

Karl Marx: What is dialectical materialism?

After the deaths of Marx and Engels, socialists began taking up the important task of summarizing their work for popularization. In 1919, for example, Georg Lukács, the Hungarian Marxist, argued that the essence of Marx's project is not the correctness or incorrectness of his many theses, but rather, his dialectical *method*. Stressing the significance of Marx's method Lukács notes that it is a "weapon" of the proletariat and "an instrument of war" (1919/1971, 224). Marx never wrote a text on dialectics or even used the term "dialectical materialism," and so articulating Marx's dialectic was left to Engels and those who followed. There are, as a result, a great many debates about what exactly dialectical materialism is. There has also been a tendency to oversimplify dialectical materialism into a mechanical and deterministic dogma.

This article outlines Marx's method, dialectical materialism, a theory and manner of understanding change. It is a theory that grasps how many of the competing social forces driving the movement of society are often hidden or mystified, and that gives us a way of uncovering them. It is a method that understands that unveiling social forces must be done in such a way as to foster class-for-self-consciousness within the working class as a revolutionary force. Toward these ends this article introduces the major components of dialectical materialism, including the negation of the negation, sublation, the unity of opposites, and the transformation of quantity into quality.

What is Marx's method?

In developing his method, Marx challenged what he considered to be vulgar materialism for its tendency to ignore the totality and the relationship between consciousness and material reality. A philosophical term, the "totality" refers to the total of existence in any given moment. At the same time, Marx rejected pure idealism for substituting material reality with the idea of reality (i.e. with abstract thought). Idealism therefore leads to the false assumption that alienation or estrangement can be overcome in the realm of thought alone, as if we could change our material reality by changing our ideas and beliefs.

Rather, Marx's dialectical method is based on "the unifying truth of both" (1844/1988, 154). What this means is that "it is not enough that thought should seek to realize itself; reality must also strive toward thought." In other words, Marx's method entails the examination of the relationship between ideas and material reality, specifically as it pertains to class struggle and the emancipation of the proletariat. Marx's dialectics are called "dialectical materialism" in contrast with Hegel's dialectics. Marx wrote that he "discover[ed] the rational kernel within the mystical shell" (1867/1967, 29) of Hegel's dialectics.

To realize this revolution the working-class must not only understand the interaction of forces behind the development of society, but it must understand itself as one of those forces. The dialectic is a powerful weapon because it breaks through the capitalist illusion of individualism and atomism and disrupts the idea that isolated facts speak for themselves. Only by situating facts or ideas in the historical totality of society do they

begin to make real sense. To comprehend this revolutionary movement we must conceive the interaction of forces as much more than the interaction of static and independent entities. When the parts of the totality change, their relationship to the totality changes, and they themselves change. Dialectics presents reality as an ongoing social process; nothing is ever static or fixed.

Dialectics is both a method—or a way of investigating and understanding phenomena—and a fact of existence. For Engels, what is most central to dialectics is the tendency toward perpetual “motion and development” (1894/1987, 131). What follows is a summary of the dialectical theory of movement and change. The concept around which the dialectical understanding of development revolves is the negation of the negation, which will be taken up first, before turning to the concept of sublation. The unity of opposites or the interpenetration of opposites, a central driving force of the dialectic is then explored. Finally, we look at the tendency toward the transformation of quantity into quality, which in turn allows us to understand the negation of the negation more deeply.

The negation of the negation

The tendency toward *the negation of the negation* is arguably at the heart of dialectical development. Engels, for example, notes that the negation of the negation is “extremely general—and for this reason extremely far-reaching and important” (1894/1987, 131). The negation of the negation refers specifically to the way that phenomena and structures produce their opposites.

For example, in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx (1867/1967) writes that capitalist private property is the negation of individual private property, or property held by the proprietor or individual laborer. Peasant proprietors, as small-scale industrial producers, tended to own private property and produced their own means of subsistence. This small-scale, scattered, petty industry of the peasants was limited in terms of its ability to foster economic growth. The advent of the capitalist era included the expropriation of the peasants from their means of production. The logic of the feudal system and exchange created the agencies of its own annihilation.

While feudalism was overcome in capitalism, aspects of it were preserved but reconfigured in a way to facilitate economic growth. For example, the private property of peasants was abolished, but private property itself was not.

Capitalism concentrates and centralizes property, tending towards monopoly. Bigger capitalists buy out or otherwise outmaneuver smaller capitalists. At the same time, capitalism creates its antagonist: the working class. As capital grows so too does the working class. These contradictions provide the basis for the second negation: the expropriation of the expropriators, or the transformation of capitalism into socialism.

Under socialism the means of production that existed under capitalism are preserved. Instead of being held in private they are held in common. In place of exploitation the means of production are put in the service of meeting the many needs of the producers.

This process is called sublation. When something is sublated it is both overcome yet preserved. We can also see sublation at work in Marx's theory of monopoly. Monopolies create the material basis for socialism as they aggregate and concentrate productive forces. Socialist revolution expropriates these from the capitalists, but instead of breaking them up into smaller enterprises, the working class takes control of them as they are. If this is still a bit confusing at this point, it should be clearer after we go through the other components of dialectics.

Of course, capitalism is not going to automatically transform into socialism, even though its own internal logic orients its development in that general direction. Capitalist crises and contradictions are necessary for socialist revolutions but they are not sufficient. If they were sufficient, then we would already be living under socialism!

The interpenetration of opposites

What compels entities to be in a constant state of motion are their internal contradictions, or the forces generated by the unity of opposites. The most central or essential contradiction within capitalism is between labor and capital.

Labor and capital are opposites because they have contradictory drives. For example, historically, labor has spontaneously sought to decrease the rate of exploitation by collectively bargaining for higher wages, better conditions, benefits, and so on. When successful, these decrease profit margins. Capital, on the other hand, seeks to always increase the rate of exploitation. Labor and capital are therefore compelled by opposite and antagonistic drives. This antagonism can be managed and mediated by unions and state regulation, but it can only be overcome through the negation of the negation.

Labor and capital, as such, do not have an independent existence apart from each other. To be a worker is *by definition* to be exploited by capital, and to be a capitalist is *by definition* to exploit workers. The relationship between labor and capital is therefore *internal* and constitutes the totality. As a relation of exploitation, capital is a unity of contradictions. The dialectical development of this relationship over time is the movement of the balances of forces within capitalism.

A common mistake is to conceptualize the movement generated from antagonistically-related social classes as the interaction of separate forces external to each other. This leads to the false belief that the role of the working-class revolution today is to *destroy* capitalism and *replace* it with socialism. Socialism can only be created out of what already exists.

Marx and Engels believed that socialism would first emerge out of the most developed capitalist countries. This did not turn out to be true, as socialism emerged first in Russia, an underdeveloped, predominantly feudal-based country. Socialism, nevertheless, was ushered in by the producers and created out of an old society, not separate from it.

Quantity into quality

The tendency toward the transformation of quantity into quality offers deeper insight into the negation of the negation. So far, we have seen how the essential contradiction within capitalism is the labor/capital relationship, which is an example of the unity of opposites. We also saw the sublation of private property from one negated mode of production to the next. Investigating the interrelationship of these two issues will provide the basis for our example of the transformation of quantity into quality.

The inherently unequal relationship between labor and capital was established, in part, through the violence of expropriating peasants from their means of production. Without direct access to the means of production, former peasants were forced to sell their ability to work for a wage, thereby becoming part of the working class. Although beyond the scope of this short introduction, it's crucial to note that the violence of slavery, colonialism, and settler colonialism were equally important in establishing capitalism.

The competition between capitalists drives technological development. Because the price of any given commodity tends to center around the average amount of time its production requires, devising new technologies that can reduce the number of labor hours it takes to produce whatever commodity is a tendency internal to capitalism.

In the short term this gives the capitalist at the technological forefront a competitive advantage because they can sell the commodity below its social value. But as soon as the new technology gets integrated into the entire branch or branches of industry, the average amount of time that it takes to produce whatever commodity lowers, and the competition begins anew.

While new labor-saving technologies can be super profitable for individual capitalists in the short term, in the long term it reduces the number of labor hours simultaneously set into motion. It also means that more capital is invested into machinery rather than workers. And since workers produce value and machines do not, this contributes to the tendency of the falling rate of profit.

When the amount of labor hours it takes to transform a given quantity of raw materials into whatever commodity is reduced, the composition of capital shifts quantitatively, by degree. Historically, individual capitalists have countered the falling rate of their profit margins in many ways such as devising schemes to reduce the price they pay for labor even while its value remains the same thereby pushing the laborer into depravity and impoverishment. The capitalist, driven to counter the falling rate of profit by extracting more and more value from the laborer, thereby deepens capital's crisis.

The internal drive of capital to forever expand the accumulation of surplus value brings the unity of opposites, labor and capital, into growing conflict with each other. This movement is the developmental process at the heart of the dialectics of capitalism. While the capitalist has an interest in maintaining the contradiction and creating the illusion of capital's permanence, the objective interest of labor is to resolve the contradiction, thereby changing the quality of production relations. This is quantity into

quality and the center of struggle between labor and capital. The quantitative changes *provide the basis or possibility* of qualitative change.

Conclusion

One of the reasons why dialectical materialism is so important is because it embodies a deep revolutionary optimism. Drawing attention to the fact that the future already exists as an unrealized potential within the present demystifies the seeming permanence of capitalism. In other words, it reveals the defeat of imperialism as a real potential and not a fantasy. For example, it is a fact that the most advanced means of production, labor saving technologies, as they currently exist, are able to meet the basic needs of every person in the world. In this way, the future liberation of humanity from exploitation and material oppression already exists.

The practicality of the aforementioned optimism resides in the fact that Marx's method correctly locates the agent of revolutionary transformation within the working class, the many.

Karl Marx's Theory Historical Materialism

Historical Materialism: Karl Marx's Theory of Social Change

Marx was greatly affected by the contemporary Germanic philosophy of Feurbach and French philosophy of Hegels. He was critical of Fichte that society progresses in a haphazard and unorganised manner. In pursuance of an organised development of society, he adopted dialectic of Hegel's "dialectic idealism" but rejected Hegel's view that it is ideas which are in dialectic. Instead, he proposed that it is "material conditions" which are in dialectic. This he borrowed from the Feurbach idea that Human consciousness is determined by existing material conditions.

Juxtaposing Hegel and Feurbach he said that the process of thesis, antithesis and Synthesis (dialectic) is "the guiding principle of development, but it is not ideas which are in dialectic relationship but material conditions. He was much influenced by Feurbach's emphasis on "ideas from being" but rejected his conception of human being as an object. According to him Human being is creative in nature.

Also read: [Emergence of Sociology](#)

Marx's this theory of change is known as Historical materialism. Marx did never use this term, instead he named it "material conception of History". He was more concerned with the development of Human being in a Historical perspective.

According to Marx, Man is engaged in social production which needs cooperation. This cooperative need forces them to enter into social relations independent of their will. This social relation is dependent upon economy of the society.

Marx says that each society can be distinguished on the basis of economy i.e. infrastructure and super structure. The infra-structure essentially consists of the forces of production and relations of production. While within superstructure figure the legal and political institutions as well as ways of thinking, ideologies and philosophies, the main mechanism of Historical movement is the contradiction within the infrastructure i.e. between forces of production and relations of production. The forces of production is essentially a given society's capacity to produce which is a function of scientific knowledge, technological equipment and the organisation of collective labour.

The relation of production dichotomizes the society in two classes. Whenever new source of energy is invented, forces of production develop. With the development of forces of production, old relations of production doesn't fit or say is compatible to new forces of production. This happens at certain period in the given stage. This period is known as revolutionary period. One class is attached to the old relations of production which become an obstacle to the development of forces of production and another class, on the contrary, is progressive and represents new relations of production which is progressive in nature and favours maximum growth.

This internal contradiction leads to the change of mode of production and hence the establishment of new social order which is dominated by progressive class of old social order. This change occurs at the time when the forces of production cannot be contained in the old relations or production. As in Marx's words "No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed and the new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence matured in the womb of old society."

Thus mankind takes up only such problems which it can solve, since, looking at the matter more closely we will find that problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exists or at least in the process of formation.

With the change in mode of production which lies in the domain of infrastructure, the superstructure is more or less changed. The legal domain is suited to progressive class and confirming to the ideologies. Thus, human consciousness is conditioned in dialectic interplay between the subject and the object, in which man actively shapes the world he lives in at the same time as it shapes him.

History is thus a process of the continuous creation, satisfaction and recreation of human needs. This is what distinguishes man from animals whose needs are fixed and that is why labour, the creative interchange between man and their natural environment is the foundation of human society.

Further elaborating this theory of change Marx says the dialectics of subject (forces of production) and objects (relations of production) produces different modes of

production. His analysis of west produces four types of society before the appearance of communism.

Types of Society Characterized by

Primitive communism absence of property

Ancient Society Slavery

Feudalism Serfdom

Capitalism Wage Earner

Ancient society, feudalism and capitalism is characterized by the dichotomy or society into oppressor and oppressed.

But the proletarian revolution will finish off the antagonistic character of society. Communism will be preceded by socialism.

Marx's has differentiated stages of west from that of China and India. He termed it Astatic Society which is characterized by the ownership of production in the hands of state. State is all oppressive. This difference questions unilinear theory of social development. Many social scientists have feared that socialistic stage which is transitory according to Marx may lead to state oppression i.e. Asiatic mode rather than communist society.

Change from Capitalism to Communism

Theory of surplus-value

Capitalism is a System of commodity production. In the capitalist System producers do not simply produce for their own needs, or for the needs of individuals with whom they are in personal contact; capitalism involves a nationwide, and often an international exchange market. Every commodity, according to Marx, has two fold aspect its 'use - value' on the one hand, and its 'exchange -value' on the other. Use -value, which is realized only in the process of consumption, has reference to the needs which the properties of a commodity as a physical artifact can be employed to cater to 'Exchange

-value' refers to the value of a product has when offered in' exchange for other products. Exchange value is inseparable from a market on which goods are exchanged.

Any object can have only value in so far as human labour power has been expended to produce it. This is the core proposition of the labour theory of value which Marx takes over from Adam Smith and Ricardo. It follows from this that both exchange -value and use -value must be directly related to the amount of labour embodied in the production of a commodity. It is clear, Marx says, that exchange -value cannot be derived from use value. This can be shown by the example of the exchange -value of two commodities such as corn and iron. A given quantity of corn is worth a specifiable quantity of iron. The fact that we can express the worth of these two products in terms of each other, and in quantified form, shows that we are using some common standard which is applicable to both. This common measure of value has nothing to do with the physical properties of corn or iron, which are incommensurate. Exchange -value must then rest upon some quantifiable characteristics of labour. There are obviously many difference between specific kinds of labour: the actual tasks involved in the work of growing corn are very different from those involved in manufacturing iron. Just as exchange -value abstracts from the specific characteristics of commodities, and treats them in abstract quantitative ratio in the derivation of exchange -value we have to consider only 'abstract general labour', which can be measured in terms of the amount of time expended by the worker in the production of a commodity. Concept of abstract labour does not apply to any individual worker, but to the 'Socially necessary' labour time. This is the amount of time required for the production of a commodity under the normal conditions of production, and with the 'average degree of skill and intensity' prevalent at a given time in a particular industry. The socially necessary labour time can be fairly readily determined through empirical studies. A sudden technological improvement can reduce the amount of socially necessary labour time required to produce a particular commodity, and will therefore lead to a corresponding diminution in its value.

In this analysis, Marx doesn't ignore the value of demand and supply in establishing the price of a commodity. Marx States "demand does not determine value, although it can affect prices". For Marx, demand is the most significant in relation to the allocation of the labour force to different sectors of the economy. If the demand for a certain commodity becomes particularly high then producer of other goods will be stimulated to move into the production of that commodity. The increase in price following the heightened demand will then become reduced in the direction of its value.

Profit in capitalist society

The necessary basis of capitalism is the fact that workers are free to sell their labour in the open market, What this signifies is that labour power is itself a commodity, which is bought and sold on the market. Thus its value is determined like that of any other commodity, by the labour time necessary for its production. Human labour power involves the expenditure of physical energy, which must be replenished. To renew the energy expended in labour, the worker must be provided with the requirements of his existence as a functioning organism -food, clothing and shelter for himself and his family. The labour time socially necessary to produce the necessities of life of the worker is the value of the worker's labour power. The latter's value is, therefore, reducible to a specifiable quantity of commodities those which the worker requires to be able to subsist and reproduce. 'The worker exchanges with capital his labour itself he alienates it. The price he receives is the value of this alienation'.

The conditions of modern manufacturing and industrial production allow the worker to produce considerably more, in an average working day, than is necessary to cover the cost of his subsistence. Only a proportion of the working day, that is, needs to be expended to produce the equivalent of the worker's own value. If say, the length of the working day is ten hours, and if the worker produces the equivalent of his own value in half that time, then the remaining five hour's work is surplus production which may be appropriated by the capitalists. The ratio between necessary and surplus labour is the "rate of surplus value" or the rate of exploitation'. Surplus value is the source of profit. Profit is the visible 'surface' manifestation' of surplus value.

In capitalism capitalists spend capital in two forms: one on hiring labour and other on machinery, raw materials, maintenance of factory fitting etc. First is variable capital and later one is constant capital. Only variable capital creates value. Constant capital does not, in the process of production, undergo any quantitative alteration of value. In contrast to the rate of surplus value, which is the ratio of surplus value to variable capital (s/v), the rate of profit can only be calculated with reference to both variable and constant capital, The ratio of constant to variable capital constitutes the 'organic composition' of capital: since the rate of profit depends of the organic composition of capital, it is lower than the rate of surplus-value, The rate of profit is given by the formula $p = s/c + v$ the lower the ratio on expenditure on constant capital to that on variable capital, the higher the rate of profit.

Note: Since Theory of Surplus value and falling tendency of rate of Profit is not in the Syllabus, so just use the concept in the social change theory.

The economic contradictions of capitalist production

“Law of the falling tendency of rate of profit”

According to Marx, the search for profit is intrinsic to capitalism: 'the aim of capital is not to minister to certain wants, but to produce profit. But at the same time in capitalist economy there is a structural tendency for the rate of profit to decline. This is explained by integrating the concept of organic composition of capital and surplus value. The total amount of profit in the capitalist economy depends upon the surplus value created within it; the ratio of constant to variable capital in the economy as a whole determines the average rate of profit. The rate of profit thus stands in inverse proportion to the organic composition.

Since capitalism is founded upon the competitive search for profit, technological improvement, including above all the increasing mechanization of production, is a major weapon of each capitalist in the battle for survival on the market. But increasing mechanization will reduce the rate of profit.

A rise in expenditure on constant capital frequently goes along with an increase in the productivity of the labour, which therefore effectively reduces the proportionate unit value of the constant capital, and thereby may keep the rate of profit stable or even raise it. Another mode of offsetting the declining rate of profit is via the feeding in of cheap materials through foreign trade, the result of which is to increase the rate of surplus-value if these are used to supply the subsistence needs of workers, and to lower the value of constant capital. But Marx lays most stress upon those countervailing forces to the falling rate of profit which involve the intensified exploitation of labour. These include the expansion of the working day, and the depression of wages below their value. Other things being equal the lengthening of the working-day, which was a definite empirical phenomenon during the early years of the nineteenth century, raises the rate of surplus-value. The productivity of labour relative to constant capital can also be augmented, and the rate of surplus-value increased, through making more intensive use of existing machinery by speeding up its operation,' applying shift-system. Enforced depreciation of wages is normally only a temporary expedient, and has no long-term effects upon the rate of profit.

The periodic crises occurring in capitalism are the most evident manifestation of the internal 'contradictions' of the capitalist system. In a sense capitalism is an 'anarchic' system, because the market is not regulated by any definite agency relating production to consumption. It is also an intrinsically expanding system, the basic motor of which is

the restless search for profit. Since the profit motive is dominant, any state of affairs involving a pronounced imbalance between the volume of commodities produced and their saleability at the average rate of profit constitutes a crisis for the system. Capitalism is the first system in human history where a large volume of production is possible. Overproduction in terms of Exchange-value and not use-values.

A crisis is simply an expression of production beyond what the market can absorb and still return an adequate rate of profit. Once overproduction occurs, even only in one segment of the economy, it can set into motion a vicious circle of reactions. As the rate of profit falls, investment declines, part of the labour force has to be laid off, which further diminishes consumer purchasing power, producing another decline in the rate of profit, and so on. The spiral continues until unemployment has increased to such a degree, and the wages of those still in work has been forced down to such a level, that there exist new conditions for the creation of an increased rate of surplus value, and thereby a stimulus to the resumption of investment. During the crisis some of the less efficient enterprises will have gone out of business; those remaining can therefore take over their share of the market, and are in a position to begin a new period of expansion.

Crises therefore do not represent a 'break-down' of the capitalist system, but on the contrary form the regulating mechanism which enables the system to survive the periodic fluctuations to which capitalism is subject. According to Marx, Crises are momentary, The effect of crises is to further the centralization of capital.

Pauperization

According to Marx, recurring crises play an important role in fostering revolutionary consciousness, because they make evident the common class situation of the proletariat the more so because they tend to occur as a sharp recession following a period of relative prosperity for the working class during which unemployment is low and wages are high.

It is only rarely in the capitalist economy that conditions of near full employment prevail. The existence of a group of chronically unemployed, the industrial Reserve Army is necessary to capitalism. Reserve Army has also been called by Marx 'Relative surplus population'. Reserve army constantly works as depressant upon wages. During periods of prosperity, when the demand for labour increases, part of the reserve army becomes absorbed into the labour force, and thus holds wages down; in other times, it provides a potential source of cheap labour which inhibits any attempt of the working class to

improve their lot. The reserve army is 'the lever of capitalistic accumulation, and is 'a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production'.

Marx further says that with the development of capitalism, relative disparity between Bourgeoisie and proletariat increases due to increasing 'rate of exploitation' say surplus value. This relative poverty due to reserve army and due to disparity is "pauperization".

According to Marx. pauperism is the 'hospital of the active labour army and the dead weight of the industrial reserve army'. Most or the worst forms of material exploitation are concentrated in this latter group, among whom there develops an accumulation or misery, agony of labour, slavery, ignorance, brutality, moral degradation'. Thus the contradictory character of capitalism manifests itself in the accumulation of wealth' at one pole', and of poverty and misery at the other.

Concentration and centralization of capital

The rising organic composition of capital which takes place as capitalism proceeds, is intimately connected with a trend towards the centralization and concentration of capital. 'Concentration' refers to the process whereby as capital accumulates, individual capitalists succeed in expanding the amount of capital under their control. Centralization. on the other hand, refers to the merging of existing capitals. The effect of both is to lead to larger and larger productive units. And in turn, these larger units tend to drive smaller ones out of business and to absorb their capital. Centralization is further promoted by credit system.

The relative poverty of the mass of the working class, the physical misery of the 'reserve Army" and the rapid diminution in wages and upsurge of unemployment which occur incises, all provide a growing reservoir of revolutionary potential. The industrial system itself provides a source of perception of community of interest, and a basis for collective organization, since the factory concentrates large number of workers together in one place, worker's organizations begin on a local level, but eventually merge to form national units. The self-consciousness of. the proletariat expands progressively along with the undermining of the position of the entrepreneurial capitalist by the centralization and concentration of capital. The conjunction of these circumstances makes possible the achievement of socialist society.

Socialism will pass through

First stage: The Socialization of production is completed by putting an end to private property. In this phase, property become collectively owned and wages are distributed according to a fixed principle, Out of the total social product certain amounts are allocated to. Cover collective needs of the administration of production, the running of schools, health facilities and so on. In this worker is given back according to his contribution to society. In other words, at this stage labour is still treated as an exchange value. but instead of this being confined to a class group (the proletariat), this now becomes universalised.

Second Stage: Dictatorship of the proletariat. The proletariat will use its political domination to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state i.e, of the proletariat organized as the dominant class, and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible. Political power will disappear only when this stage is completed, Alienation will remain.

Third Stage: Division of labour. exists in Bourgeoisie society will be abolished ending alienation. It will replace the worker of today by a fully developed individual, that is for a variety of labour.

Marx's Alienation theory

For Marx alienation under the capitalist mode of production is not just a subjective state of mind, that one enters, but an objective process that develops from the reality that we experience through labor in capitalist society. Alienation in a generalized abstract sense, is the loss of control over an attribute of the self, one in which the actor is separated from any sense of agency in relation to the attribute. It is a historical objective process that comes into being from the relations and forces of production in the specific mode of production in existence. Alienation derives from a disconnect and loss of control over a thing or process, similar to the sense of alienation one experiences through religion. The alienation that Marx refers to comes into being through the relations of production found in capitalist society. Within the capitalist mode of production we find the conditions necessary for alienation to emerge. Those conditions are the reality that workers in capitalist society are forced by the necessity of subsistence and lack of ownership over the means of production to sell their labor-power as a commodity to someone else: the capitalist. Vital to the emergence of capitalist alienation is the specialization of labor, the reserve army of labor, and the establishment of routine work flows like an assembly line. There are four aspects of alienation that Marx wrote about as corresponding to the capitalist mode of production, those being: the alienation of the worker from the products of their labor, the alienation experienced in the production or labor process, alienation from our species-essence or human essence, and finally the alienation of man from man or from society. They might be viewed as being nested together with one leading to the other, however they are just aspects of one reality: alienated labor.

The first aspect that Marx refers to is the alienation that workers experience by the estrangement from the product of their labor. The commodities that workers produce through their labor is not their own but ultimately belongs to another and is produced for another. Here alienation is manifested in the product that work produces. Their product becomes, through their lack of control/ownership, an alien object. An object that actively works against their interests and whose hostility increases the more the worker produces. So that the more the worker produces the less the worker has and the more powerless they become. This is so because they do not have control or own a right to the commodity they produce nor to the exchange value that it will obtain in the market. So as the workers produce more, increasing productivity, they enrich the capitalist who owns the products they produce. Therefore the commodities that the workers produce increases the wealth and thus power of the capitalist who controls the fruits of their labor and who controls them through the purchasing of their labor-power that they sell for their own survival and reproduction. They thus help to perpetuate the system, the mode of production, that works against their interests and that produces the alienation in the first place.

The second aspect that Marx mentions is the alienation resulting from their lack of control over the labor process or production activity. This alienation occurs because to not have control over the products of labor implies that one also does not have control over the process of production that produced the commodities. This alienation is

emerges from the lack of control over the means of production and the work activity that one is involved in. The fact that workers do not have a say in how production is organized and what is produced or how something is produced, is how this aspect of alienation come into being. This sense of alienation is further reinforced through a worker's lack of control in their job function and from the lack of say in the relations within production. It is also formed from the reality that workers do not own the means of production and so are forced to sell for survival the one thing they do own, their labor-power, as Marx writes about the worker "his work, therefore, is not voluntary, but coerced, forced labor." (Simon, p.62).

The third aspect of alienation Marx referred to as alienation from our species-essence/human essence or in a reduced sense our human nature. For Marx humanity's species-essence is labor itself. Labor is our 'conscious life activity'. Marx claims that humans are by nature creative conscious beings and that we objectifying ourselves in the products that we produce. To objectify ourselves is to use our conscious life activity to see ourselves as the subject in relation to nature and to manifest or make real our conscious thoughts, our objects, through our manipulation of nature. Unlike the species-essence of most animals which is instinctual life activity. Since most animals operate and meet their needs through the use of their instincts, whereas we operate and meet our needs through conscious thoughts and our ability to transform nature into the objects of our thoughts. In effect by being alienated from our species-essence: our creative conscious life-activity, we alienate ourselves from our human nature to create what we want at will and from the potential that our species-essence provides us. Put simply capitalist society makes man's free conscious activity, labor, a means to an end, instead of an end in of itself. Marx articulates this when he states: "In taking from man the object of his production, alienated labor takes from his species-life, his actual and objective existence as a species."(Simon, p.64).

The fourth aspect of alienated labor for Marx can be derived from the fact that we are alienated from our own human nature or essence which is also according to Marx social. So alienation emerges in the relations of production in capitalist society. In the capitalist relations of production we are alienated not just from the product and the process of production but given that we are alienated from our human nature implies that we are also alienated from ourselves and in turn each other. So this aspect of alienated labor deals with the fact that our social relations themselves are alienated. For Marx our conscious life activity is embedded in a social framework since we are a social species from birth. This alienation is manifested as hostility or competition between workers and members of society. As Marx wrote: "In the relation of alienated labor every man sees the others according to the standard and the relation in which he finds himself as a worker"(Simon, p.65). It is experienced in the competition for promotions at work and through the stand off between production workers and workers in management. It is further reinforced by the capitalist mode of production through the existence of a reserve army of labor: the unemployed. Since full employment is not possible within the capitalist mode of production, there is always a percentage of the population at various times that is unemployed and seeking employment. This fact alone pits worker against worker for the opportunity to sell one's labor-power as a means to an end, that end being sustenance and our individual reproduction. This aspect or type of alienation is also reflected in other areas of our social relations. This can be viewed for example in the political arena in how workers vote against their own interest and the interests of other

groups such as the stigmatized victims of the capitalist mode of production: the poor on welfare.

Marx's theory of alienation can help us understand work and human nature by framing how we examine the two and how they are connected. As Sayer's analysis showed there are many thoughts on what work is and what it means to us and Marx's theory offers a refreshing take on how we should perceive work. As Sayer outlined, a popular conception of work is the one posited by utilitarianism. Mainly that work is toil and unpleasurable, and that pleasure or happiness can be derived through the absence of work. Marx would argue, however, that such a conception of work is itself a by product of alienated labor. In his analysis of alienation we find that such feelings or understanding of the nature of work can be described by the estrangement of the worker from himself, his fellows, their products, and the process of production. This estrangement is the result of private property in the economic arena or said differently of productive property, not to be confused with personal property. The fact that productive property and the means of production are privately owned and that workers are forced by this fact to sell their labor-power and in turn alienate themselves in the ways mentioned above illustrates how a utilitarian conception of the nature work is intrinsically wrong in condemning work, since labor is part of our human essence or nature. This also gives us the answer on how to experience work in the way Marx describes. In order to experience work as the expression of our species-essence, our creative life-activity, requires that we overcome our alienation and reorganize our society so as to establish relations that allow us all to act in accordance to our species-essence.

Since alienation is the by product of an objective experience stemming from the relations of production within capitalist society the solution to overcoming it also lies within it. Alienation can be more directly described as the result of the producers or workers not being in control or owning the products they produce as well as the production process in which they work. Put simply alienation is the result of private (productive) property. Since only a few, the capitalists, own the means of production and rest, the workers, must sell that which they own: their labor power in order to gain access to the means of production. So to overcome this alienation requires that we correct this inherent antagonism within the capitalist mode of production so as to bring about a new mode of production. Marx considered this new mode of production to be Communism and its is the overcoming of private property. Marx wrote: "Communism is the ultimately the positive expression of private property as overcome [aufgehoben]." (Simon, p.69). Meaning that Communism is a mode of production in which private productive property no longer exists, and therefore alienation no longer exists since it is a symptom of private property. To rid ourselves of private property is therefore to Marx a way of overcoming alienation in all its manifestations since it emerges from the social relations in which private property exists. This is stated clearly by Marx when he wrote: "The overcoming of private property as the appropriation of human life is thus the positive overcoming of all alienation..." (Simon, p.71). We may ask ourselves how would a society who's mode of production does not include private property look like? Well we can begin to realize that answer by focusing on the fact that private property, in this case commercial & industrial productive property, is essentially composed of the companies and corporations in which labor produces commodities and services. So to overcome the antagonism between those who own the companies and those who work

in the companies, the internal ownership structure of the work place must be changed. The internal structure of private property must therefore be changed into its opposite which is cooperative property. So to overcome private property and thus alienation, society must replace the private enterprises which compose its economy with worker owned and managed enterprises known commonly as worker cooperatives. Worker owned and managed cooperatives are therefore the fundamental building blocks within a Communist society's economy. Any society whose economy does not include cooperative ownership over productive property is not a Communist society, but an intermediate stage like Socialism or some other manifestation of Capitalism as is the case with the Soviet styled societies that have come into existence. They are in fact what can be called State Capitalist societies.