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HAS HISTORY ENDED? FUKUYAMA, MARX, MODERNITY
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Karl Marx and
Contemporary Philosophy

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Species-Being and Capital

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In this chapter I compare Marx's first conception of capital, in 1844, to his conception of the modern political state in 1843. 1 I argue that Marx in 1844 conceives capital as a realisation of human 'species-being', that is, of the universality and freedom inherent in human nature. However it realises this universality and freedom only in the form of 'abstract' universality and freedom, and therefore inadequately. The transition from capital to 'real community' consists in transforming this abstract universality and freedom into 'concrete' universality and freedom.

Hegel on freedom and the state

In Aristotle's Politics humans are by nature rational animals, but they can only realise their rationality by entering into a certain kind of association with each other, the polis (Aristotle, 1981, pp. 54-61). This idea recurs in Rousseau, but now with a different conception of humans in which their essence is to be free. 'To renounce freedom is to renounce one's humanity' (Rousseau, 1968, p. 55). The social contract that initiates the legitimate state does not just preserve this essential human freedom, but brings about a 'remarkable change in man' which gives him a general will as well as a particular will, so that he thinks of himself as part of a larger whole as well as an individual. Thereby he acquires civil and moral freedom in place of natural freedom, and becomes truly free for the first time (Rousseau, 1968, p. 65). So Rousseau's legitimate state plays the same role as Aristotle's polis, of enabling humans to realise their own essence, although with a new conception of the human essence as freedom.

Fichte is a direct descendant of Rousseau. For him too the properly constituted state enables humans to realise their own essence as free. But whereas for Rousseau this freedom is brought into existence by a contract, for Fichte it is brought into existence by mutual recognition. It is by mutually recognising one another as free selves that individual human beings become free. Fichte calls the relation of mutual recognition the 'relation
of right’ and sees the legitimate or rightful (rechtlich) state as institutionalising that relation (Fichte, 2000, pp. 18–52). Therefore, as for Rousseau, humans can only realise their essence as free by entering into a certain kind of state.

Hegel follows Fichte in conceiving human freedom as achieved only through mutual recognition, and in seeing this as institutionalised in a rightful state. However he differs fundamentally from Fichte in his conception of recognition. When we achieve mutual recognition in Hegel we recognise each other as free individual selves but also as part of a single ‘universal’ or collective self, which we bring into existence though this very act of mutual recognition. Hegel calls this mutual recognition ‘universal self-consciousness’:

Universal self-consciousness is the affirmative knowing of one’s self in the other self. Each has absolute independence as a free individuality, but, through the negation of its immediacy or desire, does not differentiate itself from the other, and so is universal and objective, and has real universality as mutuality in that it knows itself to be recognised in the free other, and knows this in so far as it recognises the other and knows it to be free [...] the self-conscious subjects related to each other have through the supersession of their dissimilar particular singularity risen to the consciousness of their real universality, of their freedom which belongs to all, and thereby to seeing their determinate identity with each other.

(Hegel, 1971, §436, 436A; 1986a, p. 225; t.m.)

This peculiar recognition – recognition of the other as at once distinct and autonomous from me and yet at root identical to myself – is at the heart of Hegel’s concept of ‘spirit’. He says as much when he first introduces the concept in the Phenomenology of Spirit:

What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what spirit is – this absolute substance which, in the complete freedom and independence of its opposite, namely different self-consciousnesses existing for themselves, is the unity of them: I that is We and We that is I.

(Hegel, 1977a, p. 110; 1986b, p. 144; t.m.)

Spirit is at once an ‘I’, a single universal or collective self, and a ‘we’, a multiplicity of separate selves. As a universal self it is self-grounding, a Spinozist ‘substance’ of which the individual selves are simply modes or expressions, and yet at the same time these individual selves are themselves ‘independent’ and ‘existing for themselves’, so that the universal self is only a union of them.

However fully realised (or ‘absolute’) spirit is constituted only when this mutual recognition between individuals that brings into existence a universal self is supplemented by a second mutual recognition between this universal self and the individuals that compose it, or between individuals acting as members of this universal self and the same individuals acting as particular individuals:

The word of reconciliation is existing spirit, which sees the pure knowledge of itself as a universal essence in its opposite, in the pure knowledge of itself as absolutely being-for-itself singularity – a mutual recognition which is absolute spirit.

(Hegel, 1977a, p. 408; 1986b, p. 492; t.m.)

For Hegel ‘freedom is the one authentic property of spirit’ (Hegel, 1975, pp. 47–8; 1955, p. 55), so humans become free through the double act of mutual recognition whereby they bring spirit into existence. Thus for Hegel, as for Rousseau and Fichte, human freedom is a joint achievement. As he says in his Differenzschrift:

The community of a person with others must not be regarded as a limitation of the true freedom of the individual but essentially as its enlargement. Highest community is highest freedom.

(Hegel, 1977b, p. 145; 1986c, p. 81)

However, for Hegel if spirit and its essential freedom are to be properly realised this community must be given an institutional form, as a rightful state:

Man is free, this is certainly the substantial nature of man; and not only is this freedom not relinquished in the state, but it is actually in the state that it is first constituted. The freedom of nature, the disposition for freedom, is not real [wirkliche] freedom; for the state is the first realisation [Verwirklichung] of freedom.

(Hegel, 1995, p. 504; 1986e, p. 307)

Specifically, the rightful state realises spirit and its essential freedom by objectifying them. The state is ‘objective spirit’. In it ‘freedom attains its objectivity and enjoys the fruits of its objectivity’ (Hegel, 1975, p. 97; 1955, p. 116).

Finally, just as spirit combines universality and particularity, so does the freedom which is its essence, and so does the rightful state which objectifies them both. As Hegel says in the Philosophy of Right, the modern state allows the principle of subjectivity [i.e. the principle of individual freedom – AC] to attain fulfilment in the self-sufficient extreme of personal
particularity, while at the same time bringing it back to substantial unity and so preserving this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself.

(Hegel, 1991a, §260; 1986d, p. 406)

So for Hegel as for Fichte humans realise their freedom in a state that institutionalises relations of mutual recognition between them. But mutual recognition as Fichte understands it leaves individuals essentially separate, so that their freedom is a matter of their individual self-determination, even if it is dependent on their relations of recognition with others. By contrast, mutual recognition as Hegel understands it forms individuals into a new complex kind of entity, an 'I that is we and a we that is I', and their freedom is their self-determination as members of this entity, which somehow combines individual and collective self-determination without reducing to either alone.

Thus when Hegel speaks of the individuals in relations of mutual recognition as having 'universal self-consciousness' and 'real universality', he has in mind not an 'abstract' universality which is opposed to particularity but a 'concrete' universality which is in fact a combination of universality and particularity as we normally understand those terms. The concrete universal 'contains the particular and the singular within it' (Hegel, 1991b, §164A; 1986f, p. 313; t.m.) Similarly, spirit is concretely rather than abstractly universal, and the freedom which is its essential characteristic is 'concrete' rather than 'abstract' freedom: the freedom of individuals who are simultaneously part of a larger whole rather than of individuals considered in abstraction from that whole. As Hegel says, 'The state is the reality [wirklichkeit] of concrete freedom' (Hegel, 1991a, §260; 1986d, p. 405).

Marx and the modern state in 1843

In his 1842 writings Marx agrees with Rousseau, Fichte and Hegel that freedom is the essence of human beings, and that it is properly achieved only through an association between them:

Freedom is so much the essence of man that even its opponents implement it while combating its reality.

('Debates on the Freedom of the Press'; Marx and Engels, 1975a, p. 155; 1959, p. 50)

The more ideal and thorough view of recent philosophy [...] considers the state as the great organism, in which rightful, ethical and political freedom gains its realisation.

('Leading article in no. 179 of the Kölnische Zeitung'; Marx and Engels, 1975a, p. 202; 1959, p. 104)

Specifically, he agrees with Rousseau and Hegel that this freedom is inseparable from coming to see oneself as part of this larger whole:

'The state itself educates its members in that it makes them into state-members, in that it converts the aims of the individual into universal aims, raw drive into ethical inclination, natural independence into spiritual freedom, in that the individual enjoys himself in the life of the whole and the whole [enjoys itself] in the disposition of the individual.

(Marx and Engels, 1975a, p. 193; 1959, p. 95; t.m.)

In so far as the human essence can only be realised through an association between human beings, we can say that this essence itself includes solidarity. In the course of 1843 Marx follows this implication through and begins to reformulate his idea of the essence of humanity around the core idea that humans are essentially 'universal' beings: beings whose essence is to think and live from a universal or collective standpoint (he does not distinguish these two) rather than from the standpoint of their own particular self-interest (e.g. Marx, 1975, p. 148; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 285). Although he continues to see freedom as an essential property of human beings, he now puts the emphasis on universality, while seeing freedom as inseparably bound up with this universality. So, while in the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right he continues to assert that the state is 'the highest social realisation [Wirklichkeit] of the human being' (Marx, 1975, p. 98; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 240; t.m.), he conceives it essentially as a realisation of human universality. The state (along with the family and civil society) is the 'realised universality' of the individual; in it he 'achieves his true universality' (Marx, 1975, p. 99; Marx and Engels, 1959, pp. 241–2).

Meanwhile, Marx now draws a sharp contrast between the modern or 'merely political' state (Marx, 1975, p. 183; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 319), as it is described by Hegel, and the form of human association that would properly realise human universality and freedom. As he puts it in On the Jewish Question, the former accomplishes only a 'political emancipation' (or liberation) of human beings, while only the latter can accomplish their 'human emancipation', i.e. can make them properly free. In political emancipation 'the human being liberates himself from a restriction through the medium of the state, in a political way' (Marx, 1975, p. 218; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 353). That is, human beings become free only through the medium of an association which is 'external' to them, and therefore only in an indirect and so unreal way, just as in Christianity they only see themselves as divine in an indirect way, through the medium of a particular human being (Jesus Christ) who is external to them:

'In so far as he frees himself politically, man frees himself in a roundabout way, through a medium, even if it is a necessary medium. [...] he recognises
himself only by a roundabout route, only through a medium. Religion is precisely the recognition of man in a roundabout way, through a mediator. The state is the mediator between man and man's freedom.  

(Marx, 1975, pp. 218–9; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 353; t.m.)

Likewise, in the modern political state humans realise their essential universality only in an indirect and so unreal way:

The perfected political state is, in its essence, the species-life of man as opposed to his material life [...] Where the political state has attained its true development, man – not only in his thought, in his consciousness, but in reality, in life – leads a twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life: life in the political community [politischen Gemeinwesen], in which he counts to himself as a communal being [Gemeinwesen], and life in civil society, where he is active as a private individual. [In civil society,] where he counts to himself and to others as a real individual, he is an untrue appearance. In the state, on the other hand, where man counts as a species-being [Gattungswesen], he is the imaginary member of an imagined sovereignty, is deprived of his real individual life and endowed with an unreal [unwirklichen] universality.  

(Marx, 1975, p. 220; Marx and Engels, 1959, pp. 354–5; t.m.)

Here for the first time Marx uses the term 'species-being' (or 'species-essence', Gattungswesen) to refer to the essential universality of human beings. Every entity that belongs to a species has a 'species-essence', if this means the characteristic which is universal to all members of the species. But in the case of human beings the content of this characteristic is universality. The feature that is universal to all human beings is universality itself. Marx expresses this by saying not just that a human being has a 'species-essence' (which would be the case for every entity that belongs to a species) but that it is a species-essence. This expression does not sound odd in German, since the word Wesen can mean 'a being' as well as 'an essence', but it does in English, hence the usual English translation 'species-being'.

In short, for Marx in 1843 the modern political state realises human universality and freedom in an indirect and unreal, or 'estranged', way. The political emancipation it brings about is an incomplete form of human emancipation. Nevertheless it is a step towards genuine human emancipation:

Political emancipation is, of course, a great advance. True, it is not the final form of human emancipation in general, but it is the final form of human emancipation within the hitherto existing world order.

(Marx, 1975, p. 221; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 356; t.m.)

In fact Marx envisages human emancipation as an extension of the emancipation that has already been accomplished in the modern state. In the kind of association that accomplishes human emancipation, humans will relate to each other as universal and free beings, as they do as citizens of the modern state, but they will do so in their everyday lives. Thereby they will realise their universality and freedom in a real way:

Only when the real individual man takes back into himself the abstract citizen, and has become a species-being as an individual man in his empirical life, in his individual labour, and in his individual relations, only when men have recognized and organized their 'own powers' as social powers, and, consequently, no longer separate social power from themselves in the shape of political power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.

(Marx, 1975, p. 234; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 370; t.m.)

If the essential characteristic of human beings for Marx is universality, then is this Hegel's 'abstract universality' or his 'concrete universality', that is, is it a universality that is opposed to particularity or is it a combination of universality and particularity? In the Science of Logic Hegel explicitly associates the idea of concrete universality with the term 'species' (Gattung), so Marx's choice of the term 'species-being' already indicates that he has concrete universality in mind. This is confirmed by the above quote. Marx's vision of a society that realises human universality is one in which each individual realises that universality 'in his individual labour, and in his individual relations' rather than by adopting the role of a citizen whose motivations are counterposed to those he has as a particular individual.

In fact Marx's basic criticism of the modern political state can be stated by saying that in it individuals realise their own universality only in the form of an abstract universality that is opposed to their particularity, rather than in the genuine form of a concrete universality that includes their particularity. When Marx says that in this state individuals realise their universality in an 'estranged' way, he means that they realise it through an association that is 'external' to them, and to the realm of civil society in which they realise their particularity. But, I suggest, just because they realise their universality through this external association, they realise it in the form of an abstract rather than a concrete universality, in opposition to their particularity. This is the essential difference between political and human emancipation.

It seems natural to conclude that for Marx the kind of association that will properly realise human universality as concrete universality will also realise human freedom as concrete freedom, the freedom of individuals who are simultaneously part of a larger whole, and that this is the kind of
freedom that Marx has in mind when he says in *On the Jewish Question* that other humans are the ‘realisation’ rather than the ‘limit’ of my freedom (Marx, 1975, pp. 229–30; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 365), or as he puts it in *The German Ideology*: ‘In the real [wirklichen] community individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association’ (Marx and Engels, 1976, p. 78; 1962, p. 74).12 By contrast the modern state realises human freedom only as abstract freedom, the freedom of individuals whose status as members of a larger whole is counterposed to their status as particular individuals.13

In the second part of *On the Jewish Question*, Marx treats money in a similar way to the modern state. He suggests that in the market system, humans can realise their own essence only in the form of something external to them, namely money:

Selling is the praxis of alienation [Entäußerung]. Just as man, as long as he is in the grip of religion, is able to objectify his essence only by turning it into an alien fantastic essence [or being, *Wesen*],14 so under the domination of egoistic need he can be active practically, and practically produce objects, only by putting his products, like his activity, under the domination of an alien essence, and giving them the significance of an alien essence – money.

(Marx, 1975, p. 241; Marx and Engels, 1959, pp. 376–7; t.m.)15

If the essence of human beings is universality and freedom, then it follows humans realise this essence in *two* ‘estranged’ and ‘unreal’ ways, first in the form of the modern political state and second in the form of money.16

Furthermore, Marx speaks of money here not just as the estranged essence of human beings but as an essence that dominates the activity of human beings: ‘Money is the estranged essence of man’s labour and man’s existence, and this alien essence dominates him, and he worships it’ (Marx, 1975, p. 239; Marx and Engels, 1959, pp. 374–5; t.m.). So in money human beings realise their essence in the form of something that is not only estranged from them but also dominates them.

Here too there is a parallel between what Marx says about the modern state and about money. Although he does not explicitly use the language of domination in describing the modern state in the *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Marx constantly accuses Hegel of inverting the proper relation between human beings and the state, saying for example that ‘Hegel proceeds from the state and conceives of the human being as the subjectivized state’ when the state should rather be conceived as the objectification of human beings (Marx, 1975, p. 87; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 231). At the same time he also says that Hegel ‘describes the essence of the modern state as it is’ (Marx, 1975, p. 127; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 231). The clear implication is that the inversion in which individuals are reduced to nothing but expressions of the state they have produced is characteristic not only of Hegel’s account of the modern state, but of the modern state itself.17 In this sense the modern state too dominates individuals.

**Capital as estranged species-being**

I will now argue that Marx’s philosophical conceptions of the modern state and of money in 1843, as the means whereby humans realise their essential universality and freedom in an estranged and dominating form, provides the template for the conception of capital that he forms in 1844, when he first engages with political economy.

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx begins by adopting Adam Smith’s concept of capital. For Smith capital is that part of a person’s ‘stock’ or wealth, whether it consists in money or goods, which is used not for consumption but so as to ‘derive a revenue’ from it (Smith, 1956, p. 183). Capital can produce a revenue by being used to buy commodities at one price and sell them at a higher one (merchant’s capital), but Smith is mainly interested in capital that produces a revenue by being used to buy ‘useful machines and instruments of trade’ and ‘materials’, and to pay ‘workmen’ who use these to produce commodities which are then sold for a sum of money larger than the capital invested (Smith, 1956, p. 184). In sum, capital is a sum of wealth that is used to generate more wealth. But in turn the measure of a sum of wealth is the amount of labour that it takes to produce it (Smith, 1956, p. 30–31). So we do not need to go far beyond Smith to understand capital as a quantity of labour, embodied in commodities or money, which is used to purchase living labour from labourers in order to generate a larger quantity of embodied labour.

This is how Marx officially understands capital in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. Capital is ‘accumulated labour’ (Marx, 1975, pp. 285, 287; Marx and Engels, 1968, pp. 473, 476) or ‘stored-up labour’ which ‘yields its owner a revenue or profit’ (Marx, 1975, p. 295; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 483), mainly by being used to hire labourer and to buy raw materials and instruments of production so as to produce commodities for sale on the market.18

But in these manuscripts Marx also characterises capital in terms similar to those he had used to describe the modern state and money the year before. To begin with, capital dominates the very human beings who have produced it. With the expansion of capital the worker’s ‘own labour increasingly confronts him as alien property’, the accumulation of capital ‘opposes the product of labour to the worker as something increasingly alien to him’, and this leads to an ‘enslavement to capital which piles up in threatening opposition to him’ (Marx, 1975, pp. 285–6; Marx and Engels, 1968,
Of course Marx expresses this idea most clearly in the section 'estranged labour' in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*:

So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that the more objects the worker produces the fewer can he possess and the more he falls under the domination of his product, of capital [...] The *alienation* [Entäusserung] of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently of him and alien to him, and becomes a self-sufficient power confronting him; that the life which he has given to the object confronts him as hostile and alien.

(Marx, 1975, p. 324; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 512; t.m.)

The result is 'the relationship of the worker to the *product of labour* as an alien object that has power over him', in which the worker becomes a 'slave of his object' (Marx, 1975, pp. 327, 325; Marx and Engels, 1968, pp. 515, 513). It is not the particular object that one worker produces that dominates him, but the totality of objects produced by all workers that, when these objects take the form of capital, dominates them all.

So Marx's characterisation of capital in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* involves the same domination that we saw in his accounts of the modern state and money in his 1843 writings. But it also involves the other central idea in these accounts, that of an estranged realisation of the human essence, of species-being.

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx introduces a substantial development of his conception of humans as 'species-beings', in which for the first time the idea of labour plays a central role:

Man is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species - both his own and those of other things - his object, but also - and this is simply another expression for the same thing - because he relates to himself as the present, living species, because he relates to himself as a *universal* and therefore free being.

(Marx, 1975, p. 327; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 515)

At first sight this definition simply seems to reiterate Marx's 1843 conception of species-being. The only difference is that whereas before he had said that the essence of a human being is to be universal now he says that it is to relate to oneself as universal. In this Marx simply seems to be bringing his definition of the essence of human beings in line with the one in the first lines of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (Feuerbach, 1989, p. 1; 1960, p. 1). However, while Feuerbach only says that the essence of humans consists in their ability to take their own species as the object of their thought, Marx says that they make their species their object 'practically and theoretically', i.e. that they make it their object of their thought and activity. Correspondingly 'relates' in last part of the definition must refer to both thought and activity.

In fact Marx goes on to develop his conception of a species-being entirely in terms of the kind of activity in which humans engage, saying that: 'The whole character of a species, its species-character, resides in the nature of its life activity' (Marx, 1975, p. 328; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 516). He identifies this specifically human kind of activity with labour. It is (1) universal, both in that it is oriented towards species, whether the human species or the species of other entities, and in that it is directed to *any part of nature*, (2) consciously undertaken, and (3) free. But most importantly of all it is (4) 'world-producing', in that it refashions nature as a human-produced world in which humans can see their own essence:

It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective world that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. Such production is his *active* species-life. Through it, nature appears as his work and his realisation. The object of labour is, therefore, the objectification of the species-life of man: for man doubles himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore see himself in a world he himself has created.

(Marx, 1975, p. 329; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 517; t.m.)

It is clear that Marx sees this creation of a human-produced world not just as *evidence* that humans are species-beings but as the process through which they *realise* themselves as species-beings. It follows that capital is an estranged realisation of the essence of human beings:

Estranged labour, therefore, turns [...] man's *species-essence* - both nature and his intellectual species-power - into an *alien* essence.

(Marx, 1975, p. 329; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 517; t.m.)

Therefore in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx says of capital just what he said of the modern state and money in 1843: that it is an estranged and dominating realisation of the human essence. However Marx has now characterised this essence in a new way. Whereas before the central features of the human essence were universality and freedom, now the central feature is labour, and universality and freedom are reduced to aspects of labour. In fact it is just because he has redefined the human essence in his way that Marx can now see capital, a mass of 'stored-up labour', as a realisation of this essence.

Let us leave aside the idea of domination for now (I return to it at the end of this chapter) and focus on estrangement. If capital is an estranged
he construes as expressing this basic insight (albeit in an 'estranged' form). Thus he praises Hegel for seeing that

religion, wealth, etc., are only the estranged realisation [Wirklichkeit] of human objectification, of human essential powers born into work, and therefore only the way to true human realisation [Wirklichkeit].

(Marx, 1975, p. 385; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 573; t.m.)

That is, Hegel sees that capital is a necessary step towards the realisation of humans as species-beings:

Hegel grasps man's self-estrangement, alienation of his essence, loss of objectivity, and de-realisation as self-discovery, expression of his essence, objectification and realisation. (In short, he sees [...] man's relating to himself as an alien essence and his activation of himself as an alien essence as the coming to be of species-consciousness and species-life.)

(Marx, 1975, p. 395; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 583; t.m.)

To summarise, then: in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx reworks his earlier conception of what it is to be a species-being so as to organise it around the idea of universal, free, and conscious productive activity. He gives a philosophical account of labour as this activity. Thanks to this reworking, he is able to draw on Smith's implicit concept of capital as consisting in 'stored-up labour' so as to give a philosophical account of capital modelled on his earlier accounts of the modern political state and money. Capital is the realisation of species-being in the estranged form of a thing that dominates the very humans whose essence it realises.

Capital as abstract universality

This still leaves the question of the exact sense in which capital is an 'estranged' realisation of species-being. In the case of the modern political state I have argued that it realises species-being in an estranged way because it realises the concrete universality of humans in an association that is external to them and in the form of an abstract universality. In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx clearly sees a genuine human association as realising concrete universality:

Man, however much he may therefore be a particular individual – and it is just this particularity which makes him an individual and a really individual communal being – is just as much the totality, the ideal totality, the subjective existence of society which has been thought and experienced for itself.

(Marx, 1975, p. 351; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 539; t.m.)

realisation of the human essence, then what is needed to genuinely realise this essence is to replace capital with something that retains its positive features but lacks its estranged character, just as what was needed in the 1843 writings was to replace the state with a form of association that would retain its positive features of universality and freedom but would lack its estranged character. In fact in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx speaks of the genuine realisation of the human essence in just this way. It will be

the appropriation of the objective essence through the supersession of its estrangement [...] the real appropriation of [man's] objective essence through the destruction of the estranged character of the objective world, through its supersession in its estranged existence.

(Marx, 1975, p. 395; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 583; t.m.)

Here the 'objective essence' means the essence of human beings in so far as it has been objectified by labour as a world of products, or as a refashioned nature. Currently, this objective essence takes the form of capital, and what is needed is not to destroy it but only to strip it of its estranged character.

Furthermore in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx goes on to say not just that capital is an estranged realisation of the human essence, but that this estranged realisation is a necessary means towards the genuine realisation of the human essence, just as he suggested that political emancipation is a necessary means towards human emancipation in On the Jewish Question. Here it is worth mentioning Feuerbach's account of God in The Essence of Christianity, which parallels both of these. For Feuerbach, God is a misconception by human beings of their own human essence as a being external to them, but this misconception is not just an unfortunate error. Humans could only become aware of their own essence by first becoming aware of it in the shape of a being external to them:

[Religion, the consciousness of God, [...] is the first, but indirect, self-consciousness of man [...] Man transfers his essence outside himself before he finds it within himself. His own essence is an object for him first as another essence.

(Feuerbach, 1989, p. 13; 1960, p. 16; t.m.)

In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx directly draws an analogy between capital and God, although of course capital is a product of practical activity whereas God is a product of thinking (Marx, 1975, p. 324; Marx and Engels, 1968, pp. 512), and, in a way similar to Feuerbach's, he sees the estranged realisation of humans as species-beings in capital as a necessary step towards their genuine realisation as species-beings. He says this most clearly in his commentary on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, which
This suggests that by contrast capital, like the modern political state in On the Jewish Question, realises human universality not only in an external thing but also in the form of an abstract universality. There is one passage where Marx implies just this. If we return to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, Marx begins by rejecting the idea of a monarchy in which one person exercises political power, but then goes on to align it with ‘the political republic’ or what we would now call a constitutional democracy (Marx, 1975, p. 89; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 232), saying: ‘The struggle between monarchy and republic is itself still a struggle within the abstract form of the state’. By contrast Marx calls for a ‘true democracy’ in which ‘the political state disappears’ (Marx, 1975, p. 88; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 232), or at least in which its separation from civil society is overcome (Marx, 1975, pp. 189, 234; Marx and Engels, 1959, pp. 325, 370). His point is that expanding the number of people who share in political power leaves untouched the fact that in so far as individuals share in this power they do so only as citizens, in counterposition to their status as a private individuals. Even if everyone is a legislator, the individual as a legislator thinking for the common good remains counterposed to the same individual as a private self-seeker. By gaining the status of legislator, the individual realises his or her universality only in a form that is counterposed to his or her particularity, that is, in the form of an abstract universality. So a constitutional democracy fails to overcome the estranged character of the political state. By contrast true democracy realises universality as concrete universality: it is ‘the first true unity of the particular and the universal’ (Marx, 1975, p. 88; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 231).

In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx makes an exactly parallel argument about ‘crude communism’, in which the ownership of social wealth is extended from a few individuals to the entire population, so that

...just as woman passes from marriage to general prostitution so the entire world of wealth, that is, the objective essence of man, passes from the relationship of exclusive marriage with the owner of private property to a relation of universal prostitution with the community.

(Marx, 1975, p. 346; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 534; t.m.)

Marx’s objection is that extending the status of capital-owner to every member of the community does not overcome the fundamental duality between individuals as owners of capital and the same individuals as labourers:

The community is only a community of labour and [is only] the equality of wages paid out by communal capital, by the community as the universal capitalist. Both sides of the relationship are raised to an imagined universality, labour as the determination in which every person is placed, and capital as the recognised universality and power of the community.

(Marx, 1975, pp. 346–7; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 535; t.m.)

So Marx’s fundamental objection to capital is not that it consists in a wealth of human products which are the private property of a few persons, but that it consists in a wealth of products which are private property as such and thus which are ‘external’ to those who produce them.24 If everyone became co-owners of the totality of human products, then all would realise their universality through these products, but only in the form of an abstract universality. For the individual as the co-owner of this totality of products, thinking of how to use them for the common good, would remain counterposed to the same individual as a producer. ‘Crude communism’ would give everyone a share in the ownership of the products of the whole labour of the community, parallel to the share in political power that citizens of the political republic have, but they would possess this share only as capital-owners, in counterposition to their status as producers.

Accordingly what is needed is a more fundamental transformation, in which private property in the totality of the products of labour is not just extended to all but abolished. But the resulting society would not simply be the negation of capital. Rather it would be a ‘positive supersession’ of capital, in which the human universality (and thus the human freedom) which is realised in capital only abstractly would be realised as concrete universality.25 Of course Marx never spells out exactly such a society would look like.

In arguing that Marx in 1844 criticises capital essentially on the grounds that it realises human universality only in an abstract way, I have left aside the idea that workers are dominated, indeed enslaved, by capital, and it might be said in objection that the domination of workers by capital was what overwhelmingly preoccupied Marx. But this preoccupation is not incompatible with the account that I have given, any more than a preoccupation with the way that people are dominated by the modern political state would be incompatible with the account I have given of that. Marx’s aim in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts was not simply to protest against the domination of workers by capitalists, or even to show that the agent of this domination was ultimately capital itself. It was to give an account of the ultimate source of this domination. I suggest that he saw its source precisely in the fact that capital realises the universality inherent in the human essence in an abstract way, in such a way as to counterpose the universal as something external to the particular. For if we make the Aristotelian assumption that the human essence exerts a power over human behaviour from within, it might follow that an external realisation of this essence will exert the same power over humans from outside. Specifically, it might establish a relation of power between those who personify the universal and those who occupy the position of the particular, between the legislator and the citizen, or the capitalist and the worker: a relation of power which would remain even if everyone became a legislator, or if the ownership of the world of human products were extended from individual capitalists to
the whole community. Whether such a view of the source of the coercion endemic to capitalist production is ultimately convincing, it is at least plausible that Marx in 1844 could have held it.

Conclusion

It might be argued that Marx's first attempt to relate the concept of capital to that of human nature is of little interest, since within a year he had replaced it with a very different one. In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels' vision of realised humanity becomes one of beings who engage in ever-developing productive activity, and the relation between capital (or rather the set of capitalist social relations) and this realised humanity is that it is the set of property-based social relations that least hinders the free development of human productivity, so that the next step beyond it in the history of human self-realisation must be the abolition of property as such. This makes the relationship between capital and human nature rather contingent: there is no philosophical reason why some other set of property-based social relations might not have played the role of the last and most productive in the historical series. Even the drive of capitalist social relations to expand to every part of the globe and continuously to expand and revolutionise the forces of production, emphasised further in the *Communist Manifesto*, seems to connect these relations only in a contingent way to Marx's conception of humans as beings who engage in ever-developing productive activity, for in principle some other set of social relations of production might have possessed these drives.

A suggestion, however, is that the idea of the human essence as consisting in concrete universality and freedom which is realised only in the form of abstract universality and freedom in capital and which can only be properly realised in communism, may have returned to inform Marx's mature economic writings. In this case *Das Kapital* would be implicitly not just a theory of capital but also a philosophical anthropology. Whether this is the case, and, if it is the case, whether this helped or hindered Marx in his lifelong effort to grasp the nature of capitalism, can only be questions for future research.

Notes

2. Here and below 't.m.' indicates 'translation modified'.
3. The idea that for Hegel the state is the realisation of freedom is discussed in Franco (2000, pp. 154–87), Patten (1999) and Neuhausser (2000, pp. 82–174).
4. I have preserved the standard but sexist translation of Marx's *Mensch* as 'man' only because the alternatives have proved so clumsy. Unless otherwise mentioned, 'real' and 'realisation' in my translations always stand for *wirklich* and *Verwirklichung*.
5. In the *Encyclopaedia* this is Hegel's general term for the system of right that culminates in the state.
6. Cf. from the *Encyclopaedia Logic: ‘What is universal about the concept is indeed not just something common against which the particular stands on its own; instead the universal is that particularises (specifies) itself, remaining at home with itself in its other, in unclouded clarity’* (Hegel, 1991b, §163A; 1986f, p. 311). It is important to see that the underlying contrast between ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete’ here is not between mental concepts on the one hand and physical things on the other, but rather between what is separated from, and what is interconnected with, particulars. Unfortunately there is no space here for a full investigation of Hegel’s idea of concrete universality. For a discussion, see Royce (1892, pp. 492–506).
7. For fuller investigations of Marx's 1842 view of the state see McGovern (1969) and Chitty (2006).
8. Cf. 'the essence of the ‘particular personality’ is not his beard, his abstract *physis*, but his social *quality*, and [...] the activities of the state, etc., are nothing but the modes of existence and action of the social qualities of human beings' (Marx, 1975, pp. 77–8; Marx and Engels 1959, p. 222; t.m.). For two recent discussions of Marx’s 1843 view of the state, see Kourvelakis (2003, pp. 232–336) and Leopold (2007, pp. 17–182).
9. In *On the Jewish Question* Marx is referring specifically to emancipation from religion, but I take it that his basic points about freedom do not rely on this context.
10. E.g. at Hegel 1969, p. 655; 1986g, p. 340. In the English translation of this passage *Gattung* is translated as 'genius' and *Art* as 'species'. *Gattung* is associated with concrete universality.
11. This point is made by McCarthy (1990, p. 186), but he does not elaborate on the meaning of ‘concrete universality’ (cf. pp. 39, 108).
12. Cf. in *The Communist Manifesto* 'In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all' (Marx and Engels 1976, p. 506; Marx and Engels 1969, p. 482). On the idea that Marx's concept of species-being, and therefore the form of association that will realise it, combines universality and particularity, see Mahowald (1973).
13. Meanwhile Marx's essential criticism of Hegel's account of the modern system of political state and civil society is that Hegel misrepresents this system as realising concrete freedom by trying to bridge the fundamental divide between its two elements with 'mediations'. On Marx's critique of these mediations, see Leopold (2007, pp. 74–80).
14. As noted above, the word *Wesen*, translated as 'essence' here, can also be translated as 'a being', so the 'alien fantastic essence' is clearly meant to evoke the idea of God.
15. See also from the *Natur und James Mill: 'the human social act [...] is estranged and becomes the property of a material [materialien] thing external to man, i.e. money'; money is 'the alienated species-activity of man' (Marx, 1975, pp. 260, 261; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 446).
16. Along with the idea of the modern state and money as estranged realisations of the human essence there is an implicit emphasis on their 'material' or thinglike character. Thus, clearly referring to the modern state, Marx says that the modern age 'separates the objective essence of the human being from him, treating it as something purely external and material [materialien]' (Marx, 1975, p. 148; Marx
and Engels, 1959, p. 285; t.m.). I am grateful to Jai Crookshanks for pointing this passage out to me. For a parallel reference to money as ‘material’, see the last note.

17. Cf. from the _Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right_: ‘This state and this society produce religion, an inverted world-consciousness, because they are an inverted world’ (Marx, 1975, 244; Marx and Engels, 1959, p. 378). In the _Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right_ Marx focuses on the monarchical state as inverted in this way, but he implies that his critique applies equally to a ‘political republic’. See the discussion in the section ‘Capital as abstract universality’ below.

18. Cf. Engels in his 1844 _Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy_: It becomes immediately evident that capital and labour are identical, since the economists themselves confess that capital is “stored-up labour” (Marx and Engels, 1975b, p. 427; 1959, p. 508). Marx’s and Engels’ 1844 conceptions of capital are discussed by Oakley (1984, pp. 34–4, 36–9).

19. ‘The universality of man manifests itself in practice in that universality which makes the whole of nature his inorganic body.’ (Marx, 1975, p. 328; Marx and Engels, 1968, pp. 515–16)

20. ‘[M]an makes his life activity itself into an object of his willing and consciousness.’ (Marx, 1975, p. 328; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 516; t.m.).


23. Similarly, communism is ‘the true resolution of the conflict [...] between individual and species’ (Marx, 1975, p. 348; Marx and Engels, 1968, p. 536) rather than the reduction of either to the other.

24. Of course human products will always be physically external to their producers, but this is not the kind of externality Marx has in mind.

25. Marx describes communism as the ‘positive supersession of private property’ at Marx, 1975, pp. 348, 349; Marx and Engels, 1968, pp. 536, 537. Unfortunately the question of the exact relation between capital and private property in the _Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts_ cannot be addressed here.

26. For example, the idea that abstract labour, which in Marx’s later economic writings is the source of value and therefore of capital, is characterised by abstract universality’ has been developed by Rubin (1994) and Arthur (1978).

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Labour in Modern Industrial Society

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In recent years the character of work in advanced industrial society has been changing rapidly. Production is being automated and computerized. The factory operated by massed workers is being superseded. Industrial labour is ceasing to be the dominant form of work. Work in offices that used to require intellectual skills is now done by computers. With the enormous growth of jobs in the service sector and the increasing use of information technology, new kinds of work are being created.

These changes are often summed up by saying that these societies are moving from the industrial to the post-industrial stage. In some important respects this notion is questionable. Arguably, the economy is still industrial, but it now operates on a global scale. If industry is ceasing to be the predominant form of work in Western Europe and North America, it is mainly because of its relocation to other parts of the world in a new global division of labour.

Nevertheless, it is beyond dispute that work is changing. With the widespread use of computers and information technology, new kinds of work have developed. Hardt and Negri's (2000; 2005) attempt to theorize these changes has been particularly influential. The older industrial forms of labour which produced material goods, they argue, are no longer dominant. They are being superseded by new 'immaterial' forms of work. Hardt and Negri situated their thought within the Marxist tradition. However, they maintain, Marx's ideas need to be rethought in the light of the new conditions of post-industrial society (Hardt and Negri, 2005, p. 140). Marx takes material production as the paradigm of work, his concept of labour is based on an industrial model. In order to describe the new post-industrial forms of work, Marx's account must be supplemented with the concepts of 'immaterial' labour and 'biopolitical' production.

My aim in this chapter is to criticize these ideas. First I will explain Marx's account of labour and show that Hardt and Negri's criticisms are based on a fundamental misreading of his thought. Then I will argue that Hardt and Negri's own account is confused and unhelpful. Properly understood and