MARX'S THEORY OF COMMODITY FETISHISM

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of Marx's use of the term fetishism in the context of an analysis of the theory of value and Marx's views on the relationshio between social being and consciousness. It is argued that this contextualization is necessary in order to understand the genesis and develooment of Marx's use of the term. For this reason, the examination of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism in Capital is preceded by an outline of the theory of value in Chapter One, and by an analysis of Marx's approach to the problem of the relationship between being and consciousness in the years 1842-7 in Chapter Two.

It is argued that the theory of fetishism is not a theory of ideology. It is a description of what is represented to occur when commodities are exchanged. It is a mystification which is internal to the structure of the commodity economy. It is not a psychological theory. Confusion on this point has led certain contemporary Marxists to assert that the theory of fetishism is an explanation of how people think in capitalist society. The thesis examines the sources of this confusion in Marx's writings.

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INTRODUCTION

Mystification is a complex phenomenon. It may be defined as the process whereby a person's consiousness is distorted so that he/she is unable to accurately explain or describe reality. The premise of the claim that a person is mystified is that there is a reality which it is possible under definite conditions to describe and to explain. The delusion results either from the way reality appears or from the way in which the person mystified perceives it. Or else the cause of the delusion lies in some combination of the appearance and the process of perception. If it is the appearance alone that is distorted, then the mystification which the person exhibits is a result of a reflection in his/her consciousness of this phenomenon. Consciousness is the effect not the cause. The focus is on the conditions which cause and sustain the illusion. If it is the process of perception, or some mental process connected with it which is the source of the delusion, then the focus is on this process as the problem.

There are dangers in both approaches. If the problem is located in "reality", as separate from the subject, then an explanation of how this separation takes place must be provided. The danger is that the subject often is reduced to a passive receptacle of impressions as something produced by "reality". If the problem lies in "consciousness" a similar explanation must be provided. The danger is idealism, with

material reality reduced to the playpen of the mind.

A clear distinction between materialism and idealism, however, is not as easy as it first appears. Francis Bacon's theory of the idols of the market decisively influences the Enlightenment's views on the source of delusion.[1] The language of the masses is the veil that cloaks reality. There is something in the mental structure of "the crowd" that prevents the apprehension of "truth". The emancipation of humanity from the Church, from irrationality, becomes the task of science. Science in this tradition, however, is the product of the split between mental and manual labor, the separation of the subjective and objective sides of humanity. This is materialized in the expropriation of the immediate producers from the control over the means of production.

There is a definite historical connection between the development of empiricism and the transition to the capitalist mode of production. For empiricism the raw materials of knowledge are isolated facts in which the form of appearance of the object is alleged to coincide with its essence. There is no distinction between human and natural facts, and all are subject to the same verification experiments. The aim of social science is therefore to achieve an eventual physiological explanation of human behaviour. It does not take long before physiology is incorporated in physics and the latter in mathematics.

The continuity of the empirical tradition is constituted by its denial of human specificity, its suppression of the

subjective element, the focus on form as opposed to content, and on the individual as opposed to the totality of social relations. The cause of mystification, which was originally located in material reality, is shifted to the terrain of consciousness. The problem becomes the way people think, or rather the way "the crowd" thinks. The emancipators of humanity become the scientists, the ideologues who understand ideology as part of zoology.[2] The passivity of humans in receiving impressions from the sensual world becomes an activity, but a privileged activity. It is mental labor. The chains that hold humans in subjugation are severed by a process of thought. It is in this way that empiricism becomes a form of idealism.

The key to the complexity of the phenomenon of mystification lies in the attempt to separate the perceiver from the perceived. In short, it turns on the question of social being and consciousness. Marx formulated his early views on this issue in opposition to the idealism described above. His primary focus is the political implications of the idealist position. It is because he asserts that an estranged consciousness is a symptom and not the cause of alienation that he increasingly concentrates his attention on the elaboration of social being as opposed to consciousness per se. However, by no means does he accept a crude materialist or empiricist standpoint. His position on social being is integrally related to an anthropology which encompasses humans as both subjective and objective, consciousness as linked to praxis. Nevertheless, his elaboration of social being

in his later writings increasingly adopts the position of the ultimate determination of consciousness by the way in which social relations are organized.

Marx's thought as a whole is neither an integrated system, nor is it a series of radical discontinuities. He is addressing certain problems and develops his ideas in a specific political and intellectual context. His mature views elaborate themes which were often initial responses to quite different sets of problems. A major theme which permeates Marx's works is the relationship between mystification and domination. The way people produce is linked to the way they are deluded. The products thus come to rule over the producers. The development of the productive forces, of human mastery over the environment, is connected with the process of humanization. The existence of religion is indicative of the fact that people in a given society are not fully human. Marx's initial position on consciousness is a position on religion. In the course of his deepening analysis of the question of social being, his ideas on consciousness, and religion in particular, are more or less transposed from this earlier period.

The implications of this transposition are immense. Marx's theory of commodity fetishism belongs to his mature period. It is intimately connected with the theory of value, which he only fully worked out at this time. It thus developed out of his elaboration of the meaning and determination of social being. Specifically, it related to his discovery that the anatomy of civil society is to be located in political

economy. Fetishism is a specific form of mystification which is attached to the products of labor when they are produced as commodities. It is internal to the structure of the commodity economy. It is also an effect in consciousness which occurs under specific conditions. In the use of the term fetishism, which was originally applied to a form of religion, he transposed an operation which occurs in consciousness to the way in which labor is equalized and distributed in a society that produces commodities.

It is our position that the analysis of commodity fetishism independent of its context in the development of Marx's thought as a whole is incorrect and leads to the illegitimate conclusion that the theory of fetishism can be employed to explain the production of consciousness in capitalist society (i.e. that it is a theory of ideology). This latter position has been argued by numerous contemporary Marxists, such as Richard Lichtman and John Mepham.[3] Fundamentally, they argue first, that the theory of ideology represented in the theory of fetishism marks a qualitative break from the reflection theory of knowledge position found in The German Ideology. This we deny. Second, they assert that the way commodities exchange provides an explanation of how people think. Exchange-relations in some way determine the pattern of the way events are perceived in capitalist society as a whole. We deny both that is the case and we deny that this is Marx's position.

Fundamental to our argument is the contextualization of Marx's thought. It is in these terms that we speak of a differentiation in Marx's writings between the "macro" and the "micro" levels.[4] It is on the "macro" level that Marx deepens the concept of social being, elaborates his position on the determinancy of production relations, and, flowing from this, social classes. His analysis is based upon, yet is an abstraction from, the actual process whereby people make history, develop consciousness. This latter analysis is developed on the "micro" level. It is at the "macro" level that Marx develops his ideas on the determination of consciousness by social being. Mystification is caused by the way people produce.

Nevertheless, Marx's theses on the subjective and objective nature of humans, and that all labor is conscious leads to the development of the theme that the actual production of consciousness (i.e. the "micro" level) is not subject to causal determination. Marx thus locates the source of mystification in some combination of the appearance reality assumes and the process of perception itself. He is attempting to go beyond both crude materialism and idealism. It is our position that this attempt is not entirely successful. The theory of fetishism, for example, retains elements of a reflection theory of knowledge. We differentiate the thought of Marx into levels simply as a methodological device in order to clarify why he emphasizes certain concepts at the expense of others. We argue that Marx's views on consciousness

are underdeveloped. They are the product of the specific context within which Marx is writing. This is only "natural". It is not so much a critique of Marx as it is a critique of the extrapolation of Marx's concepts from their context.

Our focus is precisely to analyze the theory of fetishism in these terms. We begin by examining the theory of value, because fetishism is inseparable from the production of commodities. Our second chapter centres on the development of Marx's ideas on the relationship between being and consciousness. Finally, we investigate the theory of fetishism in its various aspects and evaluate the concept as a whole. It is hoped that in this way Marx's theory of mystification is rendered less confusing.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, Aspects of Sociology, J. Viertel, trans.; (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 183.

2. Ibid., p. 186.

3. R. Lichtman, "Marx's Theory of Ideology", in Socialist Revolution, no. 23, April, 1975. J. Mepham, "The Theory of Ideology in Capital", Working Papers in Cultural Studies, no. 6.

4. The terms "macro" and "micro" are our terms and are not used by Marx.

CHAPTER ONE

Commodity fetishism is inseparable from the production of commodities. A commodity is "something outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another," and which bears exchange value i.e. it is exchangeable in a certain proportion for an object which satisfies a different want. A commodity is thus not simply an object produced by a definite concrete labor (i.e. a use - value), it is something produced under specific historical conditions. Human beings always work within the context of historically specific production relations, they produce concrete objects through the expenditure of energy in a definite form. Commodities are produced only when the production relations of at least a portion of the working population of the society are organized in such a way that the labor time of these persons is reckoned up[1] and expressed in uniform units of measurement.

In a commodity economy[2] the formally autonomous commodities producers are in fact bound to each other through a social division of labor, as the production relations of a given society form a whole. The reckoning up of the labor time of the individual producers is the mechanism employed for the equalization and distribution of the total social labor. This process is expressed in units of labor time, or abstract labor. Value is the expression of the total labor time expended in production within a given society. It is

wholly social, as its substance is abstract labor (i.e. units of labor time which are equated without regard to the particular concrete activity performed) and it is measured by the labor time required to produce a given quantity of an article under the given historical conditions. The distribution of labor is therefore effected by the equalization of the various concrete labors of the producers. The equalization of the different labors occurs through the equalization of the various commodities produced by them, and this in turn only results when the commodities are exchanged.

Exchange value is the form of value in a commodity economy. The reckoning up of the labor time of a given society in this economy is manifested in the relationship of commodities to each other (i.e. their exchange relations). The form of value is thus the form of exchangeability and through this the social function of the equalization and distribution of labor is performed. In a commodity economy, the social division of labor is indirectly and spontaneously regulated. There is no conscious control over the allocation of the labor time of the producers. There is no plan which determines beforehand the needs of the society and appropriately distributes the labor time available. In a commodity economy, the autonomous producers are connected to each other (i.e. as a total pool of labor within a given society) through the exchange of their products. Production relations take the form of things (i.e. are reified) and are not expressable except

through things.

Fetishism[3] is the mystification of production relations in a commodity economy, and is connected with the reification of the same. Marx understands fetishism as the product of a certain state of "social being"; it is not simply an illusion which can be pedagogically dispersed. Fetishism is thus historically conditioned and can only be explored in the context of the theory of value. Though Marx by no means invented the labor theory of value, he was the first to integrate the two aspects of it:[4] the relationship to nature and the relationship within society. The theory of value is an attempt to grasp the consequences of the internalization within society of the relation to nature and the mechanisms by which this occurs in a commodity economy in particular. The theory of value is thus concerned with the mediation of the relationship to nature through labor, and the development and the satisfaction of wants within the context of specific production relationships.

The problem for the theory of value is not to discover a standard of value against which commodities are equated; rather, it is to uncover the causal relationship between the distribution of social labor in production and the process of equalization in exchange. Thus the theory of value has both a qualitative and a quantitative side to it: the former refers to the form of value, the social mechanism of the equalization of disparate concrete labors; the latter refers to the measurement of the productivity of various producers, and determines

the proportions in which different products exchange. As Marx never tires of pointing out, classical economists only pay attention to the quantitative side of value, and ignore the qualitative dimension. The secret of fetishism lies in the latter.

Marx develops the theory of value in the context of certain premises about the human condition.[5] According to Marx, there are no isolated individuals, only individuals in society. Any society is an expression of the particular relations between the individuals who compose it. Thus no social state is natural, as the relations between the individuals are variable. Every human being is in part constituted by his/her particular social relations and by his/her relations to their natural organism and to the natural environment. Thus human beings are the product of both culture in general (a universal, abstract moment) and the particular culture. The dialectic of wants is constituted by both the universal and the particular moments and both a biological and a cultural base. Labor is the means of satisfying these wants. Both the wants and the technology which satisfies them are variable and exist only in the context of historically specific social relations.

Humans are both continuous and discontinuous with nature. Labor mediates the relationship between a particular society and nature, thus there is an internalization in the production relations of this interchange. However, the moment of internalization is also a moment of externalization, as it

is through this process that culture is extended into the natural realm. The relationship of labor to nature is both an activity and a passivity. It is an adaption; yet crucially one which is effected in the context of particular social relations. Labor is both the means and the process of the self reproduction of humans. Labor is the process of self-objectification and as a continuous activity is distinct from work, which is labor directed towards a particular end result, thus always concrete. The opposition between labor and work is potential in all human societies: it is only fully developed in civil society.

The relations of labor and work to nature are mediated by both the instruments employed, and the skills, traditions etc. of the particular society. The former embody dead labor, the latter, living labor. Relations of labor in society are both active and passive. Living labor is both subject and object of labor; dead labor is purely objective. The system of social production encompasses the relations of both living and dead labor, and it is only through this process that the subjective factor is introduced and that nature is transformed into an object.

The production of the means of subsistence is a direct relationship to nature; it is the transformation of nature to satisfy human wants. In contrast, the production of material life (i.e. all human relations) is always an indirect relationship to nature, as it occurs in society. Human relations in a particular society are both direct and indirect. While the relationship to nature is always mediated by labor, relations

within the whole of society are only partly so. The relations of production, in turn, are both mediate and immediate.

It is the physical organization of the human being which conditions both the direct and the indirect relations to nature. Both relations are part of the material interchange with nature. This interchange is effected through both the labor of the body and the labor of the hands. The labor of the body is continuous with nature, it is always concrete, and has both an indirect and a direct relation to nature. The labor of the hands is human labor alone; it is the mark of the difference in the human and animal conditions. It encompasses both abstract labor (i.e. labor in a social context alone, equated with other labors) and concrete labor (i.e. labor which is performing a specific task, e.g. tailoring, weaving) and thus is both continuous and discontinuous with nature. However, the continuity of the labor of the hands is a purely social continuity. The labor of the hands includes both mental and manual labor: all labor is conscious to begin with, and involves the transformation of nature in accordance with a particular theory. The division between those who think and those who do not is completely artificial and requires specific historical conditions before such a demarcation can arise.

Marx's anthropological premises are both abstractions and concretions. That is to say, Marx does not begin from a philosophical construct of "human nature", an abstract potentiality which is only actualized through history. Rather, especially after 1848 Marx starts from the concrete societies

in which humans actually exist.[5] Through the specifications of the variations in the different cultures, and through comparison with other species, it is possible to abstract from this material various common features which demarcate the human from the animal conditions. However, as these traits are only developed or suppressed in the context of definite historical conditions, the abstractions merely help one to understand the enormous changes in the human conditions which have occurred historically. However, it is only the concrete analysis of the specific cultures which allows one to locate factors which changed the production relations within a given community, and thus altered the possibility for certain traits to emerge which were present before the transition, yet absent in the aftermath.

It is fundamental to the understanding of the theory of value that the societies within which value is produced are placed in a historical context. Value is only produced in civil society, where labor time is reckoned up. Civil society is a category used by Marx[6] to refer to the society of the divided whole, a society divided into a class of immediate producers and a class of non-producers. The term civil society is both an abstraction and a concretion, encompassing the various modes of production (Asiatic, slave, feudal, and modern societies of capital production) and their existence in the different social formations. Civil society is the realization of the potentiality of primitive society i.e. it grows out of primitive society and is the articulation of

specific oppositions which are undeveloped in the latter.

The various cultures which antedate the transition to civil society are collectively encompassed in the term primitive society. In civil society labor time is reckoned up; in primitive society this accounting process is done in a qualitatively different way, usually over several generations. In primitive society the units of consumption and production are coincident, and thus commodity production is either low or non-existent. Then is there no value produced, no accumulation of products, and any surplus is used in feasts and is not a social surplus. The category of the "social" is only introduced when one person labors for another and the units of consumption and production diverge. However, as there is little or no division between the relations of production and the relations of reproduction in primitive society, there is no social labor: one is not working for another except insofar as the other person is part of the same communal unit as oneself (i.e. the family, or the community at large). There are no individual interests: as there is no exchange in the means of production, there can be no individual accumulation of a surplus which can be opposed to the common interest. The community is an undivided social whole: there is no division between public and private; labor is neither free nor unfree, and its bonds are comfortable.[7] The division of labor within primitive society results from a reading of biological differences into the relations of the communal or family unit, and is not a social division of labor

per se.

The transition to civil society occurs historically when the isolated communities enter into increasingly intensive intercourse. The exchange of products between the communities is reflected in the division of labor within the respective communities, with a portion of the population producing a surplus (i.e. beyond its immediate consumption needs) of a particular product, thus permitting accumulation. The units of consumption and production thus diverge and the relations between the two communities become social relations.

While at first the exchange of products may be accidental, as the relations become more and more intensive between the two communities, the division of labor within each becomes a social division (i.e. a certain proportion of the population expend their labor time in the production of goods exclusively for the purpose of exchange, and thus require the satisfaction of their subsistence wants through the purchase of other goods, which in turn are produced by another portion of the population). The labor of each commodity producer[8] is then not just a particular concrete labor, but is abstracted to form a social whole. The producer's labor is thus accounted in terms of units of labor time (i.e. abstract labor). This social equalization is then expressed in the exchange value of the products, and the social relations between the producers are established through the process of exchange.

However, civil society is not simply a society within which social relations have been established. Social labor is establise

when one person works for another. The relationship is therefore reciprocal: two people produce two different use-values and exchange their products to provide for a mutual satisfaction of wants. Historically, the development of social relations between communities has been accompanied by the appropriation of the social surplus by a class of non-producers. Civil society is thus the society of the divided whole, a totality that is at once opposed internally into a class of immediate producers, and a class of non-producers. It is historically identical with the society of political economy i.e. the production of surplus value and exchange value.

The transition to civil society involves first, the negation of the community, the establishment of social relations based on the divergence of the units of consumption and production; second, the transition requires the expression of individual interests which are opposed to the common interest. The material base of this developing individuality is the control of the social surplus which is extracted from the immediate producers. The persons who appropriate the surplus are thus "torn" from the communal bonds and are constituted as class individuals.

There is a dual movement in the transition to civil society. First, there is a movement from a diffuse to a concentrated society. Second, there is a parallel process which concentrates power within the newly emerging social unit. A social economy (i.e. an economy in which the units of production and consumption diverge and are mediated through

exchange) could theoretically exist, and would not require this concentration of power. However, where the immediate producers produce a product which contains both a self reproductive part and a surplus value, and thus the relations of political economy hold sway, there is a need for an organ to regulate class relations. This organ is the State, and it rules in the interests of the ruling class as a whole. However, the State may act against the interest of particular members or fractions of the class of non-producers in order to safeguard the long term interests of the ruling class.

The divergence of the units of production and consumption and the introduction of relations of political economy involves the imposition of an external organization of production upon the community. The disparate production units are linked through exchange in a network of social relations within which immediate producers engage in social labor. This social labor is non-reciprocated in the relations of political economy as the surplus value is appropriated by the class of non-producers. The surplus value is unitary and at the same time divided into public and private parts i.e. part of it may go to taxes, another part as rent to private landlords. Civil society is both the superstructure and the relationship between base and superstructure. It is the system of social relations of a formal character, which ties together the producing units at the base (i.e. the relations of political economy) with the State. Thus civil society encompasses the judicial, education, moral systems.

There is a double alienation in civil society. First, the alienation between production and exchange. It is only through the reckoning of units of labor time as expressions of abstract human labor[9] that these two divergent systems can be interconnected. Second, the network of social relations established through the exchange of products is a formal connection between human beings. The exchange of products is both a formal and a substantial act, but the reciprocity has no substance because it is articulated through the relations of political economy. Surplus value has in fact been produced and been appropriated by non-producers. Thus it is alienated from the immediate producers, and reciprocity of social labor is in fact a fiction.

Within civil society, the public and the private spheres are separate. There is the development of both a public and a private interest, which are not only opposed to each other, but jointly opposed to the common interest. The common interest remains expressed in the organizations established by the immediate producers which seek to limit the extraction of surplus. The articulation of both the public and private interests is based upon the extraction and accumulation of surplus value. The class character of the individualities involves an increasing split between an informal and the formal sides of their humanity. The connection between the public and the private spheres is established through the network of formal social relations, especially legal relations. The development of civil society results in an increasing

alienation of the inner human being and the outer character mask which the individual wears in order to engage in social relations. The connection between the subjective and objective sides of the human being, which is established in the laboring process, and which is realized even if in a somewhat undeveloped form in primitive society, is thus increasingly severed. The subjective factor, the articulation of wants by each human being, is developed in the context of formal social relations.

Wants are segmented within the sphere of consumption (private) and the public sphere, the organization of social production (social labor) where wants are objectified. The public sphere is at the same time the sphere of law and the State. The bearer of wants in this sphere is the juridicial person. The juridicial person is wholly formal, a legal fiction. Though both subjective and objective moments are present in both the public and private segments of wants the two spheres are only brought together through the relations of reproduction, which in turn are mediated by the exchange of products.. Thus the two spheres are only related formally, not in terms of content, and this segmentation is internalized in the human beings themselves.

The organization of social production in civil society is the system of social labor. The social internalization of the relationship to nature is effected through the opposition of abstract and concrete labor. This opposition is necessary for exchange to occur. Social labor is expressed formally in units of labor time (asbtract labor) and substantially in

concrete labors which are discontinuous and cannot be equated except through a process of abstraction. The implicit split between the process of labor and its end product is made explicit in the opposition of living labor and dead labor. Dead labor is purely objective and passive; living labor is both subjective and objective and is both active and passive. The producer is separated from his/her product.

Social labor is either free or bound. It is only free in the modern societies of capital production, and the freedom is purely formal. The free laborer remains bound in substance by the system of wants and engages in a contract as formally equal with his/her employer. The free laborer thus establishes a contractual limit on the labor time purchased by the owner of the means of production. Thus in this exchange the laborer is alienated from his/her labor power. Labor power is a "thing" exchanged which satisfies a definite want: it is thus a commodity and stands in exactly the same relation in exchange as dead labor. The laborer exchanges his/her living labor power for dead labor.

The relations between production and exchange are only connected by the abstraction of concrete labors performed by the producers and its expression in labor time units. Value is the expression of labor time expended in social production. Only social labor, therefore, produces value. Dead labor produces merely more dead labor. It is living labor which produces new value. This is the use value of living labor: it

is capable of producing not merely enough for its own subsistence, but also a surplus. It is only in the society of political economy that this surplus is appropriated by a non-producing class, and the exchange of living labor power for dead labor masks the creation of a surplus value in the sphere of production.

Value is a historical category. It is only produced in the conditions of civil society, and only finds its fullest expression in the modern societies of capital production, where labor power is a commodity. The production relations of civil society are the relations of political economy, and the anatomy of the former is to be found in the latter.[10] The analysis of the political economy of a given society does not proceed on the basis of the order of the historical appearance of the economic categories of that society, but rather on the basis of their specific articulation in the social formation as a whole. Once the transition to a new mode of production is made, the production relations, including the vestiges of the old mode(s) of production, are transformed and recombined in an entirely new way. For examole, rent is historically prior to the capital-labor relationship, but in the context of the capitalist mode of production, is incomprehensible except in terms of the determinate position of the capital-labor relation.

Marx's focus is precisely on the historicity of the capitalist mode of production. His method of approaching this is to analyze the inner workings of the capitalist mode of

production as a whole. This is the task of the theory of value: to explain the equalization of the products of labor in exchange in terms of the process of equalization and distribution of labor in production. Through this process it is possible to understand how a given society "works". Marx in Capital is concerned with how capitalism works i.e. how an anarchic system of production relations nevertheless allocates the social labor available for the production of goods which will satisfy the existing wants at least to the degree that the classes which are constituted by the system of production relations are able to reproduce themselves. The premise of equilibrium thus runs through all three volumes of Capital. This is not to say that Marx ignores crises, or thinks capitalism is eternal: rather, the premise of equilibrium is a theoretical starting point. The point is that Marx is concerned with the inter-relationship of the qualitative and the quantative sides of the theory of value. This is why Marx begins Volume one with the analysis of the commodity.

The commodity is the economic cell form of capitalist society. The commodity contains both a use-value and an exchange value, two quite separate relations. Use value expresses the natural, physical properties of an object or service which satisfy a definite want and is the product of concrete labor. The exchange-value is the form value assumes in a particular society in order that the social function of the equalization of the different use values as value (i.e. as products of different concrete labors, and thus representing

a given expenditure of labor time within the total social labor) can be performed. The inter-relation of the natural and the social within the commodity thus represents the mechanism whereby a given society internalizes within society the relationship to nature (i.e. satisfaction of wants).

Commodities are not just produced in capitalist society. They are produced in all civil society. Marx in Chapter One of Capital is analyzing the production relations in all commodity producing economies. Marx's interest is in the specific social function preformed by commodity exchange. Thus he analyses commodities in their "pure" state at first. His premise is a commodity economy composed of autonomous commodity producers. Here, commodities sell at their values (i.e. the exchange proportions are exactly regulated by the labor time socially necessary for the production of each commodity).

There is thus a theoretical point of equilibrium of labor, wherein transfers of labor from one branch of production (or within the same branch) cease. Deviations from this equilibrium point occur through the operation of supply and demand, and these, of course, occur at numerous points in the actual functioning of a commodity economy. Far from being neglected by Marx, supply and demand is precisely the way in which the law of value operates to effect the distribution of labor. Supply and demand, are, however, not the cause of this process, but only the effect of changes in the sphere of production. Wants are only constituted in this context of the system of

production relations as a whole; they are the conscious expressions of the relations of reproduction. The exchange of commodities to meet wants in varying proportions is not simply the exchange of natural objects. It is only the exchange of objects produced by human labor within given historical conditions. The production of an object for exchange is thus the allocation of a given quantity of labor time. The magnitude of the value of the commodity is determined by the labor time socially necessary to produce it. Value is objective because it is an expression of the way in which a society allocates its labor time. The exchange value of the commodity is merely the form in which the products and the various labors are equalized.

Marx's task in Capital is to uncover how the law of value operates. He both analyzes the product of value in its completed form in order to determine its content, and he then moves to discover why this content acquires a specific social form[11]. This dialectical method (form to content to form) constitutes a distinct departure from the method of orthodox political economy. The latter starts from a determined form of value to analyze the value of products in terms of their magnitude, but they never investigate the qualitative side of value, or use this content they have discovered to explore why it has assumed a special form. The reason they never did this was because they assumed capitalism was natural, eternal: to investigate the social function performed by exchange-value was to historicize the categories of value.

The capitalist mode of production involves very specific changes from a "pure" commodity economy. Commodities do not sell at their values and commodity producers do not expend labor but rather capital. The equalization of the rate of profit in the various branches of protection is the way in which labor is distributed throughout the economy. However, it is commodities which are produced and the basic law of value which applies to all commodity producing societies, applies also to capitalist societies. Marx's second task is to show the connection between the specific features of capitalism and the universal aspects of commodity production (e.g. to derive profit from surplus value, prices of production from values etc.). For our purposes, this secondary task is of less importance than the examination of the theory of value per se. The fetishism of commodities is distinct from the specific form of mystification which occurs in capitalist production relations. Nevertheless, the latter is derivable from the former.

Marx's aim in analyzing the commodity is to discover the interrelationship between the production of goods which satisfy definite wants and the social form they acquire in the context of definite production relations. He thus takes as his starting point the production relations of not just any society, but a commodity economy. Here the producers are formally autonomous but in fact are bound to each other in a social division of labor. A product's acquisition of a value form means that it is able to be

exchanged with products which have different use-values. The autonomous producers who produce the use- values with different concrete labors are connected through the exchange of the products. The premise of the value form being attached to a material object is thus a "spontaneous" division of labor. When Marx says "the existence of value is a purely social reality"[12], "social" is both an abstraction and a concretion. It requires a specific system of production relations before value is produced. It is only the existence of formal autonomy among the producers that creates the need for a reckoning of labor time (i.e. abstract labor) to be expressed in material form.

Value is a social property which is attached to a product of labor. A product of labor can be a use-value without having value. There must be production of use-value for others, "social use-values".[13] This itself, however, still is not enough. The question is <u>how</u> a use-value becomes social. Again, the premise is a specific organization of social production, the commodity economy. A determined level of the development of the productive forces is understood before this economy could exist. A historically specific level of education, labor skill is also understood to be generalized in order for the economy to function. Different concrete labors "are but different means of expanding human labor power".[14] This is historically specified later in the same paragraph: "of course, this labor power, which remains the same in all its manifestations, must have attained a certain pitch of development before it can be expanded in a multiplicity of modes."[15]

Products of labor as values are "mere congelations of "human labor in the abstract."[16] This process of equalization of different labors, however, is not a physiological equalization. It is a social equalization. In a commodity economy the equalization of concrete labor as abstract labor can only occur through the equalization of the products of these labors. This, in turn, results from the exchange of these products. Through this process labor which is skilled, private and concrete, becomes unskilled, social, and abstract: in a word, homogeneous. The abstraction, the mechanism of reckoning the labor time expended by the various producers, is effected through exchange. Thereby, labor can be distributed throughout the various branches of the economy to satisfy the different wants generated in the context of these production relations. The exchange of things, though it is premised upon a definite system of production relations, becomes the indispensible medium for the expression of these relations.

Therefore value in a commodity economy, must be congealed in a product of labor. The substance of value is abstract labor but "value can only manifest itself in a social relation of commodity to commodity."[17] The visible expression of this value is the exchange-value of the product. The social labor contained in an article is not expressed directly but only through the value form of the product. The form of value performs the social function of equalizing the concrete labors and of connecting the autonomous producers. It is thus the "form of exchangeability". Through this value form any two

products of social labor are directly exchangeable and this exchange will occur in a definite proportion.

The "form of exchangeability" in a commodity economy is the exchange value of the products of labor. The production of value is quite separate from the way in which it becomes visible to the commodity producers. Exchange value is established through a social relationship between commodities. In this way value assumes an independent and concrete form. In the exchange of any two commodities three things are revealed. First, they exchange in a certain proportion with each other. Second, there is an equalization of the various concrete labors effected through the equalization of the different use-values. Third, in order to carry out this equalization, it is necessary that the commodities stand in a specific relation to each other.

The example Marx gives is 20 yds. linen = 1 coat. The linen is this relation is the relative form, the coat the equivalent form. The linen has a use-value, and is the product of a definite concrete labor, weaving. The coat has a different use-value, and is the result of a different concrete labor, tailoring. The linen, however, in this instance, can only express its value in its relationship to the coat. It cannot express its value in linen. The coat in this relationship is serving as the form of value. That is, the coat is serving as the way in which the use-value of linen and the concrete labor weaving become value and abstract labor respectively. The coat fulfills a qualitative function: it socially equalizes.

There is no relationship between this function and the proportions in which the linen and the coat exchange. Commodities always exchange in a definite proportion, but it is a separate process. The key point here is that the linen expresses its value in the bodily form of the coat. The coat in this relationship plays a wholly social role; yet, as Marx says; "it is a mere use-value"[18]. In this exchange relation a "use-value becomes the form of manifestation, the phenomenal form of its opposite, value".[19] The concrete labor of tailoring becomes the embodiment of abstract labor. Finally, the private labor of the autonomous tailor becomes the direct expression of social labor. These peculiarities are the roots of the mystification process Marx terms the fetishism of commodities.

The seeming accidental exchange of two commodities, Marx terms the elementary form of value. Each commodity contains both value and use-value. In the elementary form this opposition is externally reflected in the polar opposition of relative and equivalent forms. The relative form figures directly as use-value only; the equivalent form as exchange value only. The elementary form of value is the germ of the other forms of value. In the expanded form of value, linen (for example) is equated to various other commodities. Linen thus exists in a social relation with the whole world of commodities.

In the general form of value, all commodities express this value in a commodity, the universal equivalent (linen for

example). The social relations of all commodity producers are expressed through the equation of their products to linen. "The substance linen becomes the social incarnation, the social crysalis state of every kind of human labor."[20] The selection of a universal equivalent is a social process, as all other commodities are excluded from serving as equivalent. The universal equivalent, meanwhile, insofar as it serves in this role, is excluded from the relative form. Its value, therefore, is expressed only relatively, by the movement of the commodities to which it is equated. When the universal equivalen selected is a metal (especially gold or silver) the monetary form of value is realized. All these developed forms of value, are simply expansions of the elementary form of value, and the fundamental features of the latter obtain in the former.

Commodities always exchange in a definite proportion. The investigation of the causal relationship between the production process and the exchange proportions is the subject of the quantitative side of the theory of value. The total labor power of a given society is a whole. Each unit of labor is the same as all others: it represents simple average labor, expended under normal conditions of production, with an average degree of skill and intensity. Naturally, what this average is varies from country to country, epoch to epoch. Nevertheless, within a given society "skilled labor counts only as simple labor intensified."[21] "As values all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labor time".[22] The equalization of labor as abstract, simple, social labor is

effected through the exchange of the products of labor. This equalization is necessary so that the distribution of social labor to the various branches of production in an economy where the producers are formally autonomous can take place.

The causal determinant of this distribution is material-technical process of production itself. The quantity of labor power which it is necessary to allocate for the production of a given article is an expression of the productivity of the production process. In general, the higher the productivity, the less the abstract labor congealed in the product, and therefore the lower the value of the product. Obviously, the only reason a commodity producer would increase the productivity of the production process would be because the mass of the value produced increases in proportion to the increase in volume. The producer would then have the option of either diminishing the labor time he/she would need to expend to equal the same amount of value formerly produced. Or he/she could increase the units of labor time he/she expends. As this "simple labor intensified" (i.e. it is skilled in relation to the other commodity producers in some branch of production as long as the latter have not introduced the same technical innovations which increase the productivity) this labor time may very well be equivalent to the same working day he/she formerly put in.

Naturally, other producers do not simply sit idly by while this occurs. Given the premise of a free market, a portion of the producers in the particular branch under study,

as well as a portion of the other producers in other branches, will "move in" to share in the riches to be gained by the introduction of the device which increases productivity. To the extent to which both the knowledge and the technical capability of producing this device are generalized (this process also, of course, occasioning a further redistribution of labor) the device itself will come into general use in the particular branch of production. A general average of skill and intensity will be established. Although our exposition is oversimplified, the general conclusion remains: if there are no changes in productivity for a long enough period in all branches of production within the economy as a whole, transfers of labor from one branch to another will eventually cease, and a point of equilibrium reached.

The law of value operates in a somewhat different way within the capitalist mode of production. Nevertheless both the qualitative and the quantitative sides of value still hold: labor is equalized and distributed through the exchange of commodities, and these exchange ratios are ultimately derivable from the labour embodied in the different products. However, unlike a "pure" commodity economy in capitalism there is no direct correlation between them. Capitalism is not simply an entrepreneurial spirit, nor production for a distant market. It is a mode of production i.e. the inter-relationship between given production relations and productive forces which have attained a certain state of development.[23] The fundamental feature of capitalism is that labor-power is

a commodity. The producer is thus formally free, and contracts out a portion of his/her living working day to another person. The historical prerequisite of capitalism is thus the dispossession of the immediate producers from the means of production. Though they are "free" to contract their labor or not, they are in fact bound to the system of wants. In order to reproduce, to have access to the means of consumption, they must transact with a capitalist.

In a commodity economy, the producer does not purchase the labor power of others. He/she produces a given article with only his/her own labor, and possibly that of his family (but no exchange is involved). Labor power is thus not separate from labor, and all surplus is produced by the allocation of his/her labor-time. If he/she sells the article to a merchant, who then sells it to a distant market for a higher price, the merchant is merely appropriating a portion of the surplus-value already produced by the producer. The proportion of the surplus appropriated is, of course, dependent upon the degree to which the merchant can "buy cheap and sell dear." The portion of the surplus retained by the producer, in turn, is determined by the degree to which he/she can sell the product above its value.

The transaction in capitalism is quite different. Money as a universal equivalent serves basically two functions; it is a means of circulation, and it is a means of payment. Its role at any one time is dependent upon the particular operant production relations. Money as a means of payment is

only capital when it is used to generate more money. Commodities are not simply sold in order to purchase a new commodity (C-M-C'); money purchases commodities in order to increase its quantity (M-C-M'). This is valorization, the self-expansion of value. Increased consumption by the individual capitalists is quite secondary to this process.

Capital takes various forms depending upon the specific social relations present. Capital may be industrial, merchant, or loan. In all forms, the self-expansion of value is the aim of the process. However, value is only created in the circuit of industrial capital. This is the root of the specific form of mystification which occurs in the capitalist mode of production. Only living labor creates new value. Dead labor (i.e. congelations of past labor in objects) only produces more old value: it cannot add to the value which has already been placed in it. Dead labor in production over time depreciates and must be replaced. This requires living labor.

The capitalist purchases two types of commodities: constant capital (e.g. machinery [fixed] and raw materials [circulating]) and variable capital (i.e. wages paid for living labor-power). The immediate producer (i.e. the laborer) sells his/her labor power at its value. The value of the commodity labor-power is the labor time socially necessary to reproduce the laborers. This subsistence level is not a physiological concept, but rather determined in the context of definite historical, cultural conditions. Nevertheless, the sale of labor-power at its value is not automatic: it is the result of

a struggle with the capitalist, who naturally seeks to lower his/her labor-costs. The producer is able to satisfy his/her historically determined wants through the receipt of a wage.

The value of a commodity in capitalism is obtained by the addition of the constant capital and the variable capital invested by the capitalist, plus the surplus value created in the process of production ($V = c + v + s$). The working day of the producer is divided into two parts: a necessary (i.e. for subsistence) and a surplus part. If the producer does not produce a surplus, there is no reason for employing him/her. The rate of surplus value of a particular factory is obtained by dividing the total surplus produced by the variable capital expended $\frac{s}{v}$. However, the capitalist is not directly interested in the rate of surplus value. He/she is concerned with the ratio between the total capital expended $(c + v)$ and the surplus value. This is the rate of profit $\frac{s}{c+v}$. The fact that it is different from the rate of surplus value is the reason why commodities in capitalism do not exactly express in their prices the labor-ratios embodied in them.

However, valorization is dependent upon the rate of surplus-value. It is only living labor that creates new value. There are only two ways to increase the rate of surplus value: absolutely, by lengthening the working day; relatively, by

increasing the productivity of labor. The latter method is the most frequent and results from the introduction of new technical methods, machinery into the production process. This increases the ratio of variable to constant capital (i.e. the organic composition of capital = $\frac{c}{v}$). This results in the relative expulsion of living labor from production, and its substitution by dead labor. This in turn creates a reserve army of labor (i.e. the unemployed) which acts to depress wages. The labor-power which remains engaged in the production process in the particular branch where the innovation has been made, is, however, more intense. Depending upon the level of skills required to reproduce it, the value of the labor power, and following this the wages of the producer, may increase.

Surplus-value takes various forms (profit, rent, interest) but it has one source. Within a given branch of production, the generalization of technology and skills which results from competition eventually establishes an average rate of profit. The value of a commodity is then expressed as its price of production. This is obtained through the addition of the constant and variable capital and the average rate of profit which exists in the branch (c+v+arop). Capital gravitates to the particular branch, or the industry within the branch, which has the highest rate of profit. If the rate

of profit is the same in all branches, transfers of capital (and thereby the redistribution of labor) would cease.

Capitalists are not simply individuals who seek to satisfy abnormally luxurious wants. They perform a certain social role. The determinant of this role is the objective process of the self-expansion of capital: money seeking more money. The fact that production for the sake of production, accumulation for the sake of accumulation, is quite absurd, does not make it any less real.

Capitalists seek surplus profits. One of the ways surplus profits are obtained is through lowering the cost of production. Either wages are decreased, or, more commonly, new technology is introduced, thus reducing the labor time required for the production of a given quantity of an article. This investment requires an accumulation of capital. This is accomplished by one of two ways, or a combination of both. First, concentration, the re-investing and amassing of capital produced within a single industry. Secondly, centralization, the process of borrowing (i.e. credit) and merging of different capitalists to form a large joint-stock enterprise (i.e. corporation). The socialization of production which results in the introduction of new technical methods, goes hand in hand with the socialization of capital. The realization of surplus profits in one industry, of course, attracts competing capital. The capitalists in the branch who are not able to independently raise the capital required to purchase the new technology, are eventually absorbed. Thereby, in time, an average rate of profit

is again established in the branch. However, the accumulation process does not stop here, but continues on and on, both within this branch and in the others.

In capitalism, the organic composition of capital tends to diverge in the various branches of production, while the rate of profit tends towards equality. The exchange ratios of two different commodities will only express their embodied labor ratios when their respective organic compositions are equal. This is because commodities in capitalism sell in proportion to their price of production. The market prices of the products (as distinct from their price of production) is regulated by the average profit, but, of course, is not equivalent to it as it is through the divergence of the market prices from the price of production that surplus profits are made, capital re-distributed etc. Given the premise of free competition[24], the degree to which profits are made is dependent upon the technical structure of the particular industry or branch. This is simply the operation of the law of value in its quantitative aspect.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with Marx's scheme of extended reproduction, crises, the transformation problem, and countless other aspects of the functioning of the capitalist economy. Our exposition of the specificities of capitalism has been necessarily simplistic, as our aim has been to outline the objective processes of this mode of production, as derived from the theory of value.

The law of value is the inter-connection of the relation-

ship of humans to nature as it is internalized in society. The transition to civil society marks a qualitatively new way in which labor time is reckoned. The divergence between the units of consumption and production necessitates a mechanism for the equalization and distribution of labor within a given society. This mechanism is the exchange of the products of labor. The relations between producers are established through the social relation between commodities. Thereby, skilled, private, concrete labor becomes unskilled, social and abstract. Through the exchange relation a product of labor, a use-value, becomes the bearer of the relationship between the human beings. A natural object is endowed with a social function.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. That is, labor time as reckoned up in a single generation. The distribution of social labor will always refer to the distribution of units of labor time.

2. This is an abstraction used purely for purposes of illustration. When the word society is used a commodity economy will be presupposed unless specified otherwise.

3. Henceforward, fetishism will be employed in place of commodity fetishism, unless specified otherwise.

4. c.f. Lawrence Krader, Dialectic of Civil Society. (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1976), p. 185.

5. What follows is based extensively on Krader, op. cit., pp. 249-57.

6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology, in Collected Works, Vol. 5, (New York: International Publishers), pp. 50, 53, 89.

7. Lawrence Krader, The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx, (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1975), p. 60.

8. At first only a small proportion of producers produce commodities.

9. It is only in a fully developed commodity economy that abstract labor is historically specified.

10. Karl Marx, Preface to A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy, Moscow: Progress, 1970), p. 20.

11. I.I. Rubin, Essays on Marx's Theory of Value, trans. by M. Samdzija and F. Perlman, (Montreal: Black Rose, 1973), p. 73.

12. Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, (Moscow: Progress, 1954), p.54.

13. Ibid., p. 48.

14. Ibid., p. 51.

15. Ibid., p. 51.

16. Ibid., p. 51.

17. Ibid., p. 54.

18. Ibid., p. 58.

19. Ibid., p. 62.

20. Ibid., p. 72.

21. Ibid., p. 51.

22. Ibid., p. 47.

23. Maurice Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism, (New York: International, 1963), p.7.

24. This is not the case, for example, in a monopoly. There, the price is solely dependent upon supply and demand.

CHAPTER TWO

Fetishism is a particular type of mystification which is linked to the production of commodities. It is an effect in consciousness which has its cause in a particular system of production relations. Our analysis of the theory of value has provided the objective basis for the investigation of how this process actually works. The object of our examination is the interrelationship between social being and consciousness. The fact that a use-value in a commodity economy assumes a social function in itself is a quite separate process from the mechanism of mystification in consciousness which results in a confusion of the natural and the social. It is for this reason that we must trace the development of Marx's ideas on the concepts of social being and consciousness and how they relate to his mature formulation of the theory of fetishism.

Marx's writings do not form an integrated system. There ~~are~~ certain themes, questions and formulations which are found throughout both his early and his later writings. However, they are only comprehensible in the context of the particular research interests which preoccupy him at a certain point. These, in turn, can only be understood in terms of the political conjuncture, the situation of Marx in relation to the "great debates" of the various philosophical and economic schools. This historical specificity, which permeates Marx's development of various methods appropriate to the study of different objects, also intersects with his self-understanding as a political actor. Marx is not simply writing to discover

an objective truth. He is, at all points, a participant in the process of social transformation. What exactly this process is and what it means to Marx individually, of course, unevenly fluctuates with the rhythm of events. At one point, it may mean Marx rushing to the scene of a political crisis, and engaging all his energy in the production of popular pamphlets. At another time, it may signify to Marx that a temporary retreat into economic research is called for. At still another point, Marx may have to abandon research altogether in order to make ends meet. To categorize Marx's viewpoint under the rubric "dialectical materialism" or even "scientific socialism" is thus to do the richness of his thought an injustice. His thought at every point is punctuated with the interplay of specific historical events and the passion of the political actor. Marx is neither an idealist nor a utopian, but then neither is his thought the product of an abstract system.

It follows from this that if Marx's works do not constitute a system, neither are they composed by abrupt discontinuities, or "epistemological breaks". From our perspective of examining Marx's views on the question of social being and consciousness, this has very specific results in terms of his theory of fetishism. The elaboration of his early views (pre-spring 1845) is undertaken in the context of a battle which is primarily waged against idealism. The problem which is posed is the cause of alienation and the content of emancipation. The battle is fought not merely against Hegel and the Right, but especially the Young

Hegelians (Bruno Bauer et al) who collapse political and human emancipation. For the latter, with the formal privatization of religion (the secularization of the State) the struggle against mysticism and reaction is won. The cause of human estrangement is identified with the form it takes, and the practice required to overcome it is education: ideas are conquered by ideas.

Marx's response to these ideas results in the development of his thinking on the questions of human nature, material reality and its relation to consciousness, alienation, emancipation etc. Marx's exploration of the answers to these questions leads him increasingly to concentrate on the content of "social being" in a concrete rather than an abstract philosophical way. Marx took up the study of political economy in the fall of 1843, on his move to Paris.[1] He was, of course, influenced by many factors, among them Engels, French socialists, Moses Hess, the workers' movement in Paris etc. His experience in Paris led to his becoming a communist and to his recognition of the proletariat as the agency of fundamental social change. The Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (unpublished and incomplete), and The Holy Family (with Engels) are the products of this period. These works, however, are thematically continuous with such earlier writings as On the Jewish question and Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. However, alienation is given socio-economic content as Marx struggles to flesh

out his thinking on the causes of estrangement and the content of emancipation.

The conversion to communism provides a crucial catalyst to Marx's thinking on the question of being and consciousness. The composition of the proletariat as a class in the context of specific historical conditions, becomes the basis of the investigation into social being. The object of Marx's research ceases to be an abstraction ("human nature") and becomes increasingly concretized. The content of emancipation becomes the abolition of private property realized through the revolutionary practice of the proletariat. "Social being" is not a static concept, simply a description of what "is". It is a term which relates to the process of social transformation, to the inter-connection between social composition and praxis. Marx's research is then addressed to the problems related to defining the specific content of social being i.e. the socio-economic contradictions which underlie class relations and historical development.

This shift in focus results in a re-formulation of what materialism means, and its relationship to practice. The Theses of Feuerbach, The German Ideology and The Poverty of Philosophy are all the products of this shift. However, the increasing concentration on social being is crucially interlinked with a conception of consciousness which is transposed from his earlier period (pre-1845). The actual process of the development of ideas and beliefs in the context of historically specific situations is not subjected to the same

critical analysis as is the actual content of material reality. There is thus an unevenness which permeates Marx's writings on the relationship between being and consciousness. This unevenness continues right up to the theory of commodity fetishism.

The reason for this situation is simple; Marx is not interested in the problem of consciousness per se. His early writings are responses to the Hegelian premise that being and thinking are one and the same thing. Marx's thrust is to separate the two, not merely temporarily (in terms of the unfolding of the Idea), but absolutely. For Marx, the problem is being, and his investigation into it, naturally resulted in a shift of interest away from consciousness per se. This is not to say that consciousness was unimportant for Marx, or that he simply adopted a mechanical materialist perspective. In fact, it is because of his conception of consciousness that he broke with Feuerbach. But the key to understanding this is in terms of his research into social being, and the subjective and objective sides of human labor etc.

For our purposes, we shall first examine the development of Marx's thought on this question up to 1845. We shall then examine his views in his major works in the period 1845-7. To repeat: this is not an absolute division, a break. There is simply a general shift in focus in response to different sets of problems. There are, of course, numerous cases of overlap. What we are investigating is the evolution of Marx's research interests and how it has a bearing on Marx's views

on the relationship between being and consciousness.

Marx, in his early period, especially in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, develops his anthropological views in opposition to Hegel's view of human nature as pure self-consciousness, as part of the unfolding and realization of the Weltgeist. For "man is directly a natural being". On the one hand, he is the product of internal forces (instincts) "on the other hand....he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like plants and animals [....] the objects of his instincts exist outside him."[2] These objects "are objects that he needs...indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers."[3] It is the externality of nature and the fact that the individual human needs to go beyond him/herself which is the crucial point here. The wants of the person, their subjectivity, is only developed in connection with external, natural objects: "objects bring about needs" and the reverse is true also. Both the object and the activity which appropriates it for human use become wants. Thus "every activity and property of his being; every one of his vital urges, becomes a need, a necessity, which his self-seeking transforms into seeking for other things and human beings outside him."[4]

This outreach to nature to realize "his essential powers" is cognitively organized through the process of sense perception. But, there can never be an immediate relationship between the individual and nature: the individual always exists in society. Thus "immediate sensuous nature for

man is, immediately, human sensuousness (the expressions are identical)."[5] The relationship to other humans becomes the medium through which the person experiences nature and is able to express "his essential powers". But this mediation is not an abstraction from nature, rather "nature is the immediate object of the science of man". The relationship to nature and within society are two complementary aspects of the same movement of human self-objectification, of the expression of the material grounding of human nature and of their limited condition. It is in this sense that Marx says: "the social reality of nature, and human natural science.... are identical terms".[6]

The manifestation of the essential being of the human is only realized through labor. Man's "objective product only confirms his objective being, his activity as the activity of an objective natural being".[7] This labor is marked as exclusively human, by the introduction of the subjective factor, consciousness: "conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity."[8] By transforming nature through practice "man proves himself a conscious species-being".[9] Man is a species being "because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a universal and therefore free being."[10]

Though the terms species-being is a philosophical construct, Marx understands the individual's relationship to the species not in an abstract, but in a concrete sense. Human self conscious activity is not simply one person trans-

forming nature, but an individual in a social context. This social base allows for the passing on of cultural traditions, sharing of skills, experiences etc. in relation to the appropriation of natural objects. The reciprocal transformation of both nature and the individual's wants and abilities is thus accomplished in a social framework. The relationship to nature is not simply one-to-one: the individual does not just rely on his own personal skills and experience.[a] This allows him/her the freedom to choose between alternative techniques etc. This is what Marx means when he compares animals who produce one-sidedly and humans who produce universally.[11] Through this process man is able to make "all nature his inorganic body".[12] Humans are thus not simply natural beings, but human natural beings:

> Activity and enjoyment, both in their content, and in their mode of existence, are social [...]. The human aspect of nature exists only for social man, for only then does nature exist for him as a bond with man...Thus society is the complete unity of man with nature. [13]

A human being is a social being, his/her limited condition is interwoven with his/her social nature. The objects of the social being thus become social objects, and the senses whereby man relates to nature become "the senses of the social man", which are different from the senses of the non-social man.[14] The process of human labor, the self objectification "is required to make man's senses human".[15] It is only through the laboring process that human subjectivity and objectivity cease to be antithetical and are interwoven

in the "conscious self-transcending act of origin"[16] that is human history.

Although Marx developed his anthropological perspective in opposition to Hegel's view of man as pure self-consciousness, he also incorporated in his writing a Hegelian understanding of the "individual" as the synthesis of the universal and the particular. This is closely connected with the concept of species-being: each individual in his/her objectification is expressing his/her humanity through the development of a specifically human sensuousness and human needs. Thus, each concrete individual in each particular society, through their participation in the process of communal activities is internalizing not simply the traditions of the society, but is realizing his/her humanity. Socialization is humanization and the community becomes the focus of social being. The community is composed of both universal and particular elements: it represents both humanity in the abstract and is the concrete agency of socialization. Abstractions are thus only expressions of the concrete existence of the community: "My general consciousness is only the theoretical shape of that of which the living shape is the real community, the social fabric."[17]

It is because of this composition of the community that "man, in as much as he may be a particular individual... is just as much the totality... of the human manifestations of life."[18] Each individual is able to bridge the distance between him/her and the species because through his/her objectification in the community he/she <u>becomes</u> the species:

"the rich human being is simultaneously the human being in need of a totality of human manifestations of life..."[19]

Marx's anthropology forms the basis of his rejection of Hegel's idealist interpretation of human estrangement. To simplify somewhat, according to Hegel, reality is ultimately a universal spirit or mind which externalizes itself in matter. This ceaseless process of the unfolding of the Idea is a movement of developing self-consciousness. (i.e. the idea coming to consciousness of itself). Every particular moment in this process is internally constituted as both an affirmation and a negation. Every act is both a formal movement of the Idea and the supercession of a past objective expression of the Idea. It is in this sense that Hegel understands the individual who, at a particular moment, acts to advance the unfolding of the Idea as a synthesis of the universal and the particular. The complexities of Hegel's articulation of what this means or how this occurs is beyond our scope at the present. What is crucial is the interconnection between praxis and self consciousness. Praxis is inseparable from self consciousness because the individual is ultimately composed of consciousness. The person may or may not understand the significance of his/her act in the grand scheme of things. It doesn't matter. The progression of self-consciousness occurs at the "macro" level: the individual is simply part of this movement.

Estrangement, according to Hegel, is therefore the process of objectification itself. As Marx comments: the

self objectification of the mind is "nothing but the estranged mind of the world thinking within its self-estrangement"[20] and "Hegel makes man the man of self-consciousness instead of making self consciousness the self-consciousness of man of real man"[21]. For Hegel the movers of the process of history are thus abstractions from the human being who actually created them. The predicates are transformed into subjects and the subjects into predicates:

> The fact which is taken up as a point of departure is not conceived as such, but as a mystical result...
> Hegel transforms the predicates, the objects into independent entities, but divorced from their actually independent subjects... The mystical substance therefore becomes the actual substance and the real object appears as something else, as an element of the mystical substance. 22

Marx's criticism of Hegel's tranformation of predicates into subjects developed at length in A Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. An example is his discussion of Hegel's concept of sovereignty. According to Marx, Hegel treats sovereignty as if it were a person, as if it acted independently of people. Social relations are adapted to the movement of this "hypostatized abstraction." In the example of the hereditary monarch, instead of understanding kingship as the product of definite human relations, Hegel understands it as the product of nature.[23]

Ideas are human products. The reversal of the actual position of subject and predicate is a process of mystification. It is Hegel who is transforming the relationship and making

the mystical substance the subject. The real subject merely "appears" to be a product. It is clear that for Marx this is not simply a philosophical debate. There are two questions here. First, why does this mystification occur? Second, what is the effect of this delusion? At this point, Marx is less clear on the answer to the first, and is slightly more clear on the second. The mystification process does have material results because human beings in civil society are turned into abstractions, they are treated as something external, and "the content of the human being as his true reality" is not accepted.[24] There is an objective relationship between mystification and domination, and one of the moments of this process is the confusion of the natural and the social.

The key element about the relationship between mystification and domination for Marx is the political conclusion which is drawn from the reversal of subject and predicate. For Hegel and for the "critical" philosophers who follow him the "real objective chains" are converted "into merely ideal, merely subjective chains".[25] The political struggle thus becomes a struggle in thought. According to Marx, on the contrary, the battle against "those products of self-debasement and self-alienation which have been endowed with an independent being and with a life of their own" is an outward fight, and the abolition of the mystification a <u>practical</u> abolition.

Hegel does not believe activity can overcome estrangement because he locates the process of objectification, the

unfolding of the Idea through labor as alienation per se. Labor is always "abstractly mental labor" and results in man's "coming to be for himself within alienation."[26] In contrast, for Marx, labor is the confirmation of man's natural being. The cause of estrangement is not objectification but rather labor which is performed in specific historical conditions. Alienation has a social rather than a natural root.

> It is not the fact that a human being objectifies himself inhumanly, in opposition to himself, but the fact that he objectifies himself in distinction from and in opposition to abstract thinking that constitutes the posited essence of the estrangement and the thing to be superceded. 27

The expression through labor of human "essential powers" is only realized through a co-operative social process. Marx then develops the idea that these human powers are treated as objects "and this, to begin with, is again only possible in the form of estrangement."[28] Estrangement is only realized in relation to other humans: the alien being, that stands over and dominates his/her activity is not simply an idea torn loose from its social context, but is another person.[29] Although at this point Marx's ideas on the actual causes of estrangement are somewhat undeveloped, it is clear that estrangement itself only arises in conjunction with the development of private property. Although the "subjective essence" of private property is labor, its objective expression is "one-sided enjoyment": enjoyment does not flow from the activity or object itself, but from the ownership of the object.

The want for the object flows from the ability to possess it, and is not a free reciprocal interaction of the human's labor and natural world. The want is to have the object and not having it in the society of private property is "the complete separation of man from his objectivity."[30] The division of labor and exchange rest on private property: they express the segmentation of human activity. Because of this, the laborer is estranged from his/her species-being from "the totality of human manifestations". He/she is a part-human. The producer who does not own the product thus fashions an article that stands as an alien power over him/her.[31] The more he produces, the less he/she has for his/her subsistence. Labor as an activity becomes estranged: it becomes a means to satisfy a want external to it. Private property "does not know how to change crude need into human need": the result is a "complete crude, abstract simplicity of need" in which "even his animal needs cease to exist".[32] Man becomes alienated from his/her being: "an immediate consequence is the estrangement of man from man".[33] The social nature of humans is thus ripped apart, and they stand to each other as aliens, as a means to an end, rather than as ends in themselves.

The society within which humans are estranged is civil society. Herein, each person "acts as a private individual, regards other men as a means, degrades himself, and becomes the plaything of alien powers."[34] People become separate from the general interest, the community, which constitutes

their actual social being. Individuals are united only in a "smaller exclusive interest - man no longer bound to man even by the semblance of a common bond". Life becomes a "universal struggle of man against man."[35] Each person's individuality, rather than expressing their participation in the process of humanization, becomes a barrier to social intercourse. This atomism "follows necessarily from the fact that the community, the communal being in which the individual lives, is civil society separated from the State..."[36] The individuals who constitute civil society are ripped from their real being in the community, thus, they are "fictitious"[37] persons.

The atomism of civil society is illusory. In fact, the individuals are bound together in a system of wants and production relations. However, the universality of human species nature is not expressed on this level. It is expressed on the level of an abstraction from civil society, the State. In the State each person is "deprived of his real individuality and the State is endowed with an unreal universality."[38] Political life is "life in the airy regions of civil society".[39] The State constitutes itself above the particular individuals, and institutions which comprise it as a universal reality, and stands in relation to these particularities as religion stands to the secular world. It pretends to be the true being or humans, beyond all contradiction. At times, the State may even attempt to abolish the material pre-suppositions of its existence, such as private property. However, this can only end in a

convulsion and leads to the re-establishment of its real material foundations.[40]

The State is the mediator of the formal relations between the members of civil society. All individuals, insofar as they have a political life, are citizens. It doesn't matter of what their private lives consist. In the democratic State there is a complete separation between the political and economic lives of each person. Each individual is a formal equal of the other as a citizen: sharing the same duties and rights. The State is thus fully realized as universal: there are no particular privileges which formally accrue to anyone person because of his/her economic being. The real individual in bourgeois society is the bourgeois i.e. the individual in his/her purely economic sphere. The bourgeois is a monad, self-sufficient, "a totality of needs and only exists for the other person...insofar as each becomes a means for the other."[41] The rights of the bourgeois are the rights of private property, liberty, security etc.

According to Marx, the perfect Christian State is the democratic State. The State that knows no official religion, no privileges, where the intercourse of individuals is basically free from all restrictions. Religion in the democratic state is a purely private affair, a pure matter of faith, and a reflection of the inward devotion to God. The form of religion which is most appropriate to the democratic state is thus Protestantism. The State which needs to have an official religion is an undeveloped state: it still

requires religion, an element of civil society from the private sphere, to complete itself. Its universality is thus not fully human. The democratic state has a human foundation: its "ethical actuality" is the "religion of private property".[42] It stands as a universal principle to the particular elements which compose its material base. Thus the "separation and remoteness of man from man"[43] is crystallized in the democratic state through the complete separation of the political and economic spheres of the individuals' lives.

Christianity stands in the same relation to other religions as democracy stands to other state constitutions. The essence of the State is its abstraction from civil society. Its full realization is thus a purely formal relationship between individuals as citizens and totally separate from their lives as bourgeois. Only then does the universal principle stand over civil society as separate in essence from it. Democracy, as the constitutional expression of this separation, is the union of the formal and the material principles. In democracy the material separation of man from man is given its fullest formal expression. Democracy as a particular constitution thus is the universal essence of all other state constitutions.

Religion, for Marx, is a human product. It is "the self-consciousness and self-esteeem of a man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again."[44] "Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself."[45] Marx does

not take a neutral stand on the content of religion: religious claims are very clearly untrue in his opinion. However, his interest is not in the content of religion, it is in what this content reveals about the society within which it is produced:

> [Civil society] produces religion, an inverted world consciousness because... [it is] an inverted world [...] Religion is the general theory of that world...it is the fantastic reflection of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. 46

Religion is an illusion, but illusions are inverted reflections of material reality. Thus, they tell us something about civil society, namely that human beings therein are estranged from their true reality. Religion is "the recognition of man in a roundabout way, through an intermediary."[47] Religion is the "sigh of the oppressed creature" that has been torn from the primitive community and ripped from his species being in civil society. Religion is a human expression: the supernatural beings which inhabit the religious world simply mediate the "human condition". It is man as a universal, and therefore species-being, that is the true subject of myths. They are tales addressed to human fears and concerns. Man in fully developed civil society is the bourgeois, the isolated monad, the particular. The expression in religion of this individuality, this isolation of humans from each other, is the realization of man (universal species being) as bourgeois (particular). The union of the universal and the particular is the God-man: Christ.

Christianity is thus the "spirit of civil society, of the sphere of egoism ... It is no longer the essence of community but the essence of difference".[48] The logical culmination of Christianity is its privatization, its banishment from the public sphere. Christianity is the faith of the monad. This is why it is the essence of all religions, in an exact parallel to democracy's relationship to other State constitutions on the political level. Both the State and religion are "unreal universals" which stand over the real particulars. However, it is the particulars which produce the universals. This is why, for Marx, religion is not the problem, merely the symptom. The call to abolish religion is a call to abolish in a practical way the condition that requires religion. This condition is civil society.

The difference between the liberation of humans from the symptom of estrangement as opposed to the cause of alienation is the difference between political and human emancipation. To try to abolish religion by politically emancipating the State from an official connection with it is simply to aid both the State and religion in realizing their essential natures. Human emancipation will occur "only when real individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen and as an individual human being has become a species-being in his everyday life".[49] This, in turn only results from the abolition of private property: "the complete emancipation of all human senses and abilities".[50] This is communism: "the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e. human) being." It

is the return of humans to the community, to a real universality.

It is in the context of these ideas that Marx read Du Culte des Dieux Fetishes by Charles de Brosses in 1042,[51] and was first acquainted with the term fetishism. De Brosses takes the word fetish from the Portuguese and Fetisso, meaning "enchanted".[52] De Brosses, in turn derives the word from a Latin root: De Brosses employs the word as an anthropological term i.e. it has a universal applicability to all peoples. Fetishism refers to the divinization of inanimate objects, to the use of oracles, amulets and talismans. though a material object possesses "power", and to the cult which is the result of this belief system. De Brosses was the forerunner of the evolutionary school of nineteenth century anthropology, later represented by such persons as Tylor and Spencer.[53] De Brosses argues that fetishism is not just peripheral to religion, it is a particular class within religion. Fetishism is the earliest form of religion, which all peoples in the word had to pass through.

Fetishism is, however, not simply a historical stage, it is a way of thinking about the world appropriate to a particular level of education. Fetishism is the result of fear and ignorance. It is practiced by "les peuples sauvages, qui passent leur vie dans une perpétuelle enfance."[54] However, it is also present in all cultures, including the modern period. All children or uneducated people, who have no understanding of the relationship between cause and effect, will think in a fetishistic manner. They will mystify their

environment. De Brosses' argument is that an understanding of fetishism as a type of religious belief is necessary in order to understand the later developments of religion. Fetishism is the sanctification of the immediate environment, often a rock, or a tree etc. For each country there is a general fetish and a cult which surrounds it. What exactly the fetish is is unimportant. The worship of the sun and stars in Greece and Rome is a later evolutionary development, De Brosses claims, and is a separate type of religion. However, in an intermediary evolutionary stage (as in ancient Egypt) the two types of religion are intertwined. De Brosses argues that the divinization of animals in Egyptian mythology is a form of fetishism and is typologically identical with the worship of the "savages" of the Ivory coast.

De Brosses, without question, is a forerunner of later developments in anthropology. Categories such as totemism, animism, magic, the concept of mana, which are later separated by other writers are collapsed by De Brosses in the term fetishism. The racist implications of De Brosses' work are quite clear. The prototypical practitioners of fetishism are the blacks of the Ivory Coast. They represent the infant stage of human evolution for De Brosses. He makes no bones about his attitude towards fetishism: it is a "stupid and gross" superstition, an absurdity.

For our purposes, we shall briefly summarize the main points of De Brosses' work as they influenced Marx's thinking. First, fetishism is universal, it is linked to a particular

psychological state of human beings. Second, fetishism is a particular type of mystification which results from fear and ignorance. It consists of the attribution of "powers" to inanimate objects. According to Marx this psychological state is rooted in particular social conditions. These conditions are a low level of the productive forces. As a result natural forces dominate humans, and the latter have not yet developed the means to control or to understand the former to any significant degree. This stage Marx terms "natural religion".[55] Marx thus shifts the focus to the social level, to the mechanisms of the development of the productive forces and how the loss of control and ignorance operate in the context of definite social relations. Third, a central element of De Brosses' thesis is that fetishism is present in all cultures, even the present day.[56] De Brosses also states that this mystification is hard to uproot.[57] Finally, a fourth element Marx develops from De Brosses is the idea that there is a link between the advance of civilization and the divinization of man. This, of course, profoundly affects Marx's view of Christianity as religion par excellence.

Marx first employs the term fetishism in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscript of 1844. There are two references and they both apply to the mystification that endows products of labor with independent powers. Marx says, for example, that labor is the subjective essence of private property. Private property is merely something external. The social process of production is thus embedded in the object itself. The labor

is internal, thus it is unseen in the object itself. Those who see "private property as an objective substance confronting men, seem therefore to be fetishists, Catholics."[58] Marx agrees that Engels is right to call Adam Smith the Luther of political economy. Smith, in tracing the substance of the value of a commodity to the labor embodied in it, breaks through the outer appearance of the commodity to its inner content, just as Luther broke through the external ritual and form of Christianity to discern its true essence in inward faith.

The second reference to fetishism is used in relation to Marx's theme of money as an alien object that controls and debases humans. He employs a quote from Shakespeare to portray money as a "visible divinity" that is able to collapse the distinction between the natural and the social. However, money only exists in specific social relations i.e. where private property and the division of labor are present. It is thus only an expression of a social process, and may take various forms. Money may be metallic or issued in paper currency. Marx then compares the attitudes of Britain and France towards money as indices of their stage of development. Britain does not worship the metallic form of money, as it is a fully developed money-nation. France is a less developed money-nation, thus it is "still dazzled by the sensuous glitter of precious metals."[59] In an extremely interesting passage, Marx then links the state of the "senuous consciousness" of a particular society to the way in which it produces. Marx argues that the

senses only become human when there is a degree of development in the productive relations such that there is produced a "human sense of nature". This is a function of the degree of control over the forces of nature the laboring process gives to humans.

As Marx's research into political economy in 1844 progressed, it became clear to him that the problem was not merely to demonstrate that the estrangement process had its roots in material reality. The problem was a political one: how to overcome this alienation? The political dimension was never absent from Marx's considerations, but in the context of Paris in 1844 and the influence to which Marx was subject, his research took a sudden shift. The practical political question became a question of the content of social being. The 1844 Manuscripts and The Holy Family are both transitional documents in which Marx struggles to flesh out the material roots of alienation, and begins to analyze social relations in terms of class.

The absence of a theory of value is a crucial weakness at this point: the way private property causes estrangement, thus classes are produced, remains very obscure and abstract. Marx's dissatisfaction with this level of abstract analysis is expressed in his shift to examining social being in terms of the historically specific social relations of a given country. This change is interlinked with his acceptance of the labor theory of value (though as a "radical" Ricardian) in the summer of 1845.[60] The key works of this period are the Theses

on Feurerbach (spring 1845) The German Ideology (1846) and The Poverty of Philosophy (1847). The Introduction to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1857) will also be referred to, as its theses evolve out of this period.

At this point, Marx's principle protagonists are Feuerbach and Proudhon. The axis of the dispute with Feurerbach turns on the type of materialism to be adopted. To Feurerbach's contemplative humanism

Marx counters with a communism whose essence is revolutionary practice. The way Marx criticizes Feuerbach is through the analysis of the content of social being. Praxis is understood in terms of the specific social relations that exist at a given point. The relationship between being and consciousness is thus explored in the context of the relationship between social being and activity.

The shift towards the social specification of material reality is connected with Marx's methodological distinction between natural and human history. Though they are two inseparable aspects of the science of history, the focus on the process of the internalization of the relationship to nature within society forecloses the prospect for an eventual reunion of the two. The emphasis is on human specificity, at least as a methodological tool. This does not mean, however, that Marx ignores the relationship to nature. Quite the contrary, it is the basis of a scientific analysis. Science, as Marx employs the term, refers to the analysis of specific social relations. "Real positive science, the expounding of the

theoretical activity, of the practical process of the development of man" begins "where speculation ends and real life starts."[62]

Thus the premise of science is "living human individuals"[63] whose physical organization conditions the necessity for productions relations etc. However, science is not simply the contemplation of "what is." There is no "objective science" because both the senses and their objects are produced in definite historical circumstances. Feuerbach "does not see that the sensuous world around him is not a thing given direct from all eternity...but the product of industry and of a state of society."[64] A human's "sensuous consciousness" and wants are produced in the context of specific social relations.

History is made by people: "history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims."[65] History itself "does nothing". However, the "circumstances make men, just as much as he makes circumstances"[66] and "men must be in a position to live in order to 'make history'."[67] History is not made by humans thinking, but by humans acting. But the humans that act are not representatives of an ahistorical human essence, "man", as Feuerbach believes. It is because he understands "being" as an abstraction and individuals as incarnations of this essence that Feuerbach does not recognize practice as the way humans can overcome their estrangement. He isolates individuals from the historical conditions which produced them, from the ongoing process of the reproduction

of social relations. He theoretically constructs "man" and thus "man's" activity falls out of sight.

Against Feuerbach, Marx argues that the "essence of man" is not an abstraction existing in an individual: "it is the ensemble of the social relations".[68] Individuals are social products and exist in a particular system of social relations. This is the material premise of Marx's investigation. There are two different sides to the social individual: the given forces of production and the network of social relations.[69] Marx's "premises are not men in any fantastic isolation or fixity, but in their actual, empirically perceptive process of development under definite conditions."[70] The production of the means of subsistence is the beginning of the distinction between humans and animals.[71] This process has three reciprocal movements: the production of the means to satisfy wants, the generation by this satisfaction of new wants, and the process of reproduction. The production of material life has both a biological and a social dimension. Thus, "right from the start there is a definite materialist interconnection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production which is as old as the men themselves."[72] The production of material life therefore has a fourth moment: a definite mode of co-operation between people which is itself a production force.

Production is not simply an "abstraction". All production occurs in a system of "definite social and political relations." The "production relations of every society form

a whole"[73] as it is through them that the material interchange with nature is effected, labor is distributed. The physical organization of the human being conditions the necessity of the production of the means of subsistence. The requirement that there be an interchange with nature to satisfy wants is the ultimate material base of the system of production relations. The fact that these relations are always historically specific does not alter the determinate position the production relations occupy vis-a-vis the network of social relations:

> ...definite social relations are just as much produced by men as linen, flax etc. Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production and in changing their mode of production...they change all their social relations. The handmill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist. 74

The key point for Marx in his debate with Proudhon is that there are no social relations which are eternal: people make these relations and can unmake them too. However, the system of social relations form a whole linked to a definite mode of production (productive forces and production relations). Just as a particular social relation cannot be isolated from the system as a whole; (e.g. Proudhon on money),[75] neither can the social relations be changed until the material premises upon which they rest are first internally transformed. The system of wants "arises directly from a production or from the state of affairs based on production."[76] Marx argues in The Poverty of Philosophy that with the advance of productive

forces in industrial society all needs, even "natural" needs become social i.e.wants. The wants of various social classes are comprehensible only in the context of the totality of social relations in the given society. This is what Marx means by the term "social being". However, the specific social relations only exist in the context of a particular division of labor, which is determined by the given mode of production. The system of wants is the subjective pre-requisite of practical activity. Practice is therefore utimately dependent upon the mode of production.

The development of the productive forces is associated with the establishment of a particular social division of labor. In this division of labor "each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity which is forced upon him".[77] Marx in The German Ideology equates private property and the division of labor.[78] This division of labor therefore implies the contradiction between the interests of the separate individual or the individual family and the common interest of all individuals who have intercourse with each other."[79] This common interest has a real material base in the "material interdependence of the individuals among whom the labor is divided." There is thus a concrete relationship between the corralling of human labor into one sphere (and thereby the person's estrangement form the "totality of human manifestations") and the detachment from the individual of his/her activity so that it becomes "an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him."[80]

Human labor is both subjective and objective. The internalization of the relationship to nature within specific social relations means that both the production process itself and the wants it satisfies are reciprocal. As a relationship in society, work is a conscious application of resources to produce a desired result. It is this conscious dimension, the ability to conceptualize a plan and then execute it materially, which distinguishes human from animal labor.[81] The "sensuous consciousness" from which issues both perceptions and activities is a social product and dependent upon the growth of the productive forces. It is upon this material base that human beings develop i.e. when a certain degree of autonomy from the direct influence of natural forces exists. This base is, of course, the community.

Ideas, beliefs, sentiments grow out of the specific ensemble of social relations: "the same men who establish their social relations in conformity with their material productivity produce also principles, ideas and categories in conformity with their social relations... they are historical and transitory products."[82] The integral relationship between social being and consciousness is only severed when the social division of labor truly develops as such with a split between mental and manual labor; "from this moment onward consciousness merely flatters itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice .... From now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory..."[83]

The emancipation of ideas from their material roots is only possible given the transition to civil society. The production of the superstructure (law, state, religion, government etc.) is therefore dependent upon the transformation of the production relations,[84] in particular "the fact that intellectual and material activity, that enjoyment and labor devolve on different individuals."[85] Contradictions between the superstructure and the actual relations which sustain it only occur when the existing social relations are in conflict with the existing productive forces.[86] These contradictions are merely reflected on the level of ideology, and "changes in the economic structure lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure."[87] The social order as a whole can never be replaced until the material premises for its abolition have been fulfilled.

To briefly summarize, Marx is dealing with three different sets of problems. First, the formation of social relations by the mode of production. Second, the development of the forms of consciousness which arise out of the totality of social relations. Finally, the relationship between activity and these forms of consciousness on the one hand, and the underlying relations of production on the other. Needless to say, all three problems are inter-connected, and especially at the individual level it is impossible to isolate the factors which determine behaviour at any one point. There is no strict monocausal materialist determination of consciousness or activity according to Marx. To comprehend why this

is the case, we must probe deeper into his concept of social being, and in particular, what exactly historically specific social relations are.

On the one hand, Marx continues to see the process of humanization as a universal movement, as the production of a "sensuous human consciousness", which in turn, is the result of the laboring process established through the co-operative interaction of the members of the community. It is on this level of abstraction that Marx postulates the need for various material premises to be fulfilled before true humans emerge. It is this context that Marx argues that the relations of production are determinant. When Marx claims that it is only after the consideration of the "four aspects of primary historical relations, do we find that man also possesses consciousness"[88] he is making a methodological claim. He makes this in response to those who say consciousness is "pure" and independent of matter. He argues that from the beginning consciousness is a "social product" and "burdened with matter."[89] Language is practical consciousness "that exist for other men as well" and arises from "the necessity of intercourse with other men".[90] Therefore, consciousness arises out of the relationship of humans to each other and to nature as conditioned ultimately by their physical organization. The forms of consciousness are dependent upon the level of productive forces i.e. they are determined by the way in which humans satisfy their wants.[91]

Humans never produce abstractly, but only concretely,

in particular cultural situations. Though the thesis that human labor is both subjective and objective is an abstraction, it is only realized in specific productive relations. The reciprocity of wants and activity renders the project of ascertaining causal determination impossible to achieve at the micro level. However, the question is "Is Marx interested in the micro level per se?" The answer is no. Marx is responding to a different set of problems. Specifically, he is examining social being in terms of class relations. Questions of praxis and consciousness are investigated in this context i.e. - as class activity and class consciousness. The reason for this focus is ultimately political: the emergence of the proletariat and its struggles especially in Paris in the middle 1840's. Marx is trying to understand, and participate in, this process of social transformation. It is precisely his understanding of this process as a collective movement, and not simply the response of individuals, which results in the reformulation of his views on social being, and his rejection of Feuerbach.

Marx's examination of social being thus operates at two levels. First, at the "macro" level he is concerned with the emergence of social classes in the context of what we have termed the process of humanization. It is at this level that he isolates the relations of production as ultimately determinant of the superstructure, consciousness etc. This is Marx's methodological response to Feuerbach and Proudhon. Second, there is the "micro" level which is bounded by the

"macro". This is the terrain upon which "real living individuals" actually make history. Although the weight of Marx's emphasis is on the "macro" level, the two levels are interwoven throughout most of his writings, especially in historical analyses. However, it is the prioritization of the "macro" that results in the underdevelopment of his examination of consciousness.

The full exploration of Marx's theory of social classes, even in The German Ideology alone, would require a major investigation in its own right. For our purposes, we shall briefly concentrate on his understanding of the proletariat, in particular what we shall term the anthropological composition of this class. By the use of this term we do not mean to suggest that proletariat is simply an abstraction, akin to "species being". Marx very clearly understands classes in the context of specific social formations, but as the result of economic transformations which can be abstracted from their context and integrated into an international framework. It is this "macro" level process that links the emergence of the proletariat with a fundamentally Hegelian anthropology.

Although Marx's economic thought is by no means fully developed at this point, as he has not yet recognized the specificity of capitalism in terms of the transformation of labor power into a commodity, he does identify the creation of the proletariat as the outcome of two factors. First, the development of the productive forces to a certain level. Secondly, the dispossession of the majority of the population

from the means of production. These two conditions are intertwined in the intrinsically international development of capitalism.[92] It is the unevenness of these factors which creates the "radical chains" of the proletariat.[93]

In his earlier writings Marx recognizes that "the human being had to be reduced to asbolute poverty in order that he might yield his inner wealth to the world."[94] The growth of the productive forces resulted in the gradual socialization of production. Peasants, for example, were forced off the land and into cities by the enclosure movement. There they served as an easily exploitable resource. Needless to say, this was an uneven process which took various forms at particular times, in different countries. Nevertheless, the general movement was one of growing dispossession and loss of control over the production process by producers. Though the proletariat is still subject to the social division of labor, this dispossession connected with the socialization of production ultimately creates a social bond: "Poverty is the passive bond which causes the human being to experience the need of the greatest wealth - the other human being."[95] Essentially, the proletariat is reduced to nothing but his/her humanity: he/she in being ripped from possession is also ripped from the narrowness of <u>having</u>, the segmentation of particular interests.

The creation of the proletariat is a process of humanization. It will be remembered that according to Marx, this process is conditioned by the growth of the productive forces

and associated with the development of a certain degree of control over both these forces and nature. With the development of capitalism, it becomes increasingly clear that the cause of this absence of control is purely a function of the lack of ownership over these material resources i.e. it is connected with the relations of production. The re-capturing of control over the productive forces is a qualitatively new stage in human evolution. However, this "universal" interest is materialized in the development of the proletariat, specifically, in the struggle for the satisfaction of this classes' wants. These wants are, of course, constituted within the totality of social relations of a given society. Interwoven with the struggle for subsistence is the fight for the satisfaction of "radical needs" i.e. the wants connected with the expression, the realization of the proletarians' humanity. It is this which makes the social being of the proletariat intrinsically revolutionary:

> In the fully formed proletariat the abstraction of all humanity, even the semblance of humanity is practically complete....Since man has lost himself in the proletariat yet at the same time has not only gained the consciousness of that loss, but through urgent, imperative need...is driven directly to revolt against this inhumanity, it follows that the proletariat can and must emancipate itself. But it cannot emancipate itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life.96

The proletariat is different from the bourgeoisie not only because it is not at home in its estrangement, but also because its being fundamentally confers upon it a different species-character. That is, the composition of the

proletariat is not analogous to the composition of other classes and estates in other modes of production. In these other periods (for example, feudalism) the construction of the bourgeoisie as a class, which therefore involves its expression as a revolutionary force vis-a-vis both the feudal relations of production and the political structure, is fundamentally determined as a class both by its assertion against the feudal nobility, and by its desire to consolidate its position against the proletariat. Members of the bourgeoisie thus act not as individuals, but as class individuals. It is this particular interest grounded in the exploitation of another section of humanity which limits their expression of the interests of the species as a whole.

However, the proletariat "is a class...that has no longer any particular class interest to assert against a ruling class."[97] This is because its emancipation is the liberation of all humanity. This locates the proletariat as "a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society...a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering."[98] The proletariat is not simply a particular element, it is a synthesis of the particular and the universal. Its activity is the progression of humanity, the expression of human activity at a new stage of development. The dispossession of the proletariat combined with the level of productive forces has created individuals, who, reduced to their humanity, embody the universality ("the totality of human manifestations") of the species. The universality is

not an abstraction, it has real material roots in terms of the inter-penetration of all national economies in international capitalism. The proletariat is thus a class "...which in all nations has the same interest and for which nationality is dead, a class which is already rid of the old world, and at the same time stands pitted against it."[99]

It is at the level of the process of humanization and the creation of the proletariat that the boundary between class and individual disappears. The objective processes which construct the proletariat also forge the individual proletarian and his/her perception of his/her being. The proletarians, in their expressions of their individuality, embody directly the progression of humanity as a whole and therefore the forward movement of their class:

> ...the contradiction between the individuality of each separate proletarian and labor, the condition of life forced upon him, becomes evident to him... [...] Proletarians if they are to assert themselves as individuals have to abolish the hitherto prevailing condition of their existence, namely, labor. 100

The cleavage between the proletarian's individuality and the conditions of his/her life and the fact that proletaria's unity is not determined by a common interest in exploiting a third party, transforms the activity of the proletarian into direct political (i.e. class) activity. The proletarian, "robbed of all life content" becomes an "abstract individual" and can thereby relate to others only as an individual: "only at this stage does self-activity coincide with material life, which corresponds to the development of

the individual into a complete individual and the casting off of all material limitations."[102] The proletarian sees in its estrangement "its own powerlessness and the nature of an inhuman existence."[102] Therefore his/her self-activity as an individual is directed towards re-capturing control of his/her conditions of life. This can only be realized through his/her free association with his/her fellow proletarians:

> With the community of revolutionary proletarians... who take the conditions of existence and those of all members of society under their control... it is as individuals that the individuals participate in it. For it is the association of individuals (assuming the advanced stage of modern productive forces, of course) which puts the conditions of the free development and movement of individuals under the control conditions which were previously left to chance and had acquired an independent existence over against the separate individuals... 103

The fundamental aspect of this association is that it is the realization of the communal nature of humanity. The proletarian as a universal individual, representing the progression of the species, is forced to break through his/her particularity and become a true communal being. This transformation is based upon the realization of the material premises of communism.[104] These include the development of capitalism as an international system and thus the internationalization of the proletariat: "the liberating of each single individual will be accomplished in the measure in which history becomes transformed into world history."[105] World historical individuals are thus produced whose inner human wealth is an expression of his/her "real connections" with the rest

of humanity. The revolutionary activity of the proletarian thus results in the acquisition of a "new need - the need for society - what appeared as a means becomes an end."[106]

The establishment of the proletarians' as individuals is only realized with the construction of a communist society, and thus the abolition of the proletariat as a class. Communism means a classless society in which the time devoted to the production of an article is determined by its "social utility". Both the wants and the process of production are consciously regulated by the community as a whole. The communal connections of all individuals are not "illusory": they are material and based on the common possession by all producers of the means of production. Each individual is no longer confined to a single sphere of activity by the division of labor: he/she is able to participate in a "totality of human manifestations" in a real concrete way.[107] Abolishing the division of labor is "not possible without the community, ...only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions, hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community."[108] This real freedom, and true possession, which each individual will enjoy, is only possible given the realization of the material premises of communism.[109]

Marx's shift in focus to the specification of social being in terms of class relations results in the reformulation of the question of consciousness. The being of the proletariat is directly linked not merely to its position in the relations

of production, but also to the possession of class consciousness. What produces this unity of being and consciousness is the proletariat's anthropological composition. Marx first differentiates the proletariat as a class in terms of the different way it "feels" and "sees" its estrangement.[110] The poverty of the powerless and dispossessed proletarian is a "poverty which is conscious of its spiritual and physical poverty, dehumanization which is conscious of its de-humanization and therefore self-abolishing." The proletarian is "already rid" of the old world, of all nationalism[111] and the contradiction between his/her individuality and conditions of life is "evident".[112] The proletarian is not bound to illusions.[113]

The development of class conciousness and the nature of proletarist's struggle as explicitly political is a function of the maturation of the material premises of communism. The actual process of conscientization is never really analyzed. Of course, Marx does draw a distinction between being and consciousness[114] as this is his central objection against Hegel, that the latter does not make this distinction. Even in terms of the proletariat Marx allows that there may exist a gap between the subjective aim of the proletarian "and what... he/she will be historically compelled to do."[115] Marx's exploration of the relationship between the being and consciousness of the proletariat, however, centres on the content of its chains i.e. - as rooted in consciousness or in material reality and therefore what type of activity is required to

abolish them. Marx's answer is, of course, the chains are rooted in the proletariat's being not its consciousness. The problem is thus not that the proletariat is "deluded" or entrapped by ideology. The problem is one of praxis.

Marx in The German Ideology is attacking Feurerbach, Stirner, and Bauer. He is also criticizing a whole historiographic school, which had its origins in the French enlightenment, and is firmly rooted in empiricism. Its exponents were termed "ideologues" and its principle propagandist was Destutt de Tracy[116] who coined the term "ideology". The aim of this school was "to dissect the human mind" in order to reveal the contents of consciousness. It had a critical objective, but it remained simply a mechanism for classifying ideas and for examining their interaction in abstraction. As de Tracy said: ideology is part of zoology.[117] It had as its ultimate goal the revelation of the complete "physiology of consciousness." In a similar way "German ideology" abstracted ideas from their social context, analyzed individuals apart from the social relations which produced them, and understood emancipation as liberation from the domination of a concept. Marx's critique of ideology is a critique of the class which bears it: it is not an abstract theory of consciousness. Marx's attack is politically motivated: he is linking up Feuerbach's empiricism, his concept of social being as isolated abstractions called individuals, with the latter's purely theoretical understanding of practice. He is then connecting Feuerbach's ideas to his class, saying that like all idealists he is compelled to

"share in the illusions of the epoch". Thereby, he is denying that the bourgeoisie has any revolutionary potential.

It is in this framework that Marx, in The German Ideology, develops his theses on the relationship between being and consciousness in general. Marx at this point is operating at the "macro" level for the purposes of the debate with Feuerbach. Marx's general points are as follows. First, consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the "material intercourse" of humans. Second, this "material intercourse" is conditioned by a "definite development of the productive forces." Third, ideas are "phantoms" or "necessary sublimates of their [i.e. - humans'] material life-processes"[118]. Fourth, in ideology "men and their relations appear upside down, as in a camera obscura." This inversion is thus not real. Fifth, the cause of this inversion "arises...from their historical life-process"[119]. The distortion is caused by reality. Sixth, the substance of this inversion is that "morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology... retain the semblance of independence."[120] That is, they do not appear to be directly conditioned by the material life-process. Seventh, this ideology, this illusion, is "the result of their limited material mode of activity and their limited social relations arising from it."[121] Eighth, the full development of ideology only occurs with the development of the productive forces and population and the transition to civil society i.e. the social division of labor, and, in particular, the division between mental and manual

labor. Nineth, the "ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas."[122] This is not merely an expression of the inter-relationship of the control over the means of material production and ideological production. It is an expression of the fact that the uprooting of ideas from their "material life processes" and their propagation by "mental laborers" is a product of class society.

Finally, the transition to civil society involves the dissolution of the "common interest". An illusory "common interest" is formed to maintain the domination of the ruling class. The "independent form" this interest assumes is the State. This is the "illusory community, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family."[123] The "autonomy" of the State, like the "autonomy" of ideas, serves a coercive end. Though they have a social origin, the social division of labor which produces them is "not voluntary, but has come about naturally." Thus the superstructure appears "as an alien force existing outside of them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they are thus no longer able to control."[124] It appears eternal, natural: outside history.

Illusions are thus carried by social classes which are conditioned by the level of the development of the productive forces. This is simply what Marx means when he says: "It is not consciousness that determines life, it is life that determines consciousness."[125] In particular, ideology is borne by the bourgeoisie. This does not mean that all members

of the ruling class believe at any one point that they are actually expressing the common interest, although Marx does say this is generally the case.[126] It is a pre-condition of a class which is revolutionary and seeks power that it is able to present its particular interest as the common interest. This is the case with the proletariat as well.[127] But ideology is not simply a question of belief. It is a question of being. The bourgeoisie bears ideology because it is incapable in practice of overthrowing the material conditions which sustain it.

It is the being of the proletariat which necessitates the abolition of these material conditions and thus ideology. The coincidence of "self activity ...with material life" only occurs in revolutionary praxis. "The products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by criticism" and the earthly family, which contains the secret of the holy family, must be destroyed in theory and practice."[128] The immediate question, of course, is how is the proletariat emancipated from ideology prior to the abolition of these material conditions? In short, how is the educator him/herself educated in order to "change circumstances"?[129]

There are a number of points involved here. First, Marx is continuing to operate at the "macro" level. He is concerned with delineating the being of the proletariat as objectively revolutionary. As we have seen, this is a function of the anthropological composition of the proletariat. Second, the proletariat at the time Marx was writing, was not subjectively

revolutionary. Marx understands this as a product of the immaturity of material conditions which will eventually create a fully formed proletariat and a fully developed capitalist system. Thus the struggle of the developing proletariat may take "illusory forms"[130] and be reflected as a religious war. Third, the composition of the proletariat as a new stage of humanity, and its activity as part of a universal movement which leads to its self abolition as a class, transforms the particular struggles into expressions of a universal political struggle. This is an uneven process as the proletariat is not formed all at once as a homogenous mass, but is dispossessed by degrees. As a universal struggle this therefore acquires theoretical expression. The development of this theory is not merely the product of the advanced activity of certain layers of the proletariat. It is also inter-sects with the division between mental and manual labor. Certain people of petit-bourgeois class origin (such as Marx), caught up in the movement of the proletariat, may become theoreticians of the proletariat. The theory which "captures" the struggle of the proletariat as a "universal" movement is communism.

The final point Marx makes is the most important. The proletariat is the author of its own emancipation. The synthesis of the particular and the universal in the individual proletarian is only accomplished by the latter's self-activity. Or, as Marx writes in his parody of Feuerbach: the "being" of the proletarian is brought into harmony with his/her essence

through revolutionary practice. The realization of humanity in the proletarian is the manifestation of humanity in its totality i.e. as both subjective and objective. The labor of the proletarian which expresses his/her humanity (i.e. revolutionary praxis) is thus conscious from the very beginning. The revolutionary activity, however, is the product of his/her association with fellow proletarians. It aims at gaining control of the productive forces. This end is only realized given the fulfillment of various material premises.

The production of consciousness in the proletariat is therefore very uneven : it mirrors the uneveness of the actual production of the class. As long as the struggles of the proletariat are apolitical, the communists as theoreticians remain mere utopians.[131] However, as the struggle matures, science, as the theoretical "grasping" of the process of historical development, and which is produced by the historical movement, "cease[s] to be doctrinaire and.. become[s] revolutionary."[132] The proletariat "no longer needs to seek science in their mind": they realize it through their praxis. Theory is only confirmed and developed by the practice of the proletariat. The division between mental and manual labor falls away in the production of the new human being. Needless to say, this process is only fully materialized with the establishment of communism. At this point both communism as an idea and the proletariat as a class are abolished. This is what Marx means when he says: "Philosophy

cannot be made a reality without the abolition of the proletariat, the proletariat cannot be abolished without philosophy being made a reality."[133]

Marx's examination of the relationship between social being and consciousness is fundamentally determined by the specific problems he is addressing himself to at any one point. In particular, Marx throughout his formative period (1842-7) focuses on the concretization of social being, especially developing his understanding of the concept on the "macro" level i.e. dealing with the production of social classes and the determination of both consciousness and activity in this light. The theme of human products, including ideas, assuming an independent and dominating position vis-a-vis their producers runs throughout Marx's works. However, it is incomprehensible except in the context of Marx's particular research direction at the time of writing.

Marx is not interested in ideas per se: he is concerned with the practical project of human emancipation. As his thought develops, it becomes clear to him that the proletariat through its revolutionary praxis is the agency of this liberation. Marx's understanding of the social being of the proletarist borrows heavily from various Hegelian anthropological premises. It is this being which conditions both the consciousness and the activity of the proletariat. These two aspects are interfused in the "unfolding" of the "essence" of the class as universal, as a stage of humanization. This "unfolding" is the result of the fulfillment of the external

premises of communism in interaction with the developing self-activity and self-consciousness of the proletariat. This process, however, is uneven and always historically specific. The wants of the proletariat are constituted in the context of the totality of social relations. The actual "on the ground" production of the proletariat as a class and its conjunction with the universal movement of humanization is never fully analyzed. Marx remains at the "macro" level for the most part.

The problem of dissecting the gradations of consciousness within the working class, and their complex interaction with the struggles of the individuals at large which constitutes the proletariat, becomes simply a problem of translation. The process of mystification becomes a <u>reflection</u> of the social being of the individual or group that is deluded. This process remains on the level of abstraction because Marx is interested in demonstrating that the proletariat has a qualitatively different social being than the bourgeoisie, for example, and this is understood in terms of the former's revolutionary potential. This class's mystification, or lack thereof, is thus simply a function the maturation of the material conditions which produce it.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Ernest Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx, (London: NLB, 1971), p. 27.

2. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in Collected Works, Vol. 3, (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 336. Hereafter, all references are from Marx and from the Collected Works, unless otherwise indicated. The volume number will be specified in the initial reference. Henceforth, the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts will be indicated by E.P. Note that our references to Hegel's views are references to Marx's understanding of Hegel's positions at the time of writing.

3. Ibid.

4. The Holy Family, 4, p. 120. Henceforth indicated by H.F.

5. E.P., p. 304.

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8. Ibid., p. 276.

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19. Ibid., p. 304.

20. Ibid., p. 330.

21. H.F., p. 192.

22. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law, 3., p. 9. Henceforth indicated by C.C.

23. Ibid., p. 105.
24. Ibid., p. 81.
25. H.F., p. 82.
26. E.P., p. 340.
27. Ibid., p.
28. Ibid., p. 333.
29. Ibid., p. 277.
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31. E.P., p. 274.
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35. H.F., p. 116.
36. C.C., p. 79.
37. J.Q., p. 154.
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40. J.Q., p. 155.
41. Ibid., p. 160.
42. C.C., p. 102.
43. J.Q., p. 160.
44. Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction, 3, p. 175. Henceforth indicated by Intro.
45. Ibid., p. 176.
46. Ibid., p. 175.
47. J.Q., p. 152.

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56. De Brosses, op. cit., p. 186.

57. Ibid., p. 14.

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62. Ibid., p. 37.

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71. Ibid., p. 31.

72. Ibid., p. 35.

73. The Poverty of Philosophy, 6, p. 166. Henceforth indicated by P.P.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid., p. 145.

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77. G.I., p. 47.

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81. Capital, Vol. 1, (Moscow: Progress, 1954), p. 174.

82. P.P., p. 166.

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122. Ibid., p. 122.
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CHAPTER THREE

In every society there is a given quantum of labor-time. The production relations are an internalization of the interchange with nature. The production of an article which will satisfy a definite want, is at all times the reproduction of a social relation. The system of wants is constituted within the network of social relations, which is in turn developed within the framework established by the system of production relations. Marx's research in the 1850's, which leads to his elaboration of the theory of value, is primarily directed towards locating the "anatomy of civil society" through an analysis of political economy. After his experience in the 1848 revolutions and their aftermath, it becomes clear to him that the complex interactions of the various social classes engaged in a political struggle have to be placed in the context of the fluctuations and development of the system of production relations. The problem Marx is addressing in this period is fundamentally: how does the system of production relations work in capitalism? As we have seen this involves examining the way in which labor is equalized and distributed throughout the economy. This is effected through the production of commodities.

The commodity is the economic cell-form of capitalist society. As we have seen, Marx investigates the internal structure of the commodity on an abstract level first in order to

examine the operation of production relations within capitalism. The reproduction of social relations is only comprehensible in terms of the production of commodities and the specific changes which occur with the transition to capitalism. The question of social being is ultimately dependent upon the framework established by the way in which production relations form a totality within a given society.

Fetishism is a form of mystification "which attaches itself to the products of labor" and is "inseparable from the production of commodities."[1] Our investigation into fetishism centres on the production of an article as a commodity, and its relationship to the production of consciousness. The problem hinges on the internalization by the producer of the internal structure of the commodity. Marx understands mystification as rooted in social being, not consciousness. However, the actual process of the generation of wants and the perception of interests by the producers is <u>not</u> simply <u>a reflection</u> of the structure of the commodity. Nevertheless, the theory of fetishism <u>understood in isolation</u> does contain elements of a reflection theory of knowledge. Problems arise when fetishism is abstracted from its context to form a theory of ideology in general.[2]

The theory of fetishism is developed on what we have termed the "macro" level. The theory of value is a response to the problem of the internalization in society of the relationship to nature. Marx argues that production relations mediate

this process, and he focuses on consciousness primarily in this context. Due to the type of problems he is responding to, the political situation, Marx is not particularly interested in consciousness on the "micro" level. In short, fetishism is a type of mystification which specifically arises from the form social labor assumes in order that production relations within a commodity economy can constitute a whole (i.e. the way in which labor is equalized and distributed). The law of value is the expression of this. Formally autonomous producers are connected to each other through the exchange of their products. Fetishism refers not to the fact that in this process there is a social relation between things, but to the way in which this relation is represented i.e. as a direct relationship between things instead of an indirect relationship which is mediated by the relations of exchange. The form production relations take (i.e. as things) in order to effect an equalization and distribution of labor is falsely equated with the substance of the process itself (i.e. human beings producing). This misrepresentation is intrinsic to the form of value which is attached to the product of labor.

The internal structure of the commodity economy has already been examined in Chapter One. A pre-condition of the "enigmatic character" is the fact that the labor time of the product only manifests itself in the exchange of the product. The wants of the producer can only be satisfied through the equalization of his/her concrete labor

with other producers' labor as abstract labor. However, this equalization only occurs through the equalization of their products as values. It only results from the establishment of an exchange relation between different use-values. It is in this relationship that the products of labor acquire a social form (i.e. that the producer's individual labor is expressed as part of a social whole). In the exchange relation commodities stand to each other purely as values i.e. as embodying abstract labor. In this relation, the physical properties of the articles are completely immaterial. The relationship is wholly social.

In the elementary form of value the relative and the equivalent forms are polar oppositions. No use-value can simultaneously be the expression of its own value. Its value can only be expressed in the exchange-relation. Thus, the relative form of value (in our example, the linen) manifests its value in the coat. The coat maintains its bodily form, yet <u>in this relation</u>, exists purely as equivalent i.e. it officiates as the form of value. It does not express its own value at all. It serves a purely social function and through this equates weaving with tailoring, and connects the tailor with the weaver. In the exchange relation, therefore, besides its natural properties, the coat is endowed with a purely social attribute, the form of exchangeability. However, as the linen expresses its value directly in the bodily form of the coat, it appears that nature has bestowed upon the latter value as well as various physical characteristics. Thus "the

social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor."[3]

The commodity relation is thus a social relationship between things.. Products relate to each other as values: there are no direct social relations between producers. The way in which products relate as values is through the assumption by a use-value of a form of value in the context of exchange. This representation of a physical object as having the power to perform a social function is direct i.e. in the exchange-relation the body of the coat is the direct expression of the equality of tailoring and weaving as human labor. The exchange transaction, therefore, appears to be possible because the coat contains an intrinsic social property and therefore is able to engage in a direct social relationship with the linen. In other words it seems the linen is able to be exchanged for the coat because the coat is a coat, not because it is a product of human labor.

The coat exists as a form of value purely in an exchange relation. The social form tailoring acquires is thus detached from the actual process of tailoring. However, the bodily form of the coat in the exchange transaction serves as the way in which tailoring is expressed as part of a system of production relations. When viewed in isolation from the production process, the exchange relation thus represents the social relation between things as the production of value itself. The form is equated with the content. The social relation between things appears as a direct social

relation because use-values directly embody values. This is the mystery of the commodity, which arises from "the form itself."[4]

Fetishism is inherent in the exchange-relation: it is a misrepresentation which must exist for a commodity-economy to function, because it is attached to the products of labor as soon as they are produced as commodities. As long as the producer only perceives his/her labor in terms of its "visible expression" in the exchange of his/her product (i.e. given the premise that this perception occurs in complete isolation from any other perceptions) he/she will be mystified. Marx is thus examining the process of mystification at a very abstract level. He is simply saying: if you look at the exchange-relation alone, you are simply looking at the form in isolation from the production of value. From this perspective it is inevitable that one would conclude that the form is the content, because this is precisely what the commodities in their social relations are representing is the case. However, this is not the case. The assumption by products of a social form is not eternal. It is not one of their natural properties. Products only assume a social form when production relations are organized in a certain way. The correct method of political economy is not to take the form for granted and then analyse why producers exchange in a given proportion. It is to derive the forms things assume from the way production relations are organized. This is why the law of value has both a qualitative and a quantitative side.

Fetishism is distinct from, yet connected with, reification. Reification is the result of social relations assuming a material form. Human beings are reified in both primitive and civil society, though this occurs in different ways in the respective societies. In primitive society, reification occurs primarily on the level of religion. In civil society, the separation of the units of production and consumption necessitates the establishment of social relations through the exchange of things. Thus, reification in civil society is socially organized. The producers who labor for others are engaged in social labor. The continuity of labor is effected through the reckoning of labor time in abstract units. This continuity as abstract labor is opposed to the discontinuity in concrete labor. This split is further expressed in the opposition of labor as a process (living labor) and its end product (dead labor). The social laborer receives dead labor in return for his/her living labor. The transformation of the laborer into a position of equality with dead labor is a pre-condition of the exchange relation between products.[5] The relations of exchange then mediate the relations of production and reproduction. Human beings must first be reduced to things, in order that they may be socially connected through the exchange of things. Thus linked with the social relation between things is the conceptually distinct moment of the material relation between persons i.e., the development of the split between the public and the private, and the formal and the informal. These formal connections are

articulated primarily through the juridicial relations of civil society.

Reification in the specific form it develops in civil society is the degradation of the process of objectification. Unfree social labor is directly reified; free social labor is reified through the sale of a part of its labor time.[8] Labor and labor power from the perspective of the producer are one: they are only separated through the process of reification. Labor power becomes a commodity just like any other: it is a directly thingly relation. Reification thus differs with respect to social class. Though both the buyer and the seller of labor power are reified in the sense that their relationship to production is materialized in things, the seller of labor power offers living labor. The buyer extends only dead labor.

Personification is connected with reification. However, in a commodity economy all exchangers are transformed into persons. However, they personify different things. The assumption by production relations in a commodity economy of a material form means that "the characters who appear on the economic stage are but the personifications of the economic relations that exist between them."[7] "The persons exist for one another merely as representatives of and therefore owners of commodities."[8] The fragmentation of the product of labor (i.e. as value and use-value) is internalized in the producer as the fragmentation of the subject of the process of labor.[9] This internalization involves the split between dead and living

labor, in which the former comes to stand apart from and rule over the latter. Human labor which is both subjective and objective is divided into abstract and concrete labor. The wants of the producer are satisfied only through the formal links established between producers as exchangers of commodities.

The substantial connection between human beings becomes a "material relation between persons."[10] Humans become juridicial persons who bear masks of commodities. They stand to each other in a relationship in which the subjective and objective dimensions of their labor are only connected through this exchange transaction. They stand to each other as formalities, divorced from their substance. In this way humans exchange as formal equals, as formally free individuals who are allegedly able to contract in or out of any production relation if they so chose.

However, as humans in a commodity economy are only able to engage in production relations as owners of commodities, in their relations to each other they personify these production relations. In the relationship of capital and labor, the capitalist bears the mask of capital, the wage-laborer, the mask of labor-power. They both transact as formal equals: each owning different commodities. Both the capitalist and the worker internalize the separation between the subjective and objective sides of their humanity, the split between the public and private spheres, the formal and the informal. The difference between the two rests in the substantial process

of production which is expressed in the different commodities they advance in the exchange transaction.

Fetishism is the mystification of reification, and it is coincident with the establishment of an exchange relation between things. What the specific production relation is which assumes a material form in exchange is irrelevant to the fetishization of the relation. Both the buyer and seller of labor power, for example, are equally mystified as long as both parties perceive the exchange relation in isolation from the production of value as a whole. The degree to which they do so is a function of their reification, or their social being in a commodity economy. Fetishism in itself is not dependent upon the existence of social classes. However, it is historically connected with the relations of political economy. Mystification intersects with the appropriation of surplus value by the class of non-producers.

In the exchange relation there are a number of realities which underlie the process of mystification. First, there really is a social relation between things and production relations must assume a material form. Second, in a commodity economy the social division of labor requires the separation of abstract and concrete labor, and the alienation of the product from the producer. Third, exchange does constitute a separate moment formally independent of the process of production as a whole. The equalization of labors really occurs through the equalization of products as values. However, the exchange of products is an indirect relation of the

producers, and it is mediated by the system of production relations of the social economy. Fourth, a use value is the form in which value is manifested, concrete labor is the form in which abstract labor is expressed, and the same relation holds for private labor vis-a-vis social labor.

However, the form in which the social relations between the producers becomes visible is intrinsically mystifying. The social relation between things is presented as a direct social relation. The indirect relation between the products in exchange is presented as a direct relation. The form of value appears to be an "objective character" of the product itself and is thus isolated from the process of production. It seems to be natural, and this natural property fulfills a social function. Thus, things act as if they have a life of their own, and in this "topsy-turvey world" the products act as human beings. This inversion of reality, however, is not simply a distortion of reality. To the extent that the exchange-relation is isolated from production, the products really do assume human characteristics. These "estranged forms" are "at home" in these "forms of illusion" precisely because these are the forms "in which they move about and find their daily occupation."[11] The key element in the mystification is therefore the isolation of the exchange relation.

The attribution of human characteristics to things by the exchangers is accompanied by the second moment of fetishism which is connected with the transformations the human beings themselves undergo in the relation. A fundamental condition

of this mystification is that the connections between producers in a social division of labor are spontaneously organized. The exchangers exist in a relation of formal autonomy and equality. These formal relations mediate the relations of production and reproduction. The immediate producers engaged in social labor who exchange their commodity (labor-power) for dead labor are bound in a relationship of formal reciprocity. There is thus a real material relation between persons.

The fetishism arises from the form social labor acquires. The producer's labor as part of the total social labor is visible i the form it takes in the relationship between things. This formal relation is taken for the substance of the system of production relations as a whole. Part of the production process is thus substituted for the whole. The formal interchange is taken from the material interchange. In this way, the "outer mask" the human being wears to exchange his/her goods is represented as the whole human being, the formal public person is split from the informal private person. The substantial human being who is actually engaged in production, and within whom the subjective is never completely divorced from the objective, is thus suppressed behind the fictitious juridicial person.

Historically, this fetishism of substituting the part for the whole coincides with the relations of political economy. The formal relations of civil society, which operate through the network of public institutions, unite the production relations of a given society in a totality. The reality of

the internal opposition of classes is obscured in the formal legal equality of citizens. The State is the reification of society. Though it formally proclaims its independence from the affairs of private persons, and represents the public interest as the interest of the community, its material base in the relations of political economy indicates otherwise. Thus, the State is the "illusory community". The representation of civil society as an undivided whole is the fetishism of society. It is the identification of the form with the form plus content.

Fetishism is a mystification which affects, in the first instance, the way in which the producers perceive their own labor. Commodities are "social things, whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses." They are mysterious because in the commodity "the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor." The mystification is the result of the way in which their labor is "presented to them" as part of the social whole. Though value is wholly social, the producer's perception of value is mediated by the social relation between things. Therefore "a definite social relation between men assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things."[12] Marx shifts from the examination of the exchange relation per se and its peculiarities, to the way in which it is internalized in the consciousness of the exchanger. The fetishism which is

located in the internal structure of the commodity relation is reflected in the person's consciousness.

The exchanger is active in the exchange of his/her product for another. In so doing, he/she equalizes his/her labor with that of others through the equalization of his/her product with other products as values. However, he/she is not aware that this equalization of labor is occurring.[13] "The conventions of our everyday life make it appear commonplace and ordinary that social relations of production should assume the shape of things."[14]

> The two-fold character of the labor of the individual appears to him, when reflected in his brain, only under those forms which are impressed upon that labor in everyday practice by the exchange of products. 15

The exchanger reproduces his/her own mystification. While he/she is active in exchanging, he/she is passive in receiving the imprint of the fetishism embodied in the social relation of things. The equalization of labor in exchange "is a primordial and hence unconsiously instinctive operation of their brain, which necessarily grows and of the particular manner of this material production."[16] "The way in which... [this social relation of things] exists for them or is reflected in their brain, arises from the very nature of the relationship."[17] Whereas the distinction between value and use-value in the commodity is comparatively easy to make, it is "different with the value-form which exists only in the relationship of commodity to commodity" and "the opposing determinations of the commodity are reflected against one

another."[18]

The point remains that the shift from the internal structure of the commodity to the exchanger's consciousness signifies an internalization in the latter of the former. This parallels the process whereby the divisions in civil society are reproduced in the split between public and private, formal and informal, subjective and objective sides of the human being. Nevertheless, fetishism as it is reflected in consciousness is significantly different from this latter process. It is not internal to the way in which production relations are organized in a commodity economy. Fetishism is internal. But the premise that this mystification is reflected in the brain of the exchanger is that the exchanger perceives this relation and nothing else. This is a claim about the process of perception, not about the structure of a commodity economy.

It is in this context that Marx's use of the analogy of religion to fetishism can be analyzed. Marx compares "the fantastic form of a relation between things" to the "mist enveloped regions of the religious world."[19] There is thus a shift in terrain. On the one hand, mystification is internal to the structure of the commodity relation. On the other hand, religious mystification is internal to the process whereby humans produce their consciousness. Using the table as an example, Marx argues that as a commodity it "evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas."[20] The mystification is produced within the commodity relation itself.

However, in the religious world "the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life"[21] and then enter into relations with themselves and humans. Religious mystification is produced within the human brain.

The similarity between the two types as mystification lie in their common cause i.e. the way production relations are organized. "The religious world is but the reflex of the real world"[22]: it is an inversion of the world because it reflects an inverted world. The same with fetishism: private labor (for example) manifests social labor in the exchange of products because there are no direct social relations between humans in commodity relations. Marx's focus in his examination of both fetishism and religion is the way in which the respective mystifications are derived from the production relations which produce them. He is not interested in the mystifications per se.

Nevertheless, there are similarities in the mystifications themselves. Both religion and commodities are human products. The attributes of both gods and commodities when the latter are placed in an exchange relation seem to inhere in the gods and commodities respectively. They both assume an independence vis-a-vis their producers. However, there is a fundamental difference between the two types of products: the social relation between things connects the autonomous producers of the commodity economy in a social division of labor. It is the mechanism whereby the relationship to nature is internalized in society inthe commodity economy. Fetishism

is a fundamental internal element in the way production relations are organized.

In contrast, religion is not internal to the system of production relations. It is internal to consciousness. However, this means it is constituted in the context of the totality of social relations within each society. Thus, to say as Marx does that "the religious world is but the reflex of the real world" is not to say it reflects the inversion present in the system of production relations. Religion in itself has no direct connection with production. The Church may, but religious ideas in themselves do not. Thus, the examination of the development of religiosity can only be properly done on what we have termed the "micro" level.

However, because he is not interested in religion per se, Marx does not analyze religion at this level. He explores it on the "macro" level. It is this which allows him to construct the anology between religion and fetishism in terms of their common base in the way production relations are organized. This leads Marx later on to correlate the type of religion practiced within any given society with the system of production relations. He focuses on the state of the productive forces and the degree to which the relations of production are transparent as relations between humans. There is an explicit correlation between the degree of fetishism (i.e. as a result of the extent of commodity production) and the type of religion.[23]

Christianity becomes the "most fitting form of religion"

for the economy of generalized commodity production.[24] In the commodity, abstract labor, as the substance of value, is manifested as concrete labor in the body of the commodity. The universal (abstract labor) is incarnated in the individual (concrete labor). The human ripped from the community is the divided individual: objectivity is opposed to subjectivity, formal to informal, public to private. Christianity is the cry of this creature.

The full development of the commodity economy results in the complete substitution of form for form plus content. The universal form detached from universal substance is represented as the complete human being. The visible expression of this universal form is the bodily form of the commodity in the exchange relation. In the same way, Christ is the incarnation not of God, but of abstract humanity ripped from its substantial base. Christ is form become content. Christianity is therefore the expression of the fullest development of civil society: formal relations between humans are represented as material relations. The relationship between persons is one of formal autonomy and equality. This is why Protestantism is the most fully evolved form of religion. It is the expression of individuality in civil society.

Marx, in constructing his analogy of fetishism and religion, is, to a degree, directly connecting together the content of the two types of mystification. Religion becomes a form of fetishism. This is, of course, not at all surprising given the genesis of the concept. Nevertheless, the rigour

of Marx's examination of commodity fetisnism is not at all carried over into his analysis of religion, nor indeed into the sphere of consciousness at all. The term fetishism is simply transposed from the terrain of consciousness. If religion is a form of fetisnism, by extension, the theory of fetishism became a theory of ideology. If this is accected then the reflection theory of knowledge must be accepted.

The only way out of this corner is to place Marx's formulations on the relationship between being and consciousness in the context of the develooment of his thought. It then becomes clear that if Marx is "guilty" of conceptual slippage, such as in his use of the religion analogy, it is because he is not particularly interested in consciousness as a topic of investigation. His focus is on the mystification of social relations in commodity economy. How exactly fetishism affects the consciousness of the exchanges is only delineated in a highly artificial context (i.e. on the "macro" level). Consciousness on this level is a reflection of the way production relations are organized. When this framework is transposed to the examination of religion, this mystical veil can only "finally vanish when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations to his fellowmen and to nature."[25]

Marx is concerned with deriving the form of value from the system of production relations. Fetishism results from the isolation of the form from production, and its substitution for the process as a whole. To the degree to which the

producer perceives his/her labor exclusively in terms of the exchange-relation, he/she is mystified. Marx is outlining a method of studying political economy. Thus, the fetishism he is particularly concerned with is the mystification of bourgeois political economy. The ideas of the vulgar economist are constituted both by the system of production relations and by their relationship to it i.e. as mental laborers, non-producers. "The categories of bourgeois economy...are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production viz; the production of commodities."[20]

The investigation by the mental laborers into the "forms of social life" occurs only after the process of historical development is completed. In the commodity economy "the characters that stamp products as commodities, and whose establishment is a necessary preliminary to the circulation of commodities, have already acquired the stability of natural self understood forms of social life, before man seeks to decipher...their meaning."[27] The forms production relations acquire thus appear to the economist to belong naturally to the products themselves. He/she starts from the forms as given. From the price of commodities the economist derives the magnitude of value, and from the expression of all commodities in money he/she derives their common character as values.[28] However, the forms themselves conceal rather than reveal their derivation from historically specific production relations. In the exchange-relation viewed in isolation from

production, value parades as the natural property of an object. The mystification of bourgeois political economy is therefore expressed in its empiricism: things are viewed as isolated facts, the form a social relation takes is substituted for the relation as a whole.

Adam Smith decisively dispels the illusion generated by the Physiocrats that rent grows out of the soil and recognizes labor as the source of value. The reason he is able to theoretically grasp the reduction of all concrete labors to abstract labor is because of the degree of development of the commodity economy itself. This process of the equalization of labors "forcibly asserts itself like an overriding law of Nature."[29] Yet he is unable to derive the form value assumes in a commodity economy from the organization of production relations. He and the political economists who follow him derive these forms from the nature of the objects produced themselves. In their eyes then, the proportion in which commodities exchange (the magnitude of value) is derived not from the technical structure of production (i.e. productivity of labor) but the operations of the forms themselves. The economic categories of political economy are endowed with human attributes (i.e. hypostatization). Capital becomes responsible for the growth of the productive forces.

Thus, political economists are <u>ideologues</u> who "remain in the grip of the world of illusion."[30] They are "at home in the estranged outward appearance of economic relations."[31] It is their beliefs which constitute ideology in the proper

sense of the word.[32] They are simply unable to place the present in a historical context. The more generalized the form production relations assume, the more complete is their mystification. Thus, they are most deluded when it comes to dealing with money.[33] The reason vulgar economy does not investigate the qualitative side of value is because:

> The value form of the product of labor is not only the most abstract, but also the most universal form, taken by the product in bourgeois production, and stamps that production as a particular species of social production, and thereby gives it its specific historical character. If we treat this mode of production as one eternally fixed by Nature for every state of society, we necessarily overlook that which is the differentia specifica of the value form...34

Marx counterposes the method of political economy to the method of vulgar economy. In the former, the substance of value is derived from the form of the commodity. Then the form of value is derived from the way production relations are organized. Science must probe the relationship between form and content as a historical process, as the product of the interactions of living human beings. It is not simply the description of facts as isolated events. Social facts are the forms social relations assume at a given point. There are no "natural" social forms which exist in a static relation to each other. Forms may conceal rather than reveal the totality of social relations which underlie them. This is why it is the task of science to place forms in this historical context. As Marx says: "all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of

things coincided."[35]

The generalization of commodity production, its extension to all spheres of the economy, results in the forms production relations assume becoming the visible expressions of the production process as a whole. The traces of the historical generation of these forms vanishes. They become "natural". This is why Marx argues that the only correct method of political economy is to examine the system of production relations as it forms a totality i.e. how these relations are internally articulated in terms of "abstract general relations" e.g. value, division of labor.[36] This is the movement from abstract to concrete. The abstract categories remain tools of investigation for the purpose of peeling back the substance of social production. They do not produce the system of production relations. The revelation of the substance of the categories as the labor of human beings in the given economy allows one to examine why production relations assume different social forms at different times, in different countries.

Thus, though political economy does not analyze economic categories in the order they appeared historically, its results in the historization of these forms. "The whole mystery of commodities vanishes therefore as soon as we come to other forms of production."[37] In the feudal mode of production, for examole, the producers are not formally autonomous: social labor is bound.[38] The social division of labor is an internalization in society of the relationship to nature.

This is articulated in the relations of political economy. The production of things and the appropriation of surplus value undergirds the system of production relations. However, because "personal dependence forms the groundwork of society, there is no necessity for labor and its products to assume a fantastic form different from their reality."[39] Surplus value is extracted through services or payments in kind or dues. However, there is no exchange relation. Therefore, there is no social relation between things. The producer's labor is directly social.

The limited degree to which commodities are produced in the feudal mode of production means that fetishism is correspondingly limited. The forms production relations assume in commodity production are only perceived as natural with the generalization of this production. Until this point, the primary sources of fetishism are interest and money. Nevertheless, though the social organization of production in other modes of production may be comparatively "extremely simple and transparent", as long as the forces of production remain at a low level of development, "the social relations within the sphere of material life, between man and man, and between man and nature, are correspondingly narrow."[40] These relations are therefore "founded either on the immature development of man individually...or upon direct relations of subjection."[41] This underdevelopment is reflected in the presence of other types of mystification, especially religion. The process of production itself remains outside

the conscious control of the immediate producers.

Mystification is intimately related to the process whereby the products humans produce come to stand over and dominate them. The inversion in the sphere of consciousness reflects an inversion in the sphere of production relations. The fact that humans are not in control of the process of production signifies they are not fully human. A specific form of mystification is connected to a specific way in which production relations are organized. Demystification is therefore the result of the abolition of the condition which requires the illusion.[2] The illusion cannot be dispelled until the social being of the person is first transformed. This requires the maturation of various material premises. In the commodity economy:

> ...the behaviour of men in the social process of production is purely atomic. Hence their relations to each other in production assume a material character independent of their control and conscious individual action. 42

The key reason why humans are dominated in this society is that labor is 'spontaneously' organized in a social division of labor. Producers depend on the social relations between things to connect them together. The forms production relations take "make the actual relation(s) invisible".[43] Producers are thus bound to the system of wants by "invisible threads" though they remain formally autonomous. Because the distribution and equalization of labor is not consciously organized, but is effected through the exchange of products of the proportions in which the producers' products exchange fluctuates independently of this control. In this way, the

products come to rule over their producers.[44] These fluctuations "appear to them as overwhelmingly natural laws that irresistibly enforce their will over them, and confront them as blind necessity."[45]

Fetishism, because it involves the representation of a social process as the property of a thing, produces the illusion of permanence. The isolation of the exchange relation from the process of production necessarily involves the detachment of the form of value from its historical context. If only the social relation of things is perceived, not only is the way production relations are organized seem as eternal, but also of course, the exchanger feels powerless to do anything about it.

Demystification only occurs when the producers themselves consciously control the distribution of labor, and thereby the process of production as a whole. The material conditions for this "community of free individuals" is the development of the productive forces to a certain level and their possession by all producers in common. In this society of associated producers the social relations between human beings are "perfectly simple and intelligible ...with regard not only to production but also to distribution."[46] Both the producer's labor and his/her product are directly social. There is no fetishism or mystification of any type.

Through the conscious control of the productive forces to satisfy the associated producers' wants humans "rationally regulate their interchange with Nature, bringing it [i.e. the

realm of production under their common control instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature."[47] However, the sphere of production, no matter how it is organized remains a realm of necessity. Nevertheless, it is through this process that the working day can be reduced, and the true realm of freedom can develop.

The material pre-conditions for the establishment of a society of associated producers are developed in the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism involves a specific type of fetishism. It is expressed in the valorization of capital. Capitalism is the fullest development of the features of civil society which are only implicitly developed in other modes of production. The formal freedom of labor allows for the sale of labor-power as a commodity. This freedom co-exists with the freedom of capital to expand to new spheres of production and expand itself. The formal reciprocity of exchange masks the difference between living and dead labor i.e. that living labor alone produces new value. The wage relation is a phenomenal form which conceals the producer's exploitation by the capitalist (i.e. the appropriation of surplus value). It is pure illusion because the exchange of living labor for dead labor conceals the fact that unpaid labor has been expended by the producer.

"Capital is not a thing, but rather a definite social relation, belonging to a definite historical formation of society, which is manifested in a thing and lends this thing a specific social character".[48] In the production relation

of capitalist and worker, money assumes the social function of industrial capital. Capital is then the specific form assumed by the means of production. Capital assumes various forms depending upon the specific production relation involved. Value is only produced in the process of social production. However, the surplus value which is pumped out of the producers is unevenly distributed throughout the other sectors of the economy through the establishment of other production relations.

Surplus value, though it has one source, takes different forms as profit, rent, and interest. Interest-bearing capital is the most "fetish-like form" it involves the self-valorization of capital.[49] It is money that expands its value "without the intervening process that creates the value."[50] Interest bearing capital is thus a social relation which is "consummated in the relation of a thing, of money, to itself."[51] It is dead labor that "contains within itself a portion of present or future living surplus labor."[52]

The owner of the means of production expends capital, not labor to generate valorization. He/she purchases not only variable capital but also constant capital. The conversion of surplus value into the rate of profit is determined by both circulation and production.[53] The sphere of circulation is increasingly separated from the sphere of production as capitalism develops. The result is that the sphere within which value is actually produced becomes less and less visible. The divergence of prices from values contributes to this mystification.

Capital confronts living labor power as formally autonomous from it. It expresses the fact that the means of production have been monopolized by a minority of non-producers; yet juridicially the owner of the factory and the owner of labor-power exchange as equals. Capital is simply dead labor, existing in a social relation, which confronts the worker as an alien power standing over him/her.[54] In the valorization of capital, the productive powers of labor seem to belong to dead labor. Capital employs labor. Capital sets in motion the development of the productive forces. Labor-power appears as but a "factor of production", one input among many.

The participants in the process of production (wage-labor, capital, and landed property = Trinity Formula) as formally autonomous inputs, draw independently their separate revenues. The personifications of these economic categories (worker, capitalist, and landlord respectively) own their different commodities and perform different functions. The value created is transformed into separate portions and distributed as a wage to the worker, profit to the capitalist, and rent to the landlord. However, because the commodities they contribute to the process of production are formally equal (i.e. as dead or living labor) it appears as if the sources of revenue are equally sources of value. Capital and land "ghost-walk" as social characters and as mere things.[55] This mystification results from the fact that value appears to a property of the product produced. The Trinity Formula

is thus a form of fetishism as it is manifested in capitalism, and is in fact fetishism in its most developed form.

The mystification of capitalism is reproduced through the isolation of the exchange relation (the sphere of circulation generally) from the sphere of production. The wage-form is the specific mechanism whereby exploitation is cloaked in the veil of formal equality and freedom. "The wage laborer is bound to his owner by invisible threads."[56] These threads mediate the relations of production and reproduction, and tie the worker to the system of wants. The exclusive focus on the sphere of circulation creates the illusion that humans participate in the process of productions as a whole as free and equal individuals. The mask the worker wears as an owner of the commodity labor power is taken for the whole human being.

The shift from the sphere of circulation to the sphere of production reveals that humans in capitalist society engage in production not as individuals but as members of classes. They are constituted as individuals only in the context of historically specific production relations. In the society of political economy these relations are organized around the extraction of surplus value by a class of non-producers. The construction of the proletariat as a class is conditioned by the development of the productive forces.

The fundamental contradiction of capitalism is the socialization of these forces, of the production process, combined with private appropriation. The premise of this

developing as a conscious contradition is that the transformation of the social being of the proletariat (i.e. being thrown together in a common workplace, having an objective common interest in limiting the extraction of surplus value, combined with the development of the production forces) will generate class consciousness. According to the scenario, this collective identification in the sphere of production will submerge the atomization reproduced in the sphere of circulation (and also the sphere of reproduction). The form that is represented as form plus content will then increasingly lose its "hold" over the class of producers. They will cease to internalize completely the divisions between public and private, formal and informal, subjective and objective. In short, they will gradually form a new stage of humanity. This development will intersect with the struggle to limit the extraction of surplus-value. As the crisis in capitalism intensifies, this struggle will mature into a political struggle and the proletariat will emancipate itself through a social revolution.

Needless to say this scenario is precisely that: an abstract scenario. Marx concentrates on examining the sytem of production relations which condition the development of social classes. The proletariat is constituted as a class whose social being is revolutionary when it is fully developed through the growth in the productive forces. The premises of this argument in terms of the anthropological composition of the proletariat were outlined in Chapter Two. The theory

of value (and by extension, the theory of fetishism) simply provides the context within which the specificity of the proletariat as a social class can be understood.

The construction of the proletariat involves the movement of consciousness from the sphere of circulation to the sphere of production. Marx's articulation of the relatively illusion-free consciousness of the proletariat when it is formed as a class operates at the "macro" level. It is the social being of the proletariat which frees it in the final analysis from fetishism. The other exchangers, the bourgeois economists, are unable to pierce the "material veil" which cloaks the process of production because they are not dispossessed, forced to sell their labor-power as a commodity and thrown into a socialized production process with fellow workers. Or at least if they are subject to these conditions, as mental laborers they are subject to them in a qualitatively different way. It is the material conditions of production which do not allow the proletariat to isolate the exchange-relation from the process of production as a whole, or to identify the mask they wear as a formal equal of the capitalist as anything but a fiction. As Lukacs argues later: the reduction of the proletarian to a commodity "forces him to surpass the immediacy of his condition,"[57] and to act and to identify him/herself as a member of the class. Moreover, it is a class with "radical chains" and "radical needs".

There is no doubt that Marx understands the actual

process of the development of class consiousness (and by extension, class activity) as an enormously complex and uneven process. His historical pamphlets The Eighteenth Brumiere and The Civil War in France are analyses which, to a degree, attempt to integrate the "macro" and "micro" levels of analysis. There is no question that various layers of the proletariat in their struggles "conjure up the spirits of the past."[58] "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare..." upon the brain of the proletariat as it is developing just as it does on other social classes. However, the reciptivity of the proletariat to these ghosts is very much conditioned by the uneven and combined development of capitalism as a whole.

The proletariat, when it is fully formed, and therefore ready to make a social revolution, will have "stripped off all superstition in regard to the past" and will "let the dead bury the dead."[59] This is what makes the proletarian revolution different from other revolutions: its degree of consciousness. The proletarian enters the revolution with no illusions, no ideals, and he/she aims "only" at the placing of the productive forces under the conscious control of the associated producers.

However, the distance between a "fully formed" proletariat and an "incompletely formed" proletariat is immense. It mirrors to a degree, the distance between the "full development" of the productive forces which it is possible to achieve while still maintaining the relations of

of capitalist production, and the actual development of these forces at any one point.[60] The theory of value explains how a commodity economy in general, and capitalism in particular, works. The theoretical premise of Capital is a hypothetical state of equilibrium which is used to explain how the system functions under optimal conditions. The fact that in capitalism crises are endemic is beside the point.

Fetishism is a pre-condition to the accumulation of capital and the development of the productive forces. The rate of accumulation is connected to the rate at which surplus value is extracted from the immediate producers. Thus, there is no question in the course of the development of the proletariat, large layers of the class, if not the class as a whole, are mystified and look upon the conditions of capitalist production as "self-evident laws of nature."[61] When capitalism as a whole is progressing, and is revolutionizing the productive forces, its advance "breaks down all resistance" in the proletariat. Using the equilibrium premise Marx argues that with the complete organization of capitalist production direct force need rarely be invoked to keep the proletariat in line. "In the ordinary run of things, the laborer can be left to the 'natural laws of production'."[62]

The key to whether the proletariat is able to break from the illusions generated in the sphere of circulation appears to be ultimately dependent upon the presence or absence of crises in the sphere of production. In the final analysis, however, it is not solely the objective factors which determine

the limitation of the extraction of surplus value. It is the degree to which the changes in the productive sphere affect the producers' consciousness and activity. How exactly this would develop at the micro level is unclear. The system of wants is constituted in the context of the totality of social relations, not just productive relations.

The important point is that the mystification produced by fetishism operates whenever there is a perceptual isolation of the exchange relations from the production of value. Demystification is dependent upon transformations in the social being of the perceiver. This then has an effect on the latter's consciousness. Fetishism itself, as internal to the structure of exchange relations, continues to operate as long as the relationship between producers takes the form of a social relationship between things. It lasts as long as commodity production continues.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Capital, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 77. Henceforth, all quotes are from here unless otherwise indicated. References to Volume III are specified by Volume number.
2. R. Lichtman and J. Mepham, op. cit.
3. p. 77.
4. p. 76.
5. This occurs logically not historically.
6. Lawrence Krader, op. cit., p. 269.
7. p. 89.
8. Ibid.
9. Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, trans. by R. Livingstone, (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 98.
10. p. 78.
11. Vol. III, p. 830.
12. p. 77.
13. pp. 78-9.
14. COPE, p. 34.
15. p. 77, our emphasis.
16. Value Studies by Marx, trans. by A. Dragstedt, (London: New Park Publications), p. 36, our emphasis.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 21.
19. p. 77.
20. p. 76.
21. p. 77.
22. p. 83.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.

25. p. 84.
26. p. 80.
27. p. 80.
28. p. 80.
29. p. 80.
30. Vol. III, p. 830.
31. Ibid.
32. c.f. reference to Destutt de Tracy, p. 84, f.
33. p. 85, f.
34. Ibid.
35. Vol. III, p. 817.
36. Introduction to COPE, p. 206.
37. 80-1.
38. What follows is a description of the dominant form of social labor in the feudal mode of production. Commodities are produced to a limited extent.
39. p. 81.
40. p. 84.
41. pp. 83-4.
42. p. 96.
43. p. 540.
44. p. 79.
45. Vol. III, p. 831.
46. p. 83.
47. Vol. III, p. 820.
48. Ibid., p. 814.
49. Ibid., p. 391.
50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 392.
52. Ibid., p. 399.
53. Ibid., p. 822.
54. Ibid., p. 815.
55. Ibid., p. 830.
56. p. 574.
57. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 166.
58. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. by R. Tucker, (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 1972), p. 437.
59. Ibid., p. 439.
60. Preface to COPE, p. 21.
61. Vol. III, p. 809, as quoted in Lichtman, op. cit., p. 72.
62. Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The theory of fetishism is not a theory of ideology. Marx never intended that it serve to explain the process whereby consciousness is actually produced. Fetishism is simply a mystification which attaches itself to the products of labor whenever they are exchanged as commodities. It is internal to the structure of exchange relations. In exchange, a use-value is the mode of expression of value. The social form production relations assume is represented directly as a property of the products themselves. Fetishism is the representation of the process of reification as if it had not occurred. The transformation of human beings into things is denied and the thingly relation between persons is presented as a social relation between thingly beings. The form production relations acquire is substituted for the process of production as a whole. Thereby, things are endowed with human attributes, and ghost walk as both social characters and things. Human beings wear the masks of persons and their formal interchange is presented as a material interchange.

Fetishism is necessary in an economy wherein the division of labor (or a portion thereof) is "spontaneously" organized. The social relation between things is the way in which production relations in a commodity economy are constituted as a totality. The relationship to nature is internalized in society through the causal link between the distribution of labor in production and the equalization of the products

of labor in exchange. The theory of value is the synthetization of the relation to nature and in society in terms of the qualitative and quantitative sides of value. Marx examines how this works in a commodity economy, first, through the derivation of the content of value from the form production relations assume, and second, by tracing the development of the form itself from the way in which production is organized.

However, the discovery of the law of value in no way dissipates the mist generated by the social relation between things. As long as the exchange relation is isolated from the process of production as a whole the producers will perceive the social character of their labor "as an objective character of the products themselves."[1] The premise of this mystification is the isolated character of the perception process. As long as this holds, the appearance of value as a natural property will be reflected in the perceiver's consciousness. This is only altered with the transformation of his/her social being.

The theory of fetishism must be understood in the context of the development of Marx's thought and his standpoint as a political actor. His early writings are focused on the battle against idealism, the claim that being and thinking are identical, and that estrangement has its origin in the way people think. Marx is not merely writing to prove that Hegel or Bauer are wrong. He is fundamentally debating the political conclusions which are drawn by these men. If chains are simply mental in their composition, they can be abolished in thought.

This Marx denies: illusions are only a symptom of an estrangement that has its roots in material reality. It is this reality which must be practically overthrown.

Marx's later thought is an elaboration and clarification of this premise. Thus, the problems which are posed for him centre around the question of social being. This develops in his examination of the historical specificity of social relations, the constitution of the individual in this context, and the composition of social classes. The quest for the anatomy of civil society, which is eventually located in political economy, is conditioned by Marx's understanding of the proletariat as the revolutionary class in capitalism. His delineation of the formation of the class as the product of a mode of production, and not just a social formation, operates at the "macro" level of analysis. Marx centres on the causal determination of social being as a whole by the system of production relations in order to demonstrate the prioritization of class analysis as opposed to examining individuals. Fused with this specification of social being are a number of anthropological premises which he develops in his earlier writings. The process of the formation of the proletariat becomes a process of humanization.

Marx is interested in the question of consciousness only in terms of social being. The formation of consciousness is linked to practice, and by practice Marx understands primarily class activity or the construction of history by the process of class struggle (i.e. in the era of civil society).

His elaboration of the relationship between being and consciousness thus operates at the "macro" level primarily. On this level, consciousness becomes a reflection of social being. However, Marx by no means accepts this simplistic causal scheme as an indication of how consciousness and activity actually develop. It is an uneven process which is constituted within the system of wants as a whole. Wants are generated in the framework of the totality of social relations, not simply production relations. It is the construction of the proletariat by the development of capitalism which generates in it "radical needs" which can only be fulfilled with the overthrow of this system. The uneven rhythm of the consciousness of the proletariat is thus ultimately a function of the fulfillment of various material premises.

The "micro" level is underdeveloped in Marx's writings. Marx's general understanding of consciousness borrows heavily from the ideas he develops in his earlier period. This is indicated in his use of the word fetishism to describe a specific form of mystification. Marx understands mystification as a whole as inter-related with the domination of humans by either natural forces, or the productive forces they have created. Demystification is a function of the abolition of the condition in which humans are dominated. The progressive control of humans over their environment, the advance of the productive forces result in a transformation in the type of mystification. Consciousness is a reflection of social

being. In his elaboration of this positivist schema, Marx is at one with De Brosses. However, Marx is by no means a positivist: his whole critique of vulgar economy demonstrates this. The problem lies in the attempt to transpose this critique to the level of the actual development of consciousness.

The mystification produced by the social relation between things is only reflected in the consciousness of the perceiver to the degree that the exchange relation is perceived in isolation from production. Insofar as this occurs, the theory of fetishism is a reflection theory of knowledge. Among other inadequacies of this latter theory is that it provides no explanation of error. The perceiver is purely passive: there is no selectivity in what is and what is not perceived. This contradicts Marx's understanding of humans as both subjective and objective, active and passive, no matter how estranged they may be. The explanation of this discrepancy is simply that Marx develops the theory of fetishism at the "macro" level. It is a deliberately abstract presentation.

There is never a case in which the exchange-relation is perceived in isolation. The act of perception is always mediated by the totality of social relations in which the person is engaged (and in which he/she has been engaged). There is always selectivity in perception. The unconscious as well as the conscious portion of the psyche plays a part in this process. If the theory of fetishism is correct, it is only one element among innumerable variables which contribute

to the composition of human beliefs at any one point. The degree to which fetishism dominates an individual's consciousness, of course, fluctuates. However, fetishism in no way "structures" consciousness. Exchange-relations, even in the most highly developed capitalist society, are but a part of the totality of social relations.

To concentrate on the exchange transactions as the determinants of ideology in the society as a whole is simply to engage in fetishism: it is the substitution of the form for the form plus content. The exchangers stand as abstract individuals, and they wear the masks of persons. Fetishism is the mystification of the mask, not the whole human being which stands behind it. To identify fetishism with ideology (i.e. as the actual belief system borne by the human being) is to abstract the humans who participate in exchange from their social context.

The position that fetishism is a theory of ideology turns on the question of social being. Even to broaden the definition beyond production relations to the totality of social relations in no way really aids in clarifying the actual process whereby beliefs develop. If the conditions which require illusions cannot be separated from the illusions themselves, then, of course, it becomes very difficult to actually distinguish between illusion and reality. The significance of this is primarily political for Marx i.e. the elaboration of a political strategy requires a prioritization

of energy, a selection of where to direct one's forces. Thus, Marx's battle against idealism signifies that inevitably the study of religion as a phenomenon in its own right will be downplayed. Religion and belief systems in general are thus viewed as utlimately determined by social being. Differences in the precise latitude allowed by the word "ultimately" signify no more than degrees of acceptance of the thesis of mechanical causality.

Marx is not a simple mechanical materialist. He begins from a fundamentally different standpoint, which on the level of abstraction translates into the assertion that humans are both subjective and objective. However, this thesis is only concretized in the context of the "macro" level. Consciousness is linked to praxis, and this in turn is a function of social being, and this is determined by the composition and development of social classes. This is the axis of Marx's opposition to the "old materialism". Subjectivity and objectivity in the "new materialism" are only linked in terms of the determination of consciousness by social being. Exactly how this can occur when most human acts are conscious from the very start is unclear.

The composition of belief systems and their relationship to social being remains largely unexplored. An examination of the inter-relation between the "macro" and "micro" levels largely hinges on the relationship between the abstract and concrete moments of human society. No society is composed of abstract individuals, who incarnate a "human nature" that

is purely biologically derived, or who constitutes a culture that is abstracted from its system of production relations. On the other hand, the catch-all phrase "historical specificity" when applied to cultures is equally inappropriate. Taken to its logical conclusion, it implies there is no continuity between cultures. The integration of the abstract and concrete moments must be effected in terms of a developmental scheme. The maturation of the individual within a specific culture develops within the framework of the process of hominization as a whole. To employ the psychoanalytic phrase: ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis.

In our opinion, future research in this area must employ as one of its tools the psychoanalytic developmental scheme. In this regard, the concepts of secondary identification and the elaboration of the significance of the conflict-free sphere of the ego are particularly important. The process of hominization would be located in the context of the transition from the primitive community to civil society. In this way, many of Marx's ambiguous formulations on the anthropological composition of the proletariat and the State as an "illusory community" could be examined. The composition of belief systems in terms of the hominization process as a whole could then be explored.

The theory of fetishism will be one of the tools which will aid in this research. However, as it stands the theory has a limited use in the analysis of belief systems. It has far more validity as a weapon against vulgar economy or empiricism

of any form. This is not surprising, as it was for this purpose that Marx developed the theory. To comprehend the theory of fetishism, it is necessary to locate it in terms of the development of Marx's thought. Any other approach is bound to be as mystifying as the process it is trying to explain.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Capital, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 79.

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