but an end in itself, the meaningful expression of human energy; hence work is enjoyable.

Marx's central criticism of capitalism is not the injustice in the distribution of wealth; it is the perversion of labor into forced, alienated, meaningless labor, hence the transformation of man into a "crippled monstrosity." Marx's concept of labor as an expression of man's individuality is succinctly expressed in his vision of the complete abolition of the lifelong submersion of a man in one occupation. Since the aim of human development is that of development of the total, universal man, man must be emancipated from the crippling influence of specialization. In all previous societies, Marx writes, man has been "a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic." 36

There is no greater misunderstanding or misrepresentation of Marx than that which is to be found, implicitly or explicitly, in the thought of the Soviet Communists, the reformist socialists, and the capitalist opponents of socialism alike, all of whom assume that Marx wanted only the economic improvement of the working class, and that he wanted to abolish private property so that the worker would own what the capitalist now has. The truth is that for Marx the situation of a worker in a Russian "socialist" factory, a British state-owned factory, or an American factory such as General Motors, would appear essentially the same. This, Marx expresses very clearly in the following:

"An enforced increase in wages (disregarding the other difficulties, and especially that such an anomaly could only be maintained by force) would be nothing more than a better remuneration of slaves, and would not restore, either to the worker or to the work, their human significance and worth."

"Even the equality of incomes which Proudhon demands would only change the relation of the present-day worker to his work into a relation of all men to work. Society would then be conceived as an abstract capitalist." 37

The central theme of Marx is the transformation of alienated, meaningless labor into productive, free labor, not the better payment of alienated labor by a private or "abstract" state capitalism.

5

Erich Fromm

ALIENATION

The concept of the active, productive man who grasps and embraces the objective world with his own powers cannot be fully understood without the concept of the negation of productivity: alienation. For Marx the history of mankind is a history of the increasing development of man, and at the same time of increasing alienation. His concept of socialism is the emancipation from alienation, the return of man to himself, his self-realization.

"E.P. M.S.S., p. 107."
Alienation (or "estrangement") means, for Marx, that man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the world (nature, others, and he himself) remain alien to him. They stand above and against him as objects, even though they may be objects of his own creation. Alienation is essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object.

The whole concept of alienation found its first expression in Western thought in the Old Testament concept of idolatry. The essence of what the prophets call "idolatry" is not that man worships many gods instead of only one. It is that the idols are the work of man's own hands—they are things, and man bows down and worships things; worships that which he has created himself. In doing so he transforms himself into a thing. He transfers to the things of his creation the attributes of his own life, and instead of experiencing himself as the creating person, he is in touch with himself only by the worship of the idol. He has become estranged from his own life forces, from the wealth of his own potentialities, and is in touch with himself only in the indirect way of submission to life frozen in the idols.

The connection between alienation and idolatry has also been emphasized by Paul Tillich in Der Mensch im Christentum und im Marxismus, Düsseldorf, 1953, p. 14. Tillich also points out in another lecture, "Protestantische Vision," that the concept of alienation in substance is to be found also in Augustine's thinking. Löwith also has pointed out that what Marx fights against are not the gods, but the idols, [cf. Von Hegel zu Nietzsche, i.e. p. 378].

This is, incidentally, also the psychology of the fanatic. He is empty, dead, depressed, but in order to compensate for the state of depression and inner deadness, he chooses an idol, be it the state, a party, an idea, the church, or God. He makes this idol into the absolute, and submits to it in an absolute way. In doing so his life attains meaning, and he finds excitement in the submission to the chosen idol. His excitement, however, does not stem from joy in productive relatedness; it is intense, yet cold excitement built upon inner deadness or, if one would want to put it symbolically, it is "burning ice."
The thinker who coined the concept of alienation was Hegel. To him the history of man was at the same time the history of man’s alienation (Entfremdung). (“What the mind really strives for,” he wrote in *The Philosophy of History*, “is the realization of its notion; but in doing so it hides that goal from its own vision and is proud and well satisfied in this alienation from its own essence.”) For Marx, as for Hegel, the concept of alienation is based on the distinction between existence and essence, on the fact that man’s existence is alienated from his essence, that in reality he is not what he potentially is, or to put it differently, that he is not what he ought to be, and that he ought to be that which he could be.

For Marx the process of alienation is expressed in work and in the division of labor. Work is for him the active relatedness of man to nature, the creation of a new world, including the creation of man himself. (Intellectual activity is of course, for Marx, always work, like manual or artistic activity.) But as private property and the division of labor develop, labor loses its character of being an expression of man’s powers; labor and its products assume an existence separate from man, his will and his planning. (The object produced by labor, its product, now stands opposed to it as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object and turned into a physical thing; this product is an objectification of labor.) Labor is alienated because the work has ceased to be a part of the worker’s nature and consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work, but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not

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2. 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.
develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless.” Thus, in the act of production the relationship of the worker to his own activity is experienced “as something alien and not belonging to him, activity as suffering (passivity), strength as powerlessness, creation as emasculation.”* (While man thus becomes alienated from himself, the product of labor becomes “an alien object which dominates him.” This relationship is at the same time the relationship to the sensuous external world, to natural objects, as an alien and hostile world.” Marx stresses two points: (1) in the process of work, and especially of work under the conditions of capitalism, man is estranged from his own creative powers, and (2) the objects of his own work become alien beings, and eventually rule over him, become powers independent of the producer. (“The laborer exists for the process of production, and not the process of production for the laborer.”)

A misunderstanding of Marx on this point is widespread, even among socialists. It is believed that Marx spoke primarily of the economic exploitation of the worker, and the fact that his share of the product was not as large as it should be, or that the product should belong to him, instead of to the capitalist. But as I have shown before, the state as a capitalist, as in the Soviet Union, would not have been any more welcome to Marx than the private capitalist. He is not concerned primarily with the equalization of income. He is concerned with the liberation of man from a kind of work which destroys his individuality, which transforms him into a thing, and which makes him into the slave of things. Just as Kierkegaard was concerned with the salvation of the individual, so Marx was, and his criticism of capitalist society is directed not at its method of distribution of income, but at its mode of production, its destruction of individuality and its enslavement of man, not by the capitalist, but the enslavement of man—worker and capitalist—by things and circumstances of their own making.

Marx goes still further. In unalienated labor man not only realizes himself as an individual, but also as a species-being. For Marx, as for Hegel and many other thinkers of the enlightenment, each individual represents the species, that is to say, humanity as a whole, the universality of man: the development of man leads to the unfolding of his whole humanity. In the process of work he “no longer reproduces himself merely intellectually, as in consciousness, but actively and in a real sense, and he sees his own reflection in a world which he has constructed. While, therefore, alienated labor takes away the object of production from man, it also takes away his species life, his real objectivity as a species-being, and changes his advantage over animals into a disadvantage in so far as his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him. Just as alienated labor transforms free and self-directed activity into a means, so it transforms the species life of man into a means of physical existence. Consciousness, which man has from his species, is transformed through alienation so that species life becomes only a means for him.”

As I indicated before, Marx assumed that the alienation of work, while existing throughout history, reaches

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* E.P. MSS., p. 98.
** E.P. MSS., p. 99.
* E.P. MSS., p. 99.
* Capital I, 1. c. p. 536.
** E.P. MSS., pp. 102-3.
As in religion man is governed by the products of his own brain, so in capitalist production he is governed by the products of his own hands.”14 “Machinery is adapted to the weakness of the human being, in order to turn the weak human being into a machine.”15

The alienation of work in man’s production is much greater than it was when production was by handicraft and manufacture. (In handicrafts and manufacture, the workman makes use of a tool; in the factory the machine makes use of him. There the movements of the instrument of labor proceed from him; here it is the movement of the machines that he must follow. In manufacture, the workmen are parts of a living mechanism; in the factory we have a lifeless mechanism, independent of the workman, who becomes its mere living appendage.)16 It is of the utmost importance for the understanding of Marx to see how the concept of alienation was and remained the focal point in the thinking of the young Marx who wrote the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, and of the “old” Marx who wrote Capital. Aside from the examples already given, the following passages, one from the Manuscripts, the other from Capital, ought to make this continuity quite clear:

“This fact simply implies that the object produced by labor, its product, now stands opposed to it as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object and turned into a physical thing; this product is an objectification of labor. The performance of work is at the same time its objectification. The performance of work appears in the sphere of political economy as a

13 E.P. MSS., p. 107.
15 E.P. MSS., p. 143.
vitiation of the worker, objectification as a loss and as servitude to the object, and appropriation as alienation."

This is what Marx wrote in Capital: "Within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labor are brought about at the cost of the individual laborer; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power." 18

Again the role of private property (of course not as property of objects of use, but as capital which hires labor) was already clearly seen in its alienating functioning by the young Marx: "Private property," he wrote, "is therefore the product, the necessary result of alienated labor, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself. Private property is thus derived from the analysis of the concept of alienated labor, that is, alienated man, alienated labor, alienated life, and estranged man." 19

It is not only that the world of things becomes the ruler of man, but also that the social and political circumstances which he creates become his masters. "This consolidation of what we ourselves produce, which turns into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up to now." 20 The alienated man, who believes that he has become the master of nature, has become the slave of things and of circumstances, the powerless appendage of a world which is at the same time the frozen expression of his own powers.

For Marx, alienation in the process of work, from the product of work and from circumstances, is inseparably connected with alienation from oneself, from one's fellow man and from nature. "A direct consequence of the alienation of man from the product of his labor, from his life activity and from his species life is that man is alienated from other men. When man confronts himself, he also confronts other men. What is true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, to their labor and to the objects of their labor. In general, the statement that man is alienated from his species life means that each man is alienated from others, and that each of the others is likewise alienated from human life." 21 The alienated man is not only alienated from other men; he is alienated from the essence of humanity, from his "species-being," both in its natural and spiritual qualities. This alienation from the human essence leads to an existential egotism, described by Marx as man's human essence becoming "a means for his individual existence. It [alienated labor] alienates from man his own body, external nature, his mental life and his human life." 22

Marx's concept touches here the Kantian principle that man must always be an end in himself, and never a

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18 E.P. MSS., p. 95.
20 E.P. MSS., pp. 105-6.
21 German Ideology, Ic. p. 23.
22 E.P. MSS., p. 103.
23 E.P. MSS., p. 103.
means to an end. But he amplifies this principle by stating that man's human essence must never become a means for individual existence. The contrast between Marx's view and Communist totalitarianism could hardly be expressed more radically: humanity in man, says Marx, must not even become a means to his individual existence; how much less could it be considered a means for the state, the class, or the nation.

Alienation leads to the perversion of all values. By making economy and its values—"gain, work, thrift, and sobriety"—the supreme aim of life, man fails to develop the truly moral values, "the riches of a good conscience of virtue, etc. But how can I be virtuous if I am not alive, and how can I have a good conscience if I am not aware of anything?" In a state of alienation each sphere of life, the economic and the moral, is independent from the other, "each is concentrated on a specific area of alienated activity and is itself alienated from the other." 22

Marx recognized what becomes of human needs in an alienated world, and he actually foresaw with amazing clarity the completion of this process as it is visible only today. While in a socialist perspective the main importance should be attributed "to the wealth of human needs, and consequently also to a new mode of production and to a new object of production," to "a new manifestation of human powers and a new enrichment of the human being," in the alienated world of capitalism needs are not expressions of man's latent powers, that is, they are not human needs; in capitalism "every man speculates upon creating a new need in another in order

...to force him to a new sacrifice, to place him in a new dependence, and to entice him into a new kind of pleasure and thereby into economic ruin. Everyone tries to establish over others an alien power in order to find there the satisfaction of his own egoistic need. With the mass of objects, therefore, there also increases the realm of alien entities to which man is subjected. Every new product is a new potentiality of mutual deceit and robbery. Man becomes increasingly poor as a man; he has increasing need of money in order to take possession of the hostile being. The power of his money diminishes directly with the growth of the quantity of production, i.e., his need increases with the increasing power of money. The need for money is therefore the real need created by the modern economy, and the only need which it creates. The quantity of money becomes increasingly its only important quality. Just as it reduces every entity to its abstraction, so it reduces itself in its own development to a quantitative entity. Excess and immoderation become its true standard. This is shown subjectively, partly in the fact that the expansion of production and of needs becomes an ingenious and always calculating subservience to inhuman, depraved, unnatural, and imaginary appetites. Private property does not know how to change crude need into human need; its idealism is fantasy, caprice and fancy. No eunuch flatters his tyrant more shamefully or seeks by more infamous means to stimulate his jaded appetite, in order to gain some favor, than does the eunuch of industry, the entrepreneur, in order to acquire a few silver coins or to charm the gold from the purse of his dearly beloved neighbor. Every product is a bait by means of which the individual tries to entice the essence of the other person, his money.) Every real or potential need is a weakness which
will draw the bird into the lime. Universal exploitation of human communal life. As every imperfection of man is a bond with heaven, a point at which his heart is accessible to the priest, so every want is an opportunity for approaching one’s neighbor with an air of friendship, and saying, ‘Dear friend, I will give you what you need, but you know the conditio sine qua non. You know what ink you must use in signing yourself over to me. I shall swindle you while providing your enjoyment.’) The entrepreneur accedes to the most depraved fancies of his neighbor, plays the role of pander between him and his needs, awakens unhealthy appetites in him, and watches for every weakness in order, later, to claim the remuneration for this labor of love.”21 The man who has thus become subject to his alienated needs is “a mentally and physically dehumanized being—the self-conscious and self-acting commodity.”22 (This commodity-man knows only one way of relating himself to the world outside, by having it and by consuming (using) it. The more alienated he is, the more the sense of having and using constitutes his relationship to the world. “The less you are, the less you express your life, the more you have, the greater is your alienated life and the greater is the saving of your alienated being.”23

There is only one correction which history has made in Marx’s concept of alienation; Marx believed that the working class was the most alienated class, hence that the emancipation from alienation would necessarily start with the liberation of the working class. Marx did not foresee the extent to which alienation was to become the fate of the vast majority of people, especially of the ever-increasing segment of the population which manipulate symbols and men, rather than machines. If anything, the clerk, the salesman, the executive, are even more alienated today than the skilled manual worker. The latter’s functioning still depends on the expression of certain personal qualities like skill, reliability, etc., and he is not forced to sell his “personality,” his smile, his opinions in the bargain; the symbol manipulators are hired not only for their skill, but for all those personality qualities which make them “attractive personality packages,” easy to handle and to manipulate. They are the true “organization men”—more so than the skilled laborer—their idol being the corporation. But as far as consumption is concerned, there is no difference between manual workers and the members of the bureaucracy. They all crave for things, new things, to have and to use. They are the passive recipients, the consumers, chained and weakened by the very things which satisfy their synthetic needs. They are not related to the world productively, grasping it in its full reality and in this process becoming one with it; they worship things, the machines which produce the things—and in this alienated world they feel as strangers and quite alone. In spite of Marx’s underestimating the role of the bureaucracy, his general description could nevertheless have been written today: “Production does not simply produce man as a commodity, the commodity-man, man in the role of commodity; it produces him in keeping with this role as a spiritually and physically dehumanized being—the] immorality, deformity, and debetation of the workers and the capitalists. Its product is the self-conscious and self-acting commodity... the human commodity.”24

* E.P. MSS., pp. 140-2.
* E.P. MSS., p. 111.
* E.P. MSS., p. 144.
To what extent things and circumstances of our own making have become our masters, Marx could hardly have foreseen; yet nothing could prove his prophecy more drastically than the fact that the whole human race is today the prisoner of the nuclear weapons it has created, and of the political institutions which are equally of its own making. A frightened mankind waits anxiously to see whether it will be saved from the power of the things it has created, from the blind action of the bureaucracies it has appointed.

6

MARX'S CONCEPT OF SOCIALISM

Marx's concept of socialism follows from his concept of man. It should be clear by now that according to this concept, socialism is not a society of regimented, automatized individuals, regardless of whether there is equality of income or not, and regardless of whether they are well fed and well clad. It is not a society in which the individual is subordinated to the state, to the machine, to the bureaucracy. Even if the state as an "abstract capitalist" were the employer, even if "the entire social capital were united in the hands either of a single capitalist or a single capitalist corporation," this would not be socialism. In fact, as Marx says quite clearly in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, "communism as such is not the aim of human development." What, then, is the aim?

Quite clearly the aim of socialism is man. It is to create a form of production and an organization of society in which man can overcome alienation from his product, from his work, from his fellow man, from himself and from nature; in which he can return to himself and grasp the world with his own powers, thus becoming one with the world. Socialism for Marx was, as Paul Tillich put it, "a resistance movement against the destruction of love in social reality."

Marx expressed the aim of socialism with great clarity at the end of the third volume of Capital: "In fact, the realm of freedom does not commence until the point is passed where labor under the compulsion of necessity and of external utility is required. In the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of material production in the strict meaning of the term. (Just as the savage must wrestle with nature, in order to satisfy his wants, in order to maintain his life and reproduce it, so civilized man has to do it, and he must do it in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production.) With his development the realm of natural necessity expands, because his wants increase; but at the same time the forces of production increase, by which these wants are satisfied. The freedom in this field cannot consist of anything else but of the fact that socialized man, the associated producers, regulate their interchange with nature rationally, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power; they accomplish their task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. But it always remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human power, which is its own end, the true realm of freedom,

1 Capital I, l.c. p. 689.