MARX’S COMMENTS ON WOMEN IN THE 1844 MANUSCRIPTS

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ABSTRACT OF PAPER

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This paper contrasts the morally suspect elements in Marx's comments on relations between men and women in the 1844 Manuscripts with the more sensible and liberal tone of Marx's (and Engels') remarks on the same topic in post-1844 writings. The contrast is used to illustrate the claim that an important moral shift occurs in Marx's thought around 1844, a shift away from the early concern to overcome bourgeois egoism and with it the antagonism between state and civil society, and toward the mature concern to eliminate what are perceived to be unfair inequalities of power among economic agents in a capitalist economy. The concept of alienation articulated in the Manuscripts attempts to combine these disparate concerns, and in consequence Marx's discussion there founders interestingly.
Marx's Comments on Women in the 1844 Manuscripts

The 1844 Manuscripts are a fascinating jumble. For most purposes it is as pedantically unhelpful to stress their jumbled quality as to complain about the lack of tidiness in ancient ruins: in both cases one should be searching the remains for startling prospects or hidden treasure. My excuse for worrying in this paper about the precise analytical relations that obtain among Marx's suggestive fragments and hints is that in some places the lack of analytical tidiness is a clue to something genuinely problematic in Marx's thinking. This proves to be the case with Marx's morally inspirtitng remarks about the relations between the sexes.

I

Discussing the first of three stages in the overcoming of private property and its replacement by communism, Marx says, "It may be said that this idea of the community of women gives away the secret of this as yet completely crude and thoughtless communism."1 To understand the secret thus revealed, a preliminary is to notice that Marx's writings of this period are to a very considerable extent focussed on the problem that he labels "die Spaltung zwischen dem politischen Staat und der buergerlichen Gesellschaft." The most complete exposition of this problem occurs in "On the Jewish Question." That essay contrasts the laissez-faire liberal state, which Marx calls "the perfected political state," and the market economy, which Marx calls "civil society."

The perfect political state is, by its nature, man's species-life, as opposed to his material life. All the preconditions of this egoistic life continue to exist in civil society outside the sphere of the state, but as qualities of civil

1Marx-Engels Werke (Berlin: Dietz Verlag), Ergänzungsband, Teil 1, 534 (hereafter MEW); Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1975 on), vol. 3, 294. My translations reproduce this edition where possible. All emphases in quotes are Marx's, unless otherwise noted. On the issues treated in this paper, see generally John Plamenatz, Karl Marx's Philosophy of Man (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); and Stanley Moore, "Review Article" on the O'Malley translation of Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, The Owl of Minerva, vol. 3, no. 2 (December, 1971), and "Utopian Themes in Marx and Mao," Monthly Review, June, 1969 and Dissent, March/April, 1970. I tend to agree with much that these philosophers say about the ethical positions reached in the early Marx, but disagree with them on the issue of whether the later Marx arrives at improvements on his early views. For an example of the view Plamenatz and Moore are reacting against, see Irving Fetscher, Karl Marx und der Marxismus (Munich: R. Piper Verlag, 1967), especially ch. 1.
society. Where the political state has attained its true development, man—not only in thought, in consciousness, but in reality, in life—leads a twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life: life in the political community and life in civil society, in which he acts as a private individual, regards other men as a means, degrades himself into a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers... Man, as the adherent of a particular religion, finds himself in conflict with his citizenship and with other men as members of the community. This conflict reduces itself to the secular division between the political state and civil society.2

A page later Marx recurs to the same idea that in the state "man behaves—although in a limited way, in a particular form, and in a particular sphere—as a species-being, in community with other men," whereas the spirit of civil society is the spirit of "egoism, of bellum omnium contra omnes." Marx leaves us in no doubt as to how he believes this schism can best be healed. What is wanted is to recreate an integrated human personality, and this is to be done not as one might expect—by drawing the best of the civil-society mentality and the best of the political-state mentality into unity—but rather by abolishing egoism so that man comes to conduct himself in the manner of a purely communal being both in the state and in the economy. Towards the end of the essay, Marx announces that "Emancipation from huckstering and money, consequently from real, practical Judaism, would be the self-emancipation of our time."3 Huckstering and money here are images of that bourgeois egoism which is the spirit of civil society. "Egoism" here refers to the disposition to act on narrowly self-interested desires.

The same theme weaves through Marx's discussion of the eighteenth-century liberal rights as these are exemplified in the official declarations of the French Revolution and the state political constitutions of the United States. Marx distinguishes the liberal rights which pertain to participation in the political community from the remaining liberal rights, which pertain to life outside the political community, in civil society. Marx labels the former the "rights of citizens" and the latter the "rights of man." He criticizes the rights of man because they permit a selfish exercise. (Curiously, Marx fails to notice that this point holds equally true of the rights of citizens. I can choose to exercise my right to vote, or to run for office, only in the service of selfish projects.) Marx accuses liberal theorists of reducing "citizenship, and the political community, to a mere means for maintaining these so-called rights of man."4 At the very least Marx wishes this relationship inverted; he wants to see the civil-society rights of man become a mere means for preserving citizenship. According to Marx, in the formulation of the rights of man "he is

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2Works, vol. 3, 153-154; MEW, Band 1, 354-355. The "alien powers" vaguely mentioned here turn out to refer to money, not powerful individuals or classes.

3Ibid., 170; MEW, 372.

far from being conceived as a species-being."  

Marx calls attention to the impact of market society on male/female relations in a gibe against prostitution and loveless marriages of convenience that prefigures the fuller 1844 Manuscripts discussion. In market society, "The species-relation itself, the relation between man and woman, etc., becomes an object of trade! The woman is bought and sold."  

These passages are the stock-in-trade of expositors of Marx. I rehearse these familiar quotations partly to anticipate a contrast to be drawn later in this paper, and partly to emphasize a change in Marx's attitudes on these issues that becomes evident in the 1844 Manuscripts. The change I have in mind is not Marx's answer to the question: who will bell the cat? Who or what can be the agency that overcomes the state/civil society split? Marx's answer to that pressing question is, of course, the proletariat, and he gives this answer in an 1843 "Introduction" to a never-completed contribution to the critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Of the several respects in which the 1844 Manuscripts mark a transition in Marx's intellectual development, the one I want to stress is that alongside the familiar theme of overcoming the split between state and civil society there appears here a new and strongly voiced concern with the unfair and lopsidedly unequal power relations that are endemic in, and partly constitutive of, capitalist market society. Power becomes problematic for Marx only between April and August of 1844; in earlier essays he rather surprisingly attacks the Hegelian synthesis of a bourgeois economic order and constitutional monarchy from the standpoint of "true democracy," criticizes nascent market society for its fostering of egoism, asserts that the great misery and oppression suffered by the proletariat will bring it about that the proletariat will be a great emancipatory force—all with barely a mention of the problems of unequal power that reverberate intensely throughout his later writing. In the first half of 1844 Marx produces what appears to be the last of his early writings which ignores power—some "Comments" on a French translation of James Mill's Elements of Political Economy. Overcoming bourgeois egoism and overcoming unjust bourgeois concentrations of power both receive paramount stress, roughly equal billing, in the Manuscripts. Marx's conception of alienation bundles together these two disparate complaints against market society (along with others, as we will have occasion to notice below). As a first approximation, it would be fairly accurate to say that for Marx one is alienated to the degree that two conditions hold: (1) one lacks a fair share of control over one's work activity and over the disposition of the products created by one's work, and (2) one fails to fulfill one's

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5 Ibid.  
6 Ibid., 172; MEW, 375.  
7 Cf. sections III and V below.
species-being, which is the norm of engaging in purposive labor in order to serve the universal human community. Although for his own purposes Marx squeezes conditions (1) and (2) together under the umbrella concept of alienation, it is worth noting that lacking control over one's work and products and failing to serve the human species are conceptually distinct matters. One can imagine a society absorbed completely into a big crusade, which upholds some overarching social goal that elicits constant selfless effort from all, and which organizes the crusaders hierarchically into distinct stations of markedly unequal power. In this imaginary society the rift between state and civil society which troubles Marx is fully overcome, but it remains a very open question whether power relations are fair. People at the bottom of the social hierarchy might accept the moral purpose of the crusade and be as selflessly devoted to that purpose as anybody, yet object on grounds of unfairness to their inferior status, and they could be right to protest in this way. On the other hand, we can equally well picture a market society composed of people who are narrowly selfish, and exactly equal in talent, luck, work habits, initial endowments of resources, and all other factors.

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Since Marx does not draw any line between the core of his concept of alienation and his ramified description of closely associated phenomena, I prefer not to argue for the accuracy of my definition beyond saying I believe it picks out two strands that are clearly important to Marx. I tie in a third strand in section V below. In defining "alienation" in terms of the presence of one or both of two independent conditions, I do not mean to deny that one can give a more abstract unitary characterization of the concept. Notice that on my proposed definition alienation is a matter of the objective relation of the self to the world, so one can be alienated without feeling alienated or experiencing oneself as alienated. I take it that when, in the "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" section of the Manuscripts, Marx criticizes Hegel for conceiving alienation just in terms of consciousness and self-consciousness, he has in mind the idea that, e.g., the worker who lacks control over his work environment is alienated whatever he feels about it, whatever illusions he may have about his condition.

One final clarification. Marx's discussion of species-being starts with the Feuerbachian notion that man is conscious of himself as one of a kind, one human among others. It proceeds to tease out of this species-consciousness the norm of social production for a universal human community. Noticing this, one writer comments that "Marx's justification of his contention that man has an essential 'social' nature is a poor one; for it involves introducing the expression 'species-being' in one sense, and then making use of it in another." (Richard Schacht, Alienation (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1971), 89). The text here is fragmentary, but I think it is plausible to locate in it an implicit appeal by Marx to something akin to Kantian universalization: if man is rational and self-interested, and perceives himself to be one member of a species essentially like all other members, the question must arise, "Other members of my species have desires as pressing as mine. Isn't it arbitrary for me to labor only for the satisfaction of my desires, or for the satisfaction of some people's desires and not others?" Under capitalism each human perceives the desirability of serving the species and the excessive cost to himself of doing so, while acting on a capitalist market. Alienation from the species thus becomes an internal conflict, never quite suppressed, within the individual.
that causally influence market distribution. The social relations among such persons could be market relations conducted without the burden of any lopsided power inequalities.

There is nothing at all intellectually disreputable about packing together distinct and compatible ideas under a common concept. But even a cursory reading of the Manuscripts forces on the reader the impression that Marx has not got the different elements in his account sorted out properly (Marx's fault is venial, occurring as it does in a work that is an unfinished rough draft). One source of this impression is the loose talk Marx bandies about how one aspect of alienation follows from another as by logical necessity. "We have yet a third aspect of estranged labour to deduce from the two already considered," Marx says just as he is about to make a long leap from discussing the power-inequality side of alienation to discussing the species-being side of alienation. In an earlier passage, after asserting that the relation of the worker to the objects of production and to his production itself is a "consequence" of the relation of labor to its produce, Marx asks rhetorically, "How would the worker come to face the produce of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was estranging himself from himself?" To this query the unrhetorical answer is that sometimes workers do manage to gain considerable control over their work life while holding negligible control over their work products (e.g. Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, or if that pre-capitalist example seems suspect, consider skilled tool and dye makers in relation to their work products). No doubt one can probably reconstruct most of what Marx says around the idea that under empirical conditions that steadily obtain in capitalist society, the various aspects of alienation that Marx isolates are as a matter of fact always found together, as parts of a common syndrome with common causal antecedents. But the feeling persists that Marx is not fully in control of the materials he is handling.

Failure to distinguish clearly between the power-inequality idea and the species-being idea leads Marx into serious error in the section of the Manuscripts that has been labelled "Geld." Marx is trying to convince us that there is something inherently morally suspect about monetary transactions in which self-interested parties, who don't care at all for one another and aim only at benefitting themselves via exchange, trade money for some sought object. But Marx's examples utterly fail to convince. Consider this:

The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my—the possessor's—properties and essential powers. Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women. Therefore I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness—its deterrent

power—is nullified by money. I, according to my individual characteristics, am lame, but money furnishes me with twenty-four feet. Therefore I am not lame.  

If this has the look of plausibility to it, I suggest this is only so because Marx paints into the example an irrelevant and garish detail, namely, that unequal distribution of money confers power to dominate other human beings. Money furnishes a lame rich man with liveried servants and a carriage. We suppose it is terrible that the twelve men must wait hand and foot on the one. But before being swept along by this sentiment into assent to Marx's conclusion we would do well to isolate the self-interested use of money from its vastly unequal distribution. Imagine a poor lame boy who gives a few pennies to a poor carpenter in exchange for a pair of crutches. No doubt it would be nice if the carpenter were willing to make the crutches for the boy without the payment, or if the lame boy were willing to give his pennies to the carpenter without thought of reciprocal benefit, although in the latter case we might wonder why the boy does not take care of his own vital interests before indulging in the luxury of philanthropy. But surely there is nothing in the slightest degree morally suspicious about mutually self-interested exchange in these circumstances. And why is it even prima facie objectionable that the lame boy's powers are not limited to his (morally arbitrary) genetic endowment, but can be expanded through clever exchange? There definitely is something aesthetically satisfying about fairy tales in which the handsome prince marries the beautiful princess, after suitable travail, but from the standpoint of social criticism one should pause before hurling at capitalism the objection that the cosmetics industry enables ugly boys and girls occasionally to thwart nature and win the hand of the handsome man or maiden. Marx affects to be upset by the manner in which a person can purchase things he has not achieved or acquired through his own resources: "That which I am unable to do as a man, and of which therefore all my individual essential powers are incapable, I am able to do by means of money. Money thus turns each of these powers into something which in itself it is not—turns it, that is, into its contrary." Isn't this just a tendentious way of saying that trade (for money here is inessential, barter will do the trick, though less efficiently than filthy lucre) enables a person to benefit from the acquirements and achievements of others which the individual left to his own resources could not attain to anything like the same extent, in the absence of trade? Here I mean to neglect the debater's point that trade by itself in no way implies egoism, for the traders may be intending to confer the benefits of exchange on third parties for purely altruistic motives. However, I cannot resist commenting on one final quote: "Assume man to be man," says Marx, "and his relationship to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, etc. If you want to enjoy art, you must be an artistically cultivated person..." Why not

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10 Ibid., 324; MEW, 564.

11 Ibid., 325; MEW, 565. The quote at the end of this paragraph occurs in ibid., 326; MEW, 567. These passages invoke the human-perfection aspect of alienation discussed in section V below.
exchange love for trust, one wants to ask in exasperation. That would probably be an unfair riposte, as would wondering whether Marx thinks that to enjoy corn one ought to be an agriculturally educated person. It does seem relevant to Marx's claim to cite a recent trip to Egypt taken by an acquaintance. The organizers of the tour hired a Cambridge professor to instruct the tourists in Egyptian art. Presumably the tourists' aim was to enjoy Egyptian art without undertaking the laborious study that would ordinarily be required to gain the background information necessary for appreciation. Marx's words commit him to the claim that there is something anti-human in these tourists' relationship to the world, which is absurd. It remains obscure what Marx could have been trying to say. No doubt a person who only sought to purchase the achievements of others and never sought to achieve anything on his own would be unfortunate, but Marx does not begin to make the argument that money relations per se have a tendency to bring about this extreme syndrome. Nor is Silas Marner Everyman. The conclusion is irresistible that at this point Marx has not thought through exactly what criticism he wishes to lodge against capitalism.

The section on money in the Manuscripts indicates plainly that some at least of Marx's worries about private property in that work are continuous with the uneasiness expressed in "On the Jewish Question" at the circumstance that bourgeois rights admit of a selfish exercise. (After noting that money mediates between "man's need and the object, between his life and his means of life," Marx frets, "But that which mediates my life for me, also mediates the existence of other people for me. For me it is the other person." Ownership of money, alas, allows concern for persons to be transmuted into concern for cash.)

Private property rights are rights people have with respect to objects, including the right to exclude others from the use of the object, the right to use the object oneself, the right to dispose of the object as one wishes, the right to sell or otherwise transfer the object and one's rights in it to others. A private property system is a social order that secures private property rights. Besides criticizing the capitalist private property system described in the works of Smith and, say, Ricardo, Marx proposes the abolition of private property and its replacement by communism. This is to occur in three stages: from crude communism to political communism to the genuine communism that is "the riddle of history solved" and the "positive transcendence of private property as human self-estrangement." Marx thinks that on the basis of his analysis of estranged labor he is entitled to treat private property and estrangement as correlative terms, for the existence of estrangement (or alienation) implies the existence of private property. The argument for this conclusion is unsound. Marx says that if the worker does not control his work activity or work products, then somebody else must enjoy this control, and to enjoy control over work activity or work products is

12Ibid., 323; MEW, 563.
13Ibid., 296-297; MEW, 536.
to own them. Thus the worker's lack of control implies the private property of the capitalist over that which the worker does not control. The first step of this argument may be doubted. In a primitive society authoritative custom may regulate production, so that the domination of custom over the worker does not imply that any other person has the freedom the worker lacks. Be that as it may, even if one accepts that the worker's lack of control over production implies that some other person exercises control, it does not follow that this control must be enjoyed in the form of full private property rights of the sort that characterize capitalism (e.g., think of the serf in relation to the feudal lord). At any rate, whether or not Marx is warranted in believing that alienation implies private property, it is this belief that leads him to think that the negation of private property implies the negation of alienation. In this way the term "private property" expands in Marx's thinking so that the term refers not just to a legal-institutional complex of rights but also to forms of culture and human sensibility and motivation that are associated with this complex of rights.

The elimination of private property that is equivalent to the elimination of alienation is, Marx seems to acknowledge, no simple task. In language that recalls the formulations of "On the Jewish Question," Marx envisages a three-stage process encompassing (1) the attempt to abolish private property within civil society, while leaving the state intact (this yields crude communism), (2) an attempt to abolish private property in political life, which amounts to the "abolition of the state," and finally (3) an attempt to abolish private property in both civil society and the state which proceeds from a recognition of the "human nature of need" and on this epistemic foundation effects a transformation of human nature (this yields genuine communism). About the second stage Marx says very little. About the third stage, the definitive resolution of the conflict "between man and nature, between man and man, ...between existence and essence, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species," etc., Marx understandably waxes enthusiastic. The most interesting remarks describe the first stage, crude communism.

This argument occurs at ibid., 278-279; MEW, 518-519. It might be thought that Marx means to restrict the concept of alienation so that it is distinctive of capitalism; from which it would (perhaps) follow that alienation implies full private property and the capitalist owner of same. Marx himself scotches this possibility when he writes, "The domination of the land as an alien power over men is already inherent in feudal landed property." He also characterizes feudal property as "the earth which is estranged from man and hence confronts him in the shape of a few great lords," at ibid., 266; MEW, 505.

Ibid., 296; MEW, 536.
In institutional terms crude communism has three distinguishing features: (1) all men are equally workers, and the community functions as the single "capitalist" for whom all work, (2) an equal distribution of wages and wealth is enforced, and (3) an attempt is made to impose a stern egalitarianism that destroys whatever is not suitable for division into equal shares or for common possession by all as property (e.g. the achievements of culture and civilization which exceed the comprehension of the least able). Marx sums up the gist of this social order with the assertion that crude communism represents the generalization of private property. In cultural terms, the motivations for establishing and sustaining crude communism are envy (the desire of a person that others not enjoy any advantages or good fortune that he lacks) and the levelling desire to reduce all to a common level. Marx comments that the envy of crude communism is an avatar of the greed that dominates capitalism.

II

Perhaps one way to characterize crude communism would be to say that it achieves the elimination of the unfair power inequalities that constitute one-half of alienation, but does nothing to eliminate the spirit of acquisitive, aggressive selfishness that constitutes the other half of alienation. However, that this way of construing Marx does not quite capture his way of thinking is shown by his statement that "this idea of the community of women gives away the secret of this as yet completely crude and thoughtless communism." My essay up to this point has been a background commentary offered as an aid to understanding what Marx is driving at here. What is the secret of crude communism revealed by its treatment of women? Marx elaborates his meaning in two passages, which I quote at length:

Finally, this movement of opposing universal private property to private property finds expression in the brutish form of opposing to marriage (certainly a form of exclusive private property) the community of women, in which a woman becomes a piece of communal and common property. It may be said that this idea of the community of women gives away the secret of this as yet completely crude and thoughtless communism.16

In the approach to woman as the spoil and handmaid of communal lust is expressed the infinite degradation in which man exists for himself, for the secret of this approach has its unambiguous, decisive, plain and undisguised expression in the relation of man to woman and in the manner in which the direct and natural species-relationship is conceived. The direct, natural, and necessary relation of person to person is the relation of man to woman. In this natural species-relationship man's relation to nature is immediately

16 Ibid., 295; MEW, 534.
his relation to man, just as his relation to man is immediately
his relation to nature—his own natural destination. In this
relationship, therefore, is sensuously manifested, reduced to
an observable fact, the extent to which the human essence has
become nature to man, or to which nature to him has become the
human essence of man. From this relationship one can therefore
judge man's whole level of development. From the character of
this relationship follows how much man as a species-being, as
man, has come to be himself and to comprehend himself; the
relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human
being to human being. It therefore reveals the extent to which
man's natural behavior has become human, or the extent to which
the human essence in him has become a natural essence—the
extent to which his human nature has come to be natural to him.
This relationship also reveals the extent to which man's need
has become a human need; the extent to which, therefore, the
other person as a person has become for him a need—the extent
to which he in his individual existence is at the same time a
social being.17

Marx articulates two thoughts here: first, that the nature of male/female
relations in crude communism is a definitive indication of the moral
quality of the culture, and second, male/female relations are always an
accurate barometer of social progress. Both thoughts are problematic.
I take up the first idea first.

The plan to turn all women into common property, public parks for the
free enjoyment of males, is puzzling because it would appear to violate
the universalistic spirit of crude communism. If the intent is to de­
scribe crude communism as providing institutional guarantees of certain
equal rights but inadequate nonetheless due to the crude and grudging
popular culture that sustains these rights, then it must be admitted
that so far from revealing the true nature of crude communism, the turn­
ing of women into common property just contradicts the original descrip­
tion of the scheme. Contrary to its initial characterization, crude
communism does not achieve equal distribution of wealth, since men possess
forms of wealth that women lack, and for which they receive no compensat­
ing advantage. It's as though Marx were arguing against the conception
of communism as equal distribution by claiming that in such a system
there would be grossly unequal distribution as between members of hostile
ethnic groups. The evil in the community-of-women idea has nothing to do
with the purported inadequacies of crude communism but rather is a matter
of the crude oppression of women.

It is easy to fit this passage from Marx alongside the unedifying
history of philosophers who have professed to be scandalized by other
philosophers' comments on sexuality (cf. Hegel on Kant's view that mar­
riage involves a contract between husband and wife in which both parties
acquire limited property rights in one another's bodies). It is also easy

17 Ibid., 295-296; MEW, 535.
to locate the specific source of Marx's confusion in the passage. Implicitly Marx is assuming that none but men are workers in crude communism; hence, the equal rights that apply to all workers do not affect the status of women. Crude communism appears to acknowledge just two statuses, that of being a worker and a piece of property. Not falling into one status, women are forced into the other. But why should a radical critic of bourgeois society assume that women will predominantly remain confined to the home, cut off from the arena of industry where human emancipation is being effected? To make too much of this lapse on Marx's part would be unfair, for he corrects it in the Communist Manifesto. There and in his later analysis of women's estate, jointly executed with Engels, a key assertion is that women's obtaining equal access to socially productive paid labor is a precondition of their emancipation from the tyranny of the male breadwinner, whose control over family income tends to give him control over family life even in the absence of legal encumbrances to equal partnership in marriage.18

Even if we abstract from the "women workers" slip, Marx's critique of crude communism by way of a critique of the status of women under a crude communist regime is ill thought out. Marx writes, "Just as woman passes from marriage to general prostitution, so the entire world of wealth (that is, of man's objective substance) passes from the relationship of exclusive marriage with the owner of private property to a state of universal prostitution with the community."19 For this parallel to hold, the policy-makers of crude communist society must discern no differences between making property of physical objects and making property of human beings. How is this crass failure to notice morally relevant differences supposed to be part and parcel of the enterprise of crude communism? Forgetting women momentarily, let us suppose the crude communist society declares that all children and adults too aged or infirm to work are henceforth to become public property. Why would this gross moral failing indicate a deep problem with the project of crude communism rather than just an evil practise gratuitously tacked onto its description?

So far I have tried to develop the objection that Marx's descriptions of crude communism are formulated in terms that blur crucial normative distinctions in such a way as to make it impossible to know exactly what to make of Marx's normatively-charged descriptions. Standing back from the detail of Marx's text, we may wish he had made a distinction between two degrees of overcoming bourgeois selfishness: (a) one becomes willing to limit the pursuit of one's self-interested desires so far as that is necessary to avoid violating the rights of others, and (b) one's desires become so thoroughly communal, so thoroughly imbued with the desire that other persons gain the fulfillment of their desires that conflict of interest between oneself and others ceases to be a genuine social problem. At first glance crude communism looks to be a form of society in which (a) but not (b) holds true of most persons, but as it turns out the discussion

18 See notes 23 and 24 below.

19 Ibid., 294-295; MEW, 534.
of women's oppressive lot under this regime proves that (a) does not hold true of most persons either. In the third stage of genuine communism both (a) and (b) hold to a maximal degree. This smudging of the line between (a) and (b) amounts to a begging of the question whether, given that (a) prevails among the persons of some society, it is really desirable that (b) prevail as well. After all, one might have thought that the ideal of a communist citizen should conform to the description of John Stuart Mill's ideal individual in On Liberty—a person who has robustly self-interested desires and pursues them vigorously but scrupulously stops short of trampling on the rights of other persons, engaged in a similar pursuit. That is to say, a communist society overcomes the split between state and civil society by facilitating the development of citizens who possess both strong regulative communal motivations and strong self-interested concerns. The Marx of the 1844 Manuscripts is very far from endorsing this norm, which perhaps deserves to be called the "liberal" or "Millian" socialist ideal.

Having raised some puzzles about Marx's claim that one can read off the real character of crude communism from its treatment of women, I turn now to his generalization of this claim. Marx observes that since "the direct, natural, and necessary relation of person to person is the relation of man to woman," by observing this relation in any society one can tell "the extent to which the human essence has become nature to man," and so "judge man's whole level of development."

With part of what Marx asserts one should have no quarrel. This part may be paraphrased as follows. Since sexual relations arise from strong natural promptings, these relations in one form or another are to be found in every society and the extent to which these promptings are civilized or tamed tends to vary directly with the general level of humane

20 John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1956), ch. 3. Qualification is needed here to allow for the fact that Mill's self-regarding acts need not be narrowly self-interested, for the former are delimited in terms of their consequences, not their motivations. Still Mill's self-regarding actions will include a large component of self-interested actions.

If Marx had proceeded as outlined here, he would have criticized Hegel not for attempting to reconcile state and civil society, citizen and economic man, but for failing to integrate the two concerns in balanced fashion. Instead Hegel ultimately allows the state to swallow up civil society—as indicated in his comments on war toward the end of the Philosophy of Right.

In "Marx's Dialectic of Labor," Philosophy and Public Affairs, vol. 3, no. 3 (Spring, 1974), G.A. Cohen presents an interpretation of Marx on alienation according to which Marx does carry out Hegel's enterprise—so that the dialectic of civil society and state should end in a synthesis in which the best of both moments is preserved. Cohen's important textual citations all refer to Marx's writings of 1845 or later, so his analysis is compatible with mine. I claim the later Marxian texts correct a misplaced stress of the earlier. Somewhat similar remarks hold true of Richard Schmitt, "Alienation and Class," Radical Philosophers' Newsjournal, Spring, 1978.
culture or social progress a people has attained. One can accordingly use the state of sexual relations in any society (or, somewhat more broadly, male/female relations\textsuperscript{21}) to measure its level of social progress. It's possible to quibble with Marx as to how reliably relations between the sexes correlate with general social progress, or as to how non-arbitrarily one can construct a scale for measuring "progress," but with the proviso that this barometer cannot be finely calibrated and sometimes measures inaccurately, what Marx says looks interesting and roughly acceptable.

There is, however, something both romantic and Victorian in Marx's phrasing, which emerges into focus when we notice that Marx's barometer of progress in male/female relations is set just to measure degrees of the overcoming of the split between the state and civil society in the sexual sphere. Marx is unequivocal on this point. The less we behave like bourgeois egoists in our sexual relations, the more our needs have become needs for the other person, the higher the level of our civilization's development.

The difficulty is that sexual relations are preeminently an area of life where the survival of egoistic and even animal-like desires is without qualification a good thing. Far from seeming a perhaps unattainable but still nobly inspiring goal, the overcoming of bourgeois egoism here takes on a decidedly unattractive aspect. Marx has uncritically assimilated into his communist ideal commonplace prejudices against simple desires for quotidian bodily pleasures, prejudices not in substance different from his prissy comments on marriage in an 1842 commentary on the German historical school of law. In edifying fashion Marx there extols "the sanctification of the sex drive through exclusiveness, the restraint of the drive through loving, ethical beauty which idealizes nature's command into a moment of spiritual union—the spiritual essence of marriage."\textsuperscript{22} For more in this vein, see Marx's animadversions upon a proposed reform of the Rhineland marriage statutes that would allow divorce on easier terms: "Compliance with the wishes of individuals would be transformed into injustice against the essence of individuals; against their ethical reason which is embodied in ethical relationships."\textsuperscript{23}

Another way of exhibiting the peculiarity of Marx's suggested norm of human development is to set his statement of the idea beside Charles Fourier's unfurling of a similar standard. Evidently Marx has borrowed the idea from Fourier, but he subtly alters what he borrows, as is noticeable when one compares the Manuscripts passage with a passage from Fourier

\textsuperscript{21}Throughout this paper I ignore the complications that stem from the fact that sexual relations and love relations also occur between members of the same sex.

\textsuperscript{22}Works, vol. 1, p. 207; MEW, Band 1, 82.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., 310; MEW, 150.
that Marx himself quotes and endorses in *The Holy Family*, written a year later: "The change in a historical epoch can always be determined by the progress of women toward freedom, because in the relation of woman to man, of the weak to the strong, the victory of human nature over brutality is most evident. The degree of emancipation of women is the natural measure of general emancipation." Although there are doubtless fantastic elements in Fourier's projected rehabilitation of the flesh, his suggested measure of progress soberly registers changes in women's freedom and security from injury and coercion—not shifts in unselfishness.

To clarify further what Marx comprehends in the idea of human nature becoming natural to man, or in other words of man fulfilling his species-being, I want to distinguish two varieties of unselfishness. Let us say a person is altruistic if and only if he counts his own interests and desires as having no greater weight per se than any other person's interests and desires in deciding what course of action he will follow. Let us say a person is sympathetic if and only if some of his desires/interests are desires for the satisfaction of other people's desires/interests. Put another way, a sympathetic person cares for some things just because another person cares for those things. Both altruism and sympathy so construed admit of degrees. Marx's notion of overcoming bourgeois egoism or of overcoming the split between the political state and civil society has more to do with growth of sympathy than growth of altruism. He says—and here I repeat a passage already quoted—that the quality of male/female relations in a culture "reveals the extent to which, therefore, the other person as a person has become for him a need—the extent to which he in his individual existence is at the same time a social being." Marx's ideal here is not the person who manages to suppress his narrowly selfish desires and act on behalf of others, but much more the person whose spontaneous desires encompass the satisfaction of other people's wants.

We are now in position to state another puzzle about Marx's view of male/female relations as a barometer of social progress. A sympathetic person can be narrowly sympathetic, caring for a few close friends and not at all for anybody else. In a given culture there could flourish a cult of romance, such that men and women never couple except when they truthfully feel undying affection for one another, while in that culture no widespread ties of sympathy bind individuals into larger communities. The elimination of the individual's alienation from the species requires service to a universal human community. Yet the examples illustrate how it is possible to end bourgeois selfishness without establishing anything resembling a universal human community. Thus these examples revive the issue as to how reliable is the correlation Marx posits between the character of male/female relations and the level of human development in general, especially if what is being measured under the rubric of development is the species-being rather than the power-inequality aspect of estrangement. The same examples insinuate a doubt about whether it is desirable that motivation to serve a universal human community should predominate over narrower motives. Suppose I am a member of the community

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2^ Works, vol. 4, 196; MEW, Band 2, 208.
of cubist painters. I produce for the benefit of the producers and consumers of this style of painting. I do not, let us say, expect that my activity will benefit everybody, just the people who like this particular mode of art. A society composed of various independent communities like this one might not be unified by any overarching social goals shared by all society's members, nor by any overarching sympathies either. Is this objectionable? Must there be a total community embracing the entire society, to which all its members are devoted?24a

Similarly, a society could seemingly make great strides toward sexual equality without scoring high on Marx's scale of desirable male/female relations. Consider a society in which the law and other major social institutions include no practises that discriminate on the basis of sex, in which the physiological differences between men and women (e.g. that men tend to be physically stronger) do not correlate with differences in status and reward (e.g. the society does not glorify physical strength or confer excessive rewards on the strong),25 and in which the enforcement of law is effective, so that the incidence of coercion and violence inflicted by the members of one sex upon another is low. The members of such a society may not be specially altruistic or sympathetic. It might even be common practise in the society for large numbers of men or women to sequester themselves voluntarily from the opposite sex for long periods of time. So long as the rights of women (and men) are secure, it is inappropriate to criticize this imaginary society for failure to nurture a high level of affection between men and women. Once again the goal of overcoming the split between the state and civil society reveals itself to be morally problematic.

III

The ambiguities of Marx's 1844 Manuscripts comments on women are important because their extreme nature glaringly illuminates a moral objection to the basic standpoint of the early Marx. Or so I have argued. Tracing the further development of Marx's views on women shows very plainly that the moral objection which—if valid—vitiates the early philosophical argumentation does not apply with the same force to his mature thought. Marx's changing views on women help the reader to form a balanced assessment of the normative quality of his early as opposed to his later writing. This topic is tangled, and cannot be unravelled in a short essay. First let us pull a single thread.

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24a What would count as serving a universal community? If there were a just world-wide economic order, contributions to it might be plausible candidates for such service.

In The Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels reply in two polemical thrusts to the accusation that communism proposes the abolition of the family. They argue that when the bourgeois who considers his wife an instrument of production hears that communism aims at common ownership of the means of production, he mistakenly infers that communism aims at common ownership of women, whereas what is really aimed at is "to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production." They also argue that in contrast to bourgeois society in which prostitution and adultery are prevalent, "it is self-evident that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e. of prostitution both public and private." Neither argument hints that the abolition of capitalist private property necessarily presages any large-scale flowering of altruism or sympathy or love. The first argument identifies communism with the ending of unfair power inequalities between the sexes. The second argument draws out a consequence of achieving equality of power between the sexes when this is coupled with the elimination of inequalities of power between economic classes: if women experience prostitution as degrading and engage in the practice only under the pressure of economic coercion, the elimination of this economic coercion will take away the sole motivation that sustains prostitution. While this argument may be unrealistic in its assumption that no person would voluntarily choose a life of prostitution, note that Marx and Engels do not here indulge in far-fetched claims about the blossoming of human unselishness to be brought about by the arrival of communism. Nor is there any other passage in the Manifesto which suggests that communism has anything particularly to do with the goal of substituting love of others for love of self. (Indeed the claim that communism establishes a form of association in which "the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" is exactly the claim—reminiscent of Rousseau—that communism will bring into existence a set of institutions in which self-interested behavior is not to be feared because the individual can benefit himself only by benefitting all.26a

The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, written by Engels in what he says is an attempt to reproduce the notes of a deceased Marx, further clarifies the fate, in the later Marx, of the early philosophical themes of overcoming the split between state and civil society and ending the alienation of man from his species-being. Marx never renounces these themes, he occasionally declares an allegiance to them, but their displacement from the center of his thought is undeniable. It's not just that the terminology changes, the concepts the terminology expresses also shift. In Marx's writings dating from the Communist Manifesto the concept of species-being is reduced from the status of a central normative programmatic focus to a vestigial concern, almost a ceremonial embellishment. Marx in his maturity comes to assign first priority to the goal of completing and furthering bourgeois justice rather than to the goal of overcoming bourgeois egoism, and this changed

26 Works, vol. 6, 502; MEW, Band 4, 479.

26a The extent to which it is reasonable to hold that communism will bring into existence such institutions is discussed in my "Marxism and Majority Rule."
orientation reflects, in my opinion, Marx's eventual understanding that the problems of egoism are less tractable, less amenable to solution by way of communist revolution and subsequent institutional tinkering than are the problems of justice.

Both of the claims I am urging—the survival and the reduced significance of the species-being idea as compared to the power-inequality idea—receive support from The Origin of the Family. In the midst of anthropological speculations about the ancient gens, Engels inserts a brief digression on the probable relations between the sexes under communism that dots the i’s and crosses the t’s on the somewhat elliptical, aphoristic phrasing of the Manifesto. In bourgeois society, the theory and practise of marriage and love are at loggerheads. The norm is that one should undertake marriage only from the motive of love for one’s partner; the reality is that economic considerations, particularly the prevailing absence of opportunity for the woman to earn a living outside of marriage, but also the constraints confining choice of partner to a member of one’s economic class and the considerations stemming from bourgeois inheritance of property, render free choice in most instances illusory. "Full freedom of marriage can therefore only be generally established," says Engels, "when the abolition of capitalist production and of the property relations created by it has removed all the accompanying economic considerations which still exert such a powerful influence on the choice of a marriage partner."

Engels then ventures a tentative prediction about what marriage practices we can expect to see develop under communism. Communist economic arrangements subtract all existing motivations to marry now extant, except mutual inclination. Communist marriage will accordingly be based solely on the mutual inclination of the partners. "And as sexual love is by its nature exclusive," one can predict that communist marriage will in each case involve just two persons. Even more diffidently, Engels predicts that monogamous marriage will be the most common form of marriage under communism. The higher incidence of monogamy will be a consequence of establishing equality of power between prospective mates, for assuming that women more strongly incline to monogamy than men, with more power women will be more able to give effect to their will to monogamy. After these remarks, which may disappoint or comfort the reader, Engels again speaks with more confidence of assertion.

But what will quite certainly disappear from monogamy are all the features stamped on it through its origin in property relations; these are, in the first place, supremacy of the man.

and, secondly, indissolubility.

...What we can now conjecture about the way in which sexual relations will be ordered after the impending overthrow of capitalist production is mainly of a negative character, limited for the most part to what will disappear. But what will there be new? That will be answered when a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in their lives have known what it is to buy a woman's surrender with money or any other social instrument of power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love, or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences. When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual—and that will be the end of it.  

Apart from the perhaps facile identification of sexual equality and communist economic equality, and the lack of nervousness about public opinion in the last sentence, these splendid lines could well have been written by John Stuart Mill. What is of primary importance to Engels here is the elimination of unjust inequalities of power between the sexes which he believes communism will bring about. Of decidedly secondary importance is his hope that the removal of power inequalities that place individuals in predicaments from which squalid selfish behavior often appears the best or only choice, will leave room for the natural human disposition toward love and reciprocal affection to assert itself in action with greater frequency (this is not a claim that communism will totally transform human nature in the direction of a New Testament ideal, but a claim that roughly the same old human nature put in more favorable circumstances will express itself in more desirable actions). But Engels very tightly hedges this assertion of hope with the robust statement that under conditions of fair equality individuals will establish their own forms of consensual relations, whatever these might be—and that is really all there is to be said about it. This is a conversation-stopper not only for the exercises in prediction but for the normative discussion as well.  

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28Engels, ibid., 73; MEW, 83. Here it is unclear whether Engels is saying, plausibly, that communist economic equality is a necessary condition for women's attainment of equality with men, or, less plausibly, that it is a sufficient condition as well.

29That is, so far as marriage goes. The family is another matter. If a marriage dissolves upon the inclination of one or both partners, that does not suspend family obligations to children still in need of parental affection and guidance. Engels speaks of the socialization of child-rearing as well as the socialization of housework (ibid., 67;
Given this normative contrast between the early and late Marx, what plausibility can attach to Shlomo Avineri's claim, urged in the course of introducing Marx's 1843 critique of Hegel, that "Marx's later writings merely articulate the conclusions at which he arrived at this early stage of his intellectual odyssey. The various economic, social and historical studies undertaken by Marx are but a corollary of the conclusions he drew from his immanent critique of Hegel's political philosophy."?30

This last question may not seem rhetorical at all to a reader who is wondering if the shift in Marx's views on women may not be the single exception to the otherwise acceptable generalization that "there is no 'caesura' between the young and the old Marx." Here I can only suggest a line of inquiry worth further pursuit. Commentators on Marx sometimes imply or state explicitly that Marx offers two descriptions of the transition from primitive to more developed communism, one in the Manuscripts and one in the Critique of the Gotha Program, and that these descriptions are in all important respects compatible with one another.31 Such commentators are wrong. One important difference between the 1844 Manuscripts and the 1875 notes on the Gotha Program is that in the former

MEW, 77, but "socialized childrearing" appears to involve above all increased state provision of resources for education and the resolve not to treat children born out of wedlock as second-class children. While admirable, these aims, even if achieved, would not abrogate the special responsibilities of parents and parent substitutes. In his great popularization of Marxian hopes for the future, Woman under Socialism, August Bebel hints that perhaps children can be raised by other children under professional adult supervision. He says, "Whoever has watched children knows that they are brought up best in the company of their equals, their sense of gregariousness and instinct of imitation being generally strong." (ch. 7) But this remains a hint. Bebel gives no argument against the view that to be brought up best, a child—in addition to the stimulus of peers, good education, etc.—requires sustained intimate contact with a small number of adults who take a specially intense interest in his wellbeing. In fact Bebel announces the imperative of preserving the "mother's breast" for the child as long as is possible.

30Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx (London and New York, 1968), 5. (The 'caesura' quote below occurs at ibid., 40.) The context makes it plain that the continuity Avineri perceives embraces the normative as well as the explanatory dimension of Marx's thought.

the early phase of communism (there called "crude communism") taken as it stands is asserted to be morally worse than the capitalism it replaces. The famous Gotha Program comparison of communist revolution to childbirth carries a different implication, for infancy, though perhaps disfigured by birthmarks and birth trauma, is after all better than life in the womb. The clear respect in which early communism is said to be superior to capitalism is that while both societies attempt to secure equal bourgeois rights, in early communist society "principle and practice are no longer at loggerheads."

That is to say, unlike in capitalist society where rights promised are often not delivered, in early communist society the same or superior rights are announced in theory and also upheld in everyday practice. Although the pejorative term "bourgeois" which Marx applies to these rights signals his ambivalence about them, an ambivalence which has its source in the anti-egoism forays of his early writings, nonetheless it is true that this guaranteeing of equal bourgeois rights to its citizens marks the superiority of early communist society. The contrast with the attitude toward bourgeois rights expressed in "On the Jewish Question" could hardly be more stark. In this connection one should also observe carefully how in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Marx pours scorn on the republican constitution of 1848 for its failure actually to secure to all citizens the equal rights vaguely proclaimed. Despite its rhetoric of "unconditional right" this constitution leaves loopholes that permit the "friends of order" to pass laws the effect of which is that "all liberties were regulated so as to make sure that the bourgeoisie was not hindered in its enjoyment of them by the equal rights of the other classes." Here again the gap between principles and practice is decried in such a way as to commit Marx to the view that actually preserving equal liberties would be a very good thing.

In a passage of the Gotha Program that is crucially important for determining the normative bent of Marx's later writings, Marx has this to say about the Lassallean proposal that the German workers' movement demand free elementary education by the state:

"Elementary education by the state" is altogether objectionable. Defining by a general law the expenditures of the elementary schools, the qualifications of the teaching staff, the branches of instruction, etc., and, as is done in the United States, supervising the fulfillment of these legal specifications by state inspectors, is a very different thing from appointing the state as the educator of the people! Government and Church should rather be equally excluded from any influence on the school. Particularly, indeed, in the Prusso-German Empire (and one should not take refuge in the rotten subterfuge that one is speaking

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32 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works (Moscow, 1970), vol. 3, 18; MEW, Band 19, 20.

33 Selected Works, vol. 1, 409; MEW, Band 8, 126.
of a "state of the future"; we have seen how matters stand in this respect) the state has need, on the contrary, of a very stern education by the people.34

One might say that when Marx here objects to capitalist-controlled states interfering in the education of the people, it does not at all follow that he would entertain any reservations whatsoever about direct state management of the schools when the state comes to be controlled by the proletariat in early communist society. One might point to the Communist Manifesto35 for a hint tossed out by Marx and Engels that this proposed interpretation of their thought on education is correct. However, decisive evidence against this interpretation is forthcoming in The Civil War in France. In an enthusiastic description of the features of the Paris Commune which mark it as "the positive form of that Republic" which is to supersede "class-rule itself," Marx writes, "The whole of the educational institutions were opened to the people gratuitously, and at the same time cleared of all interference of Church and State."36 If talk of excluding the Church from influence over the school sounds like a threatened denial of freedom of worship, endorsed by Marx, a sentence from the same paragraph just quoted should clarify Marx's meaning: The Commune disestablished and disendowed the Church, and "The priests were sent back to the recesses of private life, there to feed upon the alms of the faithful in imitation of their predecessors, the Apostles."

It is true that after asserting that the early phase of communist society will uphold bourgeois rights, and correctly so, Marx airs some reservations about rights and then announces with evident relief that in a higher phase of communist society the "narrow horizon of bourgeois right" can "be crossed in its entirety." It is worth examining the argumentative context in which this slogan is imbedded.

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed

34 Selected Works, vol. 3, 28; MEW, Band 19, 30-31. Marx is referring to Lassalle's notorious negotiations with Bismarck, in which Lasalle offered to trade workingclass support for Bismarck's state in return for various concessions.

35 Works, vol. 6, 502; MEW, Band 4, 478, where Marx and Engels endorse the intervention of "society" in education.

36 Selected Works, vol. 2, 220; MEW, Band 17, 339.
in its entirety and society inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!37

This passage raises issues beyond the scope of this paper. In terms of the contrast I have drawn between the species-being and the power-inequality aspects of alienation, the latter of which becomes more central in Marx's later thought, it is relevant to observe that none of the conditions Marx lists as necessary for making the transition from the early to the higher phase of communism include anything resembling the full overcoming of bourgeois egoism dreamed of in the Manuscripts. Ending the "subordination of the individual to the division of labour" means arranging social production so that each individual can engage in a variety of interesting and challenging work roles. Ending the division between "mental and physical labor" equals the granting to each individual of opportunities for intellectual work, including the work of managing economic enterprise. For labor to become "life's prime want," work activities must become so inviting that each person wants above all to engage in these work activities. The "all-round development of the individual" is vague, but appears to require that each person should become a Renaissance man, skilled in a variety of employments (but not, presumably, a jack of all trades and master of none). The increase in the "productive forces" and in "all the springs of cooperative wealth" apparently must be sufficiently great that it is plausible to suppose that the individual, under the rule 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,' is not tempted to misrepresent his abilities to communal authority or to develop in himself needs, like the need for inter-galactic space travel, that he can foresee will place undue strain on society's scarce resources (otherwise the operation of the higher communist rule will result in chaos and squabbling). No doubt the conditions Marx lists are difficult to achieve. Perhaps it is utopian to expect their attainment in any future state of society that we can visualize, communist or what-not. But the conditions listed in the Gotha Program as prerequisite to the passage to full communism do not entail the achievement of the goal of overcoming the split between political state and civil society proclaimed in the essay "On the Jewish Question" or the goal of man fulfilling his species-being proclaimed in the 1844 Manuscripts. Communist citizens pictured by Marx may be fine specimens of humanity. They are not saints. Moreover, the preconditions for the advent of higher communism that are least likely ever to be realized pertain to the difficulty of rendering

37 Ibid., vol. 3, 19; MEW, Band 19, 21.

37a For labor to become life's prime want, rather than similar pleasurable activities with no further end in view, is it not the case that citizens must acquire a prime desire to serve others—to overcome their egoism? Not at all. Labor might become the prime want of a person who takes zestful pleasure in the performance of certain activities that he knows will earn his livelihood. Helping others might be a secondary consideration, or no consideration at all.
industrial work supremely attractive to all, not to the difficulty of transforming human nature so that in an economy of great abundance people can be expected not to cheat on production and consumption rules that are recognized to be beneficial to all and, through flexible tailoring to the individual case, fair to all. Finally, it is hardly plausible to surmise that Marx thought the stringent conditions that must be met before higher communism is possible, could be met swiftly. A better surmise is that Marx shows himself willing to endorse the prolonged existence of a post-capitalist form of society whose most salient divergence from bourgeois society is precisely that it secures bourgeois justice.  

If a liberal is taken to be one who favors strict maintenance of individual rights very much like those asserted in the course of the eighteenth-century revolutions, and a revolutionary is one committed to the improvement of capitalism through militant class struggle leading to forcible expropriation of private property, then it is no paradox to say that when Marx became more of a revolutionary in his maturity he also became more of a liberal.

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38 For the opinion that Marx takes an adversary view of justice, see Allen Wood, "The Marxian Critique of Justice," Philosophy and Public Affairs, vol. 1, no. 3 (Spring, 1972). I find Wood unconvincing, but that does not matter here. For anyone convinced by Wood can substitute the words "secures what is called 'bourgeois justice'" for my "secures bourgeois justice."

My view is that while the early Marx, for reasons best expressed in "On the Jewish Question" rejects liberal rights, the later Marx embraces them. A summary statement of Marx's mature view of liberal rights is that communism will uphold all the liberal rights, with the single exception of the right to property, which is misunderstood in liberal theory, and must be replaced by a socialist right to property. Against this view, one might say "Ah, but the addition of the socialist relations of property to the liberal rights transforms the content of all the liberal rights." To the extent that I can make sense of this, it is no objection, for it is generally true of any individual right that its value may vary depending on other rights that are added to it. The right to vote and stand for public office in open election, for example, may be trivial or important for the citizen depending on whether the right to free speech is also upheld. I put forward my view of Marx as a rational reconstruction which makes best sense of most of what he asserts. It requires a straining of some texts, for example of the Grundrisse passage that repeats most of the cliches about money from the Manuscripts, even down to reproducing the quote from Shakespeare's Timon of Athens, of which Marx was inordinately fond. But no interpretation of Marx will fit all that Marx says, for some of his statements contradict others.
The argument thus far may be conveniently summarized as follows: (1) Marx's comments on male/female relations in the 1844 Manuscripts exemplify the confusion into which he is drawn when he articulates a concept of alienation which combines the disparate species-being and power-inequality elements, (2) Marx's later views on male/female relations under capitalism and under communism illustrate the manner in which the species-being theme becomes less important in his later (post-1848) writings, and (3) the lessening of stress on the species-being idea in the later writings should enhance their ethical appeal for us.

With due allowance for hyperbole, perhaps (1)-(3) may be taken as redeeming the implicit promise of my opening paragraph, viz. that careful analysis of the 1844 Manuscripts would reveal "startling prospects." But I also promised "hidden treasure." Does Marx say nothing true in his early writings that he does not say better in his later writings?

In this regard a clue worth tracking is the frequency of reference to the achievement of excellence through laboring activity in the excerpt from the Gotha Program quoted three paragraphs back. "The all-round development of the Individual," "the antithesis between mental and physical labour," work's becoming "life's prime want": these idioms allude to an ideal of perfectionism that is very much in evidence in the 1844 Manuscripts' elucidation of the concept of alienation and in Marx's critique of capitalism thereafter. Consider two passages from the "Estranged Labor" section of the Manuscripts. Commenting on the alienation of the worker from his own activity of production, Marx writes:

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour? First, the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e. it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind.39

Distinguishing the species-being of man—social production—from production carried out by animals, Marx writes:

An animal forms objects only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the standard

inherent to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty.40

These statements fairly bristle with suggestions and hints. I propose the following construal of (part of) what Marx here has in mind:

Besides the two conditions noted above in Section I, alienation comprises another. A person is alienated to the degree that in his laboring activity he does not have a fair opportunity to exercise and develop his significant talents and capacities. More broadly, labor aside, a person is alienated to the degree that he lacks fair opportunities to achieve the human goods that compose an ideal or desirable mode of existence. Call this the human-perfection aspect of alienation. Note that these formulations leave it open whether a person suffers human-perfection alienation if (a) he exercises his talents brilliantly, judged by objective standards, but not according to his own subjective standards, or if (b) his performances are miserable in quality, judged by objective standards, but his subjective opinion is that his performances are first-rate. "Significant" in the definition above is also meant to be vague in relation to another issue. On an assembly line a worker may develop a facility for turning a nut on a bolt, but this improvement in a trivial skill does not count as the exercise or development of "significant" talent. How is significance to be judged? I think Marx would say that he means to appeal to a broad consensus as to the kinds of excellence in the arts, culture and science, craft and athletics, that uncontroversially count as significant. A similar remark would apply to the broader notion of being alienated by virtue of lacking the opportunity to lead a desirable life. In this way Marxian social theory may hope to introduce perfectionism as a standard of social criticism without entering into disputes as to what mode of life is "truly" ideal.

If perfectionism in social theory is the doctrine that directs "society to arrange institutions and to define the duties and obligations of individuals so as to maximize the achievement of human excellence in art, science, and culture,"41 then quite obviously perfectionism can vary in content depending on whether it is understood to rate societies only according to the highest level of excellence attained or also takes into account the distribution of excellence throughout the population. (One fails to consider perfectionism seriously if one simply and mistakenly identifies it with Nietzschean views that ignore distribution altogether.) We may say that democratic perfectionism is the view that society should be so organized as to maximize the average level of cultural achievement attained by the least culturally advantaged class of citizens. In the 1844 Manuscripts Marx does not employ

40Ibid., 277; MEW, 517.

this terminology, but he comes close to propounding democratic perfectionism (if one can assume that the proletarian class is roughly the least culturally advantaged class under capitalism). From the standpoint of current theories of justice, Marx's espousal of perfectionism in the *Manuscripts* reveals an interesting and controversial thesis.

The plausibility of Marx's perfectionist views may be briefly indicated by reference to issues of women's equality. In section II above, trying to disentangle the species-being from the power-inequality sides of alienation, we described a society which had eliminated legal and extra-legal discrimination against women, whose law enforcement prevented physical coercion from being a factor in relations between the sexes, and which generally had removed inequalities of power as between men and women. We then noted that in such a society relations between the sexes might not be particularly harmonious or communal, and what of it? Of the men and women of this society we might assert, with Engels, "When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual—and that will be the end of it." In the light of the human perfection aspect of alienation, that comment glides too easily over a difficulty.

For suppose in this society public opinion instructs women from an early age in such a manner as to deter them from seeking out the more strenuous, challenging, and rewarding employments. We might further suppose that this public opinion sustains itself without men having more power than women. Yet women here might well be said to lack fair opportunity to exercise and develop talents and significant capacities in their laboring activity. Moreover, regarding the broader notion of human-perfection alienation, we can imagine that affection is uncontroverially held to be part of any good human life, yet public opinion and childrearing practises conspire to implant in individuals of both sexes dispositions that militate against affectionate relations. In short, Marx's account of the human-perfection aspect of alienation expresses a norm that is not captured in the ideal of eliminating unjust bourgeois concentrations of power. Consideration of this norm may help

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42 The untrammelled pursuit of democratic perfectionism might, in some circumstances, demand burning museums and libraries to provide flickering illumination for adult education courses. Marx's comments on "equal elementary education" in the *Gotha Program* notes and, for that matter, his discussion of crude communism in the *Manuscripts*, sufficiently indicate he would not endorse the untrammelled pursuit of democratic perfectionism. It is for him one value to be balanced against others.

43 For comments on how through processes of "adverse socialization" people can pass along values different from the values they actually believe to be correct, see Ulf Hannerz, *Soulside* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1969), ch. 6.
reveal some salvageable good sense in some of Marx's more romantic and utopian-sounding comments in the Manuscripts. If we lack affection for one another, and this fact is sufficiently pervasive and has the right sort of causal antecedents, this may indicate not just our personal failings but grounds for overhauling the social order.

Finally, it seems to me that on this issue also one can trace an ethical development in Marx's thought. Post-Manuscripts writings introduce shadings and qualifications that should allay some doubts we rightly feel on encountering the first grand speculative announcement that capitalism unduly crimps the perfection of the human species ('The abolition of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and qualities," etc.). The main clarification introduced in later writings concerns the question of whether one is alienated from the species-essence to the degree that one fails to embody it or rather to the degree that one fails to have the opportunity to embody it. For the sake of simplicity I interpreted the Manuscripts comments in terms of having a fair opportunity for self-perfection, but it must be admitted that the text is far from unequivocal on this point. Later writings make it perfectly clear that when Marx objects to the capitalist division of labor it is coercive job specialization that he is objecting to, for forced job specialization prevents the individual from having a fair opportunity to develop his talents in a many-sided way. The famous hunter-fisher-shepherd-critic passage of The German Ideology is usually misinterpreted due to a simple failure to observe Marx and Engels' stress on coercion in the text that introduces this passage: "For as soon as the division of labor comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow..."(my emphasis) This quotation is important for comprehending the extent and character of Marx's commitment to liberalism in his early writings. A principle that requires fair opportunities for self-culture will not justify coercion of adult citizens to prevent their choosing what we deem a less perfect mode of existence, whereas a principle that guarantees the self-perfection or all-round development of each individual will have to undergo some very dialectical squirming if it is not to imply just this paternalist coercion. Once again, Marx's writings after the Manuscripts clarify his early ambiguous ethical positions in ways that increasingly show clear commitment to the best of liberal principle.

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The halcyon image of genuine or third-stage communism in the 1844 Manuscripts includes a Greek ideal of democratic citizenship, a New Testament ideal of communal fraternity, and a Renaissance ideal of many-sided talent. The comments on male/female relations in the Manuscripts give away the secret, not of crude communism, but of third-stage "genuine" communism. The secret is that the New Testament ideal is plainly undesirable, and the value of the Renaissance and Greek-citizen ideals are moot pending further clarification. Those who have sought a humanist Marx in his earliest writings are better advised to look elsewhere.

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45 In discussing what I call the "Renaissance" theme regarding expectations of a socialist future, Bebel mentions the example of Leonardo da Vinci as a portent of things to come.