4</sup> To this we turn our attention in the paper.

Any modern attempt to study Marxism will be met with the problems relating to the interpretation of Marx. Early studies of Marx were based on his well-known writings on politics, society and economics (The Communist Manifesto, Capital and other writings). While they acknowledged Marx's dependence upon Hegel and Feuerbach, the one for

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1. Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*.

2. Gary Chamberlin, 'The Man Marx Made' in *Science and Society*, Vol. 27, p. 302.

3. Harry Benda, 'Reflections on Asian Communism' in *Yale Review*, Oct. 1966.

4. Chamberlin, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

the dialectic and the other for a materialism, they found the social and economic doctrines of Proudhon, Ricardo, Adam Smith and other economists decisively important for interpreting Marx.

It was even argued that the thought of the mature Marx was radically different from that of young Marx. But in recent times, with the publication of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,<sup>5</sup> the emphasis has shifted. In this series of essays written in 1844, Marx articulates his philosophical concept of man. The language is taken straight from Hegel and Feuerbach. Many scholars, especially non-Marxians, find in them the key for understanding Marx's philosophy. Not only do these writings provide us with fresh insights into Marx's concept of man; they also bridge the alleged gulf between the young Marx and the mature Marx.

R.C. Tucker among other recent scholars, established most convincingly the unity of thought that connects Marx the philosopher and Marx the economist after a careful study of the Economic and philosophical manuscripts. For example, Tucker at one point shows how even 'Marx's image of the proletariat was not of empirical origin' and that it is best understood in terms of its philosophical root. Tucker writes about Marx's concept of the proletariat: "He (Marx) did not come by it, for example, by observation of contemporary factory conditions, by direct contact with industrial workers and work, or even by the study of political economy. His earliest meetings with the working-class people appear to have taken place after he moved to Paris in the late autumn of 1843. By then, however, the idea of the proletariat was already formed in his mind. The path by which he reached it was the philosophical path."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, one can agree to the view that 'Marx's essential vision remained constant while his manner of communicating this vision and his vocabulary changed considerably in the later period.' And it must also be added that Marx's philosophical writings, especially the

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5. These manuscripts were published in part in 1927. The complete texts became available in German and Russian in 1932. It was only during the post-war period that they have received systematic consideration. A translation in English has been available in England since 1959. They were published for the first time in the United States in 1961 in Erich Fromm's 'Marx's concept of Man.' Perhaps the best scholarly use of these materials was made by R.C. Tucker in his *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (1961).
  6. R.C. Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*, p. 113.

Manuscripts, offer the most valuable guide for our journey into the world of his thought.

## 2. The Philosophical Roots - Hegel and Feuerbach

'Marx's philosophy is rooted in the humanist western philosophical tradition which reaches from Spinoza through the French and German enlightenment philosophers of the eighteenth century to Goethe and Hegel, and the very essence of which is concern for man and the realization of his potentialities.'<sup>7</sup> Marx himself grew up in an atmosphere permeated by the ideals of the Enlightenment. So even before he came under the influence of Hegel or Feuerbach, he had begun his intellectual life. Having arrived at the University of Berlin, he wrote to his father at the Christmas of 1837: 'Before all things I experienced the disturbing influence of the opposition between what is and what should be which is the special characteristic of idealism.' This conflict between what is and what should be was to remain with Marx until his dying days, and his life was spent in the attempt to reconcile that conflict, philosophically and practically.

### i) Hegel

Philosophers who influenced Marx were numerous. But no one can doubt the significant influence of Hegel upon the formation of Marx's thought. Hegel furnished Marx with the philosophical method and philosophical presuppositions. According to Hegel the supreme reality is Spirit or the Absolute; any finite being, including man, is only an aspect of the developing being of the Absolute itself. In order for Spirit to become conscious of itself, it must express itself, assume various concrete objective forms. This is somewhat similar to Hindu Vedantism. 'Substance, *qua* subject, involves the necessity, at first an inner necessity, to set forth itself what it inherently is to show itself to be Spirit.'<sup>8</sup> This is both a knowing activity and a productive activity. The term used by Hegel to denote it is 'self-externalization.'

The two spheres of Spirit's self-externalization are nature and history. The creative self-externalization of spirit in history is of paramount significance because 'it is the continuation of the original creative act

7. Cf. Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, (New York: Frederick Ungar Pnb. C. 1971).

8. Quoted in Tucker, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

by which nature, together with man, came into being.<sup>9</sup> As an active agent in history, man is spirit in the historical continuation of its creative, self-externalizing phase. But in his capacity of knower, he is self-conscious spirit. So long as this remains incomplete, man is a 'finite, self-conscious spirit.' In the process of becoming in terms of cognition, finite self-conscious spirit overcomes its finitude and rises to the plane of absolute self-conscious spirit. So in an absolute sense the divine and human become identical:

The spirit's activity of self-externalization, by which an object external to it is formed, is also a state of self-alienation. The object is experienced as an alien and hostile being: it 'negated' the infinity of spirit. The overcoming of alienation is possible by the spirit's knowing activity. In other words, the negation of the spirit can be negated by the spirit's knowing activity. So for Hegel, 'negation of the negation' is another name for the infinite. The act of knowing is a transcendence of the subject-object relation as one of the spirit's alienation. 'It transforms the subject-object relation into a subject-subject relation wherein spirit has only self before it in consciousness, having recognized the objective world as externalized spirit.'<sup>10</sup>

So spirit's activity now takes three forms: externalization, alienation and transcendence of the alienation by the act of knowing. History is the totality of cycles of spirit's three-fold activity. Hegel concludes his lectures at Berlin on the history of philosophy with these words:

A new epoch has arisen in the world. Finite self-consciousness has ceased to be finite, and in this way absolute self-consciousness has, on the other hand, attained to the reality which it lacked before. This is the whole history of the world up to present time and the history of philosophy in particular.<sup>11</sup>

The process by which the spirit realizes itself is dialectical in Hegel's specific understanding of the term. Hegel's dialectic has to be understood in the larger setting of Hegel's theory of history as the self-realization of God. By dialectic Hegel means 'the pattern or mechanism of the development through inner conflict.' Hegel himself admits that the

9. Tucker, *ibid.*, p. 48. The section on Hegel is indebted to Tucker's exposition.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

11. Quoted in Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

dialectical method is no invention of his. 'Dialectic,' writes Hegel in his *Encyclopaedie*, 'is no novelty in philosophy. Among the ancients Plato is termed the inventor of Dialectic: and his right to the name rests on the fact that the platonic philosophy first gave the free scientific, and thus at the same time the objective, form to Dialectic. .... In modern times, it was, more than any other, Kant who resuscitated the name of Dialectic, and restored it to its post of honour.

He did it ..... by working out the antinomies of reason. The problem of these antinomies is no mere subjective piece of work oscillating between one set of grounds and another; it really serves to show that every abstract position of understanding, taken precisely as it is given, naturally veers round into its opposite.<sup>12</sup>

In Kant, however, dialectics reaches an impasse, since the noumenal reality is unknowable. But for Hegel, 'man is the place and medium in which the universal reason knows itself' and 'there is simply no limitation to what man can know'.<sup>13</sup> So the dialectics assumes a greater degree of movement in Hegel; it becomes a developmental process with three phases. The self-realization of the universal reason takes place in history following the law of dialectics, in which the thesis is relieved by the antithesis and the antithesis by the synthesis. Hegel asserts, in explaining his dialectical idea, that contradiction is the very moving principle of the world. But in the dialectical process the contradiction will have constructive outcome, since the spirit is engaged in the activity of self-realization. It is to be noted that this dialectics within the monism of becoming ends with self-realization. Applied to world history, the self-redemptive dialectic of Hegel will end in a retreat from history; Hegel himself ended it by absolutizing the Prussian state.

The above attempt to present some main themes of the vast and complex system of Hegel's thought is cursory. It is important to notice that the traditional dualism of God and man is replaced by the dialectical unity of the divine and human natures. And also history becomes the story of man's self-realization from finite to infinite life, as God's own self-realization in the person of man. The image of man that arises out of this can be summed up in these words of Buber: 'Man is now only the principle in which the universal reason reaches perfect self-consciousness and thus completion.

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12. Hegel, selections by Leowenberg, p. xvii.

13. Buber, *Between Man and Man*, p. 139.

ii) *Feuerbach*

Marx claimed to have turned Hegel's dialectic 'inside out', transforming his historical idealism into historical materialism. Undoubtedly it was Feuerbach who helped him to make this turn, especially his work, 'The essence of Christianity'. Then came Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*; writes Engels, 'with one blow it pulverized the contradiction, in that without circumlocutions it placed materialism on the throne again.... One must himself have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians. How enthusiastically Marx greeted the new conception and how much in spite of all critical reservations – he was influenced by it, one may read in "The Holy Family."

According to Feuerbach, his 'Essence of Christianity' is 'a solution of the enigma of the Christian religion',<sup>14</sup> which in turn he regards as the prototype and highest form of religion in general. The solution is to characterize religion as a form of alienation of man from himself. He took the term 'alienation' from Hegel who, it may be recalled, used it 'to express the form of the dialectical process of knowing which operates on an object standing outside itself, alien to the subject'. For Hegel man is god in his state of self-alienation and return to himself. But for Feuerbach, man in his religious life is alienated from himself; god is man in his state of alienation. In other words, it is not god who had man, but it is man who has made god. Therefore he affirms 'that the true sense of Theology is Anthropology, that there is no distinction between the predicates of the divine and human nature, and, consequently, no distinction between the divine and human subject.'<sup>15</sup>

According to Feuerbach, his philosophy 'searches the real and the whole nature of man.' And 'the human is the true and real; for the human alone is rational; man is the measure of reason.' The essence of man should not be separated from man's material, sensuous existence. 'Man, that is man's essence, is the most real being, not the Ego of Kant and Fichte, not the absolute Mind of Hegel.' This being of man exists 'only in community, it is found only in the unity of man with man – a unity that is supported only by the reality of the difference between I and Thou.' 'Man with man – the unity of I and Thou – is god.'<sup>16</sup>

14. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The essence of Christianity*, p. xxxiii.

15. *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

16. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

'The individual man for himself,' writes Feuerbach, 'does not have man's being in himself, either as a moral being or a thinking being. Man's being is contained only in community, in the unity of man with man—a unity which rests, however, only on the reality of the difference between I and Thou.' Buber considers this discovery of Thou as the most significant contribution of Feuerbach. He calls it the 'Copernican revolution of modern thought' and quotes the following observations of Karl Heim: 'an elemental happening which is just as rich in consequences as the idealist discovery of the I' and 'is bound to lead to a new beginning of European thought, pointing beyond the Cartesian contribution to modern philosophy.'<sup>17</sup>

The important concept Feuerbach uses in this connection is, 'species being.' The species is the real being; individual man is simply a particular instance of the life of the species. This determines man's goal or destiny which is the fulfilment of his creative faculties as a 'species-being.' In the religious life, which constitutes the entire mode of existence for man, the idealized species-being is projected as god. 'God . . . as an epitome of the generic human qualities distributed among men, in the self-realization of the species in the course of world history.' According to Feuerbach, this projection of the idealized species-being as god results in man's estrangement from himself. Instead of realizing the species being which he commonly shares with the human race, man satisfies himself with 'a purely imaginary and therefore pseudo-realization of himself in the dream about god'. So man, considered as a species-being, alienates himself in the creation of a god, and in this process destroys the fulfillment of his creativeness as 'species-being.' It follows from this theory that the emancipation of man from religion is his overcoming of self-alienation. This means the renunciation of the god-illusion; 'be human instead of merely dreaming about being god.'<sup>18</sup> The goal of history is simply for man to become fully human.

### 3. From Hegel through Feuerbach to Marx

Marx summarized his opinion of Feuerbach in his 'Theses on Feuerbach'. He wrote:

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, the duplication of the world into a religious, imaginary world and

17. Quoted in Buber, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-148.

18. Cfr. Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 88-90.

a real one. His work consists in the dissolution of the religious world into its secular basis. He overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing still remains to be done. For the fact that the secular foundation detaches itself from itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm is really to be explained only by the self-cleavage and self-contradictions of this secular basis.<sup>19</sup>

Again,

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.<sup>20</sup>

Thus we see that Marx accepts Feuerbach's starting point. What he sets out to do is to enlarge and extend that concept of self-alienation, which according to Feuerbach is a phenomenon of the religious life, to every single sphere of human life. Typically he carried the idea to its farthest extreme. He came to see alienation everywhere. It was a phenomenon pervading every single sphere of human life in the existing world - religion, the state, law, the family, morality, and, last but not the least, the economic life.<sup>21</sup>

Looking at Hegel through Feuerbach, Marx dissolved one fundamental error in his alienation theory. Both its appearance of self-externalization and the transcendence of it by self-realization are only a theory of the production of abstract thought. Since the mind is for Hegel the true essence of man, he conceives religion, wealth, etc., etc., themselves only as spiritual entities. Therefore Marx says, Hegel has not written the real history of man, but only an abstract, speculative impression of it. Marx's criticism of Hegel does not mean that he ceases to be Hegelian. On the contrary, he believed that all the elements of a correct analysis of human existence are in it, but expressed in 'mystified form.' So Marx saw his task as 'turning Hegel upside down in accordance with Feuerbach's prescription.'<sup>22</sup>

This section on the philosophical roots of Marx may be concluded by stating that the basic concepts which constitute the Marxian view

19. Marx, *Thesis on Feuerbach*, p. 244.

20. *Ibid.*,

21. Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

of man have their origin in Hegel; Feuerbach's anthropological rebellion against Hegel provides Marx a vintage point from which he looks at Hegel for reinterpreting him and integrating him into his own philosophy of man. What is important is Marx's own formulation.

#### 4. The self-realization of man through his productive activity

In *German Ideology* Marx wrote, 'men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion, or anything else you like. They themselves begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence, men are indirectly producing their actual material life.'<sup>23</sup> These differing modes of production of animals and man define the nature of relationship of man to nature. Man, unlike animal, is not under compulsion to produce, and only truly produces when he is free from any compulsion. Marx, here, prepares the philosophical ground for questioning the mode of production in the capitalist system. Also we get a glimpse of Marx's vision of 'communistic society' in which man will be free from physical needs to create artistically.

If man's essential nature is productive life, then labour occupies central significance. Through labour man acts upon the external world changes it and thus changes his own nature in changing the world about him. In labour '..... man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway.'<sup>24</sup> Labour is thus a creative process in nature.

The productive life, the free, conscious activity of man, is the 'species character' of human beings. The object of labour then becomes the realization of man's species-life; through labour man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in consciousness, but actively in what he makes. What Marx wants to affirm here is that man's real existence is social existence and Man's productive life is a concrete expression of this fundamental fact. In Marx's words, 'the practical production of an objective world, the working up of inorganic nature, is the expression of man on a conscious species-being..... It is in the working

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23. *German Ideology* 1, p. 7.

24. *Capital*, pp. 197-8.

up of an objective world, therefore, that man first really proves himself as a species being. This production is his practical species-life. Through it nature appears as his work and his reality.'<sup>25</sup> Through productivity in nature, then, man creates himself, and it is man's creation of himself which makes him conscious of his 'essence' as independent man.

True productive life is self-activity and that is man's essentially distinguished characteristic. But his present existence is not marked by this conscious, free activity; it is, as Marx saw, characterized by alienation.

i) *Alienation : the negation of productivity*

The concept of alienation provides a fundamental clue to Marx's understanding of the existence of man. As we saw, alienation for Hegel meant the confrontation by the subject of an object hostile to it, negating subject's absoluteness. Feuerbach applied this to the religious sphere. But for Marx this is only one aspect of alienation; religious alienation itself was a social product. So he wants 'to unmask self-alienation in its unholy forms. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth.'

Alienation for Marx appears in three forms :

a) *Alienation from the object of one's labour* : Under the present historical conditions of work, the object produced by man's labour, i. e. the product, 'now confronts him in the shape of an alien thing, a power independent of the producer.'<sup>26</sup> The objects which he produces no longer belong to him. 'The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, assumes an external existence, but that it exists independently outside himself, and alien to him, and that it stands opposed to him as an autonomous power. The life which he has given to the object sets itself against him as an alien and hostile force.'<sup>27</sup>

b) *Alienation of labour from the act of production - self alienation* : According to Marx alienation of the worker is not only in his relationship with the product of his labour but also in the process of production itself. The product is only the resume of activity. 'Consequently, if the product

25. Quoted in Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

26. Erich Fromm, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation – the alienation of activity and the activity of alienation. The alienation of the object of labour merely summarizes the alienation in the work activity itself.<sup>28</sup> We saw earlier that man's productive life through labour is self-activity and that distinguishes him from animal. Now for the worker, work is forced labour and so the elements of spontaneity and joy are taken away from him; he is reduced to an animal. He is alienated from himself in the very act of production. This is self-alienation as Marx understood it.

c) *Alienation of man from man*

An immediate consequence of self-alienation according to Marx is the alienation of man from man. Here again we may refer back to what has been already said about the productive life of man: productive life is species-life. It is life creating life. When man confronts himself he also confronts other men. What is true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, to their labour and to the objects of labour. Thus, 'the statement that man is alienated from his species-life means that each man is alienated from others, and that each of the other is likewise alienated from human life.'<sup>29</sup>

Alienation of the product, self-alienation and alienation of man from man – these then constitute the base of man's present existence. This alienation is actually the negation of man's productivity, the very essence of man. Overcoming the alienation means negating the negation of man's productive life. This is then the gist of the philosophy that forms the basis of Marx's view of man.<sup>30</sup>

28. *Ibid.* p. 98.

29. Erich Fromm, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

30. The question may be raised at this point as to the origin of alienation in the first place? Marx's answer is ambiguous. There are statements both in the manuscripts and in the later writings which tend to conclude that private property is the source of the alienated labour. But then Marx speaks of private property as the product of the alienated labour; and the annihilation of private property is the goal of communism. In the present existence it is the source of alienation, in some sense comparable to the concept of sin; but it is definitely not the fall. The following words of Marx taken from The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts illustrate this ambiguity: 'Although private property appears to be the basis and cause of alienated labour, it is rather a consequence of the latter, just as the gods are fundamentally not the cause but the product of confusions of human reason. At later stage, however, there is reciprocal influence.'

## 5. The Transition

Marx himself expressed his basic concern as transforming philosophy into action. 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is however to change it.'<sup>31</sup> Marx seems to have accomplished this transition in two ways. First, he expressed his philosophical categories in social and economic categories. Secondly, his philosophy of man demanded a programme of action, a revolution. The concept of alienation itself is a 'contrast-concept'. It is always alienation from something which legitimately belonged once to the one who is alienated; re-possession of it is the goal. Anything that stands in the way should go. Translated in economic terms it involves a programme of dissolution of existing world orders (revolution) and the resultant achievement of a new order which would give rise to a new type of man. That is why, with the passion of a prophet, Marx trumpets the clarion-call of revolution. Both these aspects of transition need further elaboration.

Marx takes his concept of alienated labour and expresses it in terms of the divisions in the existing economic life. Marx asks, if the product of labour and the process of production are alien to the worker, to whom do they belong? Marx's answer is: 'The alien being to whom labour and the product belong, to whose service labour is devoted, and to whose enjoyment the product of labour goes, can only be man himself. If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, but confronts him as an alien power, this can only be because it belongs to a man other than the worker. If his activity is a torment to him, it must be a source of enjoyment and pleasure to another.'<sup>32</sup> Finally Marx names this alien man as the 'capitalist' (or whatever one likes to call the lord of labour).

This is the philosophical basis for his theory of class and class-struggle expressed in 'The Communist Manifesto.' 'What Marx did here was to treat self-alienation as a social relation of production between worker and capitalist. This is in keeping with his earlier affirmation that the relation in which man stands to himself is first realized and made objective in the

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Only in the final stage of the development of private property is its secret revealed, namely, that it is on the one hand the product of alienated labour, and on the other hand the means by which labour is alienated, 'the realization of this alienation'. From these it has to be said that Marx's concept of private property is not an answer to the primordial occurrence of alienation.

31. Feuerbach, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

32. Erich Fromm, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

relation in which he stands to another man outside him—from which it follows that self-alienation may rightly be seen as a social relation.<sup>33</sup> In his later writing, *Capital*, he expresses the same idea. He writes:

Since the human being does not come into the world bringing a mirror with him, not yet a Fichtean philosopher able to say 'I am myself,' he first recognizes himself as reflected in other men. The man grasps his relation to himself as human being through becoming aware of his relation to the man Paul as a being of like mind with himself. Thereupon Paul, with flesh and bone, with all his Pauline corporeality, becomes for Peter the phenomenal form of human kind.<sup>34</sup>

The alien inner man is here personified in the capitalist. 'The capitalist and worker of Capital are personifications of the dissociated antagonistic forces in Marx's original self-alienated man. The capitalist is the personification of the life-urge to self-aggrandizement in terms of wealth. He is capital in human form, the monster personified. The worker, on the other hand, is the embodiment of living labour *power*, creative capacity in human form, personified labour time.'<sup>35</sup> Neither the capitalist nor the worker is truly human because in his alienated situation he has lost productive self-activity; the worker, however, has the potentiality to be really human. But this happens only with the emancipation of the society from servitude.

The present situation is the scene of the conflict between the capitalist and the worker. 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.'<sup>36</sup> Tucker sees this as a fight between the 'collective-capital personality' and the 'collective-labour personality' and calls it 'Marx's myth of the warfare between labour and capital.' There can be little doubt as to the collective aspect of the struggle. The alienated form of the species-being is identified with the proletariat. But for Marx the class struggle is a very concrete historical process, with ups and downs, and so are revolution and reconstruction. In the present capitalist system he sees an 'absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.' This he formulates as follows: "The accumulation of wealth at one pole of society involves a simultaneous accumulation of poverty,

33. Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

34. *Capital*, p. 23.

35. Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

36. 'Communist Manifesto', p. 7.

labour movement, slavery, ignorance, brutalization and moral degradation at the opposite pole – where dwells the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.”<sup>37</sup>

And there exists a trend towards concentration of capital in fewer and fewer hands. Eventually, the dialectic of the system leads through competition to its annulment. ‘The historical world of capital and labour becomes, in the end, a world that knows neither capital nor labour, a world of full free development of every individual.’<sup>38</sup> Capital contains a wealth of factual data taken from records of the economic and social history of early modern capitalism. The reports on conditions in the factories and factory towns of nineteenth century England were immediately available to him as sources. One can find certain defects in his use of these materials or even in his social and economic theories. Still the fact remains that he saw the class struggle as an estrangement between the capitalist and the labourer and related to the economic existence of man.

In Marx's later writings the basic relation of man to nature through labour, which is stated in the Economic and philosophic Manuscripts, is transformed into the relation of production. This is a major shift and one has to recall the influences of important British and French economists of the day on Marx (Adam Smith, Ricardo, James Mill, and others). Their principal merit is that they agree in conceiving labour as the source of all wealth, contrary to the mercantillists who had conceived precious metals, and the more recent physiocrats who had conceived land, as the source of wealth – where labour had already entered as a factor in agriculture.<sup>39</sup> Adam Smith saw all wealth as industrial wealth. Engels called Adam Smith the Luther of political economy. Just as Luther opposed Catholic paganism by returning religiosity to man's inner self, so has Adam Smith destroyed the notion of wealth as outside of man and incorporated wealth in man himself. Marx accepts this basic insight to criticize the classical political economy. Here again he makes an ‘inversion’ of the economists. Labour is the creator of all wealth, but the labourer gets only the smallest part of it. What happened is, labour power has become a commodity in the market, where all human relations are reduced to money relations.

37. Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 1222.

38. *Ibid.*, 222.

39. D.J. Struik, ‘Marx's Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts’ in *Science and Society*, p. 290.

The economic structure of society becomes the real foundation upon which are built the legal and political superstructures as well as the various forms of social awareness a society may take. Some attention should be paid here to Marx's understanding of Consciousness. 'It is not,' says Marx, 'the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.'<sup>40</sup> Sometimes, this is taken to mean that Marx assumes people to be 'materialistic.' But early in his writings Marx rejected mechanistic economic determinism: "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances, and that the educator himself needs educating."<sup>41</sup>

Marxian materialism differs from strict materialistic determinism. What Marx called 'the economic structure' of society does not refer to the interrelations among things, but to the interrelations among men—the hypothetical table of organization of society at large. It is the nature of these human relationships in production which forms 'the real foundation, on which, rise legal and political super-structures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.'<sup>42</sup> There is no over all abstract consciousness, but consciousness which depends ultimately upon the satisfaction of man's essential needs. Marx is not interested in propounding a theory of knowledge here. What he wants to emphasise is the interrelatedness of consciousness and the material conditions in which the object is found. So Marx writes in *German Ideology*, 'Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.'<sup>43</sup>

Marx now sees alienation primarily in relation to man's economic relations. The alienation within the species-being now becomes alienation within society. The self-alienation becomes the estrangement between the capitalist and the labourer or between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The transition that takes place here requires careful notice. It is the most crucial and perhaps the most vulnerable point in the development of Marx's thought. The concept of alienation is derived

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40. *Science and Society*, p., 316.

41. *Theses on Feuerbach*, p. 244.

42. Thomas Sowell, 'Karl Marx and the Freedom of the Individual,' in *Ethics*, vol. 73, p. 120.

43. *German Ideology*, p. 15.

from an analysis of the individual. Alienated man is self-divided man, man who is a stranger to himself: and the social and economic institutions express this alienation only because man is himself alienated. But he transforms this personal analysis into a social analysis, in which alienation becomes primarily a phenomenon. The self-alienation within the individual is transformed into a division between the individual and a force alien to the individual, another man. The division was immediately transferred from the exploiter and the exploited to the capitalist and the labourer, to capital and labour to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

We have also pointed out that for Marx transition meant bringing philosophy into action. This again follows the transition we have been speaking above. If the self-alienation is transferred into economic relations, then the self-realization means not a moral change within the individual but a change in the economic relations. In other words, revolutionary process is essential for self-change.

Marx sees revolution as already taking place. According to the 'absolute law of capitalist accumulation' not only the revolution but also the victory of the proletariat is inevitable, the victory which leads man to a classless society. This idea of the inevitability of socialism through a proletarian victory in the class-struggle is an impetus to the working class to mobilize its forces and to accomplish its mission. Hence the famous words of the Communist Manifesto: "Let the ruling classes tremble at a communistic revolution. The Proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of All Countries, Unite."

## 6. The Vision of a new man

According to Marx, the goal of man is his regaining of self in the communist society. The communist revolution and the seizure of political power through it are necessary to achieve this goal. 'In revolutionary activity, 'wrote Marx, 'change of self coincides with change of circumstances.'<sup>44</sup> Making use of Marx's theory of alienation we can say that the goal is the annulment of alienation between man and nature and man and man. Marx himself sees this as 'the true solution of conflict between essence and existence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and

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44. *Science and Society*, p. 316.

species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution.<sup>45</sup>

By overcoming the alienation, man's productive life becomes spontaneous self-activity and he would begin to enjoy his productivity which under present conditions is a boredom. Man will also be a social human being in harmony with nature and with man himself. These complete, free, unalienated individuals constitute the communist society which is lying on the other side of revolution. Thus for Marx, 'the aim of socialism was freedom . . . . . based on man's standing on his own feet, using his own powers and relating himself to the world productivity.'<sup>46</sup>

The goal of communism expressed here philosophically in terms of alienation is interpreted concretely in later writings as the classless communist society. History will reach its climax and there will be no more class struggle. This vision of man realizing his humanity in a reorganized society remained one of the chief attractions of the communist movement.

Lenin, who was Marx's greatest disciple, has described the final state thus:

And then will democracy itself begin to wither away due to the simple fact, that freed from Capitalistic slavery, from the untold horrors, savageries and infamies of the capitalistic exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to the observance of the elemental rules of social life that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all school books; they will become accustomed to observing them without force, without compulsion, without subordination and without the special apparatus for compulsion which is called the state.<sup>47</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

The man that emerges out of Marx's writings has two faces. First there is the picture of alienated man, man as a stranger to himself, bound to the chain of his own making and struggling to get rid of

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45. Erich Fromm, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

47. Devandon and Thomas, *Communism and the Social Revolution in India*, p. 16.

it. This picture has a certain appeal to us in the modern age. But it is hard to find anything in it that was not perfectly well-known to, say, a St. Paul. In Marx it comes to us couched in social, economic and political language. So his historical role to direct the sociological imagination into neglected places was performed with credit.

But the picture of man has a different shape in Marx's vision of a new man. Here we can say that the Marxian view is optimistic. Marx wrote in his dissertation: 'Prometheus is the noblest of saints and martyrs in the calendar of philosophy'. But unlike Prometheus, Marx's man can break the chains and become free. He can become in existence what he is in essence. In all his analysis of the social and economic conditions of man, Marx kept this Promethean image before him. Man overcoming his alienation from nature, man mastering the laws of nature and man coming out victorious from his present struggle are all expressions of it. It provided many irrespectively of their culture or nationality, a unifying principle of thinking about nature, man and history. There are many Hindu intellectuals—Brahmins who do not belong to proletarian class—who make an easy transfer to communism. The Hindu philosophical interpretation of Reality according to the Vedanta permits the acceptance of a view of life and history confined to this worldly experience, as distinctly apart from what one holds in regard to the nature of the Ultimate. In other words religion has failed to provide an integral view relevant to the revolutionary changes that are taking place. Marxism succeeds there. Does the Christian understanding of man speak with a greater sense of realism?

The dominant feature of Marxian humanism is its unalterable hope for a better future. The new order will usher in as a result of the revolution and it will give rise to a new type of man. Karl Lowith calls this, 'a secularized biblical eschatology in which the proletariat has assumed the broad features of the Servant of the Lord, whose vicarious suffering for the whole creation inaugurates the new age.'<sup>48</sup> This 'humanistic messianism' should be the primary focus of any Christian evaluation of Marxism. The Christian with his affirmation of the 'already present' future shares a common concern with the Marxian, namely fighting the dehumanizing tendencies present in the world. Marx has helped us to see the social and economic dimensions of that task.

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48. Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, p. 47.

In a recent discussion on the Christian-Marxian dialogue the leading French Communist theoretician, Roger Garaudy, expresses this common task as 'creating the earthly city and the future of Man.' But Marx is farthest from the Gospel where his humanism is highly pronounced. If his central claim is that integrated, spontaneous, autonomous man will be the member of a historical society following the revolution, this is a claim we cannot accept. His protest against Christianity, the same as that of the liberal humanism of the west, is a failure to take seriously the Christian assertion of the creaturely and sinful nature of man.