

Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey

The Political Philosophy of Karl Marx

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Introduction

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Marx was not one of the thinkers with whom Strauss engaged at any length. In both his published and unpublished writings, Strauss made only the briefest of references to Marx or Marx's thought. In this course, of the sixteen sessions Strauss lectures in six of them (session 6, in which Strauss lectured, was evidently not recorded),ⁱ with Strauss's colleague Joseph Cropsey responsible for nine sessions. (Strauss did however comment, sometimes at length, in response to Cropsey or students in these sessions.) In *History of Political Philosophy*,ⁱⁱ which Strauss and Cropsey edited together, Cropsey authored the chapter on Marx. Though this course was offered in 1960 during the Cold War, Strauss and Cropsey's primary interest is not in Marx as the theoretician of communism, nor really as a critic of capitalism. Readers interested in insights into Strauss's views of the Cold War will be disappointed here; there are only occasional references to Lenin, Trotsky, Khrushchev, or Mao, and not a mention of Sputnik nor of Hungary.

Why, then, Marx?ⁱⁱⁱ This introduction explores two answers to that question: Marx's place in modern thought, and Strauss's defense of philosophy. Near the end of the course Strauss states, "I happen to be opposed to communism in every way, but precisely for this reason I cannot take the view which a businessman can take: 'If it comes after my lifetime, I don't care.' I care very much whether it is altogether feasible with—I mean, that they may win militarily I regard as absolutely feasible, but whether it can be at the same time the true liberation of man, that alone is of course the question" (session 15, 281).^{iv} Readers of Strauss will see in this statement a connection between Marx's thought

ⁱ One of the texts discussed this session was Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach." See Strauss's mention of it in session 7, on page 117 below.

ⁱⁱ *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, 1972, 1987).

ⁱⁱⁱ Writing this introduction in 2019, one must note the sheer volume of recent attempts to answer that question. The twenty-first century has seen renewed interest in Marx, especially following the economic crisis of 2008. See, for example, Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right* (Yale, 2011); Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Harvard, 2013). And 2018, the two-hundredth anniversary of Marx's birth and the one hundred-seventieth anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto*, also saw a number of new texts, including Gregory Claeys, *Marx and Marxism* (Pelican, 2018), Mike Davis, *Old Gods, New Enigmas: Marx's Lost Theory* (Verso, 2018), David Harvey, *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason* (Oxford, 2017), and Sven-Eric Liedman, *A World to Win: The Life and Works of Karl Marx*, trans. Jeffrey N. Skinner (Verso, 2018). 2018 also saw the publication of a collection of previously-published and hitherto unpublished essays by Hannah Arendt on Marx: *The Modern Challenge to Tradition: Fragments of a Book*, ed. Barbara Hahn and James McFarland, with Ingo Kieslich and Ingeborg Nordmann (Wallstein Verlag, 2018).

^{iv} In the introduction to their collection of essays, *Reading Marx*, Slovoj Žižek, Frank Ruda, and Agon Hamza note that the aim of the essays is "to find different (and yet unexplored) ways to read Marx. This collective project . . . is situated within the specific philosophical and political

and the overall liberatory project of “modernity” that was the object of so much of Strauss’s interest. Marx is part of the “second wave” of modernity described by Strauss in a well-known essay and about which more will be said below. Moreover, toward the conclusion of a two-session engagement with Marx’s philosophical premises, Strauss says that “the most important point” in Marx is “his notion of alienation, meaning his attempt to understand modernity in particular as the period of man’s alienation” (session 9, 175). So one answer to the question, “Why Marx?” is his understanding of modern thought.

The other answer: to defend philosophy and political life in the face of challenges such as Marx’s. We receive two succinct formulations of this not in the present course on Marx, but in others of Strauss’s courses. First, in a discussion of practical wisdom in a course on Kant, for example, Strauss observes that it is “exposed to certain dangers which are beyond the competence of practical wisdom.” The example Strauss provides from the present day is Marxism, which endangers practical wisdom by its “claim to knowledge regarding the future, for example.” Strauss goes on:

“Practical wisdom is essentially operative in a horizon of an unknown future. But if you know the future or believe you know it, that affects necessarily practical wisdom. Say, Marxism: in order to protect practical wisdom in our age it is necessary to criticize Marxism. But that cannot be done by practical wisdom. Think of a man of very great practical wisdom, like Churchill, for example. He would simply not have the time or maybe even the training for criticizing Marxism. So we need then something which Socrates sometimes also calls practical wisdom but which is not quite the same thing, namely, philosophy.”^v

Second, in the context of a discussion of Aristotle’s defense of the city in the course *Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Strauss says: “[A] defense of political prudence, of the particular ways of understanding peculiar to political life, this is today endangered by Marxism, by the assumed knowledge of the character of the whole historical process. You cannot simply argue prudentially, practically, against Marxism: the defense of the sphere of prudence must be theoretical because the attack is theoretical.”^{vi} We will return to the need for the defense of philosophy in the context of the present course later in this introduction.

Given the format of the course on Marx, many of Strauss’s points occur outside his formal presentations in sessions 1-2, 5, and 7-9. This introduction draws not only on the

conjuncture in which we find ourselves” (i.e., in 2018), which the authors characterize as a situation “in which we can observe an increasing closure of possibilities and of practical initiatives for emancipation” because of the rise of authoritarian politics (“populist” nationalist movements and parties) and exploitation (“the infamous capitalism with Asian values”), *Reading Marx* (Polity Press, 2018), 1, 4. Strauss’s interest in Marx is at the opposite pole of Žižek, Ruda, and Hamza’s: whereas the three contemporary thinkers seek new modes of emancipation, Strauss is engaged in critiquing the liberatory emphasis in modern thought altogether.

^v Kant (1958), session 12, p. 285.

^{vi} *Introduction to Political Philosophy* (1965), session 11, page 19.

more “casual” remarks made in response to Cropsey’s arguments and to students’ questions, but also on other courses that Strauss taught in which he made passing but enlightening remarks about Marx.

The history of modernity and the second wave

To begin with we must focus on the history of the “second wave” of modernity that Strauss sets out in the early session of the course, and his account of Marx’s philosophical premises in sessions 8 and 9. For Strauss, Marx’s thought developed out of efforts since roughly the sixteenth century to break radically with classical political philosophy and to reject natural right. Many readers of this introduction will be familiar with Strauss’s essay, “The Three Waves of Modernity,” which sets out the features of modern thought that broke radically with the ancient understanding of the ends of man and of society.^{vii} The “second wave,” to which Marx “belongs absolutely,”^{viii} effects a radical break with the tradition of philosophic thought. In the classical doctrine, “society is for the purpose of human excellence, and this human excellence is in the highest case theoretical or speculative excellence” (session 4, 75). The first “wave” of modern thinkers, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke, lowered the goal of society: no longer would it be excellence but the attainable goal of self-preservation. The second wave, characterized by Rousseau, reacted with moral indignation to this lowering of standards and sought to erect, on the foundation of the first wave’s principle of self-preservation, a moral structure “which would even, if possible, be more moral than the Platonic-Aristotelian structure” (session 4, 76). Rousseau’s reinterpretation of virtue resulted in the liberation of man “from the tutelage of nature.” German idealism, inspired by Rousseau’s thought, became “the philosophy of freedom”; in Kant’s moral philosophy, in which moral laws are not understood as natural laws, “man is radically liberated from the tutelage of nature.”^{ix} This powerful modern project attempted to free man from external constraints and to reconcile man and society, in a condition of mutually recognized freedom and equality. Marx was perhaps the most extreme in his ambition to conquer nature and to make man “the highest being simply” (session 9, 173).^x

^{vii} “The Three Waves of Modernity,” in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 81-98.

^{viii} Session 4, page 76. Marx receives only passing mention in the “Three Waves” essay, when Strauss briefly sketches similarities between Nietzsche and Marx. For both Nietzsche and Marx, Strauss writes, the final state—for Marx, the classless society; for Nietzsche, the Over-man or the last man—marks the end of the rule of chance: man will be for the first time master of his fate. “The Three Waves of Modernity,” 97.

^{ix} “Three Waves,” 92.

^x It is perhaps worth noting that in this course Strauss uses the term “natural right” in only one context, when there is a reference to natural right in a quotation from a factory report in chapter 15 of *Capital* (session 13, 266). (As an aside, Strauss mentions that “this refutes a somewhat simplistic notion according to which in the bourgeois era natural right meant only natural right of property.”)

In the first two sessions, Strauss provides an intense summary of the modern thinkers who prepared the way for Marx. The larger part focuses on Rousseau and Kant;^{xi} there is briefer discussion of Fichte and of Hegel. Feuerbach is also significant here, but unfortunately session 6 of the course, in which Strauss took up Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach," was not recorded. In discussing capital toward the end of the course, however, Strauss observes that "Capital is the same fundamental problem which was originally known by the name of God. It is the fundamental threat to human happiness." Marx always presupposes Feuerbach's critique of religion; indeed, "the fundamental critique is of religion. Feuerbach had already done that. Marx's whole philosophy becomes concentrated in an analysis of capital. But you have to have studied before Feuerbach. Marx takes that for granted" (session 15, 307). Below I list some of the main points in Strauss's account of how these eighteenth-century thinkers prepared the way for Marx.

Rousseau

1. Liberation from teleology: no natural "ends" of man and an equality of the stages of man's "development"
2. Natural equality and freedom
3. But in society, freedom and equality require that "each individual must become wholly denaturalized, wholly collectivized" (p. 7).
4. Hence all society is bondage, and society as society cannot provide the solution to the human problem. There is an antinomy between individual and society; society as such is imperfect and must be transcended.

For the German idealists, there is a perfect solution: the rational state. Marx follows the idealists, but finds the solution in society, not in the state.

Kant

1. Kant critiques Rousseau's dogmatic understanding of morality: that it can have a basis in knowledge, especially knowledge of the nature of man: "whereas according to the traditional notion of reason theoretical reason is higher than practical reason, the new concept of reason which Kant will develop in fighting back against Hume will necessarily imply the primacy of practical reason" (p. 12).
2. For Kant the understanding, reason is *productive*. Reason as practical is free and self-sufficient. Morality cannot be derived from an understanding of our natural ends, for if we bow to law imposed by nature or by God, we are not free. Hence the moral law must be understood as self-imposed; hence the famous categorical imperative. "You conceive of yourself both as ruler and as ruled in a universal society" (p. 20).
3. The just society does not require moral regeneration but is "possible in a nation of devils."

^{xi} Strauss says that he "will speak much less about Hegel than about Rousseau and about Kant, because quite a few characteristic elements of Hegel's teaching are implied in what Kant and Rousseau said" (session 3, p. 30).

4. Kant's principle is "Thou canst what thou oughtst" and therefore the just society is *possible*. Kant's philosophy of history plays a crucial role here: it is not moral freedom that brings the just society about but "mechanical, amoral necessity," which is a victory of "the spirit of commerce." The immoral passions of man, which have been so destructive hitherto, "now become effective in the right direction." All men can do the right thing, but not for the right reasons.

Fichte. Strauss says that he "in some respects comes closer to Marx than even Hegel" (p. 27).

1. From Kant, Fichte adopts the principles of universality, equality
2. Man is the absolutely rational being
3. Man is also destined to live in society. The final society that embraces all men is the solution to the human problem because it is the most intimate society.
4. But society is not the state: "in the perfect society pure reason would be universally recognized as the highest judge" (p. 28). Hence, already in Fichte we see what Marx later called the "withering away" of the state.^{xii}
5. For Fichte nature's "mistake" was in making men different and unequal. Society corrects this mistake because in it all members' faculties are developed—but not individually, only severally: what one individual cannot do, another can. One is a perfect blacksmith, another a perfect shoemaker, and so on. Fichte assumes the principle of the division of labor.

Hegel^{xiii}

1. Hegel's criticism of Kant was that the human understanding is part of the noumenal world. The Absolute is mind: everything that is, is mind.
2. The essential contradictoriness of reason is a vehicle of reason
3. The mind essentially develops; the thing in itself is accessible to us if we intelligently look at the historical process. The early stages were necessarily preserved in the later ones.
4. The whole process is teleological. The historical process must have been completed; hence the just society exists: it has come into being in the Prussian monarchy.
5. Hegel adapts Rousseau's distinction between the *citoyen* (citizen) and the *bourgeois* (subject), giving a philosophical definition of the bourgeois, and making the distinction "between the state as the overarching and sacred association and the

^{xii} In his 1958 course on Kant, Strauss says that he did not know "until a short time ago" that the notion of the withering away of the state "stems from Fichte" (session 6, 152).

^{xiii} At least since Lenin wrote that it was crucial to read Hegel in order to understand Marx's *Capital*, scholars have attempted to extricate Marx's thought from Engels's posthumous characterizations of it and to explore his debt to Hegel. For recent works in English on the relation between Marx and Hegel, see, e.g., Tom Rockmore, *Marx's Dream: From Capitalism to Communism* (University of Chicago Press, 2018); Gareth Stedman Jones, "History and Nature in Karl Marx: Marx's Debt to German Idealism," *History Workshop Journal* 13 (March 2017); Tom Rockmore, *Marx after Marxism: The Philosophy of Karl Marx* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002); *The Hegel-Marx Connection*, ed. Tony Burns and Ian Fraser (Macmillan, 2000). See also Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (Schocken Books, 2005), 70-80.

Bürgerlichegesellschaft, bourgeois society, a distinction that is essential and one of the beginnings of Marx's criticism (session 2, p. 34).

In his critique of Hegel, Marx argues that the Prussian state cannot be the rational state. If men are rational, they don't need compulsion anymore; therefore, the withering away of the state. These points, including Marx's critique of Hegel, are crucial because in order to set out the path by which such freedom is to be achieved, Marx "has to develop not only another philosophy against Hegel in particular, but to reject philosophy altogether" (session 2, 35).^{xiv} And Marx also said, following Fichte, that "the true solution of the moral problem consists in—to use a word now already common—self-realization, in such a way that the sensual part of man comes into perfect harmony with the rational part, with reason. And that means that morality consists in a conquest of nature, a conquest of nature which cannot be limited to the conquest of man's sensual nature but must also mean the conquest of nature as a whole" (session 12, 234).

In this summary we see the following themes that will re-emerge in Strauss and Cropsey's discussion of Marx: freedom from nature and God; equality; reason/dialectic; history; primacy of productivity; social solution of the human problem, but by society, not the state

In session 3, Cropsey takes over the discussion and begins his nine-session long explanation of Marx's economic concepts, especially such concepts as the labor theory of value and surplus value, and Marx's critique of capitalism. At the outset, he draws the contrast between Marx's "absolutization of economics" and Aristotle's view: "What Aristotle meant by the supreme act of human production in the political context was something which could be done by very few men, by the great benefactors of the human kind; whereas Marx's absolutization of economics leads to a dispensing of political life in the famous formula "the withering away of the state," which would have been regarded by Aristotle as an "absolute nightmare" (session 3, 48). There are several occasions on which both Strauss and Cropsey sketch the difference between the ancient, classical view and the modern or Marxist one. For example, Strauss observes in session 4 that in the classical view, what was key was human excellence; in the modern it is freedom, and freedom as a moral phenomenon, not a political one—as in Kant's view that human excellence is self-legislation.^{xv}

^{xiv} See also session 12, where Strauss takes up this point again in response to a student's question: "the Prussian state, with its Adam Smithian laissez-faire economy, is so crude and unjust—as Hegel himself had admitted—that this cannot be the rational society."

^{xv} See also Strauss's summary of Cropsey's claim that "in Marx, there exists the supremacy of production in every respect. In every respect. In Aristotle, production is subordinated to something nonproduced, something not produced by man. Now there is a connection which you left wisely in a mystery, although I believe I have seen some of the links. In Aristotle, subordination: subordinate character of production; hence supremacy of the political within the human sphere. In Marx: supremacy of production, absolutization of production; hence denial of the ultimate relevance of the political. That seems to be really true and very clear" (session 3, 59).

The most sustained account of Marx's philosophical premises is made by Strauss in sessions 8 and 9. These premises are six in number, and the numbering comes from Strauss himself.^{xvi}

1. The starting point is Hegel: "Philosophy has been completed, and by this very fact history has been completed" (session 8, 155). Marx agreed with Hegel that philosophy has been completed, but history has not, nor has man's political problem been solved. Hence what is needed is a new theoretical effort. That new effort has a transphilosophic character: it presupposes "the great development of philosophy" but transcends it.

2. Marx's view is "transphilosophic," "a synthesis of the intraphilosophic alternative of materialism and spiritualism or idealism, of Feuerbach's materialism and Hegel's idealism" (157).^{xvii} Philosophy, as the full self-consciousness of the consciousness, presupposes the division of labor, for consciousness is only part of man. Transcending philosophy means transcending the division of labor and restoring man's wholeness.

3. Transcending philosophy is a return to common sense—to a present-day common sense, the empirical study of society.

a. The "transphilosophic" social science leads to revolutionary change: as Marx famously said, philosophy has tried to understand the world as it is, but what matters is to change the world (158).

b. But, Strauss asks, change in what direction: communism, or destruction of civilization? The question proves the need for philosophy (158-59).

4. The premise of the empirical study of society is that the relations of production are fundamental. But why? This is based on a notion of man, as Marx set out in *The German Ideology*: man distinguishes himself from the brutes by producing the means of living. The root of everything, from politics to religion and beyond, is the economic relations of production.

For Strauss, Marx's decision in favor of primacy of production is dogmatic; Marx's admission of the simultaneity of thing- and myth-production "is fatal to the whole position."^{xviii}

^{xvi} See pages 155-61; the discussion continues in session 9.

^{xvii} In the final session, Strauss refers also to Marx's "transmoral" whole. In response to Cropsey, who argues that Marx is inconsistent when he attributes historical change to many things that are not related to the relations of production (326-27), Strauss interrupts with an unusual remark: "I hate this situation in which I am forced to defend Marx." In this defense of Marx, Strauss observes that for Marx, ultimately the moral condemnation of capitalism is irrelevant, for all of the immoral acts committed in the pursuit of wealth—conquering countries, enslaving the inhabitants, and the enclosures and what not—served in the end to alleviate scarcity. "Capitalism is that social system which prepares the abolition of scarcity," and hence Marx's praise of the achievements of the capitalist system in the *Communist Manifesto*. "Therefore the moral condemnation of capitalism is of course meant seriously by Marx, but it is dialectically integrated into a transmoral whole" (session 16, 327-29).

^{xviii} See also page 163.

1. Essence of Man

For Marx there is an essence of man, but it is irrelevant: there are no eternal ideas and no “essential order of human things, something like justice, virtue, or what have you” (163). Nonetheless, Marx was not a relativist;^{xix} there is an absolute: it is the proletariat, the absolute class. “There can be an absolute class because there is an absolute moment in history: the recovery of man, the resurrection of man” (164-65).

2. Proletarian revolution means the removal of self-alienation, the removal of the division of labor and private property, the establishment of a society of freedom and equality, and the withering away of the state. Therefore, the substitution of freedom for everything that has grown by nature: the moral regeneration of man. Everyone should become *homo universal* (165 and following).

The nature of man and the question of moral regeneration

In developing the problem of the nature of man and his moral regeneration, Strauss begins to engage in a more detailed critique of Marx’s view, first by considering the establishment of a society of freedom and equality, and eventually the withering away of the state, “therefore the substitution of freedom for everything which has grown by nature . . . Freedom means the freedom of developing all my capacities with the knowledge that this freedom presupposes the freedom of everyone else to develop his capacities. Such a freedom means that everyone should become a universal man” (165).

With respect to human capacities, one of the more telling questions for Strauss is whether all men in fact have capacities for everything. For Marx, the inequality of capacities is the result of the division of labor and is hence “a social product, not a natural datum,” which would suggest that following upon the abolition of the division of labor, equal capacities will emerge and flourish. “But,” Strauss questions, “does not the inequality have natural roots?” (167) We see a revealing, if brief, treatment of this question in Strauss’s course on Plato’s *Republic* in 1957.^{xx} In discussing passages in book 2 of the dialogue (369b-370b), Strauss finds a strong “anti-Marxist position” in the mouth of Socrates (session 4). The passages concern the early stages of the city in speech, and Socrates’s interlocutor is Adeimantus. There are eight different jobs in the city, and Socrates raises the question whether each individual should be self-sufficient, producing everything he needs, or whether the division of labor should prevail, with each individual specializing in one

^{xix} See session 5, 102; session 8, 147; session 9, 164-65.

^{xx} The transcript of the course is available on the Leo Strauss Center website.

<https://wslamp70.s3.amazonaws.com/leostrauss/s3fs-public/Plato%27s%20Republic%201957.pdf>. The transcript may also be accessed in the digital collection of transcripts on the Center website. In the present course, Strauss also refers, to illustrate and support the notion of natural inequality, to Madison’s words in Federalist 10 about the differences in property that are the consequence of differing natural talents (sessions 7 and 8): “The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results . . .”

activity, whether it be shoemaking, or farming, or whatever it might be. Adeimantus states that “everyone should do himself for the sake of himself his own things,” and Socrates interprets this to mean that “everyone should do the things for which he is best fitted,” thus making the self-sufficiency that Adeimantus prefers impossible. “Thus Socrates says that everyone must follow his natural, one-sided bent. Only in this way will the products be good. He stands here,” Strauss goes on, “at an opposite pole from Marx; you should be aware of that. I think the anti-Marxist position is nowhere as clearly stated as in these pages” (session 4).^{xxi}

In the present course, Strauss’s considers this issue in the context of a discussion of Marx’s moral philosophy (session 9). Even the medieval craftsman, whose work was far more meaningful than that of the proletarian, did not find satisfaction in his work: “even there, there existed the cleavage of pleasure and duty [and] that we can say is the starting point of Marx’s reflections . . . One must transcend this whole issue of pleasure and duty. In which way? Duty and labor belong together, of course.” In communist society, enjoyment or pleasure will be “creative expression of life” (168-69).

In contradistinction to Aristotle, Marx abolishes the distinction between the necessary and the noble. For Marx there is no hierarchy of human activities; whereas for Aristotle there was nothing noble in earning a living, Marx cannot say whether fishing, hunting, thinking or painting is higher than any of the others. Moreover, Strauss states, “once man has come into his own, not only crime but any kind of lowness, meanness must disappear. I overstate it deliberately: everyone will become a beautiful soul, a soul which by nature craves the beautiful and noble and nothing else; a withering away of the need for moral effort, not only a withering away of the state” (169). In this Marx achieves, or would achieve the final reconciliation of individual and society, for “the expression of life is essentially social.”

But difficulties abound. Strauss questions Marx’s “unfounded optimism”^{xxii} and the capacity of man to be morally regenerated and finally reconciled with society. First, the

^{xxi} See also the course on Nietzsche in 1971: “[W]hat does the division of labor mean? Compulsion, coercion, there are certain things which you cannot do and are not permitted to do. It is not only that you cannot commit murder, but limitation is essential for excellence. [Could excellence be said of the man of whom] Marx said in famous formula—how does he put it so nicely?—milks cows in the evening and fishes in the morning?” (session 8). See also Hegel 1958, session 4, pages 47-50: “Hegel takes the natural inequality as desirable and inevitable”; in response to Marx’s vision of the “universal man, “Hegel would say that is abominable; jacks of all trades, that is abominable, that is the decay of man. As long as men are really something, they have a sensible one-sidedness. The notion of the universal man is a pipe dream” (48).

^{xxii} “Why,” Strauss questions, “should common ownership of the means of production—on the present level of productivity, of course—be a sufficient condition for the resurrection of man? Why should the liberation from bondage be a sufficient condition for man’s making a wise use of that freedom? Oppression is a good enough reason for fighting, for striving for liberation, but it does surely not guarantee a wise use of that freedom.” And: “Only if man is by nature striving for a wise use of his freedom, and only if his bondage to nature and, as a consequence of that bondage, his bondage to other men prevents him from achieving his end, then he truly comes into

death of the individual shows the impossibility of complete reconciliation of individual and society and is “the clearest sign of the inadequacy of the social solution of the human problem.”^{xxiii} Second, “what about leisure?” he asks. “With what right does Marx assume that this problem will not arise: that people don’t know what to do with their free time? With what right does he assume that the victory of the proletariat will bring about a moral regeneration of man so that the problem will never come, as it in fact comes?” (170) Indeed, Stalin and Khrushchev have succeeded “by abandoning the hope for the regeneration of man.” “That,” Strauss states, “a kind of empirical, not proof but empirical indication of the problem of Marxism itself” (171).

The Primacy of Production and Economics as Metaphysics

Let us return to Marx’s premise that productivity and the relations of production are fundamental. This is a key theme in Strauss’s criticism of Marx, which is revealed in the first instance in a distinction Strauss makes between the views of Aristotle and Marx. Strauss enters the discussion toward the end of session 3^{xxiv} to note the difference between Marx’s and Aristotle’s understandings of what it is that makes a thing exchangeable. For Marx, it is labor; for Aristotle, need. Strauss says “this contradiction between need as the fundamental phenomenon and labor as the fundamental phenomenon seems to me incredibly suggestive, you know, whether you start from man’s need or whether you start from man’s production, his labor. I think the whole work [i.e., *Capital*] relies on that” (60). In session 12 Strauss refers to a sentence from *Capital*, chapter 7, in which Marx describes the labor process thus: “The elementary factors of the labour-process are (a) the personal activity of man, i.e., the work itself, (b) the subject of that work, and (3) its instruments.” Strauss observes that “there is not a word said about the end”: “the labor process takes the place of what in Aristotle would be productive art, i.e., what Aristotle calls art . . . So even the form, what Aristotle calls the formal cause, is absolutely subordinate” and we see in Marx a “quasi-oblivion of the end” (236-37). This “nonteleology” reappears on the highest level: for those of us who are not always virtuous, the virtuous life appears as an end. But for Marx, the virtuous life—spontaneous expression of life, or the full development of faculties is “a foregone conclusion. It follows without effort given a certain state of society” (238). In that state of society,

his own by that liberation”; but for Marx “man does not strive by nature for the full development of all his faculties” (172).

^{xxiii} Session 9, 170. See also session 11, where Strauss returns to the moral regeneration issue, observing that it would eliminate the need for “these lousy incentives which you need in capitalist society”: “everyone desires not merely just to live, but to express himself, to develop all his faculties, and reason tells him that he cannot develop his faculties fully if everyone else does not do the same.” Strauss objects to this, arguing that “it is not difficult to show empirically that men can develop their faculties in an amazing way, whereas not all members of their society were able to do so. Think of Plato, Shakespeare, and other interesting examples.” Strauss goes on to say that “the expression of this utopianism of Marx, the superfluity of selfish incentives, is the distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity. Now the mere mortality of the human race . . . shows the untruth of this premise” (207-8).

^{xxiv} Page 60.

furthermore, it “would appear that human life itself is understood as a kind of aimless production.”

Most importantly, the primacy of production reveals Marx’s understanding of man and of man’s place in “the whole.” Driven by needs, men labor to satisfy them; later, they create beliefs, myths, ideas, and gods that come to have power over them because they do not understand that these things were of their own creation. Eventually there will be an overcoming of all ideologies and a return to man’s sensuous activity. Marx took over “the Hegelian schema” in which Mind (with a capital M) alienates itself, and in the end man recognizes that everything is Mind or the work of the mind. Marx, however, replaces Mind with man, resulting in the curious situation that nature and its features—Strauss mentions trees, mountains and elephants—are in a way alienated man: nature is, by its very nature, “susceptible of being conquered by man.” Man as the conqueror of nature takes the place of God (session 5, 110-11).

Man conquers nature through industry. For “socialistic man, the so-called world history is nothing except a generation of man through human labor, as a becoming of nature for man. Man becomes man through himself. Because of the primacy of labor, “the all-comprehensive science which deals with the two parts of being, man and non-man, is economics.”

“Economics is metaphysics, the true science of the whole . . . Production dissolves nature into products of man and therewith does justice to them. You do not understand the hare properly by looking at it, describing its qualities. If you don’t see the hare as a potential food, you do not see the hare sufficiently. That means to go beyond the theoretical understanding, and that means to have a productive understanding. A productive understanding, now an understanding from the point of view of human production, that is: that is the true natural science, the true metaphysics. Because nature becomes human through industry and thus comes into its own; because nature becomes human through industry and thus the unity of being is achieved, the relations of productions are the fundamental fact. In other words, the dogmatism of Marx still remains dogmatism, but it is deeper; it is not a mere assertion about the process of history, that in given situations that generally speaking the relations of production are the cause or the key to the political, religious and artistic ideas of a people, but it is ultimately an attempt to account for the unity of the whole on the premise that man is the highest being” (session 9, 174).

Alienation and modernity; the need for philosophy

Let us connect these thoughts with the opening theme of the course, Strauss’s attempt to understand modernity and its “three waves.” For Strauss, the most “important point, positive point” in Marx is his notion of alienation, meaning “his attempt to understand modernity in particular as the period of man’s alienation” (session 9, 175). In order to understand what this means, let us look at Strauss’s discussion of alienation in session 5. Strauss observes that capitalist society is the “most subtle and refined form of alienation, where money and capital rule and apparently as a kind of eternal laws” (session 5, 110).

Why is this so? The oppression of the proletariat, Strauss explains, is “the most revolting of all oppressions”—more than, for example, what the Spanish did to the Indians or the Romans to their slaves, which, however cruel, still involved treating them as human beings. Their relations were perverted human relations, but they were *human* relations. In a capitalist system, the relation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is no longer a human relation. The modern proletariat is in a unique situation: “it is revolting to the spectator and revolting to the victim. Therefore the corrective is in the situation. In the situation Spaniards-Indians, [there was] no corrective in the situation because they were so powerless [that] they could simply become slaves and remain slaves and try to flatter their masters, perhaps, the individuals, so that he would have it a bit better. But here the corrective is in the situation. The oppressor must degrade the oppressed and make him sensitive of his degradation. That is the disgusting thing.” With the constant transformation of living conditions, literacy and education increase, which unfortunately leads to greater humiliation for the worker. Education leads to raised expectations, which are inevitably disappointed, and the proletarian lives in a constant state of humiliation. Crucially, the natural rights teaching changes everything: “now the oppressors go out and tell the oppressed [that] every man is born free and equal. Our society is radically different from all former societies because it is a just society and still oppressed. That won’t do” (96-97).^{xxv}

It is communism that will provide a return of man’s unalienated self. In communism there will be a return to the basic human situation: men living together, producing. Strauss says that “is the key to everything, but you have to understand how this basic phenomenon, men in society producing what they need for a living, produces law, produces government, produces religion, produces philosophy . . . and goes this particular course which is called the history of the world” (104). Strauss considers the original, nonalienated state, in which man is “by himself or with himself, i.e., not alienated,” and thus “he is primarily a being which produces in society things for use.” Strauss asks:

“Now what does this mean? If you start from a simple commonsensical view of man, man begins [with] no traditions, no inheritances, no alienation in any form. There is the productive element, all right, but surely he does not produce merely turnips or acorns or whatever it is; he also produces thoughts about the whole in which he lives. Lightning and thunder: he doesn’t limit himself to run away; he thinks somehow about it—foolish thoughts, unscientific thoughts, surely, but he produces myths in the same moment in which he produces tools. . . . That the myths come later and reflect the primary production, the turnips or the tools, that is only another formulation of the fact that man is originally not alienated, because if these people catch a hare or collect acorns, whatever they do, they know what they are doing. They are fully at home in their world. But when they say there is some ancestor whom they haven’t buried or what, who is sending the thunder, then they are alienated. Do you see that? There is an essential connection

^{xxv} As Alan Ryan observes: “The *modern* republic attempts to impose political equality upon an economic inequality it has no way of alleviating.” Alan Ryan, *On Marx: Revolutionary and Utopian* (Liveright, 2014), 64. See also Ryan’s thoughtful discussion of alienation, especially pages 49-60.

between the concept of alienation and the primacy of material production. The intellectual production is already the alienation, and the end of the process will be that you have an intellectual production which destroys the alienated intellectual production, i.e., all myths, religions: Marxism” (session 5, 107).

Strauss observed earlier in session 5 that “the modern world is the alienated world” (96). Strauss explains this with an argument, as he says, “which to my knowledge Marx never uses” and which provides a compressed expression of Strauss’s understanding of modernity. Strauss turns to the beginning of modern thought in modern philosophy and to the highest expression of modern philosophy, namely, Descartes. Descartes’s universal doubt means that “the whole is alien to man . . . and man must conquer the whole. He must appropriate it in order to understand it” (175).

“Because man can no longer understand, he loses his own status by conceiving himself as a stranger in the whole. Alienation implies that there was a state of things in which man was at home in the world; otherwise alienation wouldn’t make sense. He was at home in the world as long as he took the whole as given and not as an object of conquest and of construction. This was the original understanding of philosophy and the original understanding of man as man wholly apart from philosophy, and the classic expression of that is Greek philosophy.”^{xxvi}

This statement is a remarkable distillation of the history of what Strauss calls the “second wave” of modernity that made up the earlier sessions of the course and prepared the way for Strauss and Cropsey’s discussion of Marx. Modernity departed from the tradition by replacing the ancients’ understanding of reason as contemplative, and their understanding of man’s end as happiness in accordance with his nature by the understanding of reason as productive and the end of man as freedom, a freedom that, for Strauss, risks being a merely aimless freedom.

^{xxvi} Strauss is aware that for Marx the Greeks, and especially Greek poetry provides “models which cannot be rivaled” (175-76).

The Leo Strauss Transcript Project

Leo Strauss is well known as a thinker and writer, but he also had tremendous impact as a teacher. In the transcripts of his courses one can see Strauss comment on texts, including many he wrote little or nothing about, and respond generously to student questions and objections. The transcripts, amounting to more than twice the volume of Strauss's published work, will add immensely to the material available to scholars and students of Strauss's work.

In the early 1950s mimeographed typescripts of student notes of Strauss's courses were distributed among his students. In winter 1954, the first recording, of his course on Natural Right, was transcribed and distributed to students. Professor Herbert J. Storing obtained a grant from the Relm Foundation to support the taping and transcription, which resumed on a regular basis in the winter of 1956 with Strauss's course "Historicism and Modern Relativism." Of the 39 courses Strauss taught at the University of Chicago from 1958 until his departure in 1968, 34 were recorded and transcribed. After he retired from Chicago, recording of his courses continued at Claremont Men's College in the spring of 1968 and the fall and spring of 1969 (although the tapes for his last two courses there have not been located), and at St. John's College for the four years until his death in October 1973.

The surviving original audio recordings vary widely in quality and completeness, and after they had been transcribed, the audiotapes were sometimes reused, leaving the audio record very incomplete. Beginning in the late 1990s, Stephen Gregory, then the administrator of the University's John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, initiated the digital remastering of the surviving tapes by Craig Harding of September Media to ensure their preservation, improve their audibility, and make possible their eventual publication. This remastering received financial support from the Olin Center and from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The remastered audiofiles are available at the Strauss Center website: <https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses>.

Strauss permitted the taping and transcribing to go forward, but he did not check the transcripts or otherwise participate in the project. Accordingly, Strauss's close associate and colleague Joseph Cropsey originally put the copyright in his own name, though he assigned copyright to the Estate of Leo Strauss in 2008. Beginning in 1958 a headnote was placed at the beginning of each transcript, which read: "This transcription is a written record of essentially oral material, much of which developed spontaneously in the classroom and none of which was prepared with publication in mind. The transcription is made available to a limited number of interested persons, with the understanding that no use will be made of it that is inconsistent with the private and partly informal origin of the material. Recipients are emphatically requested not to seek to increase the circulation of the transcription. This transcription has not been checked, seen, or passed on by the lecturer." In 2008, Strauss's heir, his daughter Jenny Strauss, asked Nathan Tarcov to succeed Joseph Cropsey as Strauss's literary executor. They agreed that because of the

widespread circulation of the old, often inaccurate and incomplete transcripts and the continuing interest in Strauss's thought and teaching, it would be a service to interested scholars and students to proceed with publication of the remastered audiofiles and transcripts. They were encouraged by the fact that Strauss himself signed a contract with Bantam Books to publish four of the transcripts although in the end none were published.

The University's Leo Strauss Center, established in 2008, launched a project, presided over by its director Nathan Tarcov, and managed by Stephen Gregory, to correct the old transcripts on the basis of the remastered audiofiles as they became available, transcribe those audiofiles not previously transcribed, and annotate and edit for readability all the transcripts including those for which no audiofiles survived. This project was supported by grants from the Winiarski Family Foundation, Mr. Richard S. Shiffrin and Mrs. Barbara Z. Schiffrin, Earhart Foundation, and the Hertog Foundation, and contributions from numerous other donors. The Strauss Center was ably assisted in its fundraising efforts by Nina Botting-Herbst and Patrick McCusker, staff in the Office of the Dean of the Division of the Social Sciences at the University.

Senior scholars familiar with both Strauss's work and the texts he taught were commissioned as editors, with preliminary work done in most cases by student editorial assistants. The goal in editing the transcripts has been to preserve Strauss's original words as much as possible while making the transcripts easier to read. Strauss's impact (and indeed his charm) as a teacher is revealed in the sometimes informal character of his remarks. Readers should make allowance for the oral character of the transcripts. There are careless phrases, slips of the tongue, repetitions, and possible mistranscriptions. However enlightening the transcripts are, they cannot be regarded as the equivalent of works that Strauss himself wrote for publication.

Nathan Tarcov, Editor-in-Chief
Gayle McKeen, Managing Editor

August 2014

Editorial Headnote

This course was taught by both Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, with Strauss primarily responsible for sessions 1-2, 5, and 7-9, though he does respond frequently to Cropsey and to students in all of the other sessions. The sessions usually begin with the reading of a student paper followed by Strauss's comments (and sometimes Cropsey's comments). Both Strauss and Cropsey make presentations which are interspersed with student questions and discussion.

The texts discussed in this course are *The Communist Manifesto* (it is not clear what edition was used), *The German Ideology*, ed. S. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers), and *Capital*, volume 1. References from editions readily available at the time of editing (2018) are provided.

This transcript is based upon remastered audio files, which are available for all sessions with the exception of session 6. It was edited by Gayle McKeen with assistance from David Wollenberg and Steven Klein.

Session 1: March 30, 1960
Introduction: The three waves, part 1

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —description as distinguished from the qualitative differences. Now modern philosophy as it emerges since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is, as I said before, antisocialistic in this older sense of the word. Man the individual, not a member of society, not even as a *potential* member of society, is primary. Society is simply derivative from beings who are not as such social beings. The fundamental phenomenon therefore is freedom, not obligation. All obligation is derivative from free acts of previously non-obliged individuals; that's¹ the strict meaning of the doctrine of the social contract. Therefore the fundamental moral phenomenon does not have the character of duties, but of rights. The rights of man in the strict sense are a modern notion. We must here make a distinction, as I have made it on a former occasion, between various waves of this modern thinking.¹ The first wave is represented most clearly by Hobbes and by Locke, and this Hobb-Lockean version of which I have to say only a few words is the origin of political economy. The second wave embodies political economy but does not create it.

Now what is characteristic here? The fundamental phenomenon is self-preservation, the preservation of life and limb. To understand this, one must contrast it with the Thomistic doctrine. According to Thomas there are three kinds of natural inclinations: the first is directed toward self-preservation; the second is directed toward social life; and the third is directed toward cognition. Self-preservation is the lowest and cognition the highest. Now what men like Hobbes and Locke did is as it were to disregard the two higher, or to deny that they are natural inclinations and [to] concentrate only on the primary, self-preservation. The reason for that was what one can call "realism." They wanted to have a doctrine which was not in any way utopian or visionary, but solid. Low but solid is, I think, a beautiful formulation due to Winston Churchill of² this doctrine. Low but solid. Not to trust such fanciful things as inclination toward society and natural desire for cognition, but self-preservation. That we run, we take cover, when someone points a gun at us; that's the real stuff. And of the same kind, of course, also food: that is also necessary for self-preservation. And food is almost the same thing already as property, as will appear when Mr. Cropsey will take over.ⁱⁱ This kind of doctrine is of course also characterized by an immense simplification. If you have three fundamentally different natural inclinations [you have a]³ complicated doctrine, but if there is only one [you have a] great simplification. Therefore it was possible to present the doctrine in quasi-mathematical form, as Hobbes did openly and Locke in a slightly concealed manner.

ⁱ See part 3 of "What is Political Philosophy?" in *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 40-55; "The Three Waves of Modernity," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 81-98.

ⁱⁱ Session 3.

Now self-preservation, while being the basic phenomenon, is not the complete phenomenon as far as the human will is concerned because man, as we all know, is not satisfied with self-preservation alone. He also wants to be happy, and we have to consider the relation between self-preservation and happiness in order to begin a possible understanding of Marx. Hobbes and Locke admit, of course, that man desires happiness and that he's not satisfied with self-preservation; but [as] they say in our language, happiness is entirely subjective. Someone finds his happiness in eating a special kind of cooked apples and another in reading novels; others perhaps even in writing novels and so on. [Happiness] is infinitely subjective and nothing can be built on that. Self-preservation is the same in all men; therefore it is objective, and therefore something can be built on that. Happiness cannot be the end of civil society because of its subjectivity. Civil society can only guarantee the *conditions* of happiness, because without life you cannot be happy. In other words, to introduce a formula used in the Declaration of Independence: civil society makes possible the *pursuit* of happiness, but not happiness; that is the affair of the individuals.

From this follows a point with which Marx was very much concerned: a split between the public life and the private life, between the citizen or subject on the one hand, and the private individual [on the other]. The citizen is concerned with self-preservation. The whole apparatus of the state is nothing but a big apparatus for self-preservation, as you can see even today if you consider the importance of police officers. But now [this] is important: while self-preservation is the basic thing, which has an objective character, yet what we desire is happiness, because we want self-preservation but no one is satisfied with mere self-preservation. So the higher is private; the public is basic, but not very exciting. In the language of Locke, for example, one would have to say there is a difference between self-preservation, bare self-preservation, and comfortable self-preservation.ⁱⁱⁱ Bare self-preservation is guaranteed by the government; comfortable self-preservation is everybody's own business.

Now you see here in germ the distinction between state and society. The state takes care of self-preservation by guaranteeing the security of each, but the real life of man, the interesting life of man, concerns not bare self-preservation but the comfortable self-preservation which can even consist, for example, in going to theaters, ya? Some people need that for their happiness, but that is nothing for the state. [The] state, [in] the formula of Max Weber, is characterized by the monopoly of compulsion, and that has according to the original notion the function of guaranteeing self-preservation. Society is the sphere of freedom where everyone tries to do, and does to some extent, what he wants. [It is] naturally freedom in and through competition. One of the great objections of Marx against earlier doctrines is that they did not succeed in bridging the gulf between state and society, and therefore the only solution in his opinion is [to] abolish the state in the end, but that stems from this basic principle which we see already in the first wave [of modern thought].

Now we could turn to the second wave, which is much closer to Marx and about which I have to speak at much greater length, and I would like first to say a very general word

ⁱⁱⁱ *First Treatise*, sec. 87.

about Rousseau. It is time that we look at [two] great antagonists around 1789—after Rousseau’s death, but still he was very much alive, because there was a French Revolution going on—namely, Burke and Rousseau. I for one cannot help feeling that Burke is a much better helper for practical politics than Rousseau is, but on the other hand one must also say—and especially today, where we all are so very conservative—that however impossible Rousseau’s doctrine may be, he was a much broader thinker than Burke. Rousseau began to think at the place where Burke stopped thinking. That is not meant to say that Rousseau’s doctrine is true, but it is a very profound and seminal doctrine. Now Rousseau began his career with a prize essay on the sciences and arts, the so-called First Discourse,^{iv} in which he attacked the sciences and also the arts in the name of virtue. Within the political meaning of this writing is this: it is an attack on modern political science and the political science of Hobbes and Locke in the name of the ancients. One characteristic formula⁴ is this: The ancients talk in their political writings all the time of virtue; the moderns talk all the time of trade and money.^v You see how strong the economic element was at the very beginning in modern political thought, and Rousseau takes in this respect the side of the ancients.

Furthermore, in the first wave of modern political philosophy, enlightenment played an absolutely decisive role. One can state this precisely as follows. Self-preservation is the principle; and self-preservation means also, practically speaking, fear of death. Hobbes says or presupposes that fear of death is the greatest power in human life—and that is by no means necessarily so, as no one knew better than Hobbes, because many people fear punishment after death more than death. So Hobbes’s doctrine presupposes, in order to become operative, that the fear of punishment after death ceases to be important. This will cease to be important only by means of enlightenment, by the fact that people learn⁵ that there is no punishment after death in any serious sense. So the Enlightenment is absolutely essential for the first wave of modernity, and Rousseau begins his career with an attack on that Enlightenment. We must keep this in mind. We must see what this means.

There is a connection between Rousseau’s attack on the Enlightenment and his appeal to virtue, because this teaching of men like Hobbes and Locke degrades virtue to a means for self-preservation. It makes virtue instrumental or utilitarian. Why? What is goodness? Goodness is the habit by virtue of which you have a greater chance to survive. That is not what decent men understand by virtue, and Rousseau reacted correspondingly. So Rousseau begins with a protest of moral common sense against these subversive doctrines, yet Rousseau does not simply reject Hobbes or simply return to Aristotle. He never does that. He transforms Hobbes on the Hobbesian basis, and that is important to understand and I will proceed step by step. I have to read to you a passage from Hobbes to show that. Hobbes had taught regarding virtue [that] virtue is identical with peaceableness. Self-preservation is possible only in [a condition of] peace, as you know either from your own experience or from many historical books, including TV. So that habit which enables man to live in peace is peaceableness, which consists of various

^{iv} *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750).

^v *First Discourse. The First and Second Discourses*, ed. Roger D. Masters, trans. Roger D. and Judith R. Masters (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 51.

parts. Now one part is especially interesting in our present connection, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, chapter 15:

“The question who is the better man, has no place in the condition of meer Nature; where, (as has been shewn before,) all men are equall. The inequallity that now is has bin introduced by the laws civill. [All inequality, in other words, is legal or conventional—LS] I know that *Aristotle* in the first booke of his *Politiques*, for a foundation of his doctrine, maketh men by nature, some more worthy to command, meaning the wiser sort (such as he thought himselfe to be for his Philosophy;) others to Serve, (meaning those that had strong bodies, but were not Philosophers as he,) as if master and servant were not introduced by consent of men, but by difference of Wit: which is not only against reason; but also against experience. For there are very few so foolish, that had not rather governe themselves, than be governed by others: Nor when the wise in their own conceit, contend by force, with them who distrust their own wisdom, do they alwaies, or often, or almost at any time, get the Victory. If Nature therefore have made men equall, that equalitie is to be acknowledged: or if nature have made men unequal [Hobbes reminds himself for one moment of his own wit, you see?—LS]; yet because men that think themselves equall, will not enter into conditions of Peace, but upon Equal termes, such equalitie must be admitted.”^{vi}

In other words, Hobbes does not really say all men are equal. We don't know whether they are equal or not, but we have to act on the principle that they are equal.

“And therefore for the ninth law of Nature [law of nature means here moral law—LS] I put this, that every man acknowledge other for his Equall by Nature. The breach of this Precept is Pride.”

Now pride regarding the ones that are superior. With a view to natural equality, man ought to treat everyone else as his equal by nature, yet as Hobbes admits, civil society is a state of *inequality*. You at least have the inequality of the governors and the governed or also the rich and the poor.

Furthermore, the right of self-preservation from which Hobbes starts implies the right of everyone to be the judge of the means of self-preservation. That follows under certain conditions, ya? If you have the right to self-preservation you have the right to the means of self-preservation, otherwise the right would be nugatory. But then who is going to judge of what are and are not good means? Either the wisest men—well, that is bad for you, for us, because the wisest men may not think that we are so much worse preserved as we [think]⁶; therefore everyone must be the judge as to what are means for self-preservation. And now that is according to Hobbes the natural law.

And now look at society, at Hobbes's society. Who judges of the right means of self-preservation in Hobbes's society? The sovereign. That may very well be a king, one man. And how does a king judge of the means to my self-preservation? By making laws, because laws are public judgments on the means of self-preservation, as you can easily

^{vi} Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651).

see when you look at certain individuals who steal or rob. They try to get means for their comfortable or maybe simple self-preservation, and the law judges differently and the law decides the matter. So in civil society this fundamental natural right of equal judgment regarding the means of self-preservation is rejected. Civil society is essentially a state of inequality in Hobbes's teaching. But on the other hand, morality implies or consists in recognition of the natural right of man, which includes the right to be the judge of the means. Civil society is immoral because the basic moral phenomenon is the right to self-preservation, which includes according to Hobbes the right to be the judge of the means. Civil society takes this away. But as Rousseau says from the very beginning, morality is the one thing needful. That is the only consideration which ultimately counts. Peace, mere peace, is a lesser good than justice, and justice consists in the recognition of the rights of each, including, naturally, myself to be the judge. Therefore justice, consisting in the recognition of the right of each to be the judge, consists in recognition of freedom because all freedom is concentrated in that right effectively to judge of the means to self-preservation. This is then the starting point of Rousseau's criticism of Locke, which became crucial, as we will see.

Now we have to turn now to the precise procedure of Rousseau, how he tries to refute the Hobbesian doctrine on the Hobbesian basis. The Hobbesian basis, to repeat, is self-preservation and the right of everyone to be the judge as to the means of self-preservation. Now Hobbes had taught that to understand a thing means to understand its genesis, and Hobbes accordingly understands the commonwealth or the state by understanding its genesis. There he acts consistently. But Hobbes doesn't apply this demand, this general methodological demand, as we can say, to the more fundamental phenomenon, to man himself. Hobbes takes man for granted. He takes for granted that man has an essence, that he is a rational animal; and yet Hobbes has no longer a right to do so because his doctrine doesn't allow for essences in any sense. More specifically, reason, allegedly the characteristic of man, is not possible without language; and language is, as we all know, a social phenomenon.

So man's rationality presupposes his sociality, and yet Hobbes taught all the time that man is by nature a presocial man—a manifest contradiction, because if man is prerational, it follows from Hobbes's premises that man is prerational by nature. It becomes then necessary for Hobbes to understand the genesis of man's essence, the genesis of reason, and he never did that. And that is what Rousseau does. For Rousseau, the study of man becomes the study of the history of man, of "man" becoming man. This process of man's becoming man is the theme of Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, and I say only one word about that. This process of man becoming, from a kind of orangutan—a man is presented not as a teleological process [by which] the orangutan was meant to develop into man, but as a strictly mechanical process. These slightly—these beings slightly different from orangutans were compelled by external accidental causation: by floods or by ice or by heat, I don't know, to come down from trees, as they say today, and then to become man. There is not a teleological process. That is of the utmost importance for Marx.

Now this history of man, which takes in a way the place of the philosophic study of man, shows also and particularly that inequality is not natural, as Aristotle had taught and as Hobbes had almost admitted, but that inequality has come into being by virtue of certain accidents. The early original men, this almost-orangutan, were equal. Now if inequality has come into being by certain accidents, a practical conclusion is obvious: it can be abolished again. Inequality, in other words, is only a historical fact, not a natural fact. Differently stated, man does not have a stable nature to speak of. There are such things which are stable; for example, that we have five senses and have a digestive system and so on, but that's terribly uninteresting politically. You know? In all politically interesting respects, man doesn't have a nature. Man is infinitely malleable; or rather, as Rousseau himself puts it, he is infinitely perfectible, because he does not have an essence to speak of. You see how terribly and practically important this seemingly theoretical question regarding essences, for instance, [is].

Rousseau also says all philosophers prior to him have painted civilized man—man as he has been hitherto, man as we know him from history—but they claimed to paint natural man. All previous study of man was not scientific, as it would be called today. Man's experience of man is no guide to the nature of man, because what we experience are always men molded by customs, molded by traditions, molded by accidents; and therefore no inference is possible⁷ as to the possibilities of man from what man actually has. No argument against political improvement based on experience is valid, because the experience only says that it was possible hitherto; no inference from present-day men or from history as to what man can be, despite the fact that all societies, or all civilized societies have hitherto been unequal. A strictly egalitarian society is possible. We get then this fundamental scheme: There was equality at the beginning, when men had not yet developed the truly human faculties; and then the whole historical process, to use a Marxian expression, is inequality always everywhere; but at the end, again equality.

I mention another point in which Rousseau differs from Hobbes and Locke and prepares the Marxian view of the problem. Hobbes and Locke had conceived of the state of nature as inconvenient for man⁸, to use the understatement of Locke,⁹ which meant that the men living in the state of nature were dissatisfied with their situation. If this is so, the state of nature points to civil society as such. Man, and therefore men in the state of nature project civil society in their minds before they establish it. But that is an absurd suggestion, Rousseau implies, because these fellows didn't have any reason. How could they make up any project, to say nothing of a project of a sensible civil society? In other words, Hobbes and Locke are guilty of a cryptoteleology.¹⁰ Rousseau accordingly teaches that men in the state of nature are satisfied with the state of nature, perfectly satisfied; or, to use his simple statement: the state of nature is good. That does not necessarily mean more than [that] men living in it cannot but be satisfied with it. But that's not the only reason. It is also objectively good because it is a state of equality.

Now Rousseau, in other words, takes the great step in that famous liberation from teleology which is characteristic of modern times. A teleological view presupposes a number of stages leading from the germ to the completed thing, and the stages are all imperfect compared with the perfect stage. Now in Rousseau we find a very important

exponent of the view of the equality of the stages, as we may roughly put it. One simple and important example: childhood. [That] childhood is a stage as high as adulthood is denied by all the earlier thinkers, of course, and perhaps also denied by common sense, but it follows from the consistent rejection of teleology. Each stage is as meaningful and self-contained as any other. We must keep this in mind for understanding the Marxist doctrine.

Another point which I have to mention here: the just or rational society as Rousseau understands it effectively recognizes natural equality or rather the equal right of each to be the judge of the means of his self-preservation. Therefore Rousseau can say that in the just or rational society everyone remains as free and equal as he is by nature. In the decisive respect, in the making of laws, of public judgments as to the means of self-preservation, he is equal to everyone else. Now let us look at the mechanism of that. The judgment on the means of self-preservation is the laws. Rousseau demands that everyone subject to a law must have a say in the making of the law. Everyone must be a member of legislative body, that is to say of the sovereign. For Rousseau, the legislative body and sovereign are identical and to be distinguished from the government, which we may say is the executive and the judicial part. In civil society, everyone must be subject to the general will. The general will is not opposed simply to the private will particularly. The general will is my own will modified; my own will survives necessarily in the general will, otherwise the general will could not bind me. If I am subject to the private will of another man, then I'm a slave; but if I am subject¹¹ to the general will, which is the generalization of my private will, I am subject only to myself. I'm a free man. But the free society is essentially an egalitarian society, but more than that, this solution that everyone be subject only to the general will, which is a modification of his own will, and not to the subject of any other man, this requires that everyone and everything is subject to the private will. It requires, in Rousseau's formula: "the total alienation of each associate with all his rights to the whole community."^{vii} Here you have the word "alienation" which plays such a great role, but in Rousseau the accent is different. The¹² total alienation of every individual is necessary if there is to be decency, if there is to be a just and rational society; or as Rousseau also put it, if you want to have freedom and equality, every individual must become totally denaturalized, totally collectivized. These things will come up with characteristic modifications in Marx.

Rousseau's argument, by the way, is not so difficult to understand. He says if there are any limitations to the power of the community, then these excluded areas can become the locus for private power—for private government as it was then called by certain liberals in our age. And if you want to prevent the nonlegal or the translegal dependence of individuals on other individuals, this area must be susceptible of being brought under social control. That's all Rousseau means. But the principle is of course that there is no sphere which can be excluded from social control. The total collectivization of each is the condition for the freedom of each. The formula is identical for Marx and Rousseau; the concrete meaning differs. Total collectivization, to repeat, is the indispensable condition of the freedom of each in society. You had the freedom of each originally in isolation in the state of nature, but that is not interesting. The interesting point is freedom in society.

^{vii} Presumably Strauss's translation.

Now Rousseau goes on to say that this alienation of the natural self—that he transforms himself completely into a citizen, into a member of the sovereign, and ceases in a sense to be a natural being—this alienation is the acquisition of morality. This man in the state of nature, who was concerned with his self-preservation and made his own judgments and so on, that was not a moral being. Man becomes a moral being only by becoming a citizen, and that is to say by divesting himself radically of his natural freedom. The rational society demands self-alienation. I come back to this part of this argument. From this it follows that all society, however just, is bondage. That Rousseau says with all clarity at the beginning of the *Social Contract*: “Man is born free but everywhere we find him in chains. How did this happen? I do not know. What can make this change legitimate? I believe I can answer this question.”^{viii} And that’s the meaning of the book. He will answer the question of how the transition from freedom to bondage can be legitimate. He is concerned with the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate bondage, but bondage it is in both cases.

Therefore society as society cannot give the true solution of the human problem. The true solution of the human problem cannot be a social solution. Rousseau found it in a form of living which he described as the solitary dreamer, who lives at the fringes of society but is not¹³ truly a member of society: a man communing with nature; we can say a man of religiosity as distinguished from an adherent of any positive religion. You can also say the artist, because this little thing in Rousseau has grown in the meantime to tremendous proportions. The decisive moral formulation is this: that what covers the civil society is morality, and this morality is called by Rousseau by such words as virtue or duty, a rational morality. But there is something else, and that is what Rousseau calls goodness, and which means a kind of instinctive goodness, compassion. This is at home beyond society among these radical individualists who live at its fringes in a fundamentally precarious existence, although from Rousseau’s point of view they are the salt of the earth. Why is this necessary? If society is bondage, then it is fundamentally not a happy state. But society is the home of morality; virtue is truly at home in society. Morality is then divorced from happiness. If you want to have happiness, you have to leave society, and that is to say you have to cease to be a responsible citizen. Happiness belongs to the state of nature; morality belongs to civil society. That is the simple formula for that.

Now this antinomy between the individual and society—not every individual, but some individuals like Rousseau—is absolutely crucial for the understanding of what happened afterward, and especially what happened in Marx. I will show it by reflecting for one moment on one special reason why this antinomy is necessary, and that has to do with the problem of property. Rousseau makes it clear even in the *Social Contract*, more emphatically in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, that civil society is necessarily more advantageous to the haves than to the have-nots, because the protection of¹⁴ the means of self-preservation is of course (how shall I say?) richer, more fruitful in the case of the rich than in the case of the poor. I mean the famous stories of Anatole France about the law which forbids the rich and poor equally to sleep under bridges and to beg in the streets—that’s the idea, and Rousseau has this clearly in mind. The have-nots lose the

^{viii} Presumably Strauss’s translation.

natural right of appropriating land, which they need for self-preservation. They can no longer take this land away from those who have enough land to spare. That's a crime, as you know, yes? The social contract is therefore—as Rousseau puts it in that extreme statement, which he never retracted, in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*¹⁵—a fraud perpetrated by the rich against the poor. There is only one step here to the formula of Babeuf in the French Revolution [LS writes on the blackboard]: property is theft. Legalized theft, but nevertheless theft.^{ix}

Now here one can get the simplest formulation of what Marx is doing. What happened after Rousseau—especially in German idealistic philosophy, to which I will turn soon—was to say: Throw this away. There is a perfect social solution, a perfect political solution to the human problem, and that is the rational state: the state of Kant or of Hegel, whatever it may be. Then there were other people who were certain that no state could solve the human problem, and they were such people like Thoreau: individualists, anarchists or whatever you call them, yes?¹⁶ In other words, they minimized this element, the globe. Rousseau originates both the anarchism and the statism, because in this sense he was much more comprehensive than any of the followers. Now Marx of course, you see, follows the German idealists with the social solution, but with one great difference: society, not the state. Not the state.¹⁷ Why does society, a communist society, give, supply the solution to the human problem? Because of the necessary implications of *property*. That's much more refined in Marx, but that is still the German element. But Rousseau's position is of course different from the Marxist position because Rousseau doesn't tire of teaching that society as such, with or without the state, is essentially imperfect and there is the necessity of something transcending society or at the fringes of society, however you might call it, which really gives society its true right.

This is what I would like to say about Rousseau, and then I would like to turn to German idealism as far as it is absolutely indispensable to discuss it in this connection. But it may be an opportunity to see whether there are some things which are in need of clarification at the present moment. But I ask you to keep in mind this absolutely crucial point: the Rousseauan doctrine of the necessity of the total alienation of each individual to society for the sake of the freedom and the equality of each. That is absolutely preserved in Marx in a new element, as we shall see. And also of course the other point: the fact that in Rousseau this is regarded as bondage, if an inevitable bondage. You can put it this way: from Rousseau's point of view it is a morally inevitable bondage, but he questions the ultimacy of morality, of what he calls virtue and duty. Well, Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: Why does he write a political treatise, then, and not one in favor of creativity?

LS: Both because Rousseau saw that there is one root, one root out of which there grew two things with equal necessity, and both are in a necessary tension to one another. Rousseau makes another reflection going beyond Hobbes and Locke which shows this root more clearly, namely, this: self-preservation presupposes that life is attractive, that it

^{ix} François-Noël Babeuf (1760-1797) did favor the abolition of private property, but the phrase is from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), *What is Property?* (1840).

is pleasant, or however you call it. There must therefore be an experience of that fundamental pleasantness of life or, as Aristotle puts it, of the sweetness of living as living—what someone in Homer mentioned when he spoke of seeing the sun. The light of the sun. That Rousseau calls the sentiment of existence. The sentiment of existence is the basic human experience and it is radically pleasant. And that is at the bottom of the desire for self-preservation.

Now you desire then to preserve yourself, and then you have to do something about it. You have to work . . . and quite a few other things. Yes? But then something terrible happens. Being engaged in the acts conducive to self-preservation, you no longer sense the sweetness of mere being. This is therefore the preserve of those who do not work, fight, govern, etc. These are the idlers like Rousseau. That is the scheme, so it follows from what he says. And one can understand the later development of European thought up to so-called existentialism today by starting [here]. You see how rich Rousseau's whole project is. The great change came in the moment in which the sentiment of existence was found to be or believed to be not pleasant and sweet, but terrible.¹⁸ I think the clearest expression of this change is still in Nietzsche, and that is of course very important now in existentialism, but that I mention only in passing. So for Rousseau, therefore, both were necessary, and the paradoxical fact is that the best guide for those who govern and who are governed are not governors, but the idlers at the outside. This notion plays in practice a very great role, you know. There are sometimes people who are regarded or regard themselves as the conscience of society,¹⁹ and they are by this very reason somehow marginal.²⁰ The teacher of legislators, as distinguished from the legislator, is not a political man. It is much more the sensitive poet than the man in the marketplace. Something of this Rousseau had in mind. There is a connection between that and classical thought, only for Rousseau this man is no longer a philosopher. That is at least obscured, and therefore it is convenient to say rather the artist than the philosopher.

Well, then, I will go on as far as I can come today.²¹ Now we have to make a transition to Hegel, because Hegel is the immediate starting point of Marx; but it is impossible to do so without speaking of Kant, because Kant effected a radical change in philosophy as a whole on which Hegel builds. And we can understand Kant best²² for our purposes by considering a fundamental difficulty in Rousseau. This is the contradiction between his^x moralism, his discovery or rediscovery that the one thing needful is morality, and that morality cannot be understood as mercenary, as Hobbes and Locke had understood it: mercenary and utilitarian are the same. This is contradicted by Rousseau's opposition between virtue and duty on the one hand, and goodness on the other. What I mean is the contradiction I spoke [of]: here is the world of bondage and morality, and here is the world of true freedom which is not strictly speaking a world of morality, an anarchistic but noble world. That is the point. Now the clearest solution would seem to be, as I indicated before, to forget about that, and that is what Kant tried to do. One must abandon Rousseau's reservation against society. Why? Precisely because that reservation has no moral basis. Society and morality are coextensive. What is the reason for Rousseau's error? Answer: the obscurity of the status of morality in Rousseau's doctrine. It is in no

^x That is, Rousseau's.

way clear in Rousseau whether morality is ultimately in the service of self-preservation or whether it is not connected with the spirituality of man's soul. The latter view is presented most forcefully in the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in the *Emile*. [It]²³ is a very difficult question, where Rousseau really stood. This contradiction, to state it simply, between a materialist account for morality and a spiritualist account for morality is the most obvious difficulty in Rousseau. That is the starting point of Kant. Kant tries to get out of this difficulty of an *either* materialistic or spiritualistic base for morality. Yet in spite of this profound difference between Kant and Rousseau, Kant agrees with Rousseau regarding the *content* of morality. Morality is chiefly and primarily the recognition of the rights of man, of man's equality. Men are equal because they are equal in the decisive respect: in respect to the possibility of morality. Every man is as capable as everyone else to be, have a good will^{xi} —which is not guided by morality yet morally relevant is a necessary process.²⁴ It does not depend on the human will decisively.

I try now to explain the Kantian position as simply as I can. From Kant's point of view, Rousseau is confused regarding the principles or the status of morality, and this is due²⁵ to an error which Rousseau shares with all preceding philosophers, namely, that morality can have a basis in theoretical philosophy—call it metaphysics, call it physics, it doesn't make any difference—that morality can have a basis in knowledge of nature in particular, in knowledge of the nature of man. As long as you assume that morality must have a theoretical basis, a basis in the knowledge of nature, you are confronted with an alternative of a materialistic or spiritualist basis of morality. Both positions, materialism as well as spiritualism, are wrong, Kant asserts, as theoretical assertions. Both are *dogmatic*, and Rousseau succeeded as little as any other previous philosopher in liberating himself from that dogmatism.

Kant has stated his position clearly by two references to earlier thinkers. He has said of David Hume that Hume awakened him from the dogmatic slumber. Hume's skepticism awakened him from that dogmatic slumber. But Kant said²⁶ of Rousseau: Rousseau has brought me into the right shape.^{xii} In other words, the influence of Rousseau is deeper and more comprehensive than the influence of Hume. To Rousseau he owes the positive direction; to Hume he owes the negation. Another statement of Kant regarding Rousseau is this: Rousseau proceeds synthetically, Kant says; namely, he proceeds by starting from natural man to civilized man, and therefore the Rousseauan investigation has the character of a scientific, physical investigation. It implies the absolutization of scientific knowledge, which is perfectly true because Rousseau's account of the genesis of civilization in the²⁷ *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* has methodically the character of any cosmogony: ²⁸of Kant, [of] Laplace, or of Descartes or other formulations. The alternative would be equally dogmatic, namely, what Rousseau did in his "Profession of Faith": ²⁹ a spiritualistic metaphysics, which is equally impossible, as Hume had shown.

^{xi} The tape was changed at this point.

^{xii} Strauss refers to a note found in Kant's copy of *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* ("Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime"), in *Akademieausgabe von Immanuel Kants Gesammelten Werken*, 20:44.

Now Hume questioned the rational character of the principle of causality. This alone implies the rejection of speculative metaphysics but it also endangers science, which stands and falls with the principle of causality as a rational principle. Hume has shown to Kant's satisfaction that the principle of causality is not rational, not demonstrable like a mathematical theory, nor on the other hand [is it] a legitimate generalization from experience. Experience could never supply the universality of the principle of causality, because experience can only say: Hitherto this and this was the case, but not always. To justify the principle of causality there is needed a radical revision of the traditional concept of reason and understanding. This revision will entail the supremacy of practical reason or of morality. In other words, whereas according to the traditional notion of reason theoretical reason is higher than practical reason, the new concept of reason which Kant will develop in fighting back against Hume will necessarily imply the primacy of practical reason. I will explain that.

The radical revision of the concept of reason or understanding consists according to Kant in the discovery of the spontaneity of understanding. The understanding is not, as it was for Plato and Aristotle and for the tradition generally speaking, a receptive faculty, the perception with the mind's eye of "essences." The understanding is productive, not receptive. In one formula of Kant, the understanding does not receive passively the laws of nature—the Newtonian laws, say—but the understanding *prescribes* nature its laws. The fundamental principles of physics are projects of the human mind; they are not the essential characters of nature in itself. Reason, understanding, is productive. That means the essence of man is *productivity*. You see how crucial that was for Marx. I mean, man is not only a being which produces things in order³⁰ to live from them (that would be purely external and that was never denied), but the essence of man, the core of man is productivity. The essence of man is productivity and not contemplation. That is the fundamental change.

Yet the understanding as understanding is productive only on the basis of sense perception and in connection with it. You cannot have a physics merely on the basis of this fundamental project of nature. You need also experiments in order to give and to acquire specific laws and so on, i.e., to fall back on sense perception. Now³¹ what we get by virtue of the cooperation of the human understanding and sense perception is the phenomenal world, the world as it necessarily appears to us as human beings, not the world as it is in itself. And Kant uses somewhat awkward expressions here, but I have to use them for a moment. The³² world of which we know, regardless of whether in science or in prescientific knowledge, is the phenomenal world. And the true world he calls the noumenal world, the world as it would be for a pure *nous*,³³ for a pure mind, if we could imagine that. I mean, we know it as a possibility, but we cannot say anything beyond [saying] that it is a possibility.

So the understanding as understanding is productive only on the basis of sense perception. It is productive only in connection with a receptivity, receptivity being the opposite of productivity. Therefore the understanding points to a higher faculty, if I may use this somewhat inappropriate expression, which is called by Kant reason. Reason. Reason, in contradistinction to the understanding, is free and not merely spontaneous—

spontaneous being lower than freedom—but only as practical reason, not as theoretical reason. As theoretical reason, it is always in need of sense perception. Practical reason and only practical reason is self-sufficient. Practical reason alone can constitute a kind of world, the world of morality. So³⁴ in practical reason alone we transcend the merely phenomenal. I will try to show you now in a few words why this is so terribly important for things with which every one of us is concerned whether he cares for philosophy or not.

Why is practical reason necessarily free from sense perception, from sensuality, from anything given? And hence, why is practical reason necessarily purely rational? Morality must be independent of any preceding end or purpose; whereas all earlier moral philosophers had started from the ends, Kant denies that the ends or purposes can be the beginning of morality, because according to Kant ends or purposes can be known only empirically, or at least not without the help of experience. The end of morality, happiness, was supposed to be the natural end, the end toward which man is by nature inclined. One assumes therewith according to Kant that the natural ends are good; and surely that was a tacit premise of all classical philosophy, that the natural ends are good. How else could you say [that] by following the natural inclinations as distinguished from their perversions you act well, if you do not assume that the natural inclinations are good? This in its turn presupposes of course that nature is good, but is this not a dogmatic assumption? Must it not be established first that nature is good before we are invited to follow our natural inclinations? If the ground of morality is the natural end, the moral law is given to man or imposed on man by God or by nature, as indeed everyone who had spoken of a moral law had said. But Kant says before we bow to a law which God or nature imposes, we must know first that God or nature is good. We cannot assume that. Hence the moral law cannot be conceived of as in any way imposed by either nature or God: the moral law must be understood as self-imposed, as self-given. Morality requires the emancipation of the will from the tutelage of God or nature. The freedom of man must be understood in an infinitely more radical way than it was ever understood before, and this teaching of Kant has acquired an influence later on on many people who have never heard the name of Kant. A law, Kant says, which precedes the will, the human will, is accepted on the basis of the expectation of rewards or punishments. It is therefore accepted in a mercenary intention; at least it is accepted on the basis of a preexisting need.

Hence these pre-Kantian thinkers started from the desire for happiness, but happiness is something radically different from duty. The moral law cannot originate in men's needs or be relative to such needs. It must originate in man's freedom, in man's sovereignty. The moral law cannot be based on anything preceding it. The understanding of the phenomenal world, of the world we know either scientifically or prescientifically, does not give us any help toward the understanding of morality. But how can there be a moral law? Where do we get the content? Strictly speaking, there is no content. The moral law, or ethics, as Kant calls it, is necessarily formal ethics. The content is engendered entirely by the form, and the formula of Kant for that is the famous categorical imperative: Act in such a way that the maxim of your action can become a universal law. I will speak of this a little bit later.

Now I will first say how can a formal law supply the content. Here Kant simply follows Rousseau or modifies Rousseau. Kant's notion of morality is modeled on Rousseau's notion of civil law or of right. According to Rousseau right or law which is legitimate comes into being through the generalization of particular wills and thus makes it possible that through subjection to the law man acquires his freedom. Now what does he mean by that? You enter the legislative assembly with a firm decision not to pay any taxes. That's your particular will. But you can't get up and say, "I don't want to pay any taxes." You have to say, "There ought to be a law that no one has to pay any taxes." Then you come to your senses and see, "Who will take care of the roads and bridges if everyone would think as I do?" and then you say, "There ought to be taxes." In other words, by thinking of your selfish wish in the terms of law, in terms of a universalized wish, the wish of everyone, you change your wish. You transform yourself from a natural, selfish being into a citizen. Kant radicalizes this thought, but it is exactly this thought: morality consists in the universalization of maxims. In other words, Kant is not concerned so much with an individual's proposition, "I don't want to pay any taxes," but with the maxim, with the moral principle on which you act habitually. For example, some people act on the maxim that anything which is inconvenient should be avoided. Ya? I mean, that is not something which they do this moment but that characterizes their whole life. There are other maxims of that kind. "One should cut any corner" is also such a maxim which can determine a whole life.

Now what Kant says is this: I have to look at the maxim implied in any proposition I make to myself and then see whether³⁵ I can still agree to that proposition if I make it a universal law for everyone. Yes? In other words, I don't wish to give money to a poor fellow. It's my wish, and I make it a maxim for my life: I will never do that. ³⁶Now I consider now whether it is possible to imagine a world in which everyone is a crook if he helps a poor man (well, assuming of course that there are poor men around; otherwise it wouldn't make sense) and then I see—that is at least what Kant says—that I didn't wish, that I didn't mean. And the universalized maxim is the only test of morality. Only by this universalization of maxims does it become possible that man acquires his inherent or internal or moral freedom through subjection to a law which he has imposed upon himself. He never becomes subject to a heteronomous law, to a law imposed on him by other beings—by nature, for example. External freedom, of which Kant also speaks, is defined independently of any specific purpose. Morality is defined independently of any purpose. In the case of right, of civil law, all members of a particular society impose the law on all members of that society. In the case of morality, the individual imposes a law valid for mankind, of which mankind he is a member, and thus transcending not only his individual self-love—that is done to some extent by the citizen—but he transcends also the collective self-love of a particular society. This moral law as Kant understands it is the beginning of moral orientation. It has no support outside of itself. It cannot be deduced from the nature of man or anything else. And it has the character of an unconditioned command: no reasons are given why you should be decent. You should be decent, period. It is, as Kant says, therefore the only fact of pure reason. In every other phenomenon, every other fact, pure reason, even while entering is mixed with something

else. Here alone is reason pure. It is the only absolute fact, the beginning of any possible understanding.

Now what does this practically mean? The crucial implication, and which is much more radical in Kant than in Rousseau: there is no possibility of any objection based on experience to any moral demands, because the moral demands³⁷ have a much higher dignity, a much higher rationality than any empirical observation can possibly have. [Regarding the] possibility, for example, [of] the just society, the rational society, Plato and Aristotle would have said: Yes, but the rational society is possible only under certain conditions, and if these conditions are not fulfilled it cannot become actual. That's absolutely rejected by Kant. For Kant it is perfectly sufficient regarding the just or rational society to show that it does not contain a contradiction in terms. For Plato and Aristotle that would not be enough; that would merely show that you don't contradict yourself in your proposal, but it might still be impossible, namely, incompatible with the nature of things, with the nature of man. That is impossible for Kant. You can see that the daring which was made possible already by Rousseau's notion of the infinite perfectibility of man, and [that] the impossibility of drawing any conclusion regarding the future from past history, from what we know of civilized man, is infinitely increased by Kant. Reference to the nature of man has no bearing on the fundamentals of moral politics. I wonder whether I should go beyond that. Let me see. Perhaps there are certain points which are surely in need of clarification. Perhaps I devote the rest of this meeting to that. Mr. Cole?

Mr. Cole: Just one thing about your remark concerning . . . presentation of Kant's statement that the essence of man is productivity and not contemplation. Is this peculiar to Kant, and couldn't it be said the same of Hobbes and Locke?

LS: For Hobbes and Locke, every productivity is based on receptivity in every stage and not only in knowledge. They would of course admit the primacy of sense perception. Such a thing—morality. What is the basis, look—

Mr. Cole: Why do you separate productivity from receptivity? Why is that so important?

LS: Well, ³⁸I used it in order to make clear the radical difference between Kant and the whole tradition. I mean, well, in Plato and Aristotle the essence of man is contemplation. Man was born to behold the universe, the ideas, however you call it.

Mr. Cole: Yes. Well here, by productivity don't you simply mean moral productivity, the products of practical reason, and not productivity of material things?

LS: That's made clear, but³⁹ that man has to be productive in order to live or to live reasonably well, that was always admitted. I mean, houses do not come into being without human production, that's clear. But the highest activities of man, those which are most truly human, were considered prior to that as not production, but contemplation. In Kant that is impossible because the object of contemplation would be the thing in itself: nature or being as it truly is. That's inaccessible, so contemplation can only have a very

subordinate position. The highest activity of man, cognition, is production. That is what you learn today in every logical positivistic course: What is science except organizing sense data? You know, making projects, making models: science. So that is productive activity. And regarding morality, morality means to do the right thing; but according to Kant you cannot do the right thing if you do not know that the right thing is imposed by you on yourself. It is your own legislation, a productive action.

Student: You said this becomes very important for Marx.

LS: Because Marx comes—Marx, so to say, is prepared by Kant in the following way. Marx’s attempt to understand the higher life of man in the light of economic productivity presupposes a universal philosophy of man in which man as man was understood as productive even in the highest activities. Take a parallel: art, what we now call art with a capital A was understood as an imitation of nature. Imitation of nature. Today that’s very generally rejected and the word is not productivity, but to lead these people to their *creativity*.⁴⁰ You can say Kant laid the foundation for the understanding of man as essentially creative and not imitative—although Kant doesn’t use that word, but it is permissible to say that. Now that is a very radical change.⁴¹ Of course, that is in a way prepared by Hobbes, and by Bacon: never forget the simple fact that the motto for the *Critique of Pure Reason* is taken from Bacon, so Kant knew something about this prehistory. But still there is a difference not only of degree but of kind between these earlier men and Kant. You have only to read the classic passages in Hobbes about our making,^{xiii} how infinitely crude they are compared with Kant, and to say nothing of the fact that the moral principles are of course in Hobbes absolutely imposed upon man by his natural instincts, so to say, and in no way self-imposed. In this respect, Hobbes is very old-fashioned. Hobbes says the principles of morality are to be found by experience. We look [at] how people behave and then we see, for example, that fathers, believe it or not, lock their money away from their own children.^{xiv} What does this mean? Well, that they have a great distrust of their fellows. And that you analyze more deeply; then you have the unchangeable nature of man: man as a selfish being cannot be changed. Kant can deny the radical selfishness of man by the simple device: that is how man actually behaved as far as we can see in most cases, if not always, but that doesn’t mean that he cannot be unselfish. The fact that the moral law tells me to be unselfish (I use now this simple formulation) proves the possibility of unselfishness: “Thou canst because thou oughtst,” if that is possible. That is Kant’s formula, and that no objection on the basis of theoretical knowledge of the phenomenal world is possible, because that tells us only the outside, and in addition something—a mere human construct. It doesn’t give us the core. Yes?

Student: . . . I’m not quite clear about Kant’s idea of the moral law, by which I mean . . . objective test his of being moral or immoral.

LS: The test—well, take a simple case of immorality. Yes? A very simple case: a man who embezzles money because he needs it or, as Kant wisely says, he believes to need

^{xiii} E.g., *Leviathan*, chapter 5.

^{xiv} *Leviathan*, chap. 13.

it—because that is never such an absolute *a priori* certainty as the moral law itself could take. Now what does he do? What should he do, according to Kant? He should say—wholly regardless of the positive law which forbids it, he should say: Is my present intention to embezzle money compatible with a universal law commanding everyone to embezzle money when he believes he needs money? And then I see I didn't mean that; I only want to make a little exception for me on this particular occasion. That is for Kant the root of immorality: to regard yourself, your present immoral action, as a little exception which has no meaning. But it is of course more than that. Kant also means by the categorical imperative: Take on responsibility. Be not like a little child, yes, who simply obeys, but take on responsibility. Regard yourself as a founder or creator of a world of which you would wish to be a member. If you look at your action in this perspective, then and only then do you have a sufficiently broad perspective for judging. I mean, that is not entirely the word, but I try to explain it. In the perspective of the founder: transcend selfishness. If you are a founder of a commonwealth and not merely just a member who might wish to exploit the commonwealth, the founder is interested in the existence and of the happiness of his foundation. By this you transcend selfishness. But on the other hand, you must also view yourself as a member, meaning the world which you will found must be bearable to human beings as such, and you are an example of that. You see, the combination of the perspective of the founder and of the member gives you the broadest moral perspective. That is what he also means.

It is of course a great question whether formal ethics as Kant meant it is possible, whether you really get beyond a certain notion of human nobility. [Consider]⁴² the present-day form: there are a number of cultures, as people say, and the contents of these moralities differ considerably in many points, yes? Monogamy, polygamy, and many, many other things. Now, but all these cultures share one thing: ⁴³a notion of noble things, noble actions, noble human beings, and despicable actions, yes? And these respective members of the different cultures understand one another in this particular thing. But that is only something formal in itself because the content is given in each case by the different cultures. Now Kant of course claims that by understanding this principle of nobility, you get one and only one content. You know? One can also state it as follows: morality, according to the ordinary understanding, consists in doing the right thing in the right spirit. I mean, if you do the right thing—for example, abstaining from murder—merely out of fear of the police, you don't do it in the right spirit.

Now what Kant says, as it were, is this: the right spirit alone is sufficient because the right spirit necessarily engenders the right thing, and in the same way for all, at all times. And here is the difficulty. That would lead us to find out how Kant tried to believe that he couldn't do it without introducing as a matter of course that every being which universalizes a maxim is concerned with happiness, and therefore no moral law which is incompatible with human happiness can be a moral law. But the difficulty is that at the same time Kant depreciated happiness as a hopelessly subjective concept. ⁴⁴That is one of the more detailed difficulties into which I cannot go now. Did I answer your question?

Student: Yes, I think so, but still I believe he can explain this only in the context of a society . . . it doesn't exist outside of society. It might to the extent, as you said, that there are various cultures and what Kant explains is their sense of all these . . .

LS: Yes, but when you say a culture, there is of course a danger that the self-preservation of this culture as a collective ego becomes a part of it. In other words, you are in danger of replacing simple egoism by collective egoism, and the only society of which we have to think according to Kant is all mankind. That is crucial for his notion. I do not know. Can you restate your question?

Same student: I was saying that when he states that the moral law has no content . . . what you said, at least to me, is closed from society. He explains this moral law in the context of, not outside—

LS: That he denies. I mean, ⁴⁵man is a social being and practically all his actions affect, directly or indirectly, other beings, that's quite true. But that doesn't mean of course that the peculiar moral content of this particular society or culture necessarily enters a man's moral principles. Do you see that?

Same student: Yes, but it must have relevance at some stage to society.

LS: ⁴⁶Kant would question that. Kant would say you have to obey the law of the land. ⁴⁷I will speak of that later. That you have to do, but that does not mean that you are in your moral horizon limited by the law of the land. Kant would not admit that you have to embrace the values of your society. He would say that's a very immoral principle; you know, that is as immoral as to say you have to accept the opinions of your father and grandfather regardless of what they were. I mean, if these principles of your society prove to be compatible with the moral law, all right; but if not, no. But there is one and only one moral law, and there is one and only one notion of the just society. That is the same in Kant as in the earlier thinkers, only according to Kant these notions of the just society must not be derived from any preceding end or purpose.

Now the practical meaning is clear, and the consequences are familiar to all of you. For Kant there is only one natural right, and that he calls the right to freedom—I mean external freedom, regardless of what the purpose is. That is what we understand by liberalism. You know? If you say self-preservation is the end, there is the possibility to say self-preservation is better taken care of by a wise, benevolent despot than by a republican society. It could be, yes? But if you say the only natural right is the right of freedom regardless of what the purpose is, that's clear: republican or perhaps even democratic consequences follow from that. And that is the tacit premise of present-day liberalism as it still exists. That doesn't make it a true principle, but still it only shows that these seemingly abstruse reflections of Kant have a very definite and powerful practical political meaning. What we understand by freedom today—by “we” I mean those who do not have their roots in something older than modern thought—is the Kantian notion, freedom which is not a freedom *for*. Freedom itself is the highest good: politically, external freedom; morally, moral freedom. And therefore that

is . . . Whenever you have a preceding end or purpose, that is what Kant says, you admit a principle limiting freedom.

Is it time? Yes, then I have—I'm sorry. Perhaps we can—today I have to leave.

¹ Deleted “the meaning of the strict.”

² Replaced “to” with “of.”

³ Deleted “that gives the.”

⁴ Moved “formula.”

⁵ Deleted “either.”

⁶ Deleted “do.”

⁷ Deleted “as to what man can do from”

⁸ Deleted “inconvenient.”

⁹ Deleted “inconvenient for man in the state of nature.”

¹⁰ Deleted “that of a crypto-teleology.”

¹¹ Deleted “but if I am subject.”

¹² Deleted “whole the.”

¹³ Deleted “really.”

¹⁴ Deleted “the means of self-preservation, of.”

¹⁵ Deleted “the social contract.”

¹⁶ Deleted “however that may be called.”

¹⁷ Deleted “that is the point where, and why...”

¹⁸ Deleted “Yes? And so.”

¹⁹ Deleted “You know?”

²⁰ Deleted “Yes? something of this kind was.”

²¹ Deleted “Will you remind me of the time, Jonathan?”

²² Moved “best.”

²³ Deleted “I mean, one, that.”

²⁴ Deleted “It is not, it is a necessary process.”

²⁵ Deleted “to the fact”

²⁶ Moved “Kant said.”

²⁷ Deleted “Second, in the.”

²⁸ Deleted “either of.”

²⁹ Deleted “a spiritualistic metaphysics.”

³⁰ Deleted “produces things in order.”

³¹ Deleted “that which we get by virtue of the cooperation of human understanding.”

³² Deleted “The phenomenal world, the.”

³³ Deleted “for a pure mind if”

³⁴ Deleted “practical reason.”

³⁵ Deleted “it is—whether”

³⁶ Deleted “and then I say from.”

³⁷ Deleted “are”

³⁸ Deleted “is there, I mean”

³⁹ Deleted “the, you see, but the essence of man is not, I mean.”

⁴⁰ Deleted “You can also, I mean I have no objection if you want to introduce.”

⁴¹ Deleted “now in the case of Hobbes and”

⁴² Deleted “take in.”

⁴³ Deleted “there are.”

⁴⁴ Deleted “you know?”

⁴⁵ Deleted “that man is, although.”

⁴⁶ Deleted “yes, well Kant would, no, no.”

⁴⁷ Deleted “that.”

Session 2: April 4, 1960
The three waves, part 2

Leo Strauss: I remind you of a few points I made last time regarding Rousseau, because they are especially necessary for the understanding of Marx. The first point is that according to Rousseau no conclusion can be drawn from man as empirically known or as historically known [about] what man can be or what man should be. Rousseau must therefore develop a special method for finding out what man could be, and that cannot be the observation of empirical man. Very generally speaking, he must find a way toward the natural man, and the main point is that man is characterized by infinite malleability or by infinite perfectibility. This ¹[being] the case, a society of free and equal men is possible. The fact that no such society ever existed cannot be held against that.

The second point: in order to get a society of free and equal men it is necessary that each man, each member of the society alienates all his powers to the community so that there be freedom in society. But this alienation of the individual to the society means of course also the other way around: that society is bondage. Society is possible only as civil society, as a state. This is somehow connected with the fact that civil society is based on private property and a certain element of injustice inevitably enters civil society on that score. There is therefore an inevitable antinomy between the happiness of the individual and his being a member of society. This shows itself according to Rousseau as follows. Whenever man lives in society (and this does not yet have to be civil society), vanity develops: *amour propre*, as Rousseau calls it, competition with others, and a competition which poisons the minds. Therefore happiness is possible only in withdrawal from society or in solitude. In other words, for this reason there is a limitation not to human perfection but to the perfection of society. In all society, as long as man lives in society, you cannot get rid of this poisoning element which Rousseau calls *amour propre*: vanity, you can say; pride, competitiveness. But this ceiling can be overcome in the case of the few men who can live outside of society.

Now if we disregard this problem of competitiveness and *amour propre*, we have the clear limit of society in the fact that society is devoted primarily to the protection of property. Therefore it would seem that you can overcome the difficulty [LS writes on the blackboard]—I mean, which I state in this formula. Here is the circle of civil society, and here is the free individual at the fringes of society, in a way outside of society. He is happy. He is truly a human being. They are somehow alienated, and this alienation is the price they pay for freedom. They become completely citizens. They cease to be individuals. Now the simple solution—Marx looked at this theme—was to abolish property: to abolish property, to abolish the state, and therefore in this way to have no longer a need of withdrawal from a fundamentally imperfect society. Rousseau's reply to that, if he had known of the Marxist solution, would have been: You can never solve the human problem by a solution, however perfect, of the social problem. That this point is reasonably well taken is shown empirically by a protest against Marx which arose long after Marx, and with which you are all familiar. The antipode of Marx on a commonsense level today is Freud, and Freud's statement in "Discontent of Civilization" or however—

in civilization, however it is called:ⁱ this is simply a restatement of Rousseau's point of view. Civilization is as such a thing which leads to misery, and therefore the solution of the problem of happiness cannot be found by any social means. And, well, if we take it in the crudest form we would need in addition to communism also psychoanalysis, because people would not be satisfied even by a perfectly just society. There would still remain the so-called personal problem. On another level, the same of course is done by existentialism. There are existentialists who are Marxists, as you know, in France especially, but they are distinguished from the Marxists by the fact that they are aware that the solution of the social problem is not a solution to the human problem. There is still—perhaps the human problem is essentially insoluble, but then it is important to face that fact. That one can say simply is the thesis of this kind of existentialism.

Now I turn then to Kant, who radicalizes the Rousseauan position profoundly. And Kant, just as his other successors, gets rid of that satellite [laughter] who accompanies the society and simply tries to find the solution to the human problem in a properly constructed society. Kant said: What men should be cannot be deduced, determined in any way by man's nature; man's end can be determined only by man's becoming free from the tutelage of nature and of God. If he applies this to Rousseau's problem, it is not true that man cannot become free from vanity in society.² The moral law demands from man that freedom from vanity proves the possibility of it. Man can be free from vanity because he ought to be free of it, free from it. The end of man must be determined by disregarding all ends which either nature or God impose upon man, and that means also of course self-preservation as an end. Pure reason alone determines the end of man and therefore the structure of the just society. For the question of whether a certain social project is possible or not, you do not have to go into the question of whether it is compatible with the nature of man; you have only to see whether it is compatible with reason. This means also the possibility is determined by the absence of self-contradiction, not a study of the nature of man. Freedom, freedom in the sense in which it is now understood: not a freedom for certain ends, but freedom as an end in itself. Morality means the exercise of such freedom: self-legislation, self-determination. And this freedom consists in the fact that you conceive of yourself both as ruler and as ruled in a universal society. That is the meaning of the categorical imperative.

The political counterpart of this universal society as a society of minds³ would be a league of nations in Kant's teaching, a universal human society.ⁱⁱ But there is here a great complication which is characteristic of Kant's teaching, to which I must turn now. This is due to the fact that in Kant's doctrine the Rousseauan distinction between the individual and society reasserts itself in this way: social progress, progress towards the just society, is not necessarily moral progress. The progress—the outer, the social, the institutional—is radically distinguished from the inner, from the moral. I will explain that. Morality as Kant understands it is primarily the recognition of the rights of man. Such recognition is possible in two entirely different ways: in a calculating spirit or sincerely. Or to use the Kantian terms: in the spirit of legality or in the spirit of morality. From the legal point of

ⁱ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). The German title is *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*.

ⁱⁱ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace* (1795).

view there is really nothing strictly speaking sacred. Only calculation prevails. Kant states the problem in this way: the usual view was that a perfect society, a just society, requires the complete regeneration of man; or to exaggerate, it requires that men become angels, to which Kant replies: That's nonsense. ⁴The just society is possible⁵ in a nation of devils, provided the devils have sense. By "sense" he means provided they are shrewd calculators. The perfectly just society can be established without any moral regeneration.

But let me go a step back. Kant makes it possible by his moral teaching to regard the rights of man as sacred. Because morality as he conceives of it is not utilitarian but irreducible, he does not try to deduce the rights of man from the right of self-preservation, which is something which is hardly distinguishable from what one could ascribe to the brutes. It is this way: it is a sacred duty of each to bring about the recognition of the sacred rights of men, even of those men who are not moral, even of those are prompted only by calculation. The just or rational society, the society based on the recognition of the rights of men, is necessary and possible both for immoral men and for moral men: for a nation of angels as well as for a nation of devils, i.e., mere good calculators. That means that the state is in one sense morally neutral. It is not directed toward virtue, or toward the development of man's faculties, or even towards outward decency as such or public welfare. The state has no function but to guarantee external freedom, freedom of movement. Yet this external state, this night watchman state as it was called later on,ⁱⁱⁱ is required by morality, and therefore this seemingly immoral but in fact amoral state is of the utmost moral relevance. The state as state is concerned only with legality, meaning that everyone in fact respects the rights of everyone else and fundamentally the natural rights of each. The reasoning is this: the law—compulsion, coercion—is unable to produce morality, but on the other hand it must not interfere with the moral freedom of each. A compulsory morality would not be morality.

The foundation of right therefore is freedom, external freedom which is needed by everyone regardless of what his purpose is, regardless of whether his purpose is moral or immoral. You cannot pursue your purpose if you are not free to pursue it, and therefore this freedom is wholly independent of any purpose or end you may pursue. Only for the sake of that freedom which every man manifestly needs, whatever his purpose may be, can the freedom of anyone be abridged. In other words, a certain abridgement is necessary, but this abridgement is justified only to the extent to which it is needed for guaranteeing the maximum of freedom to each. This is really a classic formulation of the liberal position. The state guarantees the security of that freedom to each under equal laws. The crucial point, which I must repeat, is this: that only through Kant, through Kant's revolution, do the rights of man, which played such a great role already prior to Kant, become sacred, because they are derivative from a nonutilitarian morality.

Now we are here confronted with the following predicament. We are obliged as moral beings to act morally, and that means to recognize indeed the rights of man, for example, never to treat a man as a slave. That would be a simple example. But this recognition of

ⁱⁱⁱ The phrase, attributed to German social thinker and activist Ferdinand Lassalle, has come to mean a "minimal" state that protects individuals from basic threats such as bodily harm, theft, and breach of contract.

the rights of man is necessarily incomplete if we live under laws which prevent such recognition. On the other hand, we are under a moral obligation to obey the law of the land, and revolution is strictly immoral according to Kant. The reason is extremely simple: no revolution without preceding conspiracy, and no conspiracy without lying, and lying is absolutely immoral. How can we get out of that according to Kant? We are morally obliged to hope for the establishment of the just society, but we cannot take this crucial conspiratorial step. ⁶We must therefore see whether this hope is altogether fantastic or whether it has some basis in fact, in the “is.” We must, in other words, look at history with philosophic eyes. We must approach history with the *a priori* premise of a possible teleology of nature. Teleology of nature: that was the old Aristotelian doctrine which still lingered on in various ways but which was fundamentally exploded by the development of modern mechanistic physics.

So from Kant’s point of view—who accepts Newton—the teleology of nature is theoretically unfounded. It is not, it cannot be, a theoretically true teaching. Yet in a way the teleology of nature must be restored, because it is necessary to establish a link between the is, the mere factual is, and the ought of the moral law. Philosophy of history in [the] Kantian sense is only the culmination of this natural teleology. Morality guarantees the moral necessity of a just society, the moral necessity meaning that it is our duty to strive toward it. Morality also guarantees the physical possibility of the just society because the principle is: Thou canst what thou oughtst—if that is intelligible; [it is] the literal translation of what Kant says: “*Du kanst denn du sollst.*” Historical proofs to the contrary possess no validity whatsoever, for the conclusion from “never hitherto” to “never in the future” is not valid. Yet there exists some historical proof of progress toward the just society which supports our hope; the weak traces of progress which we observe tip the scale in favor of the probability of the emergence of the just society as distinguished from the mere possibility, and therefore these weak traces of progress are very important. The realization of the just society is beyond the power of any one individual, say of a mighty prince. It is even beyond the power of the collective effort of mankind. Therefore we need some support apart from the moral law or the categorical imperative. The natural or unintended or mechanical must act as if it intended the just society.

Now when I’m through with this exposition we will see why this is relevant for Marx, but for the time being you must be a bit patient. I say now one point: philosophy of history. Kant was the first philosopher of the first rank who dealt with philosophy of history as such. Now philosophy of history is necessary because we need some theoretical, not merely moral, support for morality in its political implications. The fact that we know what the just society is and that it is possible is not enough. We must have some greater support for our hope because we cannot act towards it, acting being conspiratorial and therefore immoral.

Now within his systematic writings Kant has sketched the principles of his philosophy of history only in the *Critique of Judgment*,^{iv} and even there only in the appendix. The philosophy of history has in Kant a lower status than the natural teleology in general.

^{iv} Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790).

Why? Let us look at the substance of Kant's philosophy of history. Philosophy of history postulates a teleology, a directedness of historical process, and more fundamentally a teleology of nature, a directedness of nature which shows how the historical process—apparently a meaningless web spun chiefly by crimes and follies—can be understood as a meaningful process. ⁷If the word teleology is in any way embarrassing to you, say “meaningful” because it is exactly the same thing. It shows the wise and moral meaning of those follies and crimes we find at the surface of history. It shows the necessity of those follies and crimes. Now the necessity, not mechanically—that this fellow had an Oedipus complex and therefore had to murder his mother or whatever they do when they have an Oedipus complex [laughter]—but that this action was meaningful with a view to its end, that's the point. Moral actions, good or evil, are actions of human individuals, which cannot be subject to natural necessity because they are teleological or mechanical. They are free acts. Philosophy of history must therefore bridge the gulf between moral freedom and mechanical necessity. An inkling of how this is possible is supplied by statistics regarding suicides, crimes, etc., which show that these free actions of men have a strange regularity. These actions are free and hence unpredictable actions of individuals, yet we find regularities and hence predictability when we turn from the individuals to aggregates, as Kant puts it. The actions of human aggregates are subject to natural laws. Hence history as the account of the action of aggregates as distinguished from individuals may lead to the discovery of laws of nonmoral necessities controlling the sequence of those actions, and this necessity may even be in a way a teleological necessity. The sequence may be shown to lead to an end, the end being the just society.

Now how is this sequence, this progress, to be conceived? How was it conceived prior to Kant? The probability of the actualization of the just society was thought to be guaranteed by the overwhelming power of the end which this just society was thought to serve. Self-preservation as the object of the strongest and most powerful desire, or fear of violent death as the strongest passion, is the support of the just society according to the Hobbes-Lockean scheme. But why do we not have such [a] sound society in spite of the power of the fear of violent death of which we are all aware? Answer: Fear of violent death is counteracted by the fear of powers invisible, in the Hobbean phrase; i.e., by religion. The just society becomes therefore possible in proportion as the fear of powers invisible is weakened. When people cease to fear punishment after death, the fear of death comes into its own, and then a rational polity is possible. In other words, the solution preferred prior to Kant was [that] the just society comes about by enlightenment, the spreading of the truth, and this spreading of the truth is the necessary consequence of the discovery of the truth. They somehow believed that: that someone, a man has discovered the truth. He cannot keep it; he must do that, and then this consequence here.

Yet there was a difficulty here which was clearly seen by Rousseau. Men enter society for the sake of self-preservation, but society makes men oblivious of the supremacy of self-preservation. Society necessarily engenders vanity and thus weakens primary self-love, self-preservation. It thus makes men willing subjects of despotism, and therefore the discovery of the political truth, which means the discovery of the character of the just society, is not sufficient for bringing about the just society. The case would be hopeless if the powers determining social men, civilized men—love of gain, love of dominion, love

of honor and so on—did not themselves compel men to move toward the just society. The moral degradation, if I may say so, brought about by society must itself be an instrument for bringing about the society which is in accordance with morality. That is Kant's improvement of Rousseau, one can say Kant's correction of Rousseau: not the return from the imperfect civil society to the state of nature but the progress from the imperfect civil society to the perfect civil society is possible and necessary.

The general schema is this: ⁸Rousseau makes a distinction between [two understandings of self-love]: self-love as the same as self-preservation, *amour de soi*; and self-love as *amour propre*, let us say vanity, vanity or pride. Vanity is the root of the passions proper, love of gain, love of superiority of various kinds. Now this leads to the passions and also to wealth, comfort, and all these other dubious goods of society. It also leads to discord. The competitiveness is necessary to discord. Ever-increasing wealth, ever-increasing discord, ever more costly wars, enormous public debts (they spoke of that already then, you know) and therefore the need for perpetual peace impresses itself on the most wicked hoodlums who may be princes. They see simply [that] it is not to their interest, to their calculating, devilish self-interest, to have any further war. As Kant puts it, nature achieves its end: this perfect just society, which would be a federation of republics, a universal federation of republics⁹ [is brought about] through antagonisms. There is no moral motivation here necessary. You see, the solution becomes much easier. If the salvation of the human race depends on moral regeneration, we can wait until doomsday; but if the very immorality of man necessarily contributes to the bringing about of the just society, we can be sanguine. Men are compelled by their passions and the consequence of their passions to become receptive to the just society. Morality does not enter here. Therefore the thing is fundamentally easy. Ya? I mean it is difficult enough, but the greatest difficulty has been overcome.

Yet given man's freedom, is he not able to resist the overpowering trend toward the federation of republics? The federation of republics, perpetual peace? No! And that's the beauty of Kant: freedom as moral freedom categorically demands the just society, so both the wicked and the good—the wicked for wicked reasons, the good for good reasons—must promote this progress. The just society is demanded at all times by morality. In our age (I mean in Kant's age) it is necessitated by intelligent immorality as well, and the latter is of course much more powerful than morality. Morality commands the just society. Calculating egoism is driven into the just society, but this driving is much more powerful than the commanding or demanding. It looks as if—Kant doesn't go beyond that cautious, agnostic “it looks”—it looks as if there were a purpose of nature which leads to the achievement of the same thing that ought to be the work of moral freedom. The just society ought to be the work of moral freedom, but it isn't the work of moral freedom: mechanical, amoral, immoral necessity brings it about. This is a marvelous convergence and harmony, in fact a paradoxical convergence and harmony. The teleology is assumed *a priori*. We cannot have any empirical knowledge of it. We cannot even have a theoretical *a priori* knowledge of it. We have only a practical *a priori* knowledge of it. We are morally obliged to hope for it. That's the meaning of that. What we can observe is only the necessity of certain effects, for example, the effect of bankruptcy coming from the cause of public debt or coming from costly wars. That is the

mere mechanical, nonmoral necessity. The mechanistic system by its inherent necessities, without any interference on the part of morality, leads from the passions to the just society in a way which is at no point interrupted.

Yet it so happens that this mechanical necessity leads to the result which is demanded by morality. It is truly paradoxical for the following reason. What morality commands cannot be simply the same thing as that to which men are compelled by mechanical necessity. Therefore the philosophy of history deals only with institutional progress, not with moral progress. These devils who are driven into the just society by calculation don't cease to be devils. Well, they are now members of a republic, which in its part is a member of a universal federation of republics. So there is only institutional progress, no moral progress. Philosophy of history deals to some extent with intellectual progress, naturally, because the understanding of these devils needs some intelligence supplied by social science, economics, etc. But intellectual progress in this sense has nothing to do with moral progress, as I think is empirically known. The condition for the establishment of the just society is a victory of the spirit of commerce: selfish gain uniting the nations over the spirit of positive religion which as positive religion is divisive. This is the most important part of the philosophy of history as Kant understands it.

You see here the importance of the so-called economic element. This mechanical necessity includes as a crucial factor the victory of trade over positive religion. But the intellectual progress which is implied—and there is a connection between trade and intellectual progress which is quite obvious: the name for that intellectual progress is the development of economics. Now [it]¹⁰ is however not simply the intellectual progress or enlightenment which brings about this change; the passions engendered by ecclesiastical misrule and ecclesiastical wealth are much more important than the enlightenment itself. The enlightenment only gives some idea of the direction to[ward] which you move, but the power comes from the passions.¹¹ And how does it work? Yes, the envy—I mean the indignation against ecclesiastical misrule, the envy of ecclesiastical wealth, leads to such things as the Reformation, i.e., the religious wars. The contrast between the religious wars and the commercially profitable character of tolerance, empirically shown by Holland,¹² are the real elements, [and] these are the weak traces of progress pointing toward the just society. This makes clear what Kant emphasizes: that we are concerned here not with a moral progress but with a morally relevant progress, because as good men we must be concerned with the establishment of a just society even if it is established by the immoral passions.

And the argument can be stated as follows: the immoral passions are effective at all times, in the Peloponnesian War and wherever you might look. But gradually the situation is now this: that these immoral passions which were always effective in men now become effective in the right direction. We can only be grateful for that. Philosophy of history cannot deal with moral progress. Moral progress cannot be achieved by any teleology of nature. Philosophy of history deals with the necessary progress toward the just society, toward the goal of the highest moral relevance. How is this possible?¹³ I'll elucidate this by the distinction between legality and morality. The just society is possible as an automaton driven by enlightened self-interest as distinguished from morality, a

soulless mechanism: all men do the right thing, but not for the right reasons. A nation of devils. This can be brought about by compulsion—legal compulsion, or compulsion by the passions, or compulsion by starvation, or what have you. Institutional progress, which is in itself not moral progress, is however of the highest moral relevance, but there is a radical difference from moral progress. ¹⁴I may perhaps take this up later; there are certain points here where Kant is compelled to prepare a harmony and perhaps even a coincidence of the moral progress and the intellectual progress, [but] I will drop this now for the time being and go on to a point after Kant.

One way of stating the problem with which all these men were concerned from Rousseau 'til Marx and beyond is¹⁵ the problem of morality and happiness. Rousseau's solution or statement of the problem was this. You have and you can have morality proper only in civil society; only there can there be duty and virtue. Happiness on the other hand is possible only in the state of nature, which means practically beyond civil society, the individual at the fringes of civil society. Kant's thesis regarding this point [about] happiness and morality is this: we are morally obliged to hope for the happiness of those who are worthy to be happy, but this hope does not make sense regarding this life, so we must hope for the happiness of those who are worthy to be happy in another life. As regards this life, our duties consist according to Kant to take care of one's own perfection, the cultivation of [one's own] natural gifts, and of the happiness of others. Now that is of some importance for what I'm going to say. ¹⁶The happiness of others means, for example, to protect them against war, against illness and this kind of thing. That's your moral duty. It is not your moral duty to take care of your own happiness, because you do it anyway. There is no moral merit if someone takes all kinds of medicine in order¹⁷ not to get sick, you know? But on the other hand, you are obliged to cultivate your natural faculties. You are not obliged—as a matter of fact, you transgress if you regard yourself responsible for the perfection of other men, because that means paternal despotism; that's his business, to take care of his perfection. You must help him, but in the decisive respect: regarding ¹⁸the cultivation of his natural gifts, you cannot really help him, except as far as externals are concerned.

I start from this distinction in order to turn now to a famous successor to Kant, who in some respects comes closer to Marx than even Hegel. His name is Fichte [LS writes on the blackboard] and I take the statements I'm going to use from his small writing, ¹⁹*Die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*.^v How could one translate that? Literally, the destiny, the destiny of the scholar or scientist. The word *Gelehrter* had at that time in Germany still the full meaning where it could mean the scholar, the scientist, and the philosopher as well—ya, the function you could almost say of the scholar. Now Fichte starts from Kant, and man as a rational being is an end in itself. This is the Kantian doctrine already. It is implied in what I said before. Morality consists in recognizing the rights of man, in recognizing the dignity of each man as a being capable of morality. Man as a rational

^v Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Einige Vorlesung über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* (1794). In English, "Some Lectures Concerning the Scholar's Vocation," in *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Daniel Breazeale (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 144-84; *The Purpose of Higher Education*, trans. Jorn K. Bramann (Mt. Savage, MD: Nightsun Books, 1988); *The Vocation of the Scholar*, trans. William Smith (London: John Chapman, 1847).

being is an end in itself. That means, as Fichte points out, he is because he is, i.e., not for the sake of something else. Hence as rational being he is an absolute being. More precisely, man is meant to be the absolutely rational being, because he is in fact to be subject only to himself and to subject everything nonrational within him and outside of him to reason. Man is meant to be the ruler or fellow-ruler of the whole. But man is also a sensual being, not merely a rational being; therefore the absolute rationality toward which he is destined can only be an infinite goal. He could only achieve it by ceasing to be the rational sensual being which he is as a human being. Man is destined furthermore to live in society. Society means the mutual interaction of individuals through freedom. This mutual interaction leads to—as a human fight is a spiritual fight among the minds, in which according to Fichte the higher or better always wins. You remember certain statements of Justice Holmes:^{vi} that is Fichte, but in Fichte it is based on the fact, because the spiritual or rational character of the fight itself guarantees the victory of the higher, of the more rational. In brief, and that I think is the crucial point, the increase in intimacy, in rationality, is an increase in universality.

Now that is of course crucial for Marx, too. Why can this final society, which embraces all men, be the solution to the human, to the most personal problem? Because the most universal society is the most intimate society. That's a paradoxical assertion, but [one] which we must understand. Take Aristotle. There is always, apart from civil society, friendship; and the problem which cannot be solved by the *polis* in any way is solved by friendship. Friendship is essentially an affair of very few, classically of two. You know in all the famous stories of friends there are two: Horace^{vii} and . . . and what have you. So the political association is not the most intimate association, and therefore friendship can have a much higher function than political society can have. If you want to find the solution to the human problem which is a social solution, you must somehow assume that the increase in universality is an increase in intimacy, and the link between this thought is that universality is possible only by rationality, ya? ²⁰Only reason, something rational, can by its nature be common to all men, universal. And²¹ the rational, the meeting in the rational, is the most intimate relation. Both partners, all partners, think identically the same, which you cannot say of any other human association.

But according to Fichte society is not the state. The state is characterized by compulsion, and compulsion means the presence of imperfect rationality. You do not have to compel a man to the rational thing if he is rational, so therefore the state can only be a means for establishing the perfect society; but in the perfect society itself pure reason would be universally recognized as the highest judge. You know? The highest society, the final society, is a stateless society. So the state is only a means for bringing about the final society, just as in Marx. The specifically human potentialities, potentialities characteristic

^{vi} Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935), Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1902 to 1932. Strauss may be thinking of Holmes's free speech jurisprudence; for example, his dissenting opinion in *Abrams v. United States*, 250 U. S. 616 (1919), in which Holmes argued that "the best test of truth is the power of thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market . . ."

^{vii} Horace's friend is Maecenas. Strauss says a different name, but it is not clear.

of man, peculiar to man, are founded on reason, naturally, if man is a rational animal; and therefore these specifically human potentialities are equal in all men.

Consider that carefully. That is not a new thesis. The traditional view was that the intellectual inequalities among men are due to the body—you can find this in Thomas Aquinas, for example—to matter. The intellect as intellect is the same in all men but because the intellect is always found in a body, the body affects the intellect; therefore there is a great variety of levels of the intellect. So the specifically human potentialities are equal in all men. Hence, if man's destiny is to become perfectly rational it follows that it is man's destiny to become perfectly equal; and therefore the function of man is to develop in each all faculties equally, i.e., to the highest perfection. The rational society is a society in which all its members are perfectly equal—not only, as they are in liberal society, equal before the law; that's nothing. They are perfectly equal if the faculties in each individual, the same faculties are equally developed; otherwise you have, for example, the difference between painters and non-painters, and so on. Those of you who have read Marx's *German Ideology* will recognize some Marxian thoughts here. By nature, men are different and unequal. This mistake of nature—Fichte's own word—[means that] nature is in a way unjust. She made men different and unequal. This mistake of nature is corrected by society. Society develops all faculties of its members to the highest degree, but only severally. ²²Why are all faculties developed in society? Because what one individual cannot do, another can. Say the one is developed to a perfect painter, and the other is developed to a perfect blacksmith, and the other is developed to a perfect fisher. Now the different faculties are perfectly developed, but in different individuals. That is what society does anyway.

Now there is a fight of reason against nature. The ideal goal would be the complete victory of reason over nature, of egalitarian reason over inegalitarian nature. Now here a difficulty arises: What should we do in the meantime, because this perfect egalitarian society and stateless [society]—the liberal state is withered away—is only in the infinite future? What should we do? Should in the meantime a division of labor prevail, or should we already try now to have jacks of all trades? Fichte says one must leave this open: the moral law does not determine that; it is simply a rule of prudence for the time being. And Fichte assumes then the premise of division of labor, and under that premise he asserts the supremacy of the scholars or scientists. If there is to be division of labor, if men develop different faculties differently, then those who develop themselves to the highest degree, the scientists or scholars, should occupy the highest place. They are the supervisors of the progress of the human race, for the whole progress of mankind depends on the progress of the sciences.

Now I point out to you two differences. The Marxian phrases are very obvious, but there are of course also differences. The differences which are most familiar are these. Marx's objection would be: It is fantastic to set a goal to mankind in which man has ceased to be a sensual being, i.e., a perfectly rational being. In historical terms, here is where the influence of Feuerbach's sensualism against the spiritualism of people like Fichte comes in. The second point is that Fichte assumes an infinite progress. The stateless society where each develops the same faculties as everyone else equally will never be achieved;

it is an infinite goal. And here the difficulty enters which Hegel had emphatically²³ pointed out against Kant, namely, the absurdity of the notion of infinite progress.

One can even state this more simply as follows. Kant taught that moral law demands for us to strive toward perpetual peace, but perpetual peace is an infinite goal, ya? Infinite goal. That means of course, in plain English, perpetual war,²⁴ as Hegel with his hard common sense saw. Yes? And then if you think concretely about it, you see that doesn't make the wars any way better or sweeter, that they become much tougher [and] you act on the delusion [that we] are closer to peace, you know, because we are after the last war. And then this leads into infinite troubles. In other words,²⁵ Hegel's whole criticism of what he called bad infinity comes into Marxist doctrine; and therefore his objection to Fichte would be [that] this goal of the abolition of the state is a meaningless goal if it is not within reach of men in the relatively near future. It cannot be an infinite goal; it must be a goal to be achieved within a few generations.

Now there is one more point which I have to mention and I'm through with my introduction.²⁶ I must now say a few words about the most important predecessor of Marx.^{viii} I will speak much less about Hegel than about Rousseau and about Kant, because quite a few characteristic elements of Hegel's teaching are implied in what Kant and Rousseau said; and furthermore, in the case of Hegel we shall discuss Marx's own critique of Hegel, and therefore²⁷ I must say only some very general points. Now I begin from a problem [that] appeared in Kant, and that concerns the teleology of nature. The teleology of nature is not knowable. We are morally obliged to assume it in a way, but it cannot be known; and we can state the reason why the teleology of nature is not knowable in a very simple way. God is not knowable; and in Kant's view, teleology presupposes a wise God. God is not knowable, i.e., we cannot demonstrate the existence of God. We can only postulate the existence of God on the basis of moral reason, but that is not knowledge properly speaking.²⁸ Since the teleology of nature is a problematic thing for Kant, the philosophy of history is a problematic thing.²⁹ [It] is for Kant only a kind of sketch, a sketch which has a certain plausibility which probably meant more to him than his expressions say, but theoretically it does not have a good basis. Hegel's critique of Kant can be reduced to this simple formula: Kant had tried to prove the impossibility of a metaphysics proper, i.e., of a speculative or theoretical metaphysics, and that was the root of all the troubles according to Hegel's diagnosis.

According to Hegel, Kant had discovered the true metaphysics without knowing it. Now what did he mean by that? Kant showed in reply to Hume—I have alluded to that last time—that the world as we know it, scientifically and prescientifically, is decisively a work of the human mind, of the human understanding. On the basis of sense data which the mind only receives, the mind organizes these sense data, to use the now familiar expression; it brings order into that chaos. The order originates in the human understanding, not in the sense data. To that extent, the world as we know it is a work of the human mind. But since it is the work of the human mind—that was Kant's conclusion—it is not the true world; it is the phenomenal world. The world as it truly is, the noumenal world, is inaccessible to us as theoretical men.

^{viii} Strauss says "Hegel," evidently in error.

Hegel makes this very simple observation: the understanding which creates the phenomenal world is not a part of the phenomenal world and cannot be understood as a part of the phenomenal world, and it can easily be shown that it cannot be understood as a part of the phenomenal world. Every psychological explanation of the human understanding and of science leads to nonsense. The human understanding which creates the phenomenal world is not a part of the phenomenal world, but what then is it? That is the noumenal world. More generally, the organizing, legislating, constituting mind, theoretical or practical, is the Absolute. This Absolute—a word which came into usage at that time in Germany—the Absolute is not something which we infer by demonstration of the existence of God or what have you, [or of the] immortality of the soul. We find it by simple analysis. The hidden ground discoverable by analysis of the world and of the acts of the mind which constitute the world, that is the discovery of the Absolute. So Hegel arrives at the extreme thesis: the Absolute is mind. That could have been said by Aristotle in a different way, i.e., that the Absolute is mind. But everything rightly understood, if we go through the immediate appearance, say, of a rock, or of the stellar system or what have you, we discover mind. We discover mind.

Now let me see. Everything that is, is mind. Yes, of course the rock or stellar system is not mind in this way. Hegel has a formula for that: it is alienated mind, mind which does not present itself as mind. [It] is even non-mind, but as non-mind [it is] only intelligible as a work of mind. I can now use only these deceptively simple formulae, but they are essential because they are the starting point for Marx's criticism. Let us call the principle of the whole, let us call^{ix} —only in the human mind does God become conscious of himself. This is, one can say, the formula of Hegel's metaphysics. A crucial part of Kant's critique of metaphysics was that if the theoretical mind tries to think about the principle of everything, it becomes entangled in what Kant called antinomies. The antinomies mean very roughly this: that it is possible to prove contradictory assertions. You know, when I make a contradictory assertion regarding this piece of paper, it is here or it's not here, I talk nonsense. On the highest level, Kant says, this same nonsense occurs, but not arbitrarily—because this contradiction I can avoid^x—but necessarily. In other words, the mind must think the world has a beginning in time and the world has no beginning in time. It can demonstrate both; therefore, a complete breakdown of pure reason regarding the highest things. That was, one can say, the most important refutation of metaphysics which Kant tried. And here Hegel again says: Don't you see that you have the solution to the problem in your hands? This contradiction, the essential contradictoriness of reason is a vehicle of reason, because the fact that on this level here you arrive at a contradiction proves the necessity of going to another level where the contradiction is overcome. And you find that this contradictoriness is the fundamental logical equivalent to what Kant had discerned in his philosophy of history as antagonisms. The antagonisms among human beings—you know, the passionate amoral or immoral antagonisms among men bring about the just society; similarly, these seeming absurdities of reason contradicting itself: that is the highest activity of reason. The formula for that, which is of old origin but rejuvenated by Kant, was dialectics. And that

^{ix} The tape was changed at this point.

^x That is, the contradiction about the piece of paper.

is the key, only for Kant dialectics meant the collapse of reason; for Hegel, it meant the triumph of reason. So the Hegelian metaphysics is then and in this sense dialectical.

To repeat, what Hegel saw here, contended against Kant, is this: the noumenal world, the thing in itself, which according to Kant is wholly inaccessible to us, is according to Hegel accessible to us partly in the work of Kant itself. Kant's analysis of pure reason and of the understanding is a part of an analysis of the thing in itself, of the noumenal world, because that is no longer the phenomenal world. The noumenal world is the mind and the things as the works of the mind, the objectivations of the mind. But the mind essentially develops; therefore the noumenal world is the true world, [and] the object of metaphysics is the mind in its development: history rightly understood. So the thing in itself, far from being inaccessible or accessible only as a moral postulate, is accessible to us if we intelligently look at the historical process. This implies, to mention one point which is crucial, that this process is of course as a process of the mind a rational process. I mean, just as these crimes and follies of vulgar history prove to be already on the basis of Kant meaningful because they bring about the just society at the end, in the same way for Hegel still more, these crimes and follies are only the smoke and the noise which accompanies the true process, a silent process of the progress of reason. In this process, the earlier stages are necessarily preserved in the later stages. The earlier stages are imminent in the later, so the crimes and follies were necessary.³⁰ The earlier stages did not merely miss the truth. So, say, some Persian or Hindu notions, or Chinese notions are not simply wrong: it was³¹ necessary that men thought these thoughts and thought them through for long periods so that the mind was enabled to rise to a higher stage. The mind is the Absolute. This means the rational society, society in accordance with the mind, must become fully actual.

Now if it is to become actual in an infinite process it will never become actual. I mean, if you say it becomes actual only in an infinite process, you say also it will never become actual. So there cannot be an infinite process, and therefore Hegel can now develop a teleological doctrine of the whole with a good conscience. The whole process is teleological: the development, the unfolding, of the mind until it has manifested itself fully. This all implies that the historical process must have been completed. If the historical process is not completed, you cannot, [you can] never prove its rationality. You do not know what will come out later. The rationality may only be up to a certain stage, and then it may lead to a tragic end. So the historical process is completed. That means in political terms the just society exists: it's not a matter of the future.

Now how could Hegel say that the just society existed? Well, he did this on the basis of Rousseau and Kant. The just society is the society in which the rights of man are recognized. This happened in the French Revolution. The French Revolution according to Kant was the first attempt of man to stand on his head. That was not a criticism on Hegel's part; [it was] the greatest compliment. That man stands on his head means he tries to build a society on reason, and the rational society [is] one which recognizes the rights of man as man. That was done in the French Revolution, in the famous Declaration of the Rights of Man at the beginning.³² Surely then the French Revolution became a great scandal, as we all know, and therefore the French Revolution is not sufficient as

such, but ³³it needed stabilization. The recognition of the rights of man is not sufficient. You must also have a government which is capable to protect the rights of man; and while the rights of man are fundamentally egalitarian, the need for government cannot be understood in egalitarian terms. Not everyone who has rights can therefore have fully political rights. As it was put some time ago by President Eisenhower: Federal employment is a privilege but not a right.^{xi} Now still more, the presidency of the United States and a cabinet seat in the cabinet is not a right but a privilege. Government is something to be distinguished from the rights to which everyone can have. And who was it who put the crown on the French Revolution by recognizing not only the rights of man but making possible government on that basis, legislation, lasting legislation on that basis? Napoleon. And therefore Napoleon, the Napoleonic empire was for the younger Hegel the establishment of the final and just society. And then, as Hegel may have thought in some moments without publishing it, these people, the Germans and Italians and so, fell back on their nationalistic dreams, destroyed the Napoleonic empire—the Holy Alliance, you know—and then you got the famous reaction.³⁴ [It] was Hegel's misfortune to live under that regime and from 1815 until his death in 1831.

Therefore Hegel brought out a somewhat more acceptable—I mean, at that time acceptable—solution. That was his *Philosophy of Right*. In the *Philosophy of Right* he accepted the Prussian monarchy, for example, of which he was an employee, and he accepted it as a postrevolutionary state. In other words, yes, Hegel adapted himself. All right, there is no question. [Great laughter] But still that was not a mere act of adaptation; that was some very good reasoning, because the Prussian monarchy already since Frederick the Great had become a rational state somehow, and to a higher degree under the influence of the reformers of 1812 to [18]15, with which Hegel was in sympathy. I do not want to go into this question. It is very important for the details of Marx's criticism because Marx criticized of course Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, which was this document of Hegel's adaptation to the Prussian hereditary monarchy, and then he had in many ways easy going.³⁵ But there are many loose threads in Hegel, there is no question. For example, from Hegel's point of view a war at least among European states is³⁶ absolutely impossible because there is no longer a problematic principle involved. The fundamental issue is settled; there can no longer be a genuine issue. Trivial things like a little bit of a frontier, that's not worth a war; and yet the war plays in Hegel's political doctrine a very great role. And there are other things; I will mention only a few more points as a transition.

^{xi} In Executive Order 10450, which dealt with security requirements for government employment, President Eisenhower stressed the language of privilege: "Whereas the interests of national security require that all persons privileged to be employed in the departments and agencies of the Government, shall be reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States; and Whereas the American tradition that all persons should receive fair, impartial, and equitable treatment at the hands of the Government requires that all persons seeking the privilege of employment or privileged to be employed in the departments and agencies of the Government be adjudged by mutually consistent and no less than minimum standards and procedures . . ." Executive Order 10450, April 27, 1953.

For Hegel it is as essential as [it was] for Kant and for Rousseau to make a distinction on the one hand between the state as that work which guarantees the rights of man and therefore has the sacredness of the rights of man, and on the other an even higher sacredness, what they called with an untranslatable word: die *Bürgerlichgesellschaft*.

³⁷The term occurs in Marx all the time, and I don't know what the English translators do with that.

Student: Bourgeois society.

LS: Yes, “bourgeois society” is really not a bad translation. It is of course not an entirely good translation, because *Bürgerlichgesellschaft* is simply originally civil society. Now the ambiguity is worth looking into. The German word *Bürger* (burger, in English) has an ambiguity which was first pointed out by Rousseau, because the French word *bourgeois* has a similar ambiguity. But *Bürger* means³⁸ the inhabitant of a burg, a town; and the³⁹ townspeople had a greater freedom already in the Middle Ages than the non-noble country people. Therefore from this point of view the *Bürger* reminds of the citizen of the ancient republics, and they called themselves⁴⁰ *citoyen* in France—yes, they called themselves *citoyen*. Rousseau simply laughed at it and said: These French *Bürgers*, they're no citizens; they're *subjects* of the French king, and to be a citizen and a subject is mutually incompatible. A citizen means you are a member of the sovereign and a subject is⁴¹ simply a subject to the sovereign. So Rousseau made a distinction between the *citoyen*, citizen, and the bourgeois, the bourgeois being the subject and probably the wealthy subject of a half-feudal king or monarch of the *ancien régime*.

Now this distinction was taken over by Hegel and eventually by Marx; and Hegel especially is very important here, because Hegel gives a philosophic definition of the bourgeois. The bourgeois is characterized by fear of violent death. You know that had been Hobbes's definition of man—of the reasonable man, at any rate—but what Hegel says is this: the subject of the old regime is not a soldier, of course. He does not defend the fatherland; that is done by mercenaries who are hired by the absolute king. The citizen fights for his country. The citizen is a republican concept, and bourgeois is a modern monarchic concept. Now how does the distinction show itself? The bourgeois are *Bürgers* engaged in trade, commerce, industry; and from this there developed the meaning, *die Bürgerlichgesellschaft*, the bourgeois society, as a society of the market, organized by the market—not the marketplace, but the market and the economic society. Now Hegel makes therefore a distinction in accordance with this between the state as the overarching and sacred association and the *Bürgerlichgesellschaft*, the bourgeois society, which however as a competitive society must be a free society. As I have read—only Mr. Cropsey can tell us whether it is true or not—Hegel fundamentally adopts Adam Smith's doctrine and incorporates it into the *Philosophy of Right*.

Mr. Cropsey: Yes.

LS: So it's essentially true. Yes. But this bourgeois society is accepted, but only as subordinate, only as subordinate—but the distinction of the two is absolutely essential and is one of the beginnings of Marx's criticism.

Now we can state Marx's initial⁴² criticism of Hegel very simply as follows. Hegel's state, this rational state, Prussia [1820]^{xii} following Metternich, is not a rational state. It is not a rational state, and therefore the historical process cannot have reached its end; but on the contrary, the establishment of the rational state is a matter of the future. And if we think through the rational state, Marx says, we cannot be satisfied with any rational state for the Fichtean reason: because if men are rational, they don't need compulsion anymore; therefore, the withering away of the state. But in order to achieve all these things Marx has to take a much bigger step, namely, to develop not only another philosophy against Hegel in particular, but to reject philosophy altogether. That we must try to understand, which—I can only state the thesis: Marx says all, not only Hegel, but all philosophers have been wrong. And this was due to the fact that they were philosophers, not due to any particular error; for philosophers as such believe in the primacy of thinking—that is their professional disease—but thinking is derivative and hence the philosophers are wrong.

Now someone would say: But that may be true of these fantastic Germans [laughter], but what about the sensualists and materialists of these enlightened countries in the West, England and France? They always said thinking comes afterward. First you have impressions, sense impressions—you know, Locke, Hume and so on. ⁴³Do they suffer from the professional disease of philosophers, if in a somewhat different way? What do they say? What is so wrong with them? The fundamental phenomenon is not thinking, they admit. The fundamental phenomenon is sense perception, they say, but⁴⁴ what is the character of sense perception? Receptivity. You don't do anything: something hits you and then you have a sensation of colors, or sounds, or what have you. Merely receptive. That is the form in which the professional disease shows itself in the sensualistic or materialistic philosophers. The true thing is human labor: man not merely as a perceiving, sensually perceiving thing, but man as a being which has needs and which, in order to satisfy these needs, must produce. At this producing angle the Germans come in somehow—you know, productivity, but of course not their activity, the productive activity of the mind⁴⁵, but [rather] this tough primary productivity which consists, for example, in taming animals or in digging a ditch, and this kind of thing.

Yes, I think I have to leave it here for reasons of time, but I would feel very badly if we would leave the room immediately without having seen whether there has been any contact, because there was no question and exchange today at all. So may I suggest that we stay here for another ten minutes, Mr. Cropsey? Yes? Good. No, but because we do it together and therefore we must have a peaceful agreement [laughter]; otherwise it would be unjust. Now we are supposed to teach justice, at least in public practice. [Laughter] Now is there any point you would like to raise, because some of you may not have known anything of these German speculations and there may be other difficulties. Mr. Benjamin?

Mr. Benjamin: How does bourgeois society differ both from—well, differ from civil society as opposed to differing from the state?

^{xii} Strauss says 1920 but clearly means 1820.

LS: Civil society—I mean, if we accept the Hegelian doctrine, the civil society *is* a state. Yes?

Mr. Benjamin: Then the state is all-inclusive of everything social.

LS: Ya, but only the state as Hegel understands it must keep its hands off bourgeois society. ⁴⁶For example, if someone commits a bank robbery, robs a bank, the state enters, but if these people are legally honest the state leaves them completely alone. This distinction between the state and civil society is of course part of the later tradition which today has become a dogma: the distinction between state and society. Rabbi Weiss?

Rabbi Weiss: In Fichte, I didn't understand: Did you say that the same faculties are developed to the same extent by everyone or to a different extent, or different faculties to the same —

LS: No, the ideal goal would be the highest development of all faculties in each. I'm sure that Fichte and not even Marx meant that everyone should become a first-rate tightrope dancer. ⁴⁷ I believe they would have said if someone is not so good at that, that's not so terribly important, but the other faculties—the artistic faculties, the intellectual faculties, the faculties of deliberation, you know, all the really important human elements—should be equally developed in all. That doesn't mean ⁴⁸ universal mediocrity, but [the development] in each case to the highest degree. In other words, a race of *heroes*, a whole human race consisting of geniuses, that would be the goal.

Rabbi Weiss: Are they equal, are they on the same level—

LS: Well, I mean, that is then a question to which they don't seem to have given thought; but you could say perhaps Shakespeare was a greater dramatist than Goethe—at least Goethe himself believed that, ya? Well, let us say if there are such differences, that some are like Shakespeare, others are *only* like Goethe, that would still be terrific. [Laughter] That I do not know, but theoretically it's an absolutely relevant question, because if equality is so terribly important, then this embarrassing situation that some should be lower than others—that Goethe is lower than Shakespeare—still it would have to be considered, but that [takes] some time, for instance. Yes?

Student: Perhaps you will deal with this next time, but if not I wonder if you would elaborate on the point you made earlier which was that Marx got more from Kant than he did from Hegel.

LS: That I didn't say.

Same student: I thought you did.

LS: No. I said only this: so many things of Kant enter into Hegel; therefore I do not have to speak of them anymore when I speak of Hegel, and for this reason I could be briefer in

regard to Hegel. And a second reason, ⁴⁹and clearly accidental reason, because regarding Marx—or Hegel, here Marx himself will speak of him . . .

Student: Does Kant disregard . . . happiness . . .

LS: Oh no. Happiness is—I mean, the problem of happiness in Kant is very complicated, but I mention only the most massive discussion. Morality, yes—morality is the one thing needful, but we are not satisfied, Kant says, to see a truly good man who, perhaps because of his goodness, suffers terribly, and we want some compensation. Our moral understanding demands some compensation. This compensation, however, cannot be expected in this life; therefore as moral men we must hope for another [life] where those who deserve to be happy are. That is the most important argument for Kant on the subject. Hegel rejected this altogether, and he⁵⁰ speaks with contempt for those people who want to have a reward for not having betrayed their creditors. Do you see?⁵¹ A man who is not satisfied with acting decently and wants to have in addition some money or decoration for it is not a decent man. In other words, the other life, the immortality of the soul, plays no role anymore after Kant in German philosophers—and in Marx, of course, completely not. Whereas I did not mention that for the sake of brevity, the interesting thing in Kant's philosophy of history is this: *the* reason why Kant did not develop a philosophy of history was the belief in the other life, because he found *the* solution, the satisfactory solution in the other life; therefore the need for a satisfactory solution in this life, i.e., for a politically satisfactory solution, was proportionately smaller. That I think one can prove from the text. ⁵²Hegel, one can say, replaces the concept of happiness with that of satisfaction. If you are engaged in a satisfactory activity, you are happy; you do not need an additional happiness.

Now the free member of a free society who has that job which he has chosen is, in the reasonable sense of the word, happy. Now he may be melancholy, and he may not find a woman he loves: that is private, and Hegel has utter contempt for these private things. Then you must be a man and do without. That's easy, but what you can expect as a rational being from society is that you are recognized in your human dignity by the law, and that the society is free in the sense that you can choose the profession or job, however you call it, for which you are fit and for which you have a liking. Even that much is of course only imperfectly true, but Hegel regarded that⁵³ as something which has to be overcome. In this respect he wanted to have a perfectly model society, you know, with a hierarchy roughly corresponding to the hierarchy of abilities . . . that is not a problem that can be solved by anything but . . . nothing else can be said about that.

Student: Did Hegel himself reconcile or pursue the contradiction between his just society and the need for a stabilizing instrument, the need for government?

LS: That he did, sure. He took care of that, all right. The government cannot be dependent on the popular will . . . One can say this: what Hegel did in this respect (I mean, it is not very original)⁵⁴ has a very great similarity to Burke's view. The character and the need of government is not deducible from the rights of man. According to the simple rights of man doctrine, as you have it in Thomas Paine, for example, it is essential

for the legitimacy of government to be elected by all who have the same rights in everything. Rights, or differently stated, rights of man and political rights are coextensive. That is a gross exaggeration, but everyone who has the rights of man has by this very fact the full rights of a member of the . . . That is denied by Burke as it is by Hegel, because the fact—let me take the cognate formula: the right of self-preservation does not guarantee that you are the best judge of the means to your self-preservation. You have a right to the means of your self-preservation if you have the right to self-preservation, but that does not mean that you are the best judge of these means. Hence government cannot be simply popular government; and how Hegel tries to construct that, that's a long matter. That he tries to do in the most elaborate form in which a philosopher tried, and the form which he took was [this]: he wanted to have a kind of representation, but that was much closer to what came to be called in our century the corporate state than to democracy. And especially it meant, of course, at the top of the whole thing, a hereditary monarch. That's . . . in a fantastic construction. And he brings about this conclusion.

Nevertheless, the nerve of Hegel's political doctrine, if one does not get oneself bewildered by these adaptations to the German national state, is that⁵⁵ the elite, the political elite, to use a present-day expression, is the estate of intelligence. I mean, there are estates and elites: there is an estate, for example, of the peasantry; there is an estate of the merchants, and of the free professions. But there is also an estate of intelligence, and this is the higher civil service plus universities.⁵⁶ What Hegel had in mind was a monarchy which would be practically governed by a very conscientious and very highly educated civil service without any regard to the origin—[that is, whether the origin of the civil servant was as] nob[le] or commoner,⁵⁷ that played of course no role. That is what he had in mind.⁵⁸ The nobility he adopted because he had to adopt it, but that is not the essence of his doctrine. The doctrine is that there must be an institutional seat for public-spirited intelligence, and that is to be what would you call . . . the properly trained. Marx in this sense started simply from the democratic tradition, you know, that these fellows are simply—can at best be technicians, you know . . .^{xiii} as they were called by Lenin, and they can't rule in their own right. Yes. That must be the last question. Yes?

Student: Does Hegel or any of the other philosophers mentioned attempt to prove—or I think they only assume—that man is rational?

LS: That is a hard question. I would simply regard it, if I may—

Same student: A self-evident . . . but they don't prove it. It's not self-evident.

LS: Why is it not self-evident?

Same student: To me it isn't.

LS: Yes, all right. But why?

^{xiii} The word is not clear, but it sounds something like "*spetsialist*."

Same student: Well, assuming—it depends on how you define rational. And I define it simply as being able to act on the conclusion of your intellect. That's one definition of it. And you find in empirical events this isn't true. Or at least define rational as a set of consistent ideas within one person, which you don't find, I'm sure.

LS: That is not quite what they did mean. They knew how foolish, moronic wishes—[how] passionate we all are most of the time. Every child knows that, but the crucial point is this: Can any human conduct, however stupid or vicious, be understood without this being possessing reason? Can it be understood? For example, if you look at a mad dog, or even at a non-mad dog, or a duck in its worst moods, and then you see a human being in its most impossible condition, doing terrible things, eating human flesh and only God knows what, you could still—while giving a concrete analysis and, you know, going into it, you would discern the presence of reason. You see, the mere fact that most of these impossible human beings *speak*—yes, speak; as the social scientists put it, use verbal symbols [laughter]—that means the presence of reason. That man is a rational animal never meant that all men always conduct themselves in an absolutely rational manner. No one would say that.

Same student: This is not enough. Men speak. Dogs bark. They communicate. Cats meow. They communicate, too.

LS: Yes, but obviously the level of communications— [Laughter]

Same student: Is there another reason then? They don't . . . there was a reason.

LS: No, but communication is not reason; but speech, speech, the presence—I mean, if I may use a Lockean term which should be unobjectionable to every one of you: words, apart from conjunctions, stand for abstract ideas. You know, this is what men have: abstract ideas. Trees . . . all trees, all . . . That is what they meant, or partly what they meant, by reason.

Same student: That's all they mean by it?

LS: Yes, sure. But they meant something more by that. Since reason is that which is peculiar to man or since all other peculiarities of man, for example, that he is the only animal which laughs and cries. Ya? Almost, say.

Same Student: Almost?

LS: Yes, sure. Which are the exceptions? Which other animal laughs?

Same student: Monkey.

LS: Laughs? Is this true?

Same student: Yes. [Up roar of laughter] I saw an experiment on this . . .

LS: . . . Well, I've seen dogs laugh, but everyone agrees they don't communicate . . . Yes. But at any rate, the thesis is that all peculiarities of men, whatever they may be—is erect, or stature, and so on and so on—all can only be understood with a view of his rationality, and therefore that man's perfection consists essentially in the perfection of his rationality, both theoretically and practically. And that of course was elaborated first by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and was still accepted up to Hegel inclusively. There had been some underground murmurings against that, especially in the eighteenth century, but it remained victorious I would say until Hegel inclusively. Today of course everyone says that Freud has proven that Aristotle is wrong. The question is whether that is really so, whether the evidence adduced by Freud is of any relevance as far as this matter is concerned.

I'm sorry, we have to leave it at that.

¹ Deleted "given"

² Deleted "free from it."

³ Deleted "is."

⁴ Deleted "The perfect"

⁵ Deleted "The perfect . . . among."

⁶ Deleted "we are."

⁷ Deleted "because."

⁸ Deleted "vanity."

⁹ Deleted "brings it about."

¹⁰ Deleted "this."

¹¹ Deleted "that also and."

¹² Deleted "and these."

¹³ Deleted "I repeat. Legality in Kant."

¹⁴ Deleted "Now I will not go, I mean I may perhaps take this up later."

¹⁵ Deleted "that is."

¹⁶ Deleted "If you try to."

¹⁷ Deleted "to."

¹⁸ Deleted "his."

¹⁹ Deleted "well, the"

²⁰ Deleted "Yes? I mean nothing short, only reason, the rational."

²¹ Deleted "And this, yes, the rational."

²² Deleted "...in, it's really hard; it is not only due to my handwriting but also to the light, at least that's what I believe. Yet in this way."

²³ Moved "emphatically."

²⁴ Moved "perpetual war."

²⁵ Deleted "what Hegel."

²⁶ Deleted "Who has time time? What is the time? Thank you."

²⁷ Deleted "we do not."

²⁸ Deleted "Hegel's and."

²⁹ Deleted "You see, I mean that."

³⁰ Deleted "were necessary."

³¹ Deleted "essential, I mean."

³² Deleted "yes."

³³ Deleted "that."

³⁴ Deleted "and this."

³⁵ Deleted "But I must mention only, and."

³⁶ Deleted "in his opinion."

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- 37 Deleted "I don't know."
38 Deleted "on the hand."
39 Deleted: "and the towns had."
40 Deleted "perhaps, yes they called themselves *citoyen*."
41 Deleted "you are subject to the."
42 Moved "initial."
43 Deleted "why are they also."
44 Deleted "what is sense perception according to, I mean."
45 Deleted "primarily."
46 Deleted "it must make it possible by."
47 Deleted "You know, tight-rope dancer."
48 Deleted "the mediocrity, however."
49 Deleted "and equally accidental"
50 Deleted "he simply said that."
51 Deleted "Yes? Do you know? Do you get that here?"
52 Deleted "That must supply the, for Hegel. For"
53 Moved "that."
54 Deleted "I mean"; moved "not very original."
55 Deleted "the ruling."
56 Deleted "what Hegel thought of."
57 Deleted "that."
58 Deleted "and this."

Session 3: April 6, 1960

Joseph Cropsey on Marx's absolutization of economics

Joseph Cropsey: I must say, I regard it as somehow appropriate or suitable that the doctrines of perhaps the most prominent enemy of the division of labor should be treated according to the external circumstance that prevails in this course; that is to say, by a massive division of labor. I think that this would be simply a frivolous remark except for the fact that there is a most substantial reason for our having undertaken to proceed in this way. Let me try to state that reason, and the purpose for taking it into view, briefly as follows. Economics can be viewed from outside economics. It is imaginable that there could be something called meta-economics, as the scientists of science now like to say, and what point of view one would adopt for viewing economics from outside would be strictly speaking essentially different from economics. Someone who looks at economics from outside must, in a manner of speaking, cease to be an economist and must take some other point of view, which I won't try to specify too exactly but which I think would deserve to be called, if it were adequate, a philosophic point of view. It is, in other words, possible to view economics from outside economics, i.e., from the point of view of philosophy. There's a very real question as to whether philosophy can in its turn be viewed from outside itself adequately. Economics may be viewed adequately noneconomically; I wonder whether philosophy can be viewed adequately from outside without simply ascending to a higher stage or a different level of philosophy.

Now the reason that that question arises is not simply the superficial one that Dr. Strauss has been in the course of treating this question from a noneconomic point of view, and I will be presumably treating it from an economic point of view. It isn't only that more or less *ad hominem* reason that I mention this, but also the character of Marx's doctrines calls that question into view. One could say that what Marx attempted to do was once and for all to get to the bottom of the economic question: to say absolutely and of necessity what is true about the economic relations that exist among human beings and to connect the understanding of the economic relations and the economic facts with the ultimate truths about human society as such. Now I will, for certain purposes of convenience, refer to this as Marx's project towards the absolutization of economics: his project towards the absolutization of economics, an attempt to state once and for all what economics is about, what it rests upon, and always under the influence of the prepossessing idea that the most real phenomenon of human life is an economic phenomenon. I think that without this predisposition or without this preconception the attempt to absolutize economics, at least in the way in which Marx did it, would have been impossible or at least unlikely even as an attempt. Marx, as you know, said in a number of places that the truly real underpinning of human life is the set of circumstances of production, what it is that really lies at the bottom of social existence, and not only social existence but the inner life of individual men as well.

Now Marx was not the first man to have raised the economic question. The economic question was raised repeatedly; the economic question was raised from the beginning of speculation on political philosophy as we have any record of it. It is a matter of some

interest to us to note the course of the progress or regress, or at any rate the motion towards this effort to absolutize economics, to try to raise, in other words, the question: What are the alternative modes of raising the economic question? Try to understand what has been traditionally, to begin with, and then in more modern times the articulation of the economic and the supraeconomic questions as they were at one time thought to exist. It goes without saying that if the effort to absolutize the economic problem or to absolutize economics should succeed, then references to the supraeconomic would be out of order. So to begin with, we notice this fundamental distinction.

The economic question was traditionally raised in the context of political philosophy with the understanding that political philosophy somehow supervened over economics and economics found a home or a place within a much wider horizon of speculation about the human things, the understanding being that the widest speculation on human things did not fundamentally rest upon a reality which was reducible to the economic relations. Now we could, I suppose, have begun with some reference to Plato, say, in the *Republic*, where at the outset—not literally in the first pages, but very near the beginning of the substantive discussion as apart from the setting of the dialogue—here is discussion of what we might call the economic considerations: the mode of life, the mode of production and consumption that would have prevailed in that highly moral but not very intelligent and far from commodious community which later on is called, with some irritation by one of the protagonists, the city of pigs.ⁱ And we could, by following the course of Plato's argument through surely books 8 and 9, see the interweaving of the economic motifs with consideration of political philosophy on the highest plane, and that would serve our purpose very well. But for certain reasons I prefer to speak of Aristotle's point of view in this respect, because—well, for certain reasons, let me say.

Now Aristotle referred to the economic themes in three places particularly: in the first place, in *Politics*, book 1—primarily, but not only in the first book of the *Politics*; also in *Ethics*, book 5—*Nicomachean Ethics*, book 5, what are now called chapters five and six. I would point out to you incidentally that the first locus is obviously a place in which Aristotle is discussing political themes. The *Nicomachean Ethics* is not throughout a book on politics, obviously; but as it happens, that portion of book 5 where Aristotle deals with economic questions and particularly with value theory in the modern sense, that part of book 5 is on the question of justice, a—let's say for the time being, a political virtue. Now in the third place, economics is discussed, or economic themes are raised by Aristotle in a book called the *Oeconomica*, which it wouldn't be profitable for us to make much reference to here. Among other things, the text is difficult in the technical sense, and there is some question as to how much of the *Oeconomica* was written by Aristotle, and so on; and some evidence, internal evidence, points to the necessity that some part of it was written by one of the successors of Aristotle.

Now it would be impossible for me to summarize the doctrines of Aristotle with respect to the economic things. I only mean to give you some notion of the broad outline and how it might bear on our subsequent discussion. Aristotle takes as his *modus vivendi* the recurrence to the beginnings, and he says that things are well understood or perhaps best

ⁱ *Republic* 372d.

understood by resorting to the origins of them—not exclusively, but begin with the beginnings. One cannot end with the beginnings; one must only begin with them. If one properly understood that remark, I think we could simply stop now, and say after five minutes of deep reflection on that observation that you would have it and it wouldn't be necessary to go any further. But unfortunately, or for better or worse, that's not a feasible proceeding and we have to pursue the thought a bit.

Aristotle begins with the beginnings, and in this respect he might remind you of, say, Locke. Locke also begins with the beginnings, and Hobbes not [with] the beginning of man, but the primary or proto-condition of man. Rousseau begins with the beginnings and, in a certain manner of speaking, Marx also begins with the beginnings. Now these men end in very different places, although they all apparently concede that it is indispensable that one understand what eventually happened in the light of how it started and then came about. Why does Aristotle deal with the question of the beginnings? It isn't, for example, for the sake of proving that there is an inalienable right of men to the means of preservation and that, as Locke thought it necessary to point out but as Aristotle would have thought it absolutely absurd to dwell on, man has a right to the things which occur in the natural environment surrounding him. I think if you reflect for a moment you'll notice Locke had to give some attention to the articulation of man and nature, because the scheme of thought which dominated the reflection on these matters in the time of Locke was very much affected with the teaching regarding the relation of man and nature as overhung by super-nature.

Now in a certain way this question didn't come up for Aristotle. In other words, it was not necessary for Aristotle as it was necessary or desirable for Locke to show that man had an immediate right to the natural things; that the articulation of man and nature, in other words, had to be proved in the light of a contrary teaching which ran generally to the effect: the right of man to the natural things was derivative from a certain act of donation; that somehow or other, there supervened over the common framework of man and nature a super-nature which essentially governed. So we can say Aristotle's beginnings are not affected by the need to prove the articulation, the at-homeness, so to speak, of man in the natural context. That is taken for granted in one respect, but it is not taken for granted simply. The way in which the complication with respect to man's articulation in the natural whole is raised is through the notion of necessity, of need.

Now this is not perhaps the best place to speak of the ambiguity that resides in the term necessity. I'll only mention it here. When we say that certain things are necessary for man, we mean in the common sense that without them his life would be impossible. Now since we're speaking of Marx and, in the background, Hegel and also Kant, you will immediately be reminded of the fact that necessity has another meaning or bearing. That is to say, if it is true that A exists—whatever A is; A might be some condition of man or it might be some proposition, some assertion, or whatever—if it is true that A is, then necessarily it must be true that B either is also or, which is much more interesting, will be sometime. This sense of necessity it is important to keep in mind because, as you know, this arises for Marx and has very much to do with the solution, not to say the presentation, of the economic problem. The economic problem for Marx is connected

with a necessity that has transformed the necessity of the following of proposition B by proposition C with the following of some historical condition B by some historical condition C in the same ineluctable and inevitable way.

Now it goes without saying, or perhaps it doesn't go without saying and should be said: Aristotle speaks of necessity in the former sense and not in the latter sense. Man is confronted with certain needs which affect his life in the most profound ways. The notion that how man makes a living or what acts of production he does and must engage in [affects his life], that was not discovered by Marx. It would be an amazing thing if the world had to wait until the middle of the nineteenth century for somebody to observe that how people make their living has an effect on them, and a very deep and profound effect. This was known, of course, to Adam Smith. Some of you will be aware of his animadversions on the organization of society under the principle of the division of labor. It was not Marx who discovered for the first time that when a man is set to doing some petty job and he spends his whole life at it, that this is likely to have some effect on him, and that moreover, that if he has to spend all his time in an office in a sedentary occupation thinking of nothing but calculations of gain and loss, that this might affect his character. This was not the discovery of the nineteenth century; it was known a very long time ago.

Now Aristotle asserts that the manner of living, the way of making a livelihood, is of great importance for the characters of the men. He gives the examples of the nomads, the shepherds, the agrarians, the hunters, and so on and so forth, and apparently deduces nothing much from that. It is not Aristotle's point, in other words, that the manner of production leads ineluctably to a certain character of men, but rather something different, which it is my purpose from here on while discussing Aristotle to speak about. What is the lesson that Aristotle means to teach by speaking of man's articulation with the natural whole and man's being confronted by necessities which he can only overcome by doing acts of production? Aristotle makes his way into the discussion of the question by some observations about nature. In this respect he differs from Marx, I mention only in passing. The number of reflections by Marx on the extent to which the solution of the problem is affected by some nature of man or some connection of man with a natural surrounding, that's a very small extent; and the reason for that, as you know, is that in a certain way nature was replaced by something else in the Marxian formulation, say, for the time being by some process called history. But that of course doesn't exist for Aristotle, and what Aristotle—Aristotle is perfectly well aware of the fact that there is history, that is to say that events succeed each other, and that there are rises and falls of empires, and that there are follies and vices and crimes and so on and so forth, and even that there is a principle that underlies this succession of events; but still it doesn't add up to a necessity in the historical sense that I spoke about before, but rather the governing necessity is that much more simple and immediately visible one: man somehow having to exist in a natural environment.

Now what is the connection between this natural environment and the human beings that somehow or other have to find their home in it and exist in it? The problem is complicated by the fact that they don't simply live in it but they are themselves an

essential part of it. Man doesn't simply live in nature but man is himself a manifestation of nature; and then the question arises how provident has nature been or how provident is the natural order in taking care, so to speak, of its own. There is the vast surrounding, the heavens above, and the earth and the waters, the birds and the bees, and all this innumerable congeries of things, and man in the middle of it. Aristotle's formal teaching is [that] nature is benevolent and means the good of man. The things which are here have been put here for the sake of man, almost going so far really as to say that all the animals are present for the sake of contributing to man's well being, his preservation, his life, and so on—which is a manifest absurdity, because if one reflects for only a moment on the variety of animals, the fleas, and the lice, and the vipers, and the serpents and toads, and all this kind of thing, not to mention wild animals who can hardly ever become of any use to man, then it becomes clear that however it might be true in some sense that there is an economy of nature and that man fits with a perfect articulation into this natural whole, the sense in which that is true is not the simple sense that nature provides for man. Nature provides for man in the sense that there is a great mass of material, let's say of unformed material, and it is necessary for man somehow or other to appropriate, to make of himself those things in a way or in ways which are not strictly prescribed to him by nature as immediately visible.

We could go even further. We could say that when man confronts nature in the course of satisfying his needs, then he finds that nature is indeed helpful in some ways but is a very tough enemy in other ways; very tough, has to be overcome. The soil is rocky, infertile. Nature is frivolous in the way in which it provides the fertilizing materials. Sometimes it rains and sometimes it doesn't. The frost comes too soon and kills off the crops. The birds come and eat. The birds can be used for food, but the birds have ways of adapting themselves to certain acts of men, and they reverse this natural process. Then there are the various blights and so on. Everyone knows that the farmer's life is very difficult, and Aristotle recognizes this, speaks of it; and if one thinks a bit one can see the potential enlargement of this theme, of the difficulties that nature confronts man with, so that one could say not only in this visible and external sense is it true that benevolence of nature with respect to man is a rather qualified or equivocal benevolence but that there is a certain sense in which, viewing man's own interior construction, nature might even be said to be at odds with him, his own nature representing a kind of inner conflict showing the respects in which he may even be thought of as not a simple being but as a compounded being, the parts of which may even be thought of as being at war with each other.

Now to speak more concretely, it was not only peculiar to the Aristotelian teaching but perhaps even more massively conspicuous in the Platonic teaching that man is a compounded being, not a simple thing; and that the elements so compounded live in a rather uneasy equilibrium and that that equilibrium is subject to pressures. And that is where the question becomes most interesting for our purposes. What is the level on which this equilibrium of the elements of that compounded being will eventually occur? What is the level? Now I can't go into the details, but let me try to put it this way. Aristotle apparently understood human life as taking its character from the human being, from the nature of the human being. The human being is an absolutely unique combination of

things which are unchanging and things which are changing, of the eternal and the sempiternal on the one side and of the transitory, the things that come into being and pass away on the other side. The human problem could be said to be reducible, or to be expressible as the question: How to achieve the articulation of those two elements, those two kinds of things which seem to have nothing to do with each other—the eternal and sempiternal on the one side, and on the other side those things which come into being and pass away, which are united in man as in no other being of which we have any knowledge? This is, if I may recur to the question which was raised last time, a way of approaching the matter [of] what is meant by the rationality of man. Somebody asked last time whether man was—what's meant by the rationality of man and so on and so forth. I would say that if one understood at least from Aristotle's point of view ²that extraordinary linking of these two elements, then one would understand a bit at least what the ancients meant by the notion that man is really the unique animal in virtue of his rationality.

But now to come back. What does this imply for the Aristotelian teaching with respect to economics and politics? I would say that Aristotle seems to teach that the solution of the human problem, so far as there is a solution of it, is the articulation or the joining of those two elements in their proper relation, not as if they were equal the one to the other but as if one must inevitably govern the other. Now when the ancients, and Aristotle particularly, looked around at the circumstances of human life as almost all men lived it, and indeed as almost all men have lived it since, they noticed [that] what actually occurs, what might be said to be the reality, doesn't conform quite to this perfect articulation. And then they were confronted with the need to satisfy themselves that what they were asserting as the solution of the human problem was in fact as represented, namely, the solution of the human problem.

Now that would lead us very far afield if I were to try to say on what grounds it could be asserted that a solution is really a solution although it almost never comes into sight. That would be a very difficult and long procedure, but it wouldn't be necessary. For our present purposes, let me put it more dogmatically. Man is confronted with this necessity. He must face it according to the manner of what he is. He is this strange conjunction of the two elements that live so uneasily side-by-side or contained in his little frame. What is the manner of his producing the solution of this question? The solution of the question of the broad articulation for most men of these two uneasily coexisting elements is political life. That's what's meant by politics. What is the basis of politics? The basis of politics is a certain kind of human making, a certain kind of human production done under the palladium of an overriding phenomenon which is not made by man. So there is a kind of human production which goes on underneath the aegis of what is not humanly produced. The things which are humanly produced might be said to be the conventions and what all that implies: what opinions, notions, and beliefs either underlie the conventions or are generated by the conventions. Those conventions are the basis of political life. So common life, political life: that is the solution of the human problem for most men. It can't be otherwise.

There is a solution of the human problem in another sense, and I think probably everybody understands this: that philosophy was plainly said by Aristotle to be superior to politics and the life of making money and so on. Our attention is therefore directed sooner or later to the fact that there is a solution of the human problem which transcends politics, but that is a solution for exceptions, for a numerically unimportant infinitesimal fraction of all human beings. For most men, most times, in most places there is a solution which begins and ends with political life, and that is brought about by human deeds, by a kind of human production, and there is no higher solution for most men. Now it might appear to you as if what I'm saying is going to be made the basis of a remark that Marx and Aristotle really had a great deal in common, that acts of production really underlie the solution of the human problem for Marx—that he says plainly in the *German Ideology* and in the *Communist Manifesto*, and everywhere else—and also that Aristotle believed that some act of human production was really the solution of the human problem, the most real. I think that one could make that case only if one neglected the qualification that the solution of the human problem for Marx depended upon this absolutization of economics, that is to say, the understanding of production in a certain sense: not only the production of conventions, this figurative act of human generation, but the gross making, the doing of the daily deeds by all men all the time. That is a very different kind of act of production. What Aristotle meant by the supreme act of human production in the political context was something which could be done by very few men, by the great benefactors of the human kind, as he himself calls them—the men who were in a way responsible for the elevation of human beings out of their proto-human condition, out of what he did not call but what Locke and Hobbes call the state of nature into the state of civil society, i.e., civilization. Civilization and living in cities or living in political bodies: these two things mean the same thing.

So the kind of production which was had in mind by Aristotle is of course a very different kind of production from what was had in view by Marx. This is true in a variety of ways. In addition to that, Marx's solution eventually degenerates, so to speak, into an abstention from politics, so that in curious ways the absolutization of the economic leads to a dispensing with political life in the famous formula, "the withering away of the state." For Aristotle, that would have been regarded as an absolute nightmare, as nothing but a fantasy, a wandering of the mind. The idea of beings such as human beings are, that is to say compounded beings, not all rationality and therefore not all equal, but beings affected with all those subtractions from rationality which the incorporation of the mind in a body necessarily involves: for such beings the solution of the human problem by an abstention or an abstraction from politics, i.e., the rule of some over others, would have been a fantastic and inexplicable wandering of the imagination.

Now somehow or other that transition was made and the tradition slowly affected moved from the doctrines of Aristotle and those under the influence of Aristotle and Plato and so on, slowly but with an accelerating velocity beginning in the time roughly of the sixteenth, seventeenth centuries. Now to give you one example, but only an example, of the sense in which one could speak of—it's nothing but a specimen; I'll recur to it later on—sense in which one could speak of Aristotle's supreme contempt ultimately for those things which came to be regarded as the heart and the core of social science in the age of

the absolutization of economics. To give you only one specimen, I'll refer you to—in fact I'll read this passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* which is in book 5 and is 1133b, approximately 14 and following. I'm introducing this a bit out of order, but in a certain sense any organization would be imperfect. If I omitted it at this point then I would have to remind you of all these things later on, and if I read it now then the full context of the later discussion obviously won't be available, but that's—it can't be helped. We will be talking later on about the expression of Marx's absolutizing of economics in a form of theory of value.

Now everybody who has had any exposure at all to modern economics will know that there is a part of economic theory now prevailing which is called value theory sometimes; much more often it's called price theory.ⁱⁱ The fact that the term value theory can be and is in ordinary speech often replaced by price theory points to the obvious fact: value and price are now regarded as being substantially indistinguishable the one from the other. The meaning of that is that people now tend to deny professionally—they do flatly deny that there is such a thing as the value of a commodity or of a thing irrespective of its price. It comes to have a price, let's say supply and demand, and then that's about the extent of it. That's about as much as you can say. Now this was not discovered by modern economists. This was discovered by Hobbes; at least there is a brief passage in the *Leviathan* in which it becomes perfectly clear that this is what he means, that the value of something depends exclusively on what the buyer of it is willing to give for it. And if his needs press on him, then in a certain way it's an unwarranted interference with his right to preserve himself and the right to exercise his judgment, which is better in his affairs than that of a privy counselor could be with respect to the worth of this thing to him at the time.ⁱⁱⁱ That leads more or less directly to the notion that the distinction between value and price, if value is objective and price is subjective, disappears.

Now here is what I think is perhaps Aristotle's most succinct expression of his value theory. It contains a passage³ which Marx quotes in *Das Kapital* in order to show that although Aristotle was in many respects a very intelligent fellow, yet there were some things that he couldn't understand because the state of society surrounding him somehow blinded him to facts that came to view later on. Now this is Aristotle:

“Now money serves us as a guarantee of exchange in the future. Supposing we need nothing at the moment, it insures that exchange shall be possible when the need arises for it meets the requirement of something we can produce in payment so as to obtain the thing we need. Money, it is true, is liable to the same fluctuation of demand as other commodities.”^{iv}

I would tell you parenthetically, that's a rather sophisticated idea. The notion of the demand for money, as you know, has played some part in the formulations of Keynes and other people, and is even thought to affect the rate of interest and therefore the price of

ⁱⁱ According to price theory, the price of a good or service depends upon the forces of supply and demand.

ⁱⁱⁱ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 8.

^{iv} *Nicomachean Ethics* 1133b14 ff.

money. That may be [or] is precisely what Aristotle had in mind here. Maybe. Let me repeat that last sentence.

“Money, it is true, is liable to the same fluctuation of demand as other commodities for its purchasing power varies at different times, but it tends to be comparatively constant. Hence the proper thing is for all commodities to have their prices fixed. This will insure that exchange and consequently association shall always be possible. Money then serves as a measure which makes things commensurable and so reduces them to equality. If there were no exchange there would be no association and there can be no exchange without equality and no equality without commensurability. Though therefore it is impossible for things so different to become commensurable in the strict sense our demand furnishes a sufficiently accurate common measure for practical purposes.”^v

That’s the end of the quotation. He continues, and there is some interesting matter on the relation of—the exchange ratio of beds and houses and so on and so forth, but those of you who are reading *Capital*, and all of you sooner or later will, will know that Marx takes that up, and then you’ll be familiar with the relevance.

Now what is the teaching? It would be very hard to make out of this the foundation for a whole social structure, I think. What Aristotle is saying is essentially men have needs. I assume now the division of labor: they help each other to satisfy their needs. That means exchange is necessary. Adam Smith repeated this [in a] long elaboration; it’s all contained in a few sentences here. Now what will be the terms on which people will exchange one thing for another? It’s very hard to establish this. A bed is not a house. If it’s a question of exchanging one house for another, it’s comparatively easy. You look at the two and it might turn out that they simply—two men swap and that’s it. But a bed; that’s very different from a house. How do you know that a house is worth five beds? Is there something intrinsic to beds and houses that leads this to be true? Aristotle says no, the fundamental question is really how much people need the two things. It sounds a bit Hobbean and, as for their being commensurable on the basis of some objective link such as Marx was at infinite pains to draw out and without which he would have been unable to proceed, incidentally, as you know—that’s why there is a labor theory of value in Marx. But for Aristotle, there is no such link between the two. We might say, to use somewhat later language, it’s altogether an empirical question. How much one thing comes to be worth in terms of another depends on how much the people are willing to give. There is a general tendency towards a practice of a certain kind rather than another in a given community, but that’s it; you can’t go any further. And he says that is sufficient for practical purposes.

Now I would tell you that the entire science of economics would simply collapse if that notion were to be adopted, taken seriously by professional economists now. It would be impossible. No, there must be some scientific principle by which the articulation of the commodities can be understood. Aristotle does not regard this as a necessity. Modern social science regards it as absolutely necessary. Without some understanding that goes

^v *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.5.14, 1133b.

beyond a mere remark, this is good enough for practical, ordinary purposes: without some understanding that goes beyond that and that rests on a scientific basis, which means ultimately in modern life a mathematical basis, it is thought that there is no such thing as a proper understanding.

Now let me tell you what I think this means, skipping a great many steps in the meantime. In order for there to be what I hope I'll be able to explain as the absolutization of economics, there must be a science of economics. It can't be left in the realm of merely empirical things, merely empirical things, without some transempirical or let me say abstract notions. Without ideas, without something to go beyond the mere things seen, there would not be a science. Now I think Aristotle was perfectly willing to face this. I think he believed that there was no need to transcend the empirical in certain respects, particularly with respect to economics, because not that much depended upon it. I will not go into the question of what Aristotle would have answered to the question: Is it possible to have a transempirical economics? I suspect if he were shown the demonstrations in modern textbooks he would have to say this looks very much like a science. It does indeed: it starts from certain premises; those are not outrageous. It makes deductions from those premises. For the most part, those are not fallacious, and then what else is required in order to have a body of information—information is the wrong word—a body of assertions which can be called a science? I suppose Aristotle would be bound to admit such a thing is a possibility, but I believe he would have regarded it as “not necessary.” Whether he would have gone further and said it's positively harmful I wouldn't undertake to say, but the non-necessariness of such a science, the willingness to leave it at those empirical rules of thumb is, I believe, part of what we could properly call Aristotle's unwillingness ever to depreciate the political as really what supervenes over the circumstances of human life. The government of the relations between men can never fall out of the hands of men. I believe this is what Aristotle meant. Government of men is always by men.

What's the alternative to that? Well, there is a very common formulation in modern times to the effect: not men but laws must govern. That is not usually asserted in the context or in the sense that I now have in mind, it's perfectly true, but still it is both relevant and useful from the point of view of what we're now discussing. Laws are not only those things which have been enacted by legislators, but there are also such laws as the laws of thermodynamics, and the laws of motion and the law of gravity, and so on and so forth. Now there came a time when men fell increasingly under the influence of the idea that laws of economics are quite similar to the laws of motion and, to be more precise, that there are natural laws—but the natural laws are not natural laws in the same sense, let's say, in which Cicero might believe, or St. Thomas Aquinas, but that in other words, that the natural laws are not primarily moral laws, but that the natural laws are primarily the laws of motion.

Now it happens by some reflection, if one considers what man was to begin with, how he advances out of the condition in which he was to begin with, what he makes of himself—in other words, the story of the transition from the state of nature to the state of civil society and the grounds on which that transition rests—then you see that man is in a way

driven. He's moved. He has emotions. They are the source of his motion. His emotions, we now call them; they used to be called passions in some part of this literature. There should be a law of man's inner motions in the same way that there is a law of his outer motions as a heavy body, let's say. If you were to drop two men from the top of the leaning tower of Pisa, although one weighed one hundred fifty pounds and the other weighed three hundred pounds, then we're told by certain formulations that they ought to arrive at the surface of the ground at about the same time.

Now. So if it's possible to speak of laws of motion with respect to man externally, because he fits into the natural order and he forms no exception to the way in which things other than himself behave, what about this more interesting aspect of human beings? They have not only an exterior motion but an interior motion. In fact, what else is there to life generally except some manifestation of the interior motions? What is there about a man which isn't susceptible of motion? When such people as Hobbes and Locke looked around, they had great trouble finding something which was not susceptible of motion. I know that this is a very perplexed question, surely with respect to Locke, because when you read the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, of course there are many repetitions of the assertion that there are spiritual beings and that man is not matter alone and so on and so forth, but then when you try to understand what effect this might have on human life or in what way it has any bearing on Locke's formulations with respect to human life, one is more or less at a loss.

Now what is the most interesting, and for our present purposes most relevant, expression of this internalization of the laws of motion? I would say for our present purposes the laws of economics: what we now call the law of supply and demand, let's say. Now in their own way economists are still interested in this question. They still raise the question. As far as they have traveled from any serious speculation on the grounds of their own discipline, yet they're still interested in this question: Can you repeal the law of supply and demand? This, if I'm not mistaken, this is even the form in which Samuelson raises the question in that infinitely conspicuous textbook on economics, probably—well, the best textbook, elementary textbook.^{vi} Can one repeal the laws of economics—I beg your pardon—the law of supply and demand, which more generally stated would be: Can one repeal the laws of economics? I won't tell you what his conclusion is; that's beside the point. But the question is still raised: Why does—well, I will tell you. Generally speaking, he thinks that maybe you can go pretty far in repealing them. That has to do with the certain tendency nowadays called liberalism in the current sense, which is to say, in other words, that we don't have to be blindly under the influence of the laws of supply

^{vi} Paul Samuelson, *Foundations of Economic Analysis* (1947). The book was in its eighteenth edition in 2004. Samuelson's (1915-2009) use of mathematical techniques brought new rigor to the field of economics. In *Foundations*, Samuelson approaches all economic behavior as capable of being understood as maximizing or minimizing preferences subject to constraints. His work revealed fundamental insights into consumer theory ("revealed preferences"), international trade (the factor price equalization theorem), the nature of business cycles, and the nature of full employment (the "neoclassical synthesis"). Samuelson won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1970, the first American to do so.

and demand but that something other than the brutal market may also have some effect on how we rule our affairs; and, I dare say, that is one way or another true.

Now ⁴where does this originate, this notion that there is a question with respect to these laws of nature, i.e., the laws of interior motion of man, i.e., the laws of economics? Where does that originate? Well, I wouldn't undertake to say positively, because it could be that I simply don't know ⁵of a prior source to Locke's monetary essays, but I know surely that that notion arises there, say, roughly in the 1670's and thereabouts. Locke states—Locke was born in 1632; he was very reticent and didn't publish anything until he was an elderly man, practically, ⁶so it's hard to say exactly when his notions developed. It's not very important. Sometime towards the last half of the seventeenth century, Locke has developed the idea that there are laws of economics. They are really natural laws. They are the law or laws of supply and demand. He uses the terminology quantity and rent. Those do not correspond strictly speaking to supply and demand, but roughly they do; and the way in which Locke opens his discussion that leads into that question is substantially—well, he asks the question in some considerations on raising the value of money and lowering the rate of interest—he asks the question: Can this be done by law?

Now let me tell you very crudely what was the proposal. There was a certain difficulty in England at the time with respect to the monetary metals.^{vii} They saw that they had I suppose it must have been an adverse trade balance, and bullion had a tendency to flow out. Now that was awkward ⁷because they were constantly being drained of their monetary metal. It made the carrying on of commerce difficult, or so it appeared to them. Now their thoughts were not absolutely consistent in this respect, because⁸ on the one hand such men as Locke developed the notion that there is a certain amount of money which naturally fills the channels of commerce in a community at a given time, and how much is needed will find its way there and that's it: a forerunner of the international gold standard doctrines as they came to be developed in the nineteenth century and are clung to with desperate affection by a small and diminishing number of human beings even to this date. Now, so then there is the idea on the one hand that there is a certain amount of money which is appropriate to the level of commerce, but on the other hand they were conscious of some difficulties, and they realized that the money would tend to flow out even though it should have stayed there if the amount of traffic called for that amount. And incidentally, if money flowed out, they should have regarded it with equanimity because that would be a kind of proof that they didn't need any more than what was remaining, but somehow it didn't quite seem to them like that, and they took pains to prevent the draining away of their money supply, which only shows that common sense will win out over almost all obstacles sooner or later.

Now some of the suggestions that were made to rectify this unsatisfactory monetary situation included the following: in the first place, to do something with the coinage system, which we would call now devaluation; that is to say, to take an ounce of silver and instead of forming it into twelve pieces of money, form it into eighteen pieces of money. Now you might have to add a little something else to each piece in order—so that people won't lose the little coins. They get so small after a while, but⁹ the devices for

^{vii} Primarily gold and silver.

doing that have been known for hundreds, literally thousands of years, and so that was no obstacle. The technology of the coinage was well in hand. The only question was: What about the principle? Now Locke asserted that this is a piece of nonsense, to do this kind of thing; that you can't make, you cannot legislate: there is no human legislation by which the character, the fundamental character of the coinage, i.e., its value, can be tampered with. It can't be done. These things follow a kind of natural course. You cannot for the same reasons—incidentally, I should say he not only argued that you cannot, but he very strongly argued that you ought not. But Locke was a very complicated man, and on some occasions he was known to argue, as for example against the censorship of printed matter in England, [to] argue against it altogether on the grounds of expediency, whereas it was some other considerations that he really had in view. And he is known to have presented the argument in the form which he regarded as being the most compelling, which only shows that he was a sane man: that if he had a certain number of human beings before him whom he wanted to convince, and arguments of type A through X wouldn't do it but Y and Z would, then he would be very willing to ignore the fact that there are twenty-four good ones and two bad ones if the two bad ones would do the work. It turned out that he was very ingenious in the application of this method and apparently succeeded in killing the last proposal for censorship of printed matter in England that has ever been raised, and on that kind of reasoning. So.

Well, now in this case I would say Locke presents both kinds of argument, but the arguments with respect to the “ought not” really turn out to be rather weak and almost self-contradictory. You might not believe me, but I refer you to the early part of *Some Considerations*.^{viii} There is repeated reference to the widows and orphans. We now take that to be somehow, you know, a stock quip in speaking of commercial practices, appealing to the conscience of acquisitive men by reminding them of widows and orphans. Now he literally did that, and he pointed out that there are quite a few widows and orphans; and in fact, to believe him you'd think that England was nine-tenths populated with widows and orphans [laughter] who would be desperately affected by the measures which were then proposed. But those are very quickly dropped, and the widows and orphans, if I remember exactly, are not mentioned after something like page 4 or 5 of a very extensive work; and thereafter he gets down to business and he shows that the attempts to do these things simply must fail. There is a law of supply and demand, that's what he develops at great length. That's the law that really governs. To try to reduce the rate of interest: that's been going on for ages, as you know, [and] had been by his time. There were acres of writings on the just price and the just price of money, and on usury and so on and so forth. Locke said: Are you apt to find some way by which you can prevent men from giving their goods away before you can effectively control the rate of interest? Because a man doesn't borrow unless he somehow or other needs. That's not strictly correct.

And after this—soon after this point in the argument, very early, Locke drops that false notion too. He knew perfectly well that for the most part, borrowing is not done by men in need. He takes the example of men who need some more money than they have

^{viii} John Locke, *Some considerations of the consequences of lowering of interest and raising the value of money: In a letter to a member of Parliament* (1691).

because they might starve, or their families won't have—that's not why most borrowing is done and he knew it perfectly well. Most borrowing is done for the sake of gain by businessmen in the conduct of their business, now as then. Is there any way of suppressing the rate of interest? No. Locke said exactly the same rules apply with respect to the rate of interest as apply with respect to the price level, as apply with respect to the circulation of the coin, as apply with respect to the devaluation, the depreciation of the coin. There are certain economic laws. Those are not the proper province of government. The beginning of the transcendence of human rule by the laws of economics is surely visible in the economic writings of Locke.

Now how does this come about? Why is it that Locke comes to this point? And incidentally, I might mention [that] Locke was not the only man who saw the matter [as] such. Montesquieu, with very great delicacy, manages to suggest that he believes the same kind of thing is true. Only in order to mention this to you before we lose sight of the point, book 20 in *The Spirit of Laws* is on the subject of commerce, of laws and the connection which they have with commerce considered in its nature and its distinctions. Now that book forms the first part of the second volume of *The Spirit of Laws*. The second volume opened in some editions with a quotation from book 1 of the *Aeneid*, and that very short line was *Docuit quae maximus Atlas*, which by itself doesn't mean very much more than "he who was taught by great Atlas," Atlas the Great. Now the surrounding material has this general meaning: this long-haired Iopus once taught by mighty Atlas makes the hall ring with his golden lyre. I wouldn't swear that this is an absolutely satisfactory translation, but I think it corresponds pretty well with the sense of the two verses. Now why this reference to great Atlas and what he taught—and what he taught the poet, incidentally, in this context, especially in immediate juxtaposition with Montesquieu's own invocation to the muse? This is the same place where¹⁰ he starts the second book with the invocation to the muse. Montesquieu is in the position of the poet in that place, invoking the muse as Homer invoked the muse and as other poets invoked the muse. He was like this long-haired musician—I'm sorry, but that's exactly what it says: this long-haired Iopus was taught to play on the golden lyre. And by whom was he taught? By mighty Atlas, the great worker, the man who by the strength of his bent back and broad shoulders kept heaven from earth and made human life possible—the prototype perhaps of the strong-backed laboring man. One way of looking at Montesquieu's meaning here is that he was really initiated into the laws of nature by thinking about the working of men—by their economic life, so to speak. Now that's not altogether fanciful, as one may easily observe by going on to consider what follows in books 20 and 21 and so on, the books of *The Spirit of Laws* in which he deals with the laws of nature. I beg your pardon—with the laws of commerce and how commerce must eventually provide a solution of the problem for modern man.

Now. So we have then this preliminary or provisional conclusion: by a certain transformation of the basis of political philosophy—and it would be absolutely idle, a waste of time, for me to go over this. That was what—I mean, if you bear in mind now what Dr. Strauss said on the first two meetings and try to assemble that with my present remark, then it will make some sense to you. That course of development of political philosophy down through the time of the seventeenth century provided the basis for the

realignment of political philosophy and economics; and generally speaking, one could represent this by reference to the two pans of a balance, more and more weight being applied on one side and the other one rising equally into the air. ¹¹The analogy breaks down, because the one that goes down is more gravid, more heavy and more solid. That isn't what I meant in this case. What I meant was simply the difference in direction. Political philosophy subsided by an act of its own being, its own decision. It decided of itself, I'd say more or less in the person of Locke or Hobbes-Locke—let's combine them, the way^{ix} —of value and the claim, having a claim to the value of a thing. To take the case of Locke from approximately where we left it, in order to introduce this subject: What is it that originates the valuableness of the thing? What, in other words, is the source of the value? I'm now speaking of exchange value. Locke's answer to that is really substantially everything subsumed under the heading, the law of supply and demand. That's where the things get their value from, i.e., their price is determined that way, and he was thoroughly modern in the sense of equating the value and the price. It isn't labor, as Marx would say. No. Marx made the terrific attempt to eradicate the law of supply and demand and to reduce it to the law of supply. As far as Locke was concerned, this wouldn't have made any sense. It turns out, in fact, that Marx can't live with it either. We'll see that he must make certain reservations which so much vitiate the labor theory of value that some people have raised the question whether anything remains of it afterwards, and whether he has not in effect been driven back into the same kinds of loosenesses as always perplexed Ricardo, for example, and Adam Smith and surely Locke—although Marx claimed to have got rid of the difficulty.

Now what about the claim to a commodity, to a good? And as for that, it's quite clear that Locke said: Yes, in the state of nature, without any question what gives a man a right, a title to a thing is his having mixed his labor with it. But in the first place, he didn't by any means admit that this was also true after the state of nature had been transcended; and in the second place, therefore, he didn't show any particularly important consequences to flow for the state of civil society from that fact. Now what I mean by that is this: in the fifth chapter of the *Second Treatise* Locke makes a remark about the things that I mix my labor with belong to me: I have a claim to them, title. And then he goes on to give the example, the turfs that my servant has digged and the grass that my horse has bit and something else that I myself have done.^x These three together, they indicate the things to which I have a claim because of having mixed my labor with them.

Now you might say with respect to the grass that his horse has bit, that's very complicated. In what sense is it true that he has a claim by virtue of labor to the grass that his horse has bit? And I suppose you have to say: Well, he owns the horse and the horse owns the grass; and therefore, because property is a transitive relation, he owns the grass. Now that could be, I suppose, because you would say: Well, the grass contributes to the horse: bigger horse, more horse [laughter] and therefore he simply—he owns the grass. Something like this. But you can't get out—it makes no sense whatever with respect to the turfs or whatever it is his servant has digged. That's not *his* labor; that's somebody else's inconvenience and irksomeness and so on and so forth. Now—well, the resolution

^{ix} The tape was changed at this point.

^x Locke, *Second Treatise*, sec. 28.

of that is very simple. Apparently when Locke speaks of “my labor” he doesn’t mean things I do with my own back or my fingers, but he means that I may purchase labor the same as I can purchase anything else, and once I’ve bought it it’s mine: the same as once I’ve bought the horse, it’s mine. No, as it happens under the present circumstances I don’t buy the servant, not outright, but I can buy pieces of him from time to time, meaning by that pieces of his service; and then while I pay him I have bought him and he is mine, and what he appropriates becomes mine, now and unequivocally.

Now if anybody likes to call this a labor theory of value in the sense of my labor being—what I mix my labor with becoming mine in virtue of some sanctity of the working of men, then I think he’s entitled to do it, but that’s only in a very inexact sense. So Locke has produced this extension of the doctrine which is very visible in the period of the state of nature and the transition to the state of nature, and he is silently taking for granted that it is possible for one man to buy the labor of another, and to become the sole owner of those things which are produced by the second man having mixed his labor with something else. So in other words, the whole idea of a man entering into a kind of relation with another man by which the second becomes an instrument for the purposes of the first only in virtue of a money payment having been made, which is obviously at the basis of Marx’s whole understanding of the capitalist society, that is very much present in Locke.

Now the thing that is noteworthy is that while Locke was able to assert that the value of a commodity is under some circumstances contributed by labor being mixed with it and the right to it is under all circumstances, let us say, derivative from so-and-so’s labor having been mixed with it; yet he did not turn out to have a fully developed labor theory of value of the kind that Marx’s whole political and social formulations rest on. Now we might ask ourselves: Why is it that starting with such even apparently similar beginnings, Locke and Marx wound up so very far apart with respect to their propositions, their proposals for civil society?

At the present point, I have a terrific problem. It’s five o’clock and I’m nowhere near the end.

LS: May I make a suggestion? That we devote part of next time to a consideration of your paper, because we are really now in the midst of things, like a serial [laughter], and we don’t want to be rushing. I believe we can make it by shortening a bit the discussion of the *Communist Manifesto* and—or somehow, we will find ways and means.

JC: Yes. Well, of course the principal way and mean is really up to me: I somehow have to compress this thing, and I—

LS: You might even give two lectures on your paper.

JC: Yes, but considering the remark with which I began about the relation between philosophy and economics, I—

LS: . . . [Laughter]

JC: Well, let me break off at this point, because what I would like to do next is to say something about Adam Smith: the respect in which his doctrines are similar to and yet different from those of Locke. Also Ricardo, and then to lead up generally to some notions prominent in Marx, and then to conclude with some general observations on the modes of raising the economic question that we've been over. But before closing entirely, is there any point that anyone would like to raise, an objection or so? Mr. Benjamin?

Mr. Benjamin: I'm just wondering: apparently in comparing Aristotle and Locke, you're suggesting that for Aristotle economic factors are conditions which wise or political men would have to take into account in his actions but which are not in any way determinative upon his actions. In other words, you seem to me to be making a contrast between economics as something to be considered and economics as absolutely determinative upon politics.

JC: Ultimately, I think that in order to save time and avoid all kinds of complications, that would be quite fair. Yes?

Mr. Benjamin: Then you are suggesting, then, that the modern economists would—leaving even Marx out of it for a moment—would postulate that economic conditions do determine political.

JC: Yes, I think surely that there is a growing inclination in that direction, very strong, even if many economists would recoil from putting it in those terms for certain external reasons, you know, because it sounds too much like something else. But still, even if they wouldn't put it that way, I think that they would subscribe to the view that there are such things as the laws of economics and that these have an independent status, and that they are not in the most interesting ways subject to the discretion of public authority but that public authority must somehow find a *modus vivendi* with them. That, for example, the question of agricultural surpluses—the ordinary account given by the economists of the government's manner of dealing with the problem of low incomes in agriculture is by an analysis that shows a rectification of the demand schedule and demand curve on the one side by parity things, and then on the other side a rectification of the supply schedule by acreage allocations and controls, so that—I mean, I don't object to this; I think it's probably what—actually, the best way to understand it. But unfortunately there is a tendency to leave it at that, and then the whole evaluation of a policy of agricultural control comes to turn on the efficiency or some other secondary characteristic of the new articulation of the supply and demand schedules, whereas one might very well say: No, there's an altogether different way of approaching the problem of agricultural relief. You'd call it that—I mean, it's not a popular way to call it; that's what it amounts to, and that is: What are the rightful claims of the agricultural population with respect to the rest of the population? Is there such a thing as, say, the national character, to which some contribution is made by farmers or something like this? And is it really true that every problem of distribution of the national income is going to have to be settled in the market

or primarily in the market by the operation of the law of supply and demand? I mean, I don't know. Maybe the answer to that is yes, but I must say the question is rarely raised.

LS: May I say something? It has some connection to the question which Mr. Benjamin raised. Now I think I have a special right to raise a question because I'm the most ignorant of economics of all the people here. Now I found very illuminating what you said, and that was in a way for me the peak of today's lecture: a confrontation between Aristotle and Marx. In Marx, there exists the supremacy of production¹² in every respect. In every respect. In Aristotle, production is subordinated to something non-produced, something not produced by man. Now there is a connection which you left wisely in a mystery, although I believe I have seen some of the links. In Aristotle, subordination: subordinate character of production; hence supremacy of the political within the human sphere. In Marx: supremacy of production, absolutization of production; hence denial of the ultimate relevance of the political. That seems to be really true and very clear.

I had a difficulty when you spoke of the passage in the *Ethics*, in Aristotle's *Ethics*, and that is linked up strangely with what you said about Locke. I mean, since the principle of contradiction is valid in spite of Hegel and Marx, only one of us can be right. [Laughter] Now I always understood Locke to mean that labor is the only naturally right title to property. If there is no positive law, the only way in which I can have a right to a thing is by having mixed my labor with it. This mixing labor can be such a lazy gesture in certain respects, but it can also be hard work. But this is superseded by the civil law: in the civil law, I can become owner of property without doing anything. I mean, by being the heir, for example, the heir or—sure, and mere gifts. Begging, for example, is permitted in civil society unless certain . . . laws against begging complicate the situation. But in Locke's state of nature there is strictly speaking no begging possible. But at any rate, that is clear: labor is a title to property in the state of nature, but no longer the sole title in it, [and] no longer any title in civil society. If I begin to dig—if another man starts from the morning to the evening, that doesn't give me any title or right, of course, because I did not have the right to dig in the first place. It was someone else's property, and that it was not his property because he had sowed the ground but because he had sold it or bought it or made some very clever speculation in the stock market and so, which has very little to do with his real labor.

And so that is clear, but there is one part—I think that is deliberately done in this wonderful fifth chapter. Labor has two functions in that doctrine, as I understand it: (a) the original title to property; (b) the *sole origin* of value. Here we differ, and I must be permitted to state my point. And in this respect, as the sole origin of value, the difference between the state of nature and civil society is irrelevant, and therefore that's the real McCoy. I mean, the other is no longer valid in civil society, the title to property. Now what is the point? And I don't remember all the remarks of Locke, but the crucial sentence runs roughly as follows: nature gives us only the almost worthless materials.^{xi} So you need raw materials, but they are in themselves practically valueless. You have air. This is in one sense infinitely valuable: you couldn't live without it for a second. But—ya, that is probably the point where you will try to refute me later. [Laughter] I concede

^{xi} *Second Treatise*, chap. 5, sec. 43.

now your point. But still, Locke's point, which he makes by using very long examples, you remember—the bread which we eat, the enormous labor which went into that, the miller, and the man who grew the grain, and the baker and so on—and now labor is the origin of practically all value. It doesn't have to be my labor. It must be human labor. It has nothing to do with property rights. But stated differently, nature is extremely non-beneficent. It is man by his labor who makes things beneficent. Good.

Now this is connected—I mean, before I am simply refuted by you, I would like to refer to one point in Aristotle which is connected with that, and that is the question, what you said in regard to the fifth book of *Ethics*: the demand as the common denominator of all things which are exchanges. Yes, that is surely true, and there are certain problems into which I will go perhaps on a later occasion, but ¹³now, what about the price of a thing, the just price, which is the key notion not only in Aristotle but in the whole scholastic tradition up to Locke's time? Now I do not remember at the moment whether Aristotle says so or whether only Thomas Aquinas says so in his *Commentary*, but I would say even in the latter case I believe Thomas Aquinas interprets this correctly when he gives the example of the shoemaker and the physician or whatever it—oh no, it is the housekeeper. Now ¹⁴how do you determine the price? And Thomas certainly answers there are two elements which have to be considered: one is the cost of the raw material, and (b) is the work, the work. I mean—and clearly the work is different if it's a very skilled worker, you know, that his work has a higher value than if it is merely carrying of something. So some product of the cost of the raw material and the work involved gives you the just price. That implies, and that implication is surely [in] Aristotle, [that] the just price is something which may very well have to be regulated by law; and if some greedy speculators try to exploit situations—you know, scarcities or so, that can very well be made a punishable offense, ¹⁵whereas from the supply and demand point of view that ceases to be meaningful. I mean, ¹⁶the point connected with it which I mention only as something which we might have to take up: when Aristotle says in this part—[his] remark in book 5 that the homogenous medium by virtue of which all things become exchangeable—a house and a bed, as you use; this I thought not so very good, because a carpenter is involved in both cases. So the house and the shoe, we might say, if it is not the . . . that is involved. All right, the house and the bed, then. [Great laughter] The homogenous element in which all these heterogeneous things become exchangeable is according to Aristotle the need. According to the modern doctrine, if I understand you, the Marxian doctrine, it is labor. Now this contradiction between need as the fundamental phenomenon and labor as the fundamental phenomenon seems to me incredibly suggestive, you know, whether you start from man's need or whether you start from man's production, his labor. I think the whole work relies on that. But I would like to hear my refutation.

JC: Well, I'm not so sure it's a refutation. I think up to a certain point I believe—

LS: Or am I wrong?

JC: No, no. I believe that we don't really disagree so much with respect to whether it is only labor in Locke.

LS: Yes, but he wishes to say only labor, but he can't say it. Therefore the compromise is almost worthless material.

JC: Yes, well, he has this problem, if I understand him correctly. There is a disproportion between Locke's formulation with respect to man altogether as opposed to nature, number one; and on the other side, this man and that man with respect to the other men in that same relation. Now with respect to all men taken together confronted by their needs and by the natural external, I'm sure that there is no answer other than labor. It's only labor that—yes.

LS: Yes. Oh, I see. In other words, your statement was partly based on economic matters proper.

JC: That would be another way to put it, yes. But when you talk about this man and that man, then it turns out that really supply and demand supersede—yes. But I think that fundamentally I could agree with what you said, because just as that needfulness of human labor to be mixed with the natural things transcends the transition from the state of nature to the state of civil society, so also does the law of supply and demand transcend, because that's as much a natural law, I dare say, as the law of the rotation of the heavenly bodies.

LS: Yes, yes. That I simply believe.

JC: I believe—well, as far as I understand it, that's the case. So therefore one could say they have equal status as being superior to that transition, but they apply in two different directions.

LS: But what about Aristotle? Did he not oversimplify matters, then?

JC: Yes, I believe so. I took one short passage which is—which I read, incidentally, mostly because it surrounds the thing that Marx himself makes quite a bit of in *Capital* when he tries to show the shortcomings of the Aristotelian understanding.

LS: Yes. I can now state much more simply what I meant, because your statement, taken by itself, would amount to a denial of commutative justice.

JC: That is to say of the justice that could prevail between a bed maker and a house builder. Yes.

LS: Yes, because one could say supply and demand, the law of supply and demand, is an attempt to find a self-enforcing substitute for commutative justice. Commutative justice is not self-enforcing, obviously. Believe it or not, you try to cheat, but if you—supply and demand can't be cheated.

JC: Yes, Rousseau denies that, and I think with some—

LS: Yes, but still the people who believe in the law of supply and demand and want to build on it believe it cannot be cheated.

JC: I believe generally speaking—except, that is to say, all of those who never heard of monopolistic competition, which is a small minority— [Great laughter]

LS: But I understand they try also to abolish that—

JC: Yes, up to a point. Yes. Are there any other points? Well, then we'll take it up next time.

¹ I have to begin with some things that have nothing to do with the subject in hand. The bookstore has notified us to the effect that the *German Ideology* is now in stock. So that on Wednesday of next week, the second of the two papers on the Communist Manifesto [slight break in tape] ...work for the day.

² Deleted “this linking of these two extraordinary”

³ Deleted “or is in a close”

⁴ Deleted “what.”

⁵ Deleted “of a previous”

⁶ Deleted “and then”

⁷ Deleted “and so some.”

⁸ Deleted “at the.”

⁹ Deleted “that has”

¹⁰ Deleted “he.”

¹¹ Deleted “the one that was.”

¹² Deleted “and let us call it now.”

¹³ Deleted “you see”

¹⁴ Deleted “what is”

¹⁵ Deleted “that is”

¹⁶ Deleted “I mean there seems to be a certain—yes—no”

Session 4: April 11, 1960
Value Theory

Joseph Cropsey: [In progress] —brief discussion of some of the complications in the background of value theory as it developed in the few generations preceding the work of Marx. Now I made some reference last time to Locke, and it isn't either possible or desirable to go into detail with respect to Locke, but I will say this: Locke uses the term value in a number of ways, and those ways are not mutually inconsistent although they point in different directions. Locke speaks of the intrinsic value of an object, and he means by that the respect or the extent to which that thing contributes to human life and convenience. Now that is a sense of the word value which has nothing particular to do with any labor theory, and which is relevant alike both in the state of nature and in the state of civil society. That is to say, one could say of food, for example, or a particular kind of food that it has considerable intrinsic value for the obvious reason; and likewise, one could say, say, of diamonds, which is an example that was often used, or precious stones: they don't have much intrinsic value, or they might even have none because they don't contribute to the support of life. Now the reason that this fact was thought to be noteworthy was that some things like diamonds obviously are very valuable in the sense of exchange value, and it was to this consideration that men in their economic speculations addressed themselves, namely: How is it possible, or what accounts for the fact that there are some commodities which have a considerable intrinsic value and very little exchange value? Please.

Student: . . .

JC: You could put it that way. I think that would be a probably, a satisfactory equivalent although what they did themselves, in so many words, was to say—

LS: The question was not audible in the back.

JC: He said: Would intrinsic value be generally the same as consumption value? And one could say: Yes, by and large it's contributory to sustaining life. Now value—this distinction between a value which Locke chose to call intrinsic value and connected with contributoriness to the preservation of life—that on the one side, and the other use of the term value which is much more connected with things that happened in the market, that roughly corresponds to the distinction between value in use and value in exchange, or exchangeable value, as ¹those terms come to be used in Adam Smith. And then later on, of course, much more is made of this distinction in Marx, and that we'll see about.

Now generally speaking, use value then has some connection with sustaining life. Exchange value is accounted for by Locke, Smith, Ricardo—generally speaking, by all the economists, including Marx in some contexts—to be more directly connected with supply and demand, so that the distinction then is some value that arises out of a characteristic of human life and the things that support it; and then, on the other side, supply and demand, which could be affected by that need to sustain life but might go

very far beyond it and take in all kinds of things that have nothing to do with merely sustaining life.

Now at the same time that Smith—and I'll now speak more about Smith to proceed with the development—at the same time that Smith connected exchange value with supply and demand, although with supply and demand in a sense which is different from that now commonly understood—and let me add parenthetically, different because what he meant by supply was different from what's now commonly understood; what he meant by demand was generally speaking similar to what we now mean. What he meant by supply was different. Those of you who know anything at all about economics will be thoroughly enlightened in this respect if I tell you that what he meant by supply had nothing to do with a schedule of marginal costs and, more particularly, a schedule of increasing marginal costs; so that, in other words, when he speaks about retrenching the level of output he doesn't connect with that some decline in the marginal cost of production. It introduces some rather considerable differences into the analysis. I say that only in passing. Is that perfectly intelligible to everybody? Do you know what's meant by this? Some of you probably do and some of you don't, but it has to do with a certain aspect of the development of modern economics which proceeds from and through what's now vulgarly called often the law of diminishing returns, but what is more properly called the law of diminishing marginal productivity; and then if you understand that then you know the rest, but we can't stop to work it out.

Now to resume. Therefore Smith meant supply and demand in a sense which are generally speaking similar to, but not in all respects identical with, the modern understanding. Where does that leave the labor theory of value, then? If exchangeable value is really the outcome of some interaction of supply and demand in a market as generally now understood, then the origins of the labor theory of value in Smith must be doubtful. Now Marx refers all the time to the respects in which his predecessors in classical economics did adumbrate the labor theory of value, and he meant by those predecessors such people as Smith and even Locke in some ways. Now Smith and Ricardo do speak of the source of value in labor, but they are both of them very careful to stipulate that labor only is the source of value in the early time, in the time very long ago, by which they meant essentially the time before property had begun to accumulate and such a thing as capital came into being. In Locke's terms, you could say really in the state of nature value arose peculiarly out of the application of labor and from no other circumstance. It was Marx's contribution to radicalize this formulation with respect to the origin of labor so that the—I beg your pardon—

LS: The origin of value, or labor?

JC: I'm sorry. The origin of value in labor, so that it was irrespective of that transition from the state of nature to the state of civil society and was also irrespective of the accumulation of capital. He found a way of making more radical what was already present in Ricardo's formula, for that matter, namely, that capital was a form of congelation, of incorporation of labor, and that the process of production, the collaboration of human labor with the machinery, was nothing but a combining of labor

in two sorts: labor in the living flesh and labor embodied in instruments at different rates, flowing slowly or less slowly into the product.

Now what was basis for Smith's having recoiled, so to speak, from the full elaboration of the labor theory of value? Now what Smith says is that value in fact does proceed from the quantity of labor connected with the object in question, but he introduces a distinction which led, it must be said, to complications—in fact, to confusions. He made the distinction between the amount of labor embodied in the thing and the amount of labor commanded by the owner of the thing. It's a very simple idea. If you have a pair of shoes and it took, say, twenty-four hours of labor to make the pair of shoes, then we'll call that the amount of labor embodied. Now if by the ownership of that pair of shoes you can get somebody else to do twenty-four hours' worth of labor by offering them to him in exchange as a wage, in effect, then we would say the amount of labor commanded by the ownership of the shoes is twenty-four hours' worth.

Now then that would leave open the question: What is the genuine quantity of value which is represented by the object in question? In either case, you could say what results is a labor theory of value, but Smith happened to choose the one of those two possibilities, which led in a direction that had to be corrected by Ricardo and then radicalized by Marx. What Smith chose to do was to say it's really more important to consider how much labor can be commanded by the ownership of the commodity rather than how much labor is incorporated in the commodity, and this for the following reason. When Smith tries to understand what it is that generates the wealth of the nation, which was his primary question, he came to the conclusion, which also formed the premise of his work, that it's labor, the amount of human effort, that is at the foundation of the wealth of the nation. Now there was always a scarcity of labor, strange as it might seem; I mean, this was part of the premise of these men. A scarcity in one respect: with more population applied to the same resources, there would of course be an increase in the output. Now the conditions were of the essence. The question was: Under what conditions could the increased application of human time to the natural resources result in a satisfactory, i.e., a satisfactorily increasing growth of the output, so that, in modern terms, there would be not diminishing marginal product but either a constant or even perhaps an increasing marginal product?

However that problem might be solved—Smith goes into that, but we will ignore the question for the time being, at any rate—however Smith might resolve that, he does as a matter of fact always resolve the labor scarcity problem and the labor value problem in terms of the irksomeness, the human sacrifice, that's involved in a given quantity of toil. Now without going through the details of his development, he comes to the conclusion that labor is always at all times and all places substantially of the same value, for a reason that Marx did not regard as especially impressive, namely, that a given quantity of labor will always amount to about the same quantity of sacrifice, of irksomeness, toil, fatigue, giving up of happiness and leisure on the part of the laborer. The equal value of an hour of toil to the laborer was made the basis by Smith of the labor theory of value as it finds an expression in his work. How can you express therefore the value of a commodity, and why should you try to express it in terms of a quantity of labor? For the following reason:

because if it takes two hours to make this and four hours to make that, you can depend on there being something like a ratio of one to two in the exchangeable values of those on the sole ground, primarily on the ground that it involved equal sacrifice on the part of the human beings involved in the process of production. Now if you like, you could call this a purely subjective foundation for the labor theory of value in the feelings—a foundation in the feelings or the sacrifice of effort and ease on the part of the men involved in the productive process.

Now this led to some terrific problems, as was detected by Ricardo. A question comes up right away as to the relation between the labor embodied and the labor commanded. Will you run into difficulties, for instance, if it should happen that the process of production changes, the technology improves, and then it turns out that whereas before it used to take a man a day to make a pair of shoes, he now can make four pairs of shoes in a day? Ricardo raises this question: Will it be true that because now there are ten hours of labor embodied in four pairs of shoes, that in order to command ten hours of labor you must pay the man the equivalent of four pairs of shoes? Now that problem arises for the following reason: if technology advances sufficiently, productivity increases. The output of labor will grow very far beyond the mere subsistence level, however that could be defined. Does that mean that the purchase of a day's labor will always be at the expense of the output of a day's labor, even though productivity is increasing so much that in effect that means a very high standard of living for the wage earners?

Do you see what this problem is? No? Let me try to restate the condition. Suppose that by working a day, a man can turn out subsistence for a day, a package which amounts to his and his family's support of food, clothing, so on and so forth, for a day. Now suppose there is an improvement in technology and productivity increases so that the one man can now turn out in a half a day the subsistence for himself, his family, and so on for a whole day. What it takes, what he and his family require to live for a whole day he now makes in a half a day. That means in a whole day he'll make the output of two days' subsistence. Will he have to be given two days' worth of subsistence in order for him to work, to be made to work for one day? You see? Now Ricardo said: No, he won't have to be given that at all, and then² there will come into being a failure of the labor commanded and the labor embodied to mesh.

Now Smith was not altogether uncognizant of this question, but he thought that it made more sense to resolve it in the light of his original principle that really the value of a commodity is better understood in the light of the subjective sacrifice of the men at work making it, and that there is only this one anchor which holds down steady the whole value system. Now I don't want to go into the implications of this. Smith at several points found himself in difficulty on the ground of this assertion. He asserted that there was really one thing that stayed steady in value all the time through the ages, more than any other single thing: that was the value of an hour's labor. However, for reasons that you might guess even from things that I've said, he was willing to increase the list of stable items by one, and he included corn also—say, food—as being a commodity which would stay stable in value over very long periods of time, relatively speaking, and this for the reason that there is a close connection between the subsistence of workers and the amount

of food that they must absorb in order to continue. So he drew this implication from what came to be called the subsistence theory of wages: that there was a connection between the doing of an hour's work, the sacrifice of leisure and ease and so on connected with doing an hour's work, and likewise the amount of food necessary to sustain a man in order for him to do an hour's work. The one thing that he did not do was what Marx found it necessary to do, and that was to abolish that distinction that Smith had made between labor and all other things, which made it possible for him to consider the value of labor on a ground different from the ground on which he considered the value of every other thing.

Those of you who have read ahead a little bit in *Das Kapital* will know that Marx speaks about labor as a commodity and says that it has a value; more particularly, labor power has a value which is determined exactly in the same way and on the same grounds as every other commodity: the amount of socially necessary labor time involved in the production or generation of that commodity.¹ Smith was unwilling to do that. I couldn't say whether the thought ever occurred to him, but³ he explicitly denies that labor is a commodity and insists on treating it on its own absolutely unique ground as arising out of the human life, and the cost of it being simply dictated by the circumstances of human life, by sacrifice and so on. Before the labor theory of value could have been made absolutely airtight and radical and perfectly scientific, this step had to be taken. For purposes of brevity, let me say that Ricardo stands as a kind of halfway house between Smith, who tried to assert a labor theory of value without including labor itself as one of the things whose value was determined on the same principle, and Marx, who asserted without exception [that] all commodities, not only including but primarily labor power, has its value determined and governed according to the same rule, namely, how much of labor power goes into the production of it.

Now if this seems unintelligible to you, let me only say very briefly by way of anticipation of Marx's doctrine that he took this absolutely calculating position with respect to labor power. It comes into being on the basis of a certain support. It has to be supported by a prior production. The human beings have a power to work which only comes into being because they have ingested a certain quantity of matter, because they're clothed with a certain quantity of matter, and so on and so forth. The generation of that quantity of matter which, by the metabolism of the worker and his body and so on, gets transmuted into labor power is for all of the purposes of economics similar to the process by which raw materials are thrown into the hopper at one end of an automated plant, and then by the grinding of the wheels and so on they come in the form of a product at the other end. That radicalization had to be achieved before the labor theory of value could be made so—yes, let me say so consistent, for the time being, that the kinds of problems that afflicted Smith (one of them being what I mentioned to you, but there were others) and the kinds of problems that afflicted Ricardo, because he had some difficulties—before those problems could be made to disappear. So Marx's radicalization of the labor theory of value was not simply accidental, it really was necessary. Without it he could not have done the one thing needful, and to that I want to turn next.

¹ *Capital*, vol. 1, chap. 6, "The buying and selling of labour-power."

The one thing needful was to make an absolutely airtight connection between the theory of value and the theory of distribution. Now Smith begins by asserting the problem to be the wealth of the nation, the growth of the wealth of the nation, the conditions for the growth of the wealth of the nation, and the distribution of the wealth of the nation. That's of course a very long story. I would only try to give you a very rough sketch of how he attempted to proceed. He starts with the view that in the state of nature (which he doesn't call by that name) there is a distribution according to the strict principle of the labor theory of value. That is to say, one man kills a deer in ten hours and one man kills a beaver in five hours, and so therefore you have to exchange two beaver for one deer. That's very simple, because nothing else enters in except the labor. Now the difference between the primitive condition and the civilized condition is accumulation. Accumulation is virtually tantamount to the development of the means of production. That is to say, some man will now have more goods than he himself needs, and that means he can put somebody else to work. He has stored up some corn and he can support a man, or he has made a tool which another man can use while he himself works, and so on and so forth.

Now that is simply the end of the period in which the labor theory of value is decisive with respect to the distribution of the product. How does Smith make that transition? He uses a certain word, uses it often. He says the product is resolved: the product is resolved into its parts. And then there are several chapters—one on rent, and one on wages and so on and so forth, and the profits of stock—in which he shows according to the principles of supply and demand, fundamentally, how on the basis of a monopoly power—he uses this term in respect of rent—how on the basis of monopoly power, by which is meant simply accumulated possession, the output of labor is resolved into the three major distributive shares: wages, profits, and rents.ⁱⁱ Now these distributive shares have certain laws of growth and decrease, and these laws of growth and decrease are connected with the possible states of the society viewed from an economic point of view. Those states, as everybody knows who's read *The Wealth of Nations*, are called the progressive, the stationary, and the retrograde states. That's the standard terminology, but he sometimes uses another.

Now what happens to the distributive shares as the society either advances or declines? That is what takes up the remainder of book 1, in which this question is dealt with. I don't want to go into that. For our present purposes, what really matters is that there is substantially no account of how it turns out that the accumulation of property⁴ leads to the partition of the product into shares. It simply happens. Well, there is an implicit account: some man has come into possession of the ground, of some plot of ground. Now that means that he can impose on somebody by law the obligation of paying him for the use of it. It doesn't go any further than that. Smith speaks of this as being a kind of exploitation. He says so. And he points out, incidentally, that the paying of—the distribution of the output in industrial production between wages and profits has generally speaking the same character: a kind of exploitation. He doesn't use that word, but it has that general flavor. What does this mean? There are working men on the one side, there are men who live by profits on the other. There is a certain product and they

ⁱⁱ *Wealth of Nations*, book 1, chapters 5 and following.

squabble over it. And who gets how much of it depends simply on who can apply the greater pressure to the other side. This is sometimes called the bargaining power theory of distribution, to give it a handle. It's very prominent in Smith.

Now there is no question, one of the difficulties surrounding the transition from the value theory to the distribution theory in Smith is what is it that legitimates, not to say what is it that accounts for in the mechanical sense, this scheme of distribution. I think that one can only say Smith was aware of the problem, of the moral problem, and that he believed that the solution of it in the capitalistic form—another term that he didn't use—had a kind of higher justice. It looks like a piece of gross exploitation and injustice that the product should be resolved into parts—which is really only a euphemism, that term. Marx, incidentally, saw this. When he spoke about predecessor theories of distribution and value, he pointed to Smith and he said: Look what kind of a thing this man has cooked up for the occasion—it's resolved. Everybody knows what that means, that somebody simply takes it away from somebody else. Well, Smith understood that.

Now, but the question is: How could a man with any claim at all simply to ordinary decency publish such a thing to the world without any kind of glossing over? Because there was none in Smith. There is no glossing over. It's quite plain. That's a very long question, and I believe that one can only solve it—if you can answer it at all, you can only solve it by taking in Smith's entire horizon. It has something to do with what kind of political and social order he thought would generally speaking conduce most to the comfort, peace, general satisfaction, of the largest body of men. It is very reminiscent of Locke's proposal. There is not a descent into the absolute interior of value theory. There is no attempt to make the foundation of economics correspond with the foundation of all of morality and generally speaking all the principles of form and matter and so on and so forth. It's quite a pragmatic thing. Mostly Smith looks about him, sees the same distinction that Locke saw between the rational and industrious on the one side, and the lazy and ignorant on the other side. I mean, these are Locke's terms; he doesn't use them both in the same place. He speaks of the rational and industrious frequently in the treatises, but in his economic writings he specifically speaks of the lazy and ignorant, to make sure that nobody misses the point that he really had another class of human beings in mind when he spoke of the first variety.

Now Smith's view with respect to these people did differ a bit from Locke. I think that Locke believed that the lazy and ignorant were more likely to be transformed into the rational and industrious by having the most rigorous pressures applied to them. Smith has a surprisingly liberalistic doctrine with respect to this, and believes that encouragement—an increase in the standard of living and so on and so forth; generally speaking, more consideration—will tend to relieve the problem. But this is only a detail. I think that both Smith and Locke, looking at the scarcity present in the articulation of men and nature, believed that the only way to solve it would be through the institution of property, which would lead to inequalities. Smith said there would be five hundred poor for every one rich. He was willing to face that. I think he didn't anticipate some institutional arrangements which have altered that ratio, but even under those tough conditions he thought that the entire level of human convenience, freedom, and development, so far as

it was possible, would be raised without the need to resort to certain things which he called superstition, I'm sorry to say. I mean, he had the same view of this kind of solution of the human problem as Locke and Hume and similar people. A purely secularized society—⁵free and convenient—would be possible on the basis of this rather empirical solution.

Now this was absolutely detestable from the point of view of Marx, this failure to get down to the fundamentals. And I won't say any more about Smith, although there are very many things that could be said and they would be, I think, of great interest if we had more time. But the general character of Smith's solution is this modified Lockeanism, but essentially the same foundation as was present in Locke which is characterized from the point of view most interesting to us by a failure to make absolutely rigid and consistent—and also you might say respectable, for that reason or others—the connection between value theory and distribution theory. That was left in a highly empirical state, mostly explained by things such as supply and demand, the operation of the market, and things like this.

Now how this situation was modified, not to say corrected, by Marx is the purpose of our study of *Capital*, volume 1, where the attempt is made to nail down once and for all value theory and distribution theory, make them, in effect, one, and thereby put distribution theory for the first time on a perfectly respectable basis. Perfectly respectable basis: that's from his point of view. Now let me see if I can summarize this. I think that you could say that there have been two points of view from which the economic question has been considered—two primary points of view, and then it will turn out that by the conjunction of these two, a third one arises. There is in the first place the point of view of abundance or convenience. Viewing the human condition here as being a sort of unending contest with nature, plagued by scarcity, by the pains and troubles of toil, hard work, and labor, how does one somehow provide a home in the natural environment for men with the understanding that nature is really a terrific obstacle to overcome, and that men have enough of the natural built into them so that very complicated devices are necessary to induce them, not to say coerce them, to move in the direction which will help to solve their problem in one restricted sphere, the sphere of abundance lived in a rather free and more or less enlightened condition? It's a very modest aim. It took a long time to advance on it, and the achievement of this is one of the absolutely incredible accomplishments of the human species in the western part of the world in the last two or three centuries. That was the modest and solid purpose of such men as Locke and Smith. I would say let's call this the approach to the economic problem proceeding from the goal of abundance or convenience.

Now but there was another view, much older, which did not die in the olden time but which had a life that came down even into rather modern times. Let me call this the approach to the economic problem from the point of view of morality or of the way of life or, broadly speaking, excellence. Now I know that there is a kind of overlapping between the one that I've named first and this second one, but let me make these rather broad and crude distinctions, and let me point out what I mean by some examples. Rousseau would be an outstanding, perhaps the outstanding, example of this way of

looking at the economic problem of how to supply man's needs in some social context. Now Rousseau saw that there was a problem with respect to social life generally which had a diminished or reduced expression in the economic part of human life. That problem was the strange paradoxical relation between society and morality or, to put it now in the reduced terms, between abundance and vice. In the Second Discourse Rousseau points out how much man's character is reduced, is undermined or worsened by abundance. He becomes a dependent being. All the things he used to be able to do for himself he can't do for himself; all the rigors that he used to be able to withstand he can no longer withstand. And instead of being a self-reliant person [or] being, now he becomes subject to a thousand ills and wants and all kinds of things, and he really becomes a kind of detestable weakling. This is the result of the impact on human beings of convenience and abundance, that thing which everybody else seems to regard as so much a desirable thing. I don't say that this is the whole story, but it certainly is what Rousseau in part asserts.

Now there was another man of much less stature than Rousseau, and that was Bernard Mandeville, who was generally speaking in the generation between Locke and Rousseau, whose works were published, I think, between approximately 1700 and 1737. I believe the last edition of *The Fable of the Bees* was 1737.ⁱⁱⁱ Now to put it very simply, whereas Rousseau appeared to believe that abundance somehow or other contributed to the deterioration of human character, Mandeville appeared to believe that the deterioration of human character was a necessary condition for abundance, that you had—yes, that there must be certain vices present in man before a market could develop; I make it very crude now, before these conditions could arise under which a full blown, a fully developed economy could come into being.

Now I don't want to go into the question of whether they were right or wrong, or whatever. It seems as if there is some truth on both sides: both that abundance leads to a kind of deterioration in the individual self-reliance—it's perfectly obvious—and also that a certain *amour habendi*, a certain concupiscence of various degrees and directions is necessary before the market and the process of production can become elaborated in the ways consistent with the generation of a high standard of living. And incidentally, while I'm speaking of this, not only Rousseau and Mandeville but Smith too understood in his own way the paradoxical foundation or the paradoxical consequences of a fully developed economic order. He too saw that it necessarily generated some moral defects, some very unsatisfactory characteristics of men which he was willing, more or less, to make his peace with. You see, he was a very politic man, I think, in the English sense and tradition, and he was willing to make his peace with all kinds of things.

Now these paradoxes that are connected with the elaboration of the economic system, that the prosperous order has either vice as its precondition or vice as its consequence, these posed a terrific problem. It looked as if, whether Mandeville was right or Rousseau was right, or unhappily even if both of them were right, there was no way out: that if we want certain good things—convenience, the rise in the level of human life which can only come about on the basis of some solid economic base—if we want these things we must pay a certain price for them; and that price is going to be in terms either of human

ⁱⁱⁱ The last edition during Mandeville's lifetime (1670-1733) was published in 1732.

morality, self-reliance, freedom as it came to be viewed. I mean Rousseau's connection between freedom and virtue. That can't be overlooked: the price that has to be paid in terms of virtue runs over and becomes also a price in terms of a higher freedom that becomes lost to these mass men, as we would now say. Now that seems to be unbeatable. There is no way out of that dilemma, so it would appear.

Now I believe, if I have not misunderstood Marx entirely, that Marx said: No, there is a solution to this question. You can have everything all at once. You can have abundance. The abundance that will be generated by the technological system that has been brought into being by the activities of the exploiters, the bourgeoisie and so forth, that transcends this or that human society. That can be had in all human conditions, and not only can it be had, but it can be had in a way which is perfectly consistent with human excellence. That is to say, you can have fully developed human beings, not broken down wrecks living in depraved conditions, but self-reliant, upstanding men, free, thoroughly human, notwithstanding the condition of production, and in fact even arising necessarily out of the condition of production, provided that that condition of production is sufficiently organized in the light of a principle which is dictated by a proper understanding of the labor theory of value and how that labor theory of value overflows into distribution theory. ⁶It goes without saying, provided that you do the right things with respect to the ownership of the means of production. But only provided that, then all the rest follows and all the old contradictions between abundance and morality and excellence and so on, these all disappear. These are not intrinsic to human life. Men are not corrupted by an abundance of good things. It's only men under certain conditions that are corrupted by an abundance, if at all; but to the extent to which they are, that's altogether a historical proposition.

So Marx apparently believed that if one does certain things about the common ownership of the means of production and the division of labor, then abundance and morality which, let's say, equals—morality in his context equals justice in the distribution of the product and the development of the human being by being liberated from the circumscription of his horizons through division of labor—these become possible simultaneously. Now that raises some very difficult questions. I don't want to—I can't go into them at length, among other things because we're going to run out of time, but let me only very briefly tell you what I think this development has rested upon.

If you go back to Locke, you notice that he regarded the transition to the state of civil society as in effect ⁷the practical solution of the human problem. The human problem was the endangering of the status of human life through the lawlessness, let's say, of the state of nature. The transition, then, from the state of nature to the state of civil society is really a very radical transition for Locke. That makes a very great difference. In effect, you could say that is the most important act or occurrence in human history. That is what really makes the difference. Now, but there is a sense in which that is not true for Locke, because Locke understood that there is something like the immutable and eternal law of nature, and that prevails both in the state of nature and in the state of civil society. So now you could say there is then a decrease by one degree of the apparent importance of the transition from the state of nature to the state of civil society. What that transition

does is to produce a certain improvement in the environment for the operation of law of nature to work for preservation rather than for mutual destruction and poverty. The same law; change the conditions: that vital change in the conditions and on the law which used to lead men to kill each other leads men instead, through an advance in the understanding and the contract and so on, to help each other.

Now you might say Locke was so far in the tradition that he believed that political life advanced the intention of nature. Polity or political life was not contrary to the intention of nature, but the transition to the state of civil society out of the state of nature was—and you might say it's paradoxical—in the interest of nature and the natural order. As Aristotle would have said, I believe: that the advance into society was not something contrary to the intention of nature, but it was a kind of rising above to a higher state for the sake of some ends which were indicated by nature. I don't mean to make Locke into an Aristotelian, but there is a certain sense in which some traditional things, and very important [ones], still lingered on.

Now then the question arises whether the state of civil society does not operate radically against human nature. That was the question which was—you might say was raised by Rousseau. This, briefly, was the way of looking at the transition from the state of nature to the state of civil society based on the proposition that polity or political life is really contrary to the foundation or to the intention of nature, and that there is a tension between society and man's nature and nature simply which causes an absolutely insoluble problem. Now this was Rousseau. Rousseau was, you might say, really the man who broke for the second time with the ancient tradition, but he broke on a different ground. But he didn't break entirely either, because in Rousseau there is still the belief that there is a difference between one condition of man and another. There is a virtuous, free, moral condition of man (now what it rests on might be very complicated, but there is such a thing), and then there is a submoral condition of man; and there are free men, good men, courageous men, real citizens on the one side, and then there are the others on the other side. And Rousseau's point was somehow or other to see if there was not a solution of the social problem which would be guided by or controlled by this harking back to a very ancient understanding concerning the difference between virtue and vice. Now as it happened, that solution was provided in Rousseau by reference to the freedom, the self-legislating freedom of the individual, which was the ground for his citizen virtue, so to speak, expressed through the legal process, legislative process. Now, but Rousseau, it was Rousseau who discredited the distinction between the state of nature and the state of civil society. He replaced that distinction with a single historical continuum, so to speak.

Now there is some preparation for this in Locke. It's not often dwelt upon, I believe, but Locke too understood that there was something like a historical development, a very long-term rise in the level of human life which was distinct from the transition from the state of nature to the state of civil society, and which I'll only remind you of by speaking of man's majority. There are certain passages in the *Second Treatise* where Locke speaks of the difference between minority and majority, a kind of coming to one's senses.^{iv} But I believe there is some reason for thinking that he didn't mean only individuals at the age

^{iv} See especially chapter 6.

of twenty-one, but he really meant a kind of growing up of mankind and being released from some serious restraints by having their minds opened up and being made free of the law, free of the law of nature in the same way as an individual is made free of the law of England when he comes of age [and] is no longer simply subject to his father. Now, but this maturing was a civil fact. It was something that had to do with the order of political life and could only come about as a kind of political emancipation from erroneous beliefs. There was a kind of political life that replaced another kind of political life, and that progress—which I don't have to tell you was assisted by Locke's own writing; that was his understanding of it—that was the foundation of any solution such as one could hope for. Now, but it was Rousseau who, by discrediting society, discredited that transition to society. He discredited both at the same time, the transition to society and society, ⁸on what I think generally are three grounds: human excellence (the goodness of the individual); justice (that is the theme that comes out very strongly in the Second Discourse, surely); and freedom. But at the same time, he asserts quite clear[ly] that man in this presocial condition also was nothing much to be proud of, and that society had in a way substituted some difficulties for some other difficulties.

Now Marx took some different ground, although you can see how he comes rather directly out of the Rousseauan formulation. He simply dropped excellence in its fuller sense, and for it he substituted something which in our terminology we would like to call the notion of the well-rounded man; that is to say, not being circumscribed in his horizon by an insane, obsessed attention always to one petty little activity which would form his life so that he becomes a kind of automaton. That obviously has to do with the problem of the division of labor. ⁹So this completedness of the human productions on the one side; and on the other side, justice in the sense of distribution of the physical product according to the laws laid down and indicated by the labor theory of value. Now both of these were made possible in Marx's formulation by the radicalization of the labor theory of value, as we will see: that it was possible to achieve both this human excellence in the limited sense of roundedness or completedness on the one side, and justice on the other side in the distribution of the product, through the radicalization of the labor theory of value, which I think is tantamount to the absolutization of economics. That was impossible. The radicalization of the labor theory of value rested upon a reduction of economics to its foundation in true reality, as Marx himself says it.

Now when he speaks about true reality he really means the conjunction of form and matter. He reduces the old categories of value in use and value in exchange to the oldest categories of form and matter, below which I think it would be impossible to reduce the question. Now this then is the conjunction of Locke's emphasis on preservation, this just distribution of goods in perfect abundance; Rousseau's emphasis on morality and freedom, the elevation of the man to his rounded, free, and satisfactory condition; and Hegel's doctrines with respect to necessity, the dialectic, and history. The formulation of Marx is in this respect an extremely impressive thing. It was really, in effect, through his radicalization of the theory of value that he was able to assert in effect that there is an absolute order of human production, and this absolute order of human production is a reflection of the deepest layers or levels of reality. The order of human production is a model of the true order of being, in fact, and human production in a way becomes the

microcosm of all production—which sounds perhaps reminiscent of the theme with which I began when I started the first lecture, when I tried to tell you something of the ancient notions with respect to human life and production. There is only this one difference: that the ancients, I believe, never supposed that the conjunction of form and matter in a human activity was ever conceivable as a political solution. That it might have been the true characterization of the lives of ten men out of three or four billions, maybe; that could be imagined. But that this conjunction in human production of the true elements of all existence, that that should be the foundation of the political solution of the human problem I believe would have been regarded as a sheer absurdity by the ancients.

Now you might say, therefore, that Marx represents the peak of optimism in its modern signification. The possibility of bringing together, through the proper organization of human production, of those elements of nature which are the foundations of the excellent, just, perfect life—that belief that Marx had was, I believe, the foundation of his whole structure, or to put it somewhat differently, that towards which his whole construction pointed. And it is my function here to show you in what way it was the elaboration of the labor theory of value that was the visible manifestation of that movement on his part.

LS: May I say something? And I believe we won't hear the paper today.

JC: Yes, that's true.

LS: Yes.^v —you will be in the same position. Now, I mean, I will begin my question in the form of a repetition of certain things which I have said frequently in my classes, and this is as follows. There was first (that is again a very summary view of the situation) the classical doctrine, say Aristotle or, for that matter, Plato. Society is for the purpose of human excellence, and this human excellence is in the highest case theoretical or speculative excellence, and there is a certain complicated relation between speculative excellence and the city. Into this I don't want to go. The modern solution—¹⁰I distinguish three waves, as I call it.^{vi} The first wave, which is represented by Locke, for example, but already by Machiavelli and Hobbes, takes this view. Let us lower the goal of, the end of civil society: not human excellence but the most massive thing, self-preservation and its natural expansion into comfortable self-preservation. In other words, self-preservation at all costs, and if it is possible, comfortable self-preservation. It's just plain common sense. That was the classic formulation of Hobbes and Locke, and that meant a lowering of the standards, a conscious lowering of the standards, and therefore this sophistication that abundance might either require vice or produce vice is in a way implied in it. Yes? I mean, that is only a fine elaboration because many things which appeared as vice from a severe point of view did not appear as vice from this easygoing . . .

^v The tape was changed at this point.

^{vi} See part 3 of "What is Political Philosophy?" in *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 40-55; "The Three Waves of Modernity," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 81-98.

Now then there came a reaction to this view, which at a certain moment was felt to be degrading, and the great trumpeter of this moral indignation about the first wave was Rousseau. And out of Rousseau grew then German idealism, culminating in Hegel and last but not least, Marx. From this point of view, I think Marx belongs absolutely to that second wave. And what you said, Mr. Cropsey, that was a very beautiful formulation: abundance plus virtue; comfortable self-preservation plus virtue. What this second wave, as I call it, tried to do was to—on the modern foundation of plain British common sense, comfortable self-preservation—to erect an imposing moral structure which would even, if possible, be more moral than the Platonic-Aristotelian structure. That is, I think, what we are driving at. Yes, that is—I think at this point I absolutely agree with Mr. Cropsey. That is, that is what Marx is striving for, just as Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel were already striving for that.

Now we come to the subtlety, namely, the peculiar Marxian thing. In a private conversation with Mr. Cropsey we agreed on two formulae which we will not sufficiently develop in this seminar but which are, I think, sound hunches. And the first is, indeed, for Marx economics becomes metaphysics. Nothing short of that: it is the absolute science. And Mr. Cropsey has shown today some strands which are wholly unknown to me. I have other strands, and that we come to eventually. And the second point which we also agreed, was—and that is in a loose, vulgar formula: Marx tries to eat the cake and to have it. ¹¹In other words, he expects of this comfortable self-preservation people—yes, men acting on that spirit or, more generally stated, of sensual man, man concerned with the fulfillment of his needs, sensual men—[he expects] of all men therefore what could be expected reasonably only of a very tiny minority of men who would lead a rather ascetic life. That's also a point which you made.

Now that, of course, these two assertions—that Marx replaces metaphysics by economics or, in other words, he transforms economics into metaphysics; and secondly, that eating the cake and having it, that has to be proven still. But Mr. Cropsey laid a very good foundation, and here I simply repeat what you said in order to check on whether I understood you, and I believe I act there vicariously for some people in the class who also have no economic training. Now the first is this: you said, if I understood you correctly, Marx really completes classical economics. And you mentioned two points: first, labor itself is by Marx understood as a commodity, whereas in classical economics labor was not understood as a commodity.

JC: Labor power, yes.

LS: Labor power. Good. Yes. Secondly, Marx, in distinction from Smith and Ricardo, links up the value theory with the distribution theory.

JC: More tightly.

LS: More tightly. In other words, he makes the doctrine more consistent, more lucid. Yes. And now we have of course to see how this intraeconomic change, making economics a more perfect union, as it were, ¹²has this profound human, comprehensive

human meaning which is implied in the first part. Here I fail to understand you, and the only thing I could guess was this. Virtue plus abundance, let us call this the formula. I mean, not virtue on the basis of scarcity so that you have a small stratum of gentlemen and masses of multitudes or toilers, but you have a universal aristocracy, if I may say so. Yes? Everyone a gentleman, and what a gentleman, so that this implies one crucial point which I have disregarded in that first round, namely, that the meaning of virtue itself changes. The human perfection—let us use this term—which Plato and Aristotle had in mind and that which Marx has in mind, and already his German predecessors, is not the same. Now what is the difference? The difference is that in this modern notion of human excellence, freedom is the key word. Virtue and freedom always belong somehow together, but in Plato and Aristotle the emphasis is on virtue, and in the modern doctrine the emphasis is on freedom. I'm not speaking now of political freedom, but of freedom as a moral phenomenon. Kant tries to understand human excellence as freedom. Human excellence is self-legislation, is self-determination, and the contents—as temperance, courage, justice and so—they come in somehow; whereas for Plato and Aristotle what is in the foreground are these contents of virtue: temperance, courage, justice, etc.

Now what is the link-up, then? Virtue means here self-legislation, self-realization, however it is called. What has this to do with economics? Economics is not merely the condition for virtue, as everyone would admit. There is a degree of squalor and poverty where nothing can develop. The connection is much more intimate. Virtue in this modern sense is itself productivity, or if we want to have a more beautiful word still, creativity. So what economic man does is on a lower level or on a more basic level, we should say, the same [as] what spiritual man does, if we still can make this distinction. Now these points are of course for the time being in extreme abstractness and they must be clothed; these bones must be clothed with some meat before we can say we have solved our problem.

I have one point of information which I would like to add for those who are interested in this kind of thing. This problem of the combination of virtue and all-around abundance is of course an old notion, and the classic presentation of it is Plato's incomplete, fragmentary dialogue, *Critias*, a sequel to the *Republic*, where a man has the nerve, after Plato or Socrates has presented in the *Republic* this highly virtuous and austere and ascetic society, to show [that] no, you can have both: you can have virtue of an incredible level and at the same time eat from silver dishes or gold dishes.^{vii} That's the *Critias*. That is only as a point a somewhat amusing thing. But the question which would interest me as a complete ignoramus in economics is this: What did economics do, in a nutshell, after Marx?

JC: Marginal utility.

LS: What does that mean in terms of these terms which I have now cleared?

^{vii} E.g., *Critias* 120e-121a.

JC: Well, let me put it this way. Marx thought that he was providing a solution of the value and, let me say, at the same time, value and price problem, which was very complicated because—

LS: If you could do without—

JC: I'll do without. [Laughter] He thought he was solving the value problem by reference to the conditions of production or supply, essentially alone. Now there are places in *Capital*, particularly volume 1 but I believe also elsewhere, where something is introduced by Marx which is a way of sneaking in by the back door what is now called a demand condition. Yes. This has to do with what is called socially necessary labor time, which is asserted by Marx to vary for certain kinds of reasons—as, for example, most massive instance: it takes under one prevailing system of production eight hours to make a pair of shoes. Now somebody makes an invention and it's now necessary to invest only four hours of labor in the production of a pair of shoes; and nearly everybody goes along with the change, but one man ¹³likes the other way of doing it so he invests eight hours. And Marx says: Well, that's absurd to me; his eight hours are worth no more than four hours, because [what is] socially necessary now is only four, and the rest is a waste.

That's clear, but then there arise some other conditions. For example, suppose that a man spends a thousand hours engraving the first chapter of *Das Kapital* on the head of a darning needle out of devotion or whatever; and it's a tremendous thing, very difficult, takes a long time. You have to be a very skilled man, and lose your eyesight and everything. So by all his conditions this would be a very valuable thing, but Marx said it's utterly absurd. If nobody wants it, and there's some reason even to know this in advance, [for] this is not the expenditure of labor on a socially necessary object or in a socially necessary way. That's only another way of sneaking in backwards what's now called demand. In more conventional terminology, one would say there is no market for it or there is no demand for it. The demand curve vanishes or there would be some situation like this. Excuse me. [JC writes on the blackboard. Laughter] Suppose now that the supply curve is something like this, which—I mean, excuse me, Dr. Strauss. It's the curve of marginal costs, which means that in order to increase the output, there is an increase of expenditure unit-by-unit equal to the ordinate of this curve, supply curve. Suppose that the demand—well, and suppose we were to extend this, the axis, like this, and suppose the demand curve looks like this. That is to say, you can sell any number of these that you want at a price equal to the height of that little line, but that price is lower than any price at which this thing can be made. The lowest price at which it can be made is higher than the highest price at which it will be bought: no market. And now Marx would have to say: Yes, this is an example of the situation in which the socially necessary labor time is in excess. I don't know what he would say it's in excess of, but it's in excess of something or other, and therefore it can't be made and then there's been a waste of effort or something like this.

Now what economics did after Marx was to normalize that kind of explanation so that in the case of everything, not only these odd things, ¹⁴this would enter in every situation: a conjunction of the marginal utility, the satisfaction to be had from increasing the

consumption of this thing over some wide range through the market—that on the one side, call it demand; and on the other side, the inevitable changes in the cost of production as the scale of output is increased. Now of course that means value and price no longer are simply a function of the one variable. They inevitably depend on some conjunction of the two variables. ¹⁵This demand curve, which under normal conditions has a negative slope, shows by its decreasing ordinates a decline in what is called marginal utility. The increase in satisfaction contributed by n , $n + 1$, $n + 2$, and so on . . . decreases.

LS: Now may I ask you a very ignorant question? . . . Could one say that this doctrine originates, starts from this extreme case and makes it a key principle?

JC: . . .

LS: No, marginal utility.

JC: I think it would be fair to say that the marginal utility solution would be the solution to a question that could have been raised by thinking about the difference between value in exchange and value in use, not in an extreme but under any conditions. But provided one doesn't start with a doctrinaire decision not to introduce anything except the labor, the supply side, then he could naturally come to this conclusion. It's very hard to say whether the law of supply and demand as so expressed in terms of marginal utility and marginal cost is necessary in the sense that anybody thinking about it must naturally come to this thing. I really don't know whether that's true. It's a very difficult question, but I will say that it doesn't involve any great distortions. It's not an out of the way solution. Yes, and in fact I think that probably the post-Marxian economists are if anything more correct in saying that this represents a bit more of a contraction of the field. But with this kind of thing you could never do what he did—that is to say, you could never make that absolute conjunction between value theory and distribution theory. Distribution theory now is probably in the worst condition of any—well, economists are free to admit this—the worst condition of any part of economic doctrine by and large.

LS: In other words, this kind of economics cannot possibly be made into a metaphysics.

JC: Well, I don't know whether it could be. It certainly hasn't been, and in fact it has certain elements built into it of such a nature that the ones who are really devoted to it would have a kind of bias against even making that attempt go very far—bias against metaphysics in any of its—. Yes.

LS: Thank you.

Student: This Marxian analysis, facing these considerations . . . what has happened to the absolute position of their approach?

JC: Well, nothing has happened to it. The regular Marxist doctrine still adheres to a strict form of the labor theory of value but—well, I say nothing has happened to it, that's

misleading. It's not untrue, but it's misleading because in more recent Marxist economic literature I think there is more emphasis on the crisis problem, the problem of crisis. I mean, I haven't told you—I've told you just a very small fraction of all the things that Marx did with respect to economics. He was a very intelligent man, a very able man, and he foresaw certain things which it took the rest of the economics profession a very long time to catch up to. It's no question. Some of his formulations with respect to economic fluctuations, for example, these became regularized only in the 1930's or thereabouts. It's not that they weren't known, but somehow or other the problem was thought to be disposed of in other ways. Now especially since the big depression, Marxist economists have been more interested in the question of crises, the Marxist explanation of crises. Now, if you mean by what they have done since this, what they have done about this: they haven't done anything about that. They couldn't. That's absolutely built into the foundation of the system and nothing—it cannot be changed. There are polemics against the marginal utility school of economists. The polemics take their tone from Marx's own animadversions on some people of his time and a bit earlier. He called them hypocrites, in effect; such men as Nassau Senior,^{viii} and so on, these were apologists, and the argument against their doctrine was to a large extent *ad hominem*.

Now there has been a lot of that kind of thing since the evolution of the marginal utility thesis. That is to say that these men are kinds of prostitutes who have developed some apologetic for the bourgeoisie and that's—but there is no way of beginning. I mean, the most they can say is: No, we start from two entirely different premises. They seem to believe that somehow or other value can be affected by the opinions of people with respect to the goodness or the worth of this thing and how much they're willing to pay for it, and it's all irrelevant. There is such a thing as—

LS: This is what the Marxists say?

JC: Yes, with respect to the others.

LS: Yes, but is this not a point which came already up in connection with the historical school? I mean, which emphasized the fact—it's underlined in some of the work of Max Weber and before him, that the proper economic man—that's the way in which Max Weber stated it—that classical economics presupposes a man who is inspired by the profit motive and by nothing else¹⁶ if he's a perfect economic man. And now there are these people who came who are so free from the profit motive . . . who could not be induced by anything¹⁷ to begin to work. It's a wholly noneconomic man. In other words, there are always presuppositions, historical presuppositions, which bring this about. Now this is of course meant against classical economic doctrine, not against Marxism, but there is some connection, I believe. I don't see it clearly.

^{viii} Nassau William Senior (1790-1864). See *Capital*, vol. 1, chap. 9 (“The Rate of Surplus-Value”), sec. 3 (“Senior's ‘Last Hour’”). Historian J. Bradford DeLong calls Senior's error comprehensible but not excusable, in “Senior's ‘last hour’: suggested explanation of a famous blunder,” *History of Political Economy* 18 (1986): 325-33.

JC: Yes. Well, it has been said, of course, about Ricardo—and not only by Marxists, by any means—that his doctrine wouldn't have any content if he didn't imagine a certain kind of monomaniac, a certain obsessed madman who goes to his office in the morning and doesn't do anything but calculate and calculate, and if his brother-in-law or his aged mother or somebody happens to get in his way it doesn't matter. I mean, he rides roughshod through the crowd. There's a difference of two shillings: that's no question. Now, yes, but this is of course a terrific exaggeration, and Ricardo was not so foolish; but nevertheless, if one has to say that there is one motive which really guides, they certainly took it to be that. Now, but I think that's quite fair because so far as there is only one motive it is that; that's what business means.

Now, that people sometimes employ their lazy and ignorant brother-in-law rather than some rational and industrious stranger, that's well enough known. This comes under the heading of empirical or accidental circumstances, which don't modify the basic principle. No, I think that's fair. This kind of thing does suppose that the people on the demand side know the market; they have good knowledge of it, they really mean to maximize their utility for the sum mentioned. And there is even a very long analysis, as some of you know, of the behavior of consumers by the use of indifference curves and other kinds of things by which you can show that there is a certain equilibrium distribution of the income among x number of different lines of expenditure which is the optimum, for which the aggregate utility is a maximum and so on and so forth, and it doesn't say anything at all about how—whether people actually do it. But it is supposed by and large they behave within the limits of sanity, as if that were their objective. Now I don't know whether that would really be the point at which the Marxists would criticize the more conventional economics. They surely couldn't do it with respect to the supply side, and so far as the market generally is affected by the factor market, the factor of production market—i.e., dominated by bourgeois businessmen—I think they would have to say: Yes, sure, that's exactly what kinds of people there are; there are these unsatisfactory individuals who calculate. So ¹⁸I don't think could be made the basis of the objection. No, they say that simply when you look at what value means and where it must arise, then you see that Marx was right with respect to the foundation in labor.

Student: Wouldn't that be a legitimate Marxist criticism, though, that in fact the so-called science rests merely on bourgeois society? The law of supply and demand is merely trivial unless you presuppose the free market, where it roughly represents the free play of supply and demand for goods. But unless you're in that circumstance, then it's trivial. If you are in that circumstance and you say it's a law, then you aren't—you're simply representing the bourgeois state of society.

JC: Yes, there is something to what you say. When he speaks about the so-called fetishism of commodities, he tries to show that people under our circumstances take as immutable laws some things which are strictly speaking historical. These relations between and among commodities, we seem to think that these are natural. They're really not. That's one fact. Now, but if you read Marx on the labor theory of value, I suppose sooner or later the question arises: How historical is that? Because if he really asserts, if he means what he asserts with respect to the merely historical foundation of all

understanding, of *all* understanding and therewith also the understanding of this set of relations, yes, there's a real question as to how much this is also not Marx's own.

LS: Would he not say that the doctrine as developed by him refers essentially to capitalist society, I mean a society in which labor is not slave but already free and such other things?

JC: Yes, without any doubt, the explanation of the market, that is surely—that can only apply to the conditions in which the market exists. But still his own explanation is not strictly speaking formal. His own explanation has a subtler content, and then his explanation of the relations among the human beings, for example, the relations among the human beings in the productive process is to a certain extent prescribed by technology, the application of science and so on. I don't know how he avoids that. There is no way for him to circumvent that fact. I mean, to talk about some future state of man without the division of labor but with the application of machinery, it's very hard to understand.

LS: Yes, well, it may be this other famous difficulty in Marx, that he refuses to elaborate the details of the future society, yes? That may be a very serious weakness. I'm willing to grant that. But does he in *Das Kapital* wish to do anything else but to give a thorough analysis of the laws governing capitalist production and distribution, therefore a special historical form of economy?

JC: Yes. I mean, I'm—yes?

LS: Therefore he would not be subject to the criticism on the part of the historical school that in a sense he has universal laws which are laws which are only valid in a given historical epoch.

JC: Yes, but of course the difficulty is that the laws that he asserts to be the laws of capitalist society are in question, and that is precisely the point. Yes, but the point of view from which those laws are generated is supposed to be itself transhistorical. That is to say Marx, viewing capitalist society and indeed all society from outside capitalist society, speaks of the laws of value and crises and so on and so forth within capitalist society. Yes, but if that standpoint of his outside capitalist society were not itself somehow transhistoric—

LS: Yes, that is—

JC: It's a difficulty.

LS: is a great question, and I believe that Marx at least once explicitly claims that it is transhistorical, because otherwise relativism impairs . . .

JC: Are there any other questions? Please.

Student: . . .

JC: That's not bad. Well, you mean, for example, what do they do in the Soviet Union. I mean, there are no Marxist societies. Marx didn't ever say what he would do if he became the chief of budget in a big country, so all we can do is to see what happens when a country generally speaking tries to live by these rules. And incidentally, they had plenty of awkward situations; you know, they were stuck with his antique notions with respect to the gold standard, so for a long time^{ix} the Soviet Union had the most conservative monetary system of any country in the world because ¹⁹they were still operating on the basis of²⁰ the essentially Ricardian notion of the money supply. But no, what they do is to forget about Marx a hundred percent, as indeed they must. There is not a Marxist foundation for the Soviet budgeting operation. What they do is to say—like sensible men, they start with the end, as Plato, I think, suggested. You start with what you want—and Descartes and so on. You²¹ first see what you want and then work back from there to what you've got, and then move forward again, see, when you've figured out the process backwards: when you know what you want, and then you've finally made your way back to where you are now, then do the steps in the reverse order, articulating all the various lines of operation. It's a purely empirical thing, guided by the fact [that] they have to maintain so many divisions here and so many missile bases there, and that requires the support of such a steel industry, and such a cement industry, and such a railroad system; they have so many men, so many factors of production now available; they need a certain minimum of consumption goods; that squeezed to the bottom—well, properly. And the rest is made available according to purely technological considerations. I mean, that there is absolutely no movement in the Soviet Union towards the abolition of the division of labor, for example—that kind of thing, I mean; and unless they mean to give up the whole world situation and commit suicide, they won't do it either.

LS: What about the pricing system? I hear of how it was one of their major problems of economics.

JC: Sure. The pricing system is—yes, in the Soviet Union, or in Marxist systems?

LS: In the Soviet Union.

JC: In the Soviet Union, there are several budgets. Some of you undoubtedly know this better than I if you've actually studied their government, but there are different budgets. There is a labor budget; there is a financial budget. The budgets, these are the bases of the plans, the so-called plans: five-year plan, one-year plan; and then there are subordinate periods. The general principle is that there has to be an articulation between the real budgets, i.e., the budget in terms of production and the use of demand power and the other factors of production on the one side, and the financial budgets—the wages, prices, and taxes and other government fiscal support—budget on the other side. The reason for that, of course, is that the only alternative would be physical allocations in the direction of every industry and every individual consumer. There are only two possibilities now known: either by administration this individual is entitled to so many shoes and so on and

^{ix} 1924-1947.

so forth, so many cans of beans and, you know, everything; and then this one so much. Then you have the big question: Suppose that you want to deal with them both equally [and] give them both the same ration of beans, but one of them doesn't like beans. Now that's—no, it's a very important question. Yes, sure.

LS: He wouldn't have to eat them.

JC: No, he might—either he would have to eat them, which would mean to say that you'd tell him: No trading. Everybody gets now an allocation, and no trading. Or else you say: We'll start you off with the same amounts, but you may trade internally. That would be possible. It's terribly awkward, and there is no reason to do that. I mean, why should they make life more difficult rather than less? They've got—that's not their purpose, I'm sure. I mean, they impose hardships but they don't go out of their way to make things difficult. Now moreover, what about the fact that some people you like to give a higher wage than others? It's a very complicated question. If you want one man to have double the wage of the other, do you give him two cans of beans for every one can of beans for this man, two pounds of bacon for one pound? I mean, it might be their tastes are such that this would result in a, you know, absolutely impossible situation. Or if you increase every item by the same factor, naturally you ²²get absurdities because, for instance, everybody gets the same salt ration.

LS: All right. So you give them money.

JC: So you have to give them money. I wanted you to see that there are real complications in trying to live on the basis which they had first hoped themselves they could live on. Sure.²³ But if you give them the money, that means that everything has to have a price attached to it. Then somebody has to administer these prices. That means you have to adjust the net money income of all the recipients of income in the community at such a level that the aggregate value of all the consumption goods will be in a proper relation to the aggregate incomes of all the individuals, with the understanding that the disproportions in the money incomes assigned to the individuals will have to bear a proper relation to your schedule of encouragements and discouragements in the different lines of work—except if you want to say you send a postcard to every man and tell him where he goes to work, which is very difficult. If not that, then you have a wage system. You draw some more in here and extrude some out of there by fiddling around with the rates of wages. But that aggregate of incomes has to match the aggregate value of the output on the other side, with all of those prices being adjusted so that there won't be thirty thousand people lined up outside some department store, all of them wanting to get ironing board covers, let's say, because last month you made it very easy to get electric irons and the month before that you made it very easy to get the ironing boards, but this month there are no ironing board covers, so all the irons and the ironing boards can't be used except if they take the dining room table off and use it, in which case there will be—then it'll show up—that's right, honestly.

In fact, this is an example which I'm not making up. They had that difficulty several years ago with respect to the irons and the ironing boards, and that is incidentally

connected with the price of servicing the garments in the state dry cleaning establishments. See, if you want to get factors of production out of the dry cleaning industry, you say we've got—I mean, we've a choice: let them all go around looking as if they had lived in their clothing for several years. That's one possibility. Other possibility: give them the means to do it themselves. But the means to do it themselves have to be provided in a certain package: one iron, one ironing board, and then a certain number of covers to go with it over a period of time because irons—you know, they outlive the covers. Now if you don't adjust the production of all the components in the right quantity and at the right prices, see, so that demand will just about clear it off, either you have a waste of factors of production, some things being made and distributed without the complementary goods making it possible to use them—see, that's one; or else you have inflation, in which you have large quantities of purchasing power in the hands of the people—money incomes—and the prices by some mistake are set so low that people can exert large demands over quantity of the whole goods, and then there's dissatisfaction and savings begin to go down in value and various difficulties.

So then, in other words, what is done automatically by the market has to be duplicated by administration. So they have to recreate by an artificial process the conclusions of the market through administration. I don't say it's impossible. I don't say it's immoral to try to do it or anything like that, but I'm only trying to tell you it is a very difficult thing, and they must achieve it. And Marx made, I think, no particular helpful contributions to the solution of that problem. Please.

Student: [Largely inaudible question about extensive military establishments]

JC: It's the latter, the latter. They're not running into any extraordinary economic problems, and people in this country are very ill-advised if they go around under the delusion that the Soviet Union is bound to collapse because of the intrinsic unworkability of their economy. That's absurd. Their economy isn't unworkable; it's perfectly workable. So is ours. I mean, for example, such a little thing as the development of linear programming and IBM-type machines: that makes the solution of inventory problems and allocation problems very easy by mechanical measures. That means that the work of the planning bureau in the Soviet Union can be made much easier and more efficient, same as in this country. Now to expect them to collapse because of the difficulty of the planning problem, I think that's absurd. Yes?

Student: . . .

JC: I would say that what their experience shows is that within wide limits you can do pretty much what you like with respect to the economic arrangements. That's exactly the opposite of what Marx tried to show, I believe: that from the economy you have to move, more or less directly and rigidly on a very short rope, to the political consequence. No, I think that the political solution is what is dictated by judgment, and you can shore it up with different kinds of economic arrangements which more or less depend on your ingenuity. Now I don't say everything will work. I mean, it's obvious that some things wouldn't work, but it's remarkable how many things do work, economically speaking,

[that are] radically quite different. And I think that, if anything, really shows us this enormous mistake: to try to deduce the political system rigidly from the economic arrangement. Their own experience belies it. Mr. Shetty, please.

Mr. Shetty: [Largely inaudible question about resources]

JC: That's a very complicated question, and that's about all I could say at the time—

Mr. Shetty: . . .

JC: Yes. No, not any more. I mean, people in this country²⁴—two people couldn't meet and look each other in the face without bursting out laughing if one of them tried to say that anymore, but there were times when that was said—before the second World War, for example. Now, but their enormous technological achievements manifested in their military programs makes it absurd for people in the West to say: No, this thing can't work; they can't solve the problem of production. It's ridiculous. Now as to whether they do it at a minimum of cost, that's a very difficult question. So we say they don't get the maximum allocation or the optimum allocation because of the failure of the market to supply its own limits, and they say it's fine for you to complain, but you have fluctuations in the level of economic activity and those fluctuations lead to constant costly readjustments. And so now you have thirty thousand thrown out of work in this industry and at least twenty-four thousand thrown out there, and resources go unused and the men are on relief and so on and so forth, and stock markets rise and fall and all kinds of nonsensical results from the operation of the market system which can't be altogether denied. So I think that what it proves is that you can't argue very far from the mere operation of the economy. Unless you can get above that and look at the problem of that political society from a larger point of view, the mere economic arrangements won't tell you whether it's a good system or a bad system. Now I think you might be thinking for a minute of the case of India, where the economic problem is really tremendous, and you can say the political system stands or falls on the basis of whether it can solve the economic problem. Yes, that's true up to a point, but I think most people would be unprepared to say [that] if it's necessary to install a leftist, mainland Chinese kind of regime in India, that's worth it. Quite a few people would say no, that the solution of the economic problem can't be taken as the sole ground for dictating—you know, in the other direction.

LS: [Partly inaudible remark to the effect that there are sometimes incompatibilities between political goals, for example, freedom, and economic objectives]

JC: Yes—no, but I would only say that the economic arrangements include a broad latitude. Yes, and to try to make a rigid connection between these economic arrangements and those political institutions—I think that tends to break down.

¹ Deleted “that term”

² Deleted “there's going to become”

³ Deleted “it.”

⁴ Deleted “leads to these”

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- ⁵ Deleted “would be possible on the basis”
⁶ Deleted “provided that you do certain things”
⁷ Deleted “the solution of the”
⁸ Deleted “on the ground of”
⁹ Deleted “Now this”
¹⁰ Deleted “there are”
¹¹ Deleted “he wants to”
¹² Deleted “has to do with this”
¹³ Deleted “is—he”
¹⁴ Deleted “this would come”
¹⁵ Deleted “that’s what—this”
¹⁶ Deleted “as I mean.”
¹⁷ Deleted “to go”
¹⁸ Deleted “that”
¹⁹ Deleted “they had”
²⁰ Deleted “a, you know”
²¹ Deleted “see.”
²² Deleted “become”
²³ Deleted “I mean, that was—yes, it’s now.”
²⁴ Deleted “you couldn’t.”

Session 5: April 13, 1960
The Communist Manifesto

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —although I must say right away you did not do justice to the *Communist Manifesto*.ⁱ You approached it with the wrong expectation, that it is a scientific statement. Now the fact that it is not a scientific statement does not necessarily mean that it is merely a rhetorical statement. I will take that up. Do you wish to speak on the paper, Mr. Cropsey?

Joseph Cropsey: Well, there were a few points. Some of them were really rather small. Mr. Strickland mentioned the problem of the alteration of the means of production under capitalism and how that didn't seem to be given any proper foundation in the *Communist Manifesto*, which is true; it isn't. But it must be said that that's given a very extensive explanation in *Capital*, and we will come to that.

LS: Yes, and similar considerations apply also to the philosophic things. If I may mention only one point: this is not such an easy contradiction as you seem to think, that the future course of history is determined, and yet [there is] need for action, because the action is a part of the chain. Yes? A part of the chain. For example—I mean, take ordinary determinism, the older type: Hobbes, who says, well, he says everything is determined, and yet he demands a certain kind of state with law and law enforcement. But why? This law and law enforcement is a part of the determination. If you want to have people behave properly, they must be determined to behave properly, and that is done by such beautiful things as gallows, jails, and other things. You see? And if you say, “Well, but that is done by free agents, by men,” Hobbes would say, “Yes, these free agents are themselves determined in that by their desire for peace.” And ultimately Hobbes, the author of the scheme, is determined by his thought and perhaps also by his ambition to propose these things, yes? And so. That is not—I mean, the difficulty comes up in a much more subtle way. Yes. And in addition, Marx would say that there are now individuals or a small group of proletarians or half-proletarians who see the future, see the trail and therefore devise a clear and consistent policy. He would say that is not an accident. That belongs to the human situation. There are always men around, given a certain level of articulateness, who do this kind of thing. Now whether it is concentrated in one individual called Marx or in two individuals—Marx, Engels—or in seven individuals, that's accidental.

The difficulty comes out in another way, and I don't remember a passage in Marx, but in Engels there occurs this remark in the *Anti-Dühring* that this communist world society is bound to come at the peril of the destruction of civilization.ⁱⁱ There is an alternative. For

ⁱ Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ In discussing the abolition of the antithesis between town and country, Engels states: “The abolition of the separation of town and country is therefore not utopian, also, in so far as it is conditioned on the most equal distribution possible of modern industry over the whole country. It is true that in the huge towns civilization has bequeathed us a heritage which it will take much

some reason people might act foolishly or well by determination. Yes¹. Lenin is killed in 1918, yes?ⁱⁱⁱ There's an interesting discussion of that problem in Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* which—it shows really the difficulty of determining the concrete form.^{iv} Trotsky must admit if Lenin had been killed that the thing would have run very differently, and surely the victory in October of [1917]^v would not have taken place and God knows what then would have happened. But the problem is this: [that] this ultimate alternative civilization might perish is admitted by Engels and also by later writers. Now this is of course very grave. There might be people who say: Let civilization perish rather than get this abomination. Then the whole case is bust wide open. There is where the difficulty arises. Now the tacit premise of Marx, and I think also of Lenin and of Khrushchev today, is people are not so foolish to ruin themselves when ruin is obvious. In the case of Hitler, ruin was not obvious; there was a fair chance from his point of view, and it was touch and go. But now, in the age of thermonuclear war, it is impossible to play with that kind of thing; you know, a minimum of common sense suffices to rule that out. It still might accidentally happen, that's also true and that is not entirely irrelevant, but I suggest that we—or do you wish to bring up some special point?

JC: Well, they were very small things. I don't know if it's right to—

LS: No. Then I'd rather not. Now I would suggest we start from a few dates. The *Communist Manifesto* was written and published in 1848. Marx was born in 1818. And I mention—well, 1848 was of course the year of revolution in Europe, yes? That everyone knows, I take it, and even in Germany, to say nothing of France. ²I mention only one other date now, 1831, the death of Hegel. These are I think the most important dates. Now Marx was thirteen years old when Hegel died, you can see. And he studied and so on; and only about 1837 does he begin to think for himself, which is a fairly young age, and this development was finished roughly 1846. By 1846, and even perhaps a bit before, Marx's position—the rough position was completed, and then after 1848 he began his detailed economic work. He had already very clear notions about economics at that time, but the detailed work began afterward, and 1859 was his *Critique of Political Economy*, and 1867, I believe, the first volume of *Kapital*. So these are the key points.

Now I mention this for one reason which you will see later is of some relevance. Marx had completed his intellectual development when he was twenty-eight or younger. There is a case, a parallel case in the nineteenth century, as I will show later. That is the case of Nietzsche. Nietzsche died in a sense very young, as you know, because his insanity began when he was forty-four; but if you compare the young Marx with the young Nietzsche,

time and trouble to get rid of. But it must and will be got rid of, however protracted a process it may be. Whatever destiny may be in store for the German Empire of the Prussian nation, Bismarck can go to his grave proudly aware that the desire of his heart is sure to be fulfilled: the great towns will perish.” *Anti-Dühring* (1878), in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (NY: W. W. Norton, 1978), 723.

ⁱⁱⁱ Lenin was shot by Socialist Revolutionary Fanya Kaplan in an assassination attempt in 1918. He died in 1924.

^{iv} Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (1930).

^v Strauss says “1918,” in error.

the young Marx is much more completed and much less immature than Nietzsche was when he was twenty-eight or thirty. In Nietzsche the breakthrough came when he was about forty, much later. That is of some interest, as will appear later, but that only in passing.

So at the time when Marx wrote the *Communist Manifesto* his whole doctrine was already clear in his mind, and he did not present this doctrine in the *Communist Manifesto*. The *Communist Manifesto* reveals nothing of his philosophic origin. The work is, as I would call it to begin with, a political statement, not a philosophic statement. I read to you a few passages from the *Communist Manifesto* translated from the German. “Every class struggle is a political struggle, the organization of the proletarians to a class and therewith to a political party.” So in other words, contrary to the vulgar Marxist notion, the political is really the more intense, the higher: the transformation of mere quantity, one can say, into quality. I remember in Trotsky, in his history of the Russian revolution, when he speaks of the ³hunger revolts in Petrograd and other places during the war and other kinds of economic struggles—that’s chicken feed. It becomes interesting only when the struggle becomes political and becomes a struggle for political power. That is perfectly compatible with the assertion that ultimately the relations of production are decisive; but primarily, in the everyday life, the real stuff is the political and not the economic. So the book is a political statement, not a philosophic or economic statement, but it is indeed based on philosophy and economics. The situation is this: the addressees know less than the writers, that’s clear; otherwise he wouldn’t have to write it. Who are the writers? Officially, a commission of the Communist Party but in fact, of course, Marx and Engels. Who are the addressees? That’s clear. Who are the addresses in the strict sense?

Student: Well, I wasn’t clear on that. I would presume that, first of all, the workers.

LS: Yes, why not use the more precise term which Marx uses, if it is more precise?

Same student: The proletariat.

LS: The proletariat. The last call: “Proletarians of all countries unite!” So the proletarians are addressees. The writers explain to the proletarians the situations, the prospects, and the tasks of the proletarians. The philosopher-economists address not all men, but only those men whose interest makes them receptive to the message: not the bourgeois but the proletarians. Why do they do that? Why do they not address all men, but the proletarians? That’s a question of principle which is not explained here but is presupposed. Marx sets forth—or Marx and Engels set forth an idea, to use a term which is still [in] common use and was perhaps in more common use at that time in Germany. They set forth an idea. Now what is the relation of idea to actualization? Marx had very definite opinions on that. You make, you elaborate an idea. Well, that can be mere talk, air, but how does it become real, and under what condition does it become real?

Student: . . .

LS: Well, sure. That's elementary. But what is the condition for that?

Student: . . .

LS: No, no. Something more fundamental than organization, which comes in only secondarily.

Student: . . .

LS: No, no. Pardon?

Student: Acceptance of the—

LS: Yes, but what makes people accept?

Student: . . .

LS: How strange. There is a simple word which is still used, and it is necessary: interests. Interests. Marx says somewhere [that] ideas have always made themselves ridiculous if they were divorced from interests. The only people who are interested in this message, who are compelled by their interests to embrace it, are the proletarians, not the non-proletarians. Now interest means here primarily the selfish interest of a class. I mean, you must not be befuddled by the present usage of interests in present-day political science. You know, you have a group of people who loves cats and form a union for the protection of cats, and then he says also an interest group. Yes? You know? That's of course absolutely misleading. I mean, then you formalize the concept of interest so that it loses the punch which it always had. So selfish interests, but selfish interests of a class, of a section. We don't have to go now into what class precisely means. Now this presupposes one decisive thing, namely, to repeat, interests are essentially sectional interests. What does this imply? That latter point is of course elementary now via Bentley, *Process of Government*.^{vi} Yes? But what is the presupposition already in Marx of the assertion that interest is only sectional interest? What is the opposite of sectional interest? Let us proceed step by step. What is an interest which is not sectional? What is that? Pardon?

Student: National.

LS: Or yes, general common good, this kind of thing. There is no common good. That's the tacit presupposition. Let us look; I think that is right at the beginning: "The history of all previous society is a history of class struggles,"^{vii} which implies, although it is not really stated, [that] every society of which we know consists of sections or classes, and therefore the common interest is something very dubious. It may exist to some extent in the fighting against diseases and the building of bridges, perhaps, but in a substantive

^{vi} Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908).

^{vii} *The Communist Manifesto*.

sense it doesn't exist. Now this is the point which Mr. Strickland pointed out. This sentence with which they begin their argument, "The history of all previous society is the history of class struggles," is not evidently true. There were class struggles, we can say, but there were also other things. There were, for example, foreign wars. There were, or there was the War of the Roses in England, and they should prove to us that this was a class struggle. Yes? Two branches of the dynasty. Or the War of Independence is not obviously a class struggle, nor is the Civil War in this country. So that is a mere assertion for which Marx says that he has ample proof, but somewhere in his desk. Well, we don't know that. That wasn't published—you know the earlier writings were published only much later, much—after Marx's death, some of them only in our century.^{viii}

Now what is the reason for this assertion regarding the class struggle? That there were such classes, rulers and ruled, and, if you please, oppressors and oppressed in the past was generally admitted by all democratic people. Yes? All democratic people, because that was exactly the idea underlying the democratic revolution: the abolition of oppression. There were free and unfree men in the Middle Ages or before, and now the key sentence here is this. That is about three paragraphs, four paragraphs later: "Modern bourgeois society which has emerged from the decay—or the destruction—of feudal society has not disposed of the class oppositions. It has only put new classes, new conditions of oppressions, new forms of the struggle, in place of the old ones." Now let us see what that means in the context. The modern democratic state, which of course at that time did not yet exist, as you know, but it was about to emerge. It emerged for a moment in France, [18]48, was destroyed by Bonaparte, but it existed in this country but not in Europe, and surely not in semi-feudal Germany or Austria, and still less in Russia; and even in England, as you know, that was touch and go. The key here was that about this time Hegel still was able to protest against the Reform Bill. That was his last writing. So the modern democratic state, the most progressive thing you have and which you have only in very few places in the world, presents itself as a state of universal freedom and equality, the first society in which everyone is free and equal, and therefore as the just society.

But now comes the punch of Marx's thesis: this society consists in fact of oppressors and oppressed, just as every society before. The historical assertion about the past is not interesting. The exciting thesis is that the modern democratic state is itself a class state, and here Marx appeals to something which was known to the addressees. I mean, it was not merely a far-fetched assertion. These people who were locked out and tried to

^{viii} The most important of these later publications are the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *The German Ideology*, the *Grundrisse*. Robert C. Tucker writes that these works remained among Marx's private papers and "came into Engels' possession after Marx's death in 1883, and went to the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party after Engels' death in 1895. After the Russian Revolution, the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow acquired photocopies of the manuscript materials. Its director, the noted Marx scholar David Riazanov, took charge of the editing of the unpublished early writings, and, thanks largely to his labors, these writings finally came out in the 1920s and 1930s. Later, Riazanov, like so many other prominent Russian Marxists, died in Stalin's purges." *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), xix.

associate and were not permitted to associate (you know, all this kind of thing), they knew that there was a struggle between labor and capital. ⁴They knew that. Now Marx only says this: Your experience which you workers have is not an irrelevant thing; your private fate, that is the most important fact of modern society. That is the point which the *Communist Manifesto* has to make. So in other words, at this point the whole thing becomes empirical, not in the sense of a social science study, but an appeal to what these people know from their daily experience and therefore much more impressive. The old story of oppression merely continues under new names. Well, “names” is too weak a word, but I will overstate the point.

Now let us again proceed empirically and disregard Marx’s philosophic premise in order to see where the philosophic premise must come in to give the thing its character, its unity. Now if we look at the situation dispassionately, and accepting the facts as Marx stated them, this oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie is ⁵ the most recent form of that universal human phenomenon of oppression of one class by another. Now what is the difference from the practical point of view? And the practical point of view means, in the first place, from the point of view of good or bad. Now in some respects the oppression is less bad than in former times, yes? [That’s] clear—I mean, there are not chains. The workers are not chained, and there is not an overseer with a whip, like galley slaves or like Indians in Peru or what have you. They are free workers, but in other respects however the oppression is worse, and that is the point which Marx will bring out: that it is in some respects the worst of all oppressions. And therefore, because it is the worst of all oppressions, because it is the extreme oppression, for this reason a whole unexpected solution to the present problem is possible. But we must proceed step by step.

So to return then to the point which I made first: the oppression is in some respects worse, in some respects better than ⁶ in the older orders. That is again an empirical assertion. The present order will be succeeded sooner or later by another one. That would seem to be the simple, commonsensical conclusion. Oppression we find—everywhere in history we find oppression. We find oppression now, and every particular form of oppression had its time. Therefore the present form of oppression will come to an end and will be succeeded by another form of oppression, where it will no longer be bourgeoisie and proletariat but x and y, and no one can know what that x and y is because human malice is inventive and can find all kinds of other things. So this would be the old-fashioned way of looking at the situation.

How does Marx arrive at his solution, at *his* solution? Now if oppression is the universal fact of human history, then we have to raise the question: Why? Why is man a being which oppresses his fellows everywhere? That must be in human nature if it is everywhere, and that of course was always said. Now in the first place it could be due to human malice. There is this trait of malice, of viciousness, in man; and to take one theory which is very pertinent here, that of Rousseau: the viciousness of man is pride, the desire to be superior to others, and that leads man to oppress his fellow man if he can. ⁷For Marx, Rousseau had disposed of that by the following consideration: pride, malice, viciousness, is itself a product of society. ^{ix} It does not belong to human nature; therefore

^{ix} See Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.

we can get rid of that. But then there was another reason, a more pedestrian reason. Why do people oppress others? No, not out of malice; surely there are malicious people but they are uninteresting—I mean, they are exceptions. Real massive things induce men to oppress the others, their fellows, and what is that? The sober desire to have more. I don't want to be admired by you as a big shot, but I want to live conveniently; and if you have to live in huts so that I can live conveniently, that's your business. If I'm more rational and industrious than you, who are lazy and improvident, that's your business. Scarcity, in other words, is the reason why there are oppressors and oppressed.

And now Marx comes. This true reason why men have always oppressed others, scarcity, has disappeared; and that he proves empirically, for we have a phenomenon without parallel in earlier times, and that phenomenon is overproduction. Overproduction. Men produce more than they can use, and what is wrong is the distribution, in other words. So this being the case, there is no need for future oppression. Plenty makes oppression superfluous. More than that—but still the present oppression could go on indefinitely. Say it is the last; there is no longer a need for oppression but some people are better off in the present system: the oppressors. Why can they not perpetuate their system indefinitely? That might be possible. Marx says: No, the present form of oppression is self-destructive, self-defeating. And therefore the emphasis on the progressive character of bourgeois society: that is not a state of things from 1848 which can be frozen and then be forever. The dynamism is essential to civil society. That means the overproduction now is child's play compared with the overproduction thirty years hence, fifty years hence, a hundred years hence, and so: and therefore⁸ the oppressors will become ever richer; the oppressed will become ever poorer; and therefore the present system is not only the last form of oppression, it is also one which is necessarily self-destructive. That means, to state it ⁹in a general way to make some advance in the argument, the present oppression is unique. It is not only one special form of this age-old phenomenon but it is a unique form. In other words, the two classes which we have now, the bourgeois and the proletariat, are not just two classes like any other classes we have in earlier times. They are the absolute classes. The absolute classes. There is a qualitative difference between these classes now and any other classes. Still more precisely: because the class of the future is the proletariat, not the bourgeoisie, the proletariat is the absolute class.

Now there are a few details which are important to mention right away. I come back to the question on which I started. Oppression is the universal fact; therefore, why not forever and ever? And needless to say that our experience up to now with communism in particular does not refute the thesis, because no one can say that there is no oppression in Russia or China—I mean, to limit ourselves to an understatement. But still, Marx of course denied that this would necessarily be the case. Now the proletariat is in a unique position. It is the absolute class, and this absoluteness refers to its oppression. It is the absolute oppression which the proletariat undergoes. Now that, to begin with, sounds strange. I referred to the Indians in Peru after the Spanish conquest and for quite some time, and one could perhaps also think of other examples. Were they not treated infinitely worse with these bloodhounds, you know, and all the kinds of things the Spaniards did, than the modern proletarians even in the worst slums of Manchester, or New York, or wherever they were? Now what is that? What makes the proletarian oppression so

particularly terrible? ¹⁰The oppression of the proletariat is the most revolting of all oppressions, more revolting than what the Spaniards did to the Indians or the Romans to their public slaves in mines, etc. One can perhaps say this, and here I come back to the point which was mentioned by Mr. Cropsey last time: for the first time the oppressed are treated as merchandise, as merely non-human. No, but again: What about these slaves, or what the Nazis did to the Jews and others in the concentration camps?

Now I mention this only in passing because there is a very common delusion about this point. When such beasts, as we might say, torment their enemies in a most bestial way, they do not act as beasts. Shall I explain that? So “bestial” is therefore a metaphoric expression which is very meaningful, but it’s not precise. What does the tormentor do with the human being he torments? He does this only to human beings. Only very accidentally and uninterestingly does someone do this kind of thing to tables or to other things. He knows that the being he torments is a human being: that is essential for the act. So what we call bestiality is a particular behavior of humans to humans; and therefore if these Spaniards and the Indians, ¹¹they still treated them as humans in a most inhuman way, that is not the point, but they would not have treated in that way trees or stones. The capitalist from Marx’s point of view treats his workers in the same spirit in which he treats his merchandise. I mean, in other words, in his way he even takes care of it, naturally, because he doesn’t want his merchandise to spoil, and he doesn’t want his labor force to be inefficient. Therefore, in a very radical sense, that’s from Marx’s point of view the most inhuman treatment. To repeat: from this point of view the older barbarians were perverted human relations, but they were human relations. This is no longer a human relation. That’s one.

But that is not the decisive point. Let me see. There is another passage, not in the *Communist Manifesto*, but in Marx’s *National Economy and Philosophy*, an earlier writing. Marx gives this description of the situation of the modern proletariat. The dwellings of the modern worker, he says, are caves, caverns; yes, holes not fit for human habitation.^x But all right, men lived very well in caves. Why not a modern cave dweller organization? It could last for ages. Marx says no. ¹²There is a fundamental difference between the old cave dwellers and the modern proletariat, and he describes the difference by saying that the modern proletarian, as distinguished from the old cave dweller, returns to a cave in an alienated form. We have to come back to this term alienated. The savage in his cavern feels at home in his cave as fish in water, but the cellar habitation of the poor is an inimical power, an inimical power which he cannot and may not regard as his home—where he cannot say after all the hardships outside, when he comes home, “Here I am at home,” [and] for a very simple reason: he is in the home of someone else, in an alien home, namely, which far-fetched fact does Marx think of here? Pardon?

Student: Property tenants.

LS: Yes. In other words, he is a tenant and he can be thrown out every day. So he does not ever have a home as a cave dweller had, and therefore—but to return to the principle which we will gradually explain: the key phenomenon is alienation. That modern workers

^x Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 100.

may have all kinds of modern conveniences, may have many conveniences, many rights which the mass of men never had, is uninteresting for Marx because the fundamental character of his existence is what no existence of oppressed people before was: alienated. Alienated. And we must gradually see to understand. What is the—yes?

Student: Are you saying that in previous class societies according to Marx man was not alienated?

LS: That is a perfectly necessary question, and I'm grateful, although it compels me to make a parenthesis. One sentence: there is an essential difference between all earlier alienation and the modern alienation. There was alienation, yes, but it is so radical, the difference is so radical that you may call the modern world and the modern world alone the alienated world. We come back to that later. But more specifically or concretely, in the case of the bourgeois and the proletariat, the oppressor degrades the oppressed. But that was always; but now something else: the oppressor must simultaneously degrade and enervate the oppressed so that this makes the situation revolting, revolting not only for the spectator who is revolted when he sees a Spaniard chasing the Indians with his bloodhound, but it makes it—the Indian cannot revolt because he is hopeless, you know, he is simply the prey of the bloodhounds. ¹³The situation of the modern proletariat is of this unique character: that it is revolting to the spectator and revolting to the victim. Therefore the corrective is in the situation. In the situation Spaniards-Indians, [there was] no corrective in the situation because they were so powerless [that] they could simply become slaves and remain slaves and try to flatter their masters, perhaps, the individuals, so that he would have it a bit better. But here the corrective is in the situation. The oppressor must degrade the oppressed and make him sensitive of his degradation. That is the disgusting thing.

Now one can illustrate this in various ways. The bourgeois cannot allow the proletariat what the worst slave owner had to allow: that the oppressed became accustomed to his degradation and takes it for granted and thus became reconciled to his slavery, because of the revolutionary character of the relation: it is the constant transformation of the living conditions. More simply, the bourgeois must compel that proletariat to become literate. He can't do his job if he can't read and write, whereas the former oppressors prevented the oppressed from learning to write. But other education is needed: technical education, even to some extent legal education. And so in other words, he must raise the level, not necessarily of external living conditions, but the level of expectations; and also more shocking is the disappointing of these expectations. That, I believe, is the practical point which Marx tries to drive home. People circumstanced as the proletariat will necessarily feel extremely humiliated.

Look at another point. When in olden times one tribe fought another, tribe A won. The males, the surviving males of tribe B were enslaved. The people of tribe B couldn't complain; they would have done exactly the same thing to tribe A. The principle to which both referred was identical: people who are licked in a war deserve to be slaves. Yes? I mean, there was no appeal possible. But now the oppressors go out and tell the oppressed [that] every man is born free and equal. Our society is radically different from all former

societies because it is a just society and still oppressed. That won't do. There is no longer a principle to which—people can no longer oppress with a good conscience. In former times, they could oppress with a good conscience because the oppressed themselves could not deny the right of oppression. That is the new situation, and this teaching of the rights of man—I mean, Marx does not go into that, but it is perfectly in the spirit of Marx or of Hegel to introduce that. That is part of the mechanism. That is not an accident.

In other words, it is not an accident that the older changes were made in the name of positive law. You remember that the war of the Dutch against the Spaniards in late sixteenth century was made on the basis of positive documents, these laws of the Low Countries, and in the English revolution of 1688 to some extent¹⁴, and to some extent even in the Declaration of Independence insofar as there was an appeal made to the English law which allegedly the then-British government had transgressed. But still, certainly in the American Revolution and more visibly still in the French Revolution, there was no appeal to positive law. There was an appeal to natural law, to the right of man as man; and that was not an accident, because the bourgeois revolutions were breaks with the positive, with the inherited, and with the traditional in a way in which no such break had ever occurred. And the bourgeois class is the first radically revolutionary class according to Marx. Therefore they had to appeal to natural law, to universal principles as distinguished from local principles, and these principles, of course they affect everyone in their society. You cannot speak of the rights of man all the time and when there is a revolution and you need the strong arms of the Paris workers and then send them home. Of course you can do that, but that creates difficulties. You see, the situation is different than that of the Spaniard and the Indian, to take this example. Men circumstanced as the proletariat will necessarily feel extremely humiliated and are able successfully to abolish exploitation. That is the message of the *Communist Manifesto*.

In conclusion, communism is evidently reasonable to the proletariat, and I would say in this presentation [that] given the situation as it existed at that time in Western Europe, it is not merely rhetorical. You must not forget, the great change in the situation of the working class came afterward, and at that time such an anticommunist as Carlyle, Thomas Carlyle, said exactly the same thing about what was going on in Manchester and other places as what Engels said.^{xi} As a matter of fact, Carlyle said it before Engels, and Engels's book on *The Condition of the Working Class in England*^{xii} is based on Carlyle, among other[s], but these other people like Carlyle were reactionaries: they tried to go back, say, to the pre-Whiggish ideas, Archbishop Laud,^{xiii} you know, because that was a great story. In the fight between the Stuarts and the Whigs, the Stuarts stood for a social policy. I mean, Tawney has presented this, I think, most clearly in his book on—how is it called, capitalism and the spirit of religion?

Student: *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.^{xiv}

^{xi} See, e.g., Carlyle's essays "Signs of the Times" (1928), *Chartism* (1839), and *Past and Present* (1843).

^{xii} Published in 1845.

^{xiii} William Laud (1573-1645), Archbishop of Canterbury, 1633-45.

^{xiv} R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926).

LS: Religion and—yes. Yes, the first chapter, I think, for that. Well, and so that was the situation. Yes, but now let us go a bit deeper, and again a very simple observation. Communism may be reasonable for the proletariat, but Marx was not a proletarian. He was a poor man, but he was not a proletarian. Why then does Marx take the side of the proletariat? He speaks of the fact that in a certain stage of the development, members of the non-proletarian classes will join the proletariat. Marx's view—Marx joins the proletariat because he thinks that the cause of the proletariat is the cause of man. Communism, in other words, is evidently reasonable according to Marx's claim not only for the proletariat but—I now use the German Hegelian term—*an sich*, in itself: not only for the proletariat, but in itself. And therefore the non-petty human being who thinks beyond his own interest and his interest of the class will be induced by this reason to this participation. What does he—yes?

Student: Well, doesn't that imply a common good or a common interest?

LS: Yes, in a way. The common good—very good, but we have only to improve slightly on your suggestion. ¹⁵As long as there is political society, Marx says, there cannot be a common good because political society means coercive society, and that coercive society exists as long as coercion is needed. And according to Marx's analysis coercion is needed because of the antagonism of classes, and therefore there cannot be a common good. ¹⁶There will be a common good in the final society. The final society will have a common good, but that common [good] will be no problem, and therefore will be no need for coercion.

But I suggest this improvement on your formulation. The fact that Marx takes the side of the communists presupposes one thing: that ¹⁷the cause of the proletariat is the cause of man. Marx is guided by an idea of man. That would be the more acceptable conclusion. You can start from that and now let us see what that means. I give you one formulation which comes also from the *Manifesto*. ¹⁸What will be after the proletariat has won? Universal freedom, surely, but Marx does not leave it at this freedom, this point. Freedom, we have learned from Rousseau or from Kant, the freedom of each requires the freedom of all. That was old stuff by Marx's time. Yes? I mean, you cannot be free, rationally free, if not all are free. That was the key point of Rousseau and Kant. Marx goes beyond that, and that gives us an inkling of what his idea of man is. Not merely the freedom of—Marx is not primarily concerned with freedom in general ¹⁹nor with the freedom to pursue happiness as you see fit . . . the free development, free development, of each. In other words, ²⁰if you have a fancy notion of happiness, a mere idiosyncrasy that you can follow that, that is not a great good. That may be practical because of the complexity of any other solution. It may be convenient. That's not necessarily in itself a sensible position; but that everyone should develop his faculties, that is sensible. Now Marx therefore says this future society is characterized by the fact that the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. That's the formula. There is perhaps another formula which we can use.

Student: What does he mean by “free development”?

LS: Pardon?

Student: . . .

LS: Well, have you never heard of a poor boy who is musically gifted and then he had to become a miner, and he could never develop his musical faculties? Have you heard of that? You can imagine it. And another boy is mathematically gifted; another boy is gifted in other respects and is prevented. Yes? So in all societies as we know them, in all scarcity societies at any rate, quite a few human beings are prevented from developing their faculties. Now what Marx says is: Well, but some men develop their faculties in a tremendous way, take . . . for example. Marx would say this. With all admiration for these great men he would say this: that there is some defect not noticeable perhaps on a purely artistic sphere, but if we take a broader view of the work of art, there is some defect in any development of an individual, however gifted, if it is bought at the price of the nondevelopment of others. Yes? That's the point. Just as according to the more common formula, the freedom of each²¹—the freedom of each in the common sense, freedom before the law and this kind of thing—presupposes the freedom of all. Because what is the ground? Your freedom is not secure except if your freedom is based on a ground which is universal, i.e., which gives freedom to everyone else. That was the simple argument of Rousseau and Kant.

Student: Is there a concept here of love, too, of mutual supporting and whatnot?

LS: That doesn't enter here. I mean, that would be secondary. That is Feuerbach, but that's not Marx. Marx was too tough for this kind of thing, or you can also say too legal. Now, but you must not forget another point, a point of which much is made by present-day liberals: that ²²you cannot recognize potentialities of young children because of the slums in which they live. How many people can never dream of developing their faculties, yes, because of the terrible conditions under which they live? And so the free development of each is possible only in a society based on plenty, but a plenty reasonably distributed—that's the point. Yes? Yes, Mr. Johnson?

Student: Wouldn't this point to something like a technocracy?

LS: Not in Marx or Hegel. There is, of course, these great difficulties at which the whole thing ends: the formula which goes back either to Saint-Simon or to Proudhon, I don't remember at the moment: no government of men, but only administration of things.^{xv}

^{xv} The phrase is usually attributed to Saint-Simon, though the close collaboration of Saint-Simon with his mentee August Comte meant that "the works produced under Saint-Simon's name during the period of his collaboration with Comte were to a large extent Comte's," as H. S. Jones notes in his introduction to August Comte, *Early Political Writings*, ed. and trans. H. S. Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xiv. The phrase occurs in Comte's discussion of scientific politics, in which "[a]rbitrariness therefore necessarily ceases. The government of things replaces that of men." *Plan of Scientific Work*, in *Early Political Writings*, 108. Strauss uses the phrase in his discussion of the classical understanding of the best kind of society: "The

Technocracy is of course government of men, government of men by the technocrats. Now, that the administration of things is simply not possible without government of men was not sufficiently considered by Marx nor by Lenin, because all these terrible things Lenin and so did were of course meant as provisional measures, as you know. But that you cannot have a large society without some people telling others, that's government of men. Yes?

Student: What about taking the position that we were to consider in a free society, wouldn't there be a warmth in receiving this . . .

LS: Yes, that is not developed. You know, Marx—that is always the box into which Marx can put inconvenient questions by simply saying: I can't say what the proletariat as a class will do . . . There are obviously two alternatives. The first is the modern liberal: he who likes to become a musician should become a musician even if he is wholly ungifted for that; or the other is [that] some experts who have judgment on gifts tell him, and that²³ can lead to this conclusion: that someone has a gift for something without having an inclination for it. Yes? It's a hard question, but we come to a passage later when we come to the *German Ideology*, where Marx seems to have had such an idea that if all these necessities which bind us now were away, everyone would develop all faculties, and that gradually everyone would develop all faculties. Everyone would have all the faculties, you see. And the famous story is Lysenko.^{xvi} You know Stalin's case regarding Lysenko was also a sign that Stalin was at least, in spite of his bloodthirsty character, a good theoretician on this point, because it's absolutely necessary for Marxism to accept Lysenko because if we have a biological inheritance of which we will never get rid, the natural inequality and diversity will of course exist as long as human beings exist, and you will always have specialized human beings except some geniuses or fakes. But the majority of men will have special gifts; the division of labor will be a natural phenomenon and²⁴ to properly abolish the division of labor you have to abolish the genes. You have not to refute but to silence the opponents of Lysenko. And it is all Marx who started that.

Student: [Largely inaudible question about experts deciding not only who has talent in music but also how many musicians you really need.]

LS: [Largely inaudible comment to the effect that it's not a social responsibility to prevent someone from being able to make noise.]

classics called the best society the best *politeia*. By this expression they indicated, first of all, that, in order to be good, society must be civil or political society, a society in which there exists government of men and not merely administration of things." *Natural Right and History*, 135-36. See also *The City and Man*, 37-38.

^{xvi} Soviet biologist Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976) was appointed by Stalin as the director of the Institute of Genetics at the USSR's Academy of Sciences, a position he occupied from 1940-1965. By the middle of the 1950s, however, Lysenko's theory that acquired characteristics were inherited was largely rejected even in the Soviet Union, where he played a prominent political role. Because of his prominence, his slow loss of power—from being challenged in the early to middle 1950s to losing his position as director in 1965—received significant media attention in the United States.

Same student: Well, so then your only criterion is the common need.

LS: Yes, but also you have to take into consideration the gifts, you see, because—for the very simple reason that the gifts are implied in the needs. The common needs require excellence, and then you have to consider who is . . . gifted. Yes?

Same student: But ultimately it's a freedom to compete in one's development rather than freedom of development . . .

LS: Yes. There does not develop always what we call the germ, but the germs differ. That's just the empirical situation. The undeveloped human beings differ regarding . . . and now you can say: All right, each should develop his germs equally. You can also say that perpetuates a natural inequality, because men are unequally gifted; there is no question about it. And I don't know of natural inequality. Therefore you have to do something about the germs; i.e., by eugenics of some sort you have to bring about that only a certain high class of human beings will come out and . . . universally gifted. Something of this kind Marx . . . Yes, Mr. Benjamin?

Mr. Benjamin: It seems to me that the basic thing that Marx is doing, though, is not trying to make everybody be everything, but to have nobody be a fake; and what's important is not that they develop all talents but that they not be reduced to the category of either being just a musician or just a political scientist, but being men.

LS: Yes. But still, what does this mean?

Mr. Benjamin: This means basically that they do that which is natural for men, for they as individuals to do—

LS: What is that? I mean, what is that? ²⁵There would be a simple old-fashioned answer: moral virtue. And the question is whether you can here speak of virtue in that sense. You know, all are courageous, moderate, just, gentle, and what have you. That would be—you know, you can't leave it at that, and I think this statement in the first part of the *German Ideology*—in the forenoon a musician, in the afternoon [something else]^{xvii}—is a very terrible giveaway of Marx himself regarding the key difficulty. But we come to that later. ²⁶At any rate, Marx, to come back to the point: Marx's whole argument presupposes an idea of man, because every idea of man implies an idea of human perfection. Without this the whole argument doesn't work. Yes, all right, that's the old story, but what's the difficulty for Marx in his argument? Idea of man.^{xviii}—for example, here, somewhere in the second—towards the end of the second section, two pages before. His opponents say: “Ideas are modified in the course of historical development. Religion, morality, philosophy, politics, law, preserve themselves in this change. In addition, there are

^{xvii} *German Ideology, Marx-Engels Reader*, 160.

^{xviii} The tape was changed at this point. In the original transcript, the transcriber included the following, in square brackets: “[Marx speaks about ideas. What does he say about ideas?],” which is not audible on the remastered audiofile.

eternal verities like freedom, justice, and so on, which are common to all social conditions.”^{xix} Now how does Marx reply to that?

Student: He says the consciousness mirrors the environment.

LS: Yes. First thing: there are no eternal verities. What is the status of the idea of man? That’s the question which we have to raise. All ideas depend on being, because ideas have to do with what Marx calls the consciousness—the consciousness—and the consciousness depends on being. Therefore the consciousness of a feudal serf differs from the consciousness of a modern bourgeois; therefore their ideas differ; therefore their ideas of man differ. The idea of man must be according to Marx a product of history. His idea of man was a new idea, which was hardly more than forty years older than Marx, and I don’t believe that you can trace it beyond Fichte, of whom I spoke in my initial lecture. The idea of man is a historical product. Now what does this mean? We are at the threshold, if this metaphor is bearable, of an old friend of ours. I call that friend by his name: relativism. If all ideas are products of history, then the idea of man as Marx sees it is a product of history and will therefore be superseded in due time by a new idea of man. How does Marx protect himself against that? All ideas are products of history, and²⁷ I make one tacit premise in this argument, namely, that history is an infinite process. And then you have this simple situation. [LS writes on the blackboard] Here are the stages of history, and here you have the ideas corresponding to that, and that goes on infinitely. Of course there might be a cosmic catastrophe and the whole thing might stop, but that would be a purely external end. In itself, history is unfinishable and therefore relativism is necessary. How does Marx protect himself against that? Let me—there is a passage which possibly Mr.—who reads the next paper? Mr. Benjamin, yes, will have to discuss. Communism as the positive *Aufhebung*—this word, how does he translate that word? Preservation. Both preservation, destruction, and surpassing.

Student: Transformation.

LS: Yes, but it is also the consummation: preservation, destruction, and enhancement. “Communism as the positive *Aufhebung* of private property, as of human self-alienation, and therefore as real appropriation of the human essence through man and for man; therefore as complete and conscious return of man to himself as a social, i.e., human, man.”^{xx} The word is return. Return. History does not have the linear character. The linear character means relativism. History has a cyclical character. We must understand that problem not in the old sense. There is a beginning and a return to it, therefore it is finite. Therefore it is finite. You see, when Marx speaks of alienation, he implies of course that man was originally with himself or himself, not alienated. In the beginning man is with himself; at the end he is again with himself. ²⁸In between there is alienation. You don’t believe that? Tell me your objection.

Student: [Inaudible reply ending with a question about whether this implies the return to nature.]

^{xix} *Communist Manifesto, Marx-Engels Reader*, 489.

^{xx} Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 84.

LS: No, that I didn't talk of—there is something in common with a return to nature, but it is not a Marxist word.

Student: That's true, but man isn't alienated in the state of nature and also is not alienated in the classless society, but I think the differences between them are too great to say that this is simply return.

LS: Yes, sure, that is just as in Marx's teacher, Hegel: the beginning and the end are amazingly different. A man returning to himself ²⁹having fully exhausted the possibilities of alienation is a much higher creature than in the beginning; but still, if there were no such beginning there would be no guarantee of the end. ³⁰Surely it has something to do with the state of nature, although—and the proof is very simple. Why was Engels so anxious to prove the fact of original communism? The notion of original communism, private property, final communism, corresponds strictly to Rousseau's state of nature, despotic societies, a natural society on the human level, i.e., the modern republic. That is necessary. Marx, in contradistinction to the ordinary evolution—well, you know what happened. After Marx, after these early writings, at the same time as Marx published his first economic book [in] 1859, there appeared another book, if I am not mistaken. We were reminded of it very forcibly last year on this campus: Darwin.^{xxi} And Marx accepted Darwin with enthusiasm, and of course Engels in a way still more; and therefore we know Marxism generally in the Darwinistic transformation.^{xxii} That's not the original form of Marxism, and if we take the vulgar Darwinian view there is of course no question of self-alienation, of alienation. Man was a brute, ya? And you know these famous monkeys who were compelled by floods to—or, no, not by floods; first there was the jump. No, what happened? They had to jump down from the trees, I believe, and then they had to walk on their feet, yes, and so gradually they became human—you know, verbal symbols and all that. [Laughter] That is not the Marxist view because once you say these men were not with themselves, they were not even human. Ya? And therefore you can at least try to understand the process in purely progressive terms: from these half-monkeys to Charles Darwin, ever-better fellows. ³¹Then of course you have also an infinite process. There is, you know, there is no end, no such incision possible as Marx has in mind. In Marx, the mere—I'm not concerned with this passage. The very term alienation implies that man was originally not alienated, otherwise it doesn't make sense. Yes?

^{xxi} Strauss refers to the Darwin Centennial Celebration held at the University in November 1959. See <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/collex/exhibits/chicago-celebrates-darwin/>.

^{xxii} Contemporary scholars argue that after a brief initial enthusiasm Marx became critical of Darwin's views, and that the connection often drawn between the two thinkers was made at Marx's graveside by Engels. See, e.g., Francis Wheen, *Karl Marx: A Life* (W.W. Norton, 1999), 364-69; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (Harvard University Press, 2016), 563-67.

Student: I don't see that. It seems to me that all it implies is that man has a basic human nature and he is alienated from that basic human nature. I don't see what it has to do with whether he ever was not alienated.

LS: Pardon?

Same student: I don't understand what history has to do with it. I mean, all alienation means is that man has a basic human nature and is in some sense alienated from that basic human nature, but it doesn't have to mean that at some point—

LS: That is really misleading. Marx—I mean, that there is a certain basic human nature like the digestive system and the five senses, of course Marx would admit. But it is a misleading term for Marx, because when you speak of the basic human nature you imply that this basic human nature is the key for everything human, and that Marx absolutely denies. History, the changes are much more important than the basic human nature; therefore psychology in the ordinary sense of the term is uninteresting. You can say there is a basic human situation: men living together with other men from nature, yes? I mean, in the Marxian “from nature”: producing, producing. This is the fundamental situation which always exists. Out of this—and that is the key to everything, but as the key it is not sufficient; we have to make some further steps. You have to understand how this basic phenomenon, men in society producing what they need for living, produces law, produces government, produces religion, produces philosophy, and goes this particular course which is called the history of the world, culminating in a return on a much higher level to the same situation where men as social beings commonly produce their means of living. But ³²there were some others who had difficulties. Yes?

Student: Are we to understand your point about relativism to be a criticism of Marx in that—how he, in terms of his own theory, put forth a system of history which is supposed to be absolute truth for him in terms of his own theory, that any theory or any ideas are a product of history? Is this essentially the point that you were making?

LS: I didn't state it, but I—³³lest you think I evade an issue, I say that's exactly where I'm going.

Same student: Well, then, I wonder, if this were a legitimate criticism to . . . Marx, whether he did not in fact have a relativist humility to his own theory?

LS: Yes. I mean, humility is a laudatory term, the appropriateness of which would have to be established because there is as much arrogance as humility in relativism: “We know better.”^{xxiii}

Same student: Well, then I'll use another term. [Laughter]

LS: Please. Yes, in other words, that he was—

^{xxiii} Strauss's tone suggests that he is speaking in the voice of the relativists.

Same student: He recognized that his theory was merely a product of a given historical stage.

LS: No. That—³⁴I mean, there was one man who was clever enough to try that; clever enough—I mean, he was exposed to Western thought in our century and he is I think a man of unusual intelligence. I don't believe there is another Marxist writing in a Western language who comes within hailing distance of that fellow. His things are not accessible in English as far as I know—in German, also in Hungary: Lukács.^{xxiv} He did that in a very interesting book called *History and Class Consciousness*, 1922, and what happened? He was thrown out, naturally, and he had to live it down. He had to eat his words and had to become the most abominable (how do you call this?) flatterer of political—

Same student: Sycophant.

LS: Sycophant—yes, that's the word—of Stalin . . . And I must confess that purely theoretically speaking, Stalin was of course right, because Lukács's interpretation would mean in effect that Marxism will prove to be in the end an untrue doctrine which was socially immensely powerful. In other words, according to his interpretation, Marxism is as true today as the theories of the French Revolution were in 1770s.^{xxv} Now of these theories, Marx had found that they were eminently useful in order to prepare the French Revolution, but of course they were [not] true; they proved to be wrong. So Marxism³⁵ will be excellent for bringing about the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but once this change has taken place we will awake and see something wholly unexpected: Stalin has come up.

Same student: Well, along—right on this point, though: I can't produce the documentation, but I recall that there were a number of instances in which Marx chided his followers at the end of his life and said that they should not become Marxists, and the auspices of this person here probably are a product of what Marx—

LS: No. He meant by Marxists stupid people who memorized without understanding certain things he said, not—he did not reject his doctrine. Marx was a very tough fellow in this respect. But I—yes?

Same student: There's further evidence, though, even in the introduction by Engels to the *Manifesto*, in which he points out that certain of Marx's evaluations of the relation of the Communist party to other parties at the time the *Manifesto* was written of course have been superseded by events; and then Engels said: But then the *Manifesto* has become a historical document which we have no longer any right to alter.

LS: That is not—that is directed only against what the people in Russia now call . . . and that means that you stick to every formula of Marx and regard it as the final truth, and that is of course nonsense . . . The doctrine as stated by Marx regarding the process was

^{xxiv} Georg Lukács (1885-1971), Hungarian philosopher and literary theorist.

^{xxv} Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968).

wrong. Marx underestimated the terrific power of survival and productivity of capitalism. The whole imperialistic phase was not—at least not sufficiently seen of Marx, and the so-called imperialism studied by Rosa Luxemburg and later on by Lenin^{xxvi} have become—therefore they call it Marxism-Leninism, number one, and that goes without saying. But the fundamental point. The fundamental point: ³⁶I mean production as the fundamental phenomenon and all other things derivative from that, ya? Secondly, that this struggle, the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie is *the* final struggle which will be followed by the communist society at a certain stage but which one cannot in detail predict, but that it will lead to the classless society. And this classless society has not merely the character of a very convenient and equitable system of production and consumption but will be *the* fulfillment of all hopes of man. That has never changed, neither in Marx nor afterward. I mean, that you have for the first time now a leader of communism who does not even claim to be a theorist—I mean Khrushchev^{xxvii}—is of course very interesting, and there are all kinds of things going on there which don't fit into the theory, you know, the many things which are pointed out by critics. That I know, but that Marx regarded the fundamental view he developed as final, there can be not the slightest question.

I read to you another passage. Marx says the theory of communism is not enough. The real thing is the establishment of it, which will be brought by history but we must, “nevertheless, we must regard it as a real progress that we have acquired a consciousness which transcends or surpasses [the German word is *überbieten*—LS]—which transcends or surpasses the historical movement.”^{xxviii} We know the end. That this end was interpreted by Marx later as the end only of prehistory, and [that] the real history is what man does in classless society does not affect the crucial point. The Marxian doctrine is meant to be the final doctrine regarding what is known to man as a historical process, and therefore regarding the essence of man. There is no question about that. I mean, ³⁷fundamentally these are only parts of the tactical changes, that the bourgeoisie was cleverer and more inventive than anyone believed, or at least than Marx believed. Ya? And therefore the development of imperialism first, and then the more recent enormous rises in productivity which were in no way foreseen by Marx, so that the capitalist society is no longer dependent on a literally understood world market in the way in which Marx took it for granted that it would be. All this kind of thing, that belongs to the secondary things; it does not affect the overall prospect by virtue of which communism is what it is. Yes. Here, you were the other one.

Student: When you used the words “cyclical view of history,” were you using that term in a fairly limited sense, in a nonusual sense? It seems to me Marx has a very linear view of history in comparison to the Greek mythic view of—

^{xxvi} Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913); V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917).

^{xxvii} Nikita Khrushchev served as premier of the Soviet Union from 1958 to 1964.

^{xxviii} Strauss's translation. Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844. See *Marx-Engels Reader*, 99.

LS: Oh God. Well, I—excuse me. These simple formulas which you use are known to me, and I did it with my eyes open. I used it as something which sounded to begin with as a paradox. Surely not cyclical in that old sense, but nor is Marx's view simply linear progressive. That's the point; and if I use the term cyclical I am on very good grounds, because that is a Hegelian term from which the Marxian notion stems. This is a cycle, the cycle alone. When you arrive at the end, at the point from which you started, then you know you have finished the way; and for Hegel too the end is infinitely richer than the beginning, but only the fact that you return to the beginning without thinking of the beginning—are compelled to return to it—gives you a guarantee of the end.

As I said, the very term alienation proves that this is an essential part of the Marxist teaching. Since man is originally by himself or with himself, i.e., not alienated, he is primarily a being which produces in society things for use. Now what does this mean? If you start from a simple commonsensical view of man, man begins [with] no traditions, no inheritances, no alienation in any form. There is the productive element, all right, but surely he does not produce merely turnips or acorns or whatever it is; he also produces thoughts about the whole in which he lives. Lightning and thunder: he doesn't limit himself to run away; he thinks somehow about it—foolish thoughts, unscientific thoughts, surely, but he produces myths in the same moment in which he produces tools. Now if that were so and that would simply be the commonsensical view, then man is in a strict sense alienated from the very beginning, because he is given over to these products of his mind which I called now myths. That the myths come later and reflect the primary production, the turnips or the tools, yes, that is only another formulation for the fact that man is originally not alienated, because if these people catch a hare or collect acorns, whatever they do, they know what they are doing. They are fully at home in their world. Yes? But when they say there is some ancestor whom they haven't buried or what, [or] who is sending the thunder, then they are alienated. ³⁸Do you see that? ³⁹There is an essential connection between the concept of alienation and the primacy of material production. The intellectual production is already the alienation, and the end of the process will be that you have an intellectual production which destroys the alienated intellectual production, i.e., all myths, religions, philosophies: Marxism. There is an essential connection between these two points.

But now I come to the question with which I must conclude this argument: How can we know that man is originally by himself and with himself, i.e., a being which is so to speak fully enlightened, knows—I mean, doesn't say anything about things which he doesn't understand, and knows hunger, food. Food: so testing, by trial and error he finds acorns are good and certain kinds of mushrooms are bad and so on, and then—and he produces. But he is not basically in error. That is the point. That man is not alienated means also in other words that he is not basically in error. How do we know that this is man's original state or, in other words, how do we know that the production of things—well, food, shelter, and so on—is prior to the production of myths? The whole Marxian doctrine depends on that, because if the production of myths is coeval with the production of things, then the production of myths might affect the production of things, and then it is impossible to give a materialistic philosophy of history. Then you must proceed in a much more cautious way. More simply stated—but I think that the more simple statement

is less clear than the one which I have chosen: Why is the so-called economic activity the fundamental activity? That question we must answer, because that was all presupposed.⁴⁰ We have first an idea of man. This idea of man is exposed to the great difficulty that all ideas are historically conditioned, and therefore in Marx the idea of man may be provisional and to be superseded by an entirely opposite idea which no one can know, naturally. Marx disposes of that by conceiving of the historical process as a fundamentally cyclical process, and that is implied in the notion [that] the historical process is one of alienation and abolition of the alienation. Man alienates himself first into products and then he recovers control of his products, takes them back. That is the abolition of alienation.

But alienation implies that man is originally with and by himself originally; and that means more concretely that the production of things is prior to the production of thoughts, of myths. This in its turn presupposes that the so-called economic activity is man's fundamental activity. What is the basis for this assertion?⁴¹ What is the reason underlying, the seemingly plausible reason? The seemingly plausible reason is that we must first eat before we can think. Yes, that's true. But that of course is based on a very grave error if one regards this as sufficient, because what comes first in time is not necessarily the decisive thing. The condition is not the essence. In other words, this beast called man which must eat before he thinks yet has the capacity to think already before it eats, that belongs to it. And that⁴² in order fully to activate the power of thinking he must first eat does not mean that you can explain what man does afterward, after he is no longer starving, in terms of the food or the productive activity preceding the thinking activity. Therefore Marx must give as an account of why he can nevertheless say [that] although this food-producing being is from the very beginning a thinking being, he must give us an account [of] why nevertheless the food producing activity or the productive activity—generally speaking, the production of things—is more basic, i.e., not merely prior in time, than the production of thoughts. Yes?

Student: This statement that man was originally not alienated; I'm not sure what it originally referred to. What is meant by the . . .

LS: Well, we cannot—obviously we cannot have any empirical knowledge of that; that goes without saying. No documents can possibly lead us back, yes, and if we find stones or instruments and so, they don't tell us enough; they don't tell us anything of what men thought. So that is a construction, and that is wholly legitimate, because if man has come into being there was not yet any tradition, any accumulation of experience or errors. Yes? We can't help thinking of that, although we can never get a scientific answer to it. There are two alternatives at least of interest to us here. One is to say man was from the outset an animal capable of thinking in a way in which no other living being on earth is capable of it, and this must have played a role from the very beginning in ways which we cannot find out in detail. In other words, men at the beginning must have been as much open to the strangenesses, thunders, earthquakes, whatever have you, wholly unknown strange animals and whatever it may be—strange diseases, whatever—and must have tried to give an account of that. This account could not, for reasons which I believe will be

universally admitted, but have been mythical accounts and not scientific accounts. You would admit that.

So in other words, from this point of view the myth production is coeval with the material production. That would seem to be the most natural suggestion, but Marx says: No, the material production is more fundamental than the myth production. Now if he means to say the material production ⁴³must precede in time the myth production because you cannot think, however crazily, if you are starving, that is an irrelevant consideration, as I tried to show, because what is prior in time, if we want to speak of it that way, is the human constitution, because that food-producing ⁴⁴being had already a human stomach and human constitution also in other respects. And Marx owes this reasoning why the thing-production is essentially more fundamental, or the fundamental compared with the myth production or the thought production—to the honor of Marx we must say he did not shirk that responsibility and tried to show *why* economics is metaphysics. That is only another expression for what I said. Economics, let us say, has to do with thing-production, not with thoughts-production, and economics is a science of thing-production in its various stages. This science of thing-production is according to Marx (although Marx does not use the term) the fundamental science: metaphysics. That sounds a very fantastic assertion, but it is also—and it is a fantastic assertion, but on the other hand I believe it does more honor to Marx than to make out of Marx a positivist, you know, a man who refuses to think about the fundamental issues. You know, in the vulgar—in the later form of course it is so: there is of course no metaphysics, that goes without saying, not even in the young Marx. But what he proposes in fact in some of his youthful writing is such an equation, and I will try to explain this next time. We don't have the time now for that. But do you see—do we agree as to the problem? Do we agree as to the problem? Rabbi Weiss?

Rabbi Weiss: What is the idea of man as a person who can develop his potentialities, his capacities . . . this isn't the beginning of a process.

LS: ⁴⁵I will answer the question as I understood it, although I know that I have not understood it. The idea of the development of the human faculties is at least as old as Aristotle, but the question is, of course, in Aristotle it was understood [that] these faculties are very different in different human beings; hence, a hierarchy of these faculties. And that there could be a full development of the faculties of each was from Aristotle's point of view both undesirable and impossible. So we are concerned then with a more precise formulation: that a just society is a society in which each develops all his faculties and where perhaps men have become equal as regards these faculties. In this form—I do not know the doctrine earlier than Fichte, ^{xxix} a German philosopher a generation before Marx; and Marx knew this man, but that was not tried yet.

Rabbi Weiss: What I meant was if at the end of the historical process the goal is the development of each person's faculties, and this is in some sense a return to the beginning—

^{xxix} Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right* (1796).

LS: In some sense.

Rabbi Weiss: —and at the same time the beginning; in the beginning man is basically just a creature who produces things, well, then how does—

LS: Oh, that's easy. I mean surely these men who are supposed to develop their faculties in the classless societies are altogether the product of that process. These savages at the beginning who lived in caves, yes, and ate raw meat, and I don't know, and all this kind of thing, they of course could not possibly develop any faculties except those of running, hitting, ⁴⁶and cutting, and this kind of thing. Surely not, because of scarcity. It was a return only in one point. These first men, yes, these first men were not alienated. They were not under the spell of their own creations. In all history man has been under the spell of his own creations. Now I'm sorry, I must tell you what Marx means by that—I mean, although it must hurt your feelings. God, for example, is of course from Marx's point of view such a creation. And all gods, all mythical beings. But not only that: ⁴⁷the human institutions—the state, the society, government, law—these are all human creation, and man regarded them not as his products but as somehow above him. And finally the thing ends in the rule of money, of the economic laws, whichever side you would think, which according to Marx are ultimately (but only ultimately) man's creations insofar as they depend—there would be no economic laws without capital, and capital itself is a human creation; and only by taking it back, by reappropriating what man had originally put out of himself—that's the image: man exteriorates something, externalizes it. Yes? [That's the] first step. And the second step: he regards this external as his gods, as his ideals, his standards, what have you. Yes? That is the alienation. Man regards himself as a creature of alien powers, whereas ⁴⁸these powers are his creations; and that is not abolished according to Marx by the scientific consciousness, which to some extent takes these things away, but because the most subtle and refined form of alienation is that of capitalist society where money and capital rule, and apparently as a kind of eternal laws. And the end of the process is the reappropriation: man recognizes himself to be the creator of gods. By this very fact, he takes them back.

Now this notion of—and that will become clear in Mr. Benjamin's paper—he left, so I can say that [laughter]—this is Hegel, only Hegel did not speak of man; Hegel spoke of the mind, not simply the human mind. But the fundamental notion is this. There is the fundamental phenomenon: the beginning is mind. Mind alienates itself, and the key alienation for Hegel is nature. Here this is alienated mind, but then there is also a kind of alienation on the human level. And the end of the process in Hegel too is that man recognizes that everything is mind or the work of the mind. There is nothing outside of mind. That is the Hegelian schema which Marx takes over, replacing Mind with a capital M, which Hegel can also call God, therefore replacing Mind by [man]. That makes it in many respects more commonsensical, because every one of us knows human beings, and no one has seen Mind with a capital M. Therefore⁴⁹ also the crude language which he frequently uses: the man of common sense talking about these absurd German speculators. And yet, as Marx recognized all the time in very powerful passages, Hegel, he says, took care of the self-alienation but still in an alienated form. Hegel saw that the fundamental phenomenon is alienation, but he did not see it sufficiently because of his

erroneous beginning, [which was] not with the true beginning, man, but with the fantastic beginning, Mind with a capital M.

Now the key problem in Hegel—if I may mention this in passing, and that must be the end of what I say today—is nature. That man and the characteristically human has a mind character, consciousness character, that is not too difficult to grant. But what about nature? What about nature? A hopeless problem. Hegel must say, in order to maintain his “quote monistic thesis,” that this is alienated mind. That was the downfall of Hegel historically speaking, this philosophy of nature. Then Marx replaces Mind by man. Well, you can’t say trees are men, that rocks, mountains are men; and yet Marx ascribes to man what Hegel ascribes to Mind-God.^{xxx} You see, in a certain sense it still makes sense to say nature is mind, using the traditional formula, because he’s a creature of God, of Mind. Yes? To that extent, it makes sense. But when you replace Mind by man,⁵⁰ what do trees, mountains, elephants—it can’t of course be said that is alienated man . . . alienated in the French sense . . . if you say that. But Marx must say this, in a way—not so stupidly literally, but he must say it in a way. How can he prove that this is in a way man? Because it is by its nature susceptible of being conquered by man. It becomes in this sense human. It becomes material for man and therewith man stamps it⁵¹ as human. And in this sense, and I believe I can show this more clearly next time, it is so that man as the conqueror of nature is a god, takes the place of God. Ya, but if this is so, the science of man is metaphysics.

But in what capacity, may I ask, does man conquer nature? Not as speculator—there he leaves nature alone—but as worker, as industrialist, as engineer, as a “quote economic being.” So it is the economic activity of man, the material production of man, which establishes the unity of man and non-man; and since that is the key division of things, man and non-man, and the humanly fine thought is the highest thought, and that highest thought is material production, economics is metaphysics. There is still a fantastic thought, naturally, but given the premises which Marx has and which so many today would accept without any difficulty, that there are only men and non-human things, the question of their unity—I mean, either you reduce man to non-man by this simplistic formula,⁵² there is only quantitative difference between man and beast, and then you come into great absurdities which Marx always avoided. Then you have the question of their unity, and then Marx is at least respectable [in] that he tried.⁵³ I don’t believe his solution is tenable. Now is there—Mr. Cropsey, I was very unjust to you. We are supposed to teach justice—

Mr. Cropsey: Do we have to teach it by example?

LS: The only convincing way.

¹ Deleted “someone is”

² Deleted “and in 18”

³ Deleted “hunger strikes this kind of”

⁴ Deleted “that was”

⁵ Deleted “one”

^{xxx} Strauss says “Mind-dash-God”

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- 6 Deleted “in older”
 - 7 Deleted “Rousseau had”
 - 8 Deleted “every”
 - 9 Deleted “in a very general”
 - 10 Deleted “The proletariat”
 - 11 Deleted “they behaved”
 - 12 Deleted “this”
 - 13 Deleted “in this situation”
 - 14 Deleted “the old it was”
 - 15 Deleted “Under the condition of”
 - 16 Deleted “Therefore we have to use”
 - 17 Deleted “communism”
 - 18 Deleted “what is that”
 - 19 Deleted “Marx.”
 - 20 Deleted “not”
 - 21 Deleted “which means that you can”
 - 22 Deleted “by”
 - 23 Deleted “might possibly”
 - 24 Deleted “the division of labor cannot”
 - 25 Deleted “I mean”
 - 26 Deleted “I said, yes”
 - 27 Deleted “and that—we make one tacit premise”
 - 28 Deleted “in the”
 - 29 Deleted “after fully”
 - 30 Deleted “that’s not”
 - 31 Deleted “but from”
 - 32 Deleted “we must”
 - 33 Deleted “in order”
 - 34 Deleted “no, that”
 - 35 Deleted “will bring about”
 - 36 Deleted “the relation of”
 - 37 Deleted “that the tactical changes—and even, and—because”
 - 38 Deleted “Now what Marx”
 - 39 Deleted “if man were”
 - 40 Deleted “but I hope you—in other words, it is”
 - 41 Deleted “If, well, there is a kind—what would you say if you were”
 - 42 Deleted “he must first”
 - 43 Deleted “must be”
 - 44 Deleted “thing which”
 - 45 Deleted “Oh well, I don’t get—I mean”
 - 46 Deleted “and you know”
 - 47 Deleted “man”
 - 48 Deleted “he”
 - 49 Deleted “Marx is very, you know—therefore”
 - 50 Deleted “and what”
 - 51 Deleted “with”
 - 52 Deleted “man is only”
 - 53 Deleted “Whether his”

Session 6: Missing audiofile

[Transcriber's Note: At the time when this set of transcriptions was begun, one tape appeared to be missing which was not subsequently located. It was believed to be a recording of the sixth meeting of the seminar held April 18, 1960, during which Strauss apparently lectured on Marx's early writings.]

Session 7: April 20, 1960
The German Ideology

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —because of your supersonic speed.ⁱ Now when you said at the beginning “a new philosophy,” I thought that this showed a basic fallacy because—but later on I thought that you said this deliberately. In other words, you are aware of the fact that Marx did not regard these thoughts as philosophic and yet you said, criticizing Marx, they are philosophic. Right or wrong is another matter. Philosophy cannot be avoided. But ¹you gave three arguments why philosophy cannot be avoided at a certain part of your argument, and you spoke so quick[ly] that I couldn’t follow.

Student: Yes, well, in that part I wasn’t talking about the impossibility. I said that I thought Marx had tried to prove three things in the course of the *German Ideology* and that the three were incompatible, and that this was at the heart of the argument.

LS: Yes, all right. Yes, but which were these three points?

Same student: I think that he tried to prove, first, that philosophy is impossible, that it couldn’t be pursued, the reason being that men are determined in a certain way and therefore thought is not free.

LS: But one could not say the conclusion—I mean, from the fact that philosophy was actual, it follows that it was possible?

Same student: I think he would deny that, because I think he would say—well, philosophy was not actual in the sense that philosophers thought it was actual.

LS: But still, in a sense it was actual. Otherwise Marx couldn’t criticize it.

Same student: Well, i.e., in a trivial sense it’s actual, in existence.

LS: Yes, that is not so simple; but what were the two other points?

Same student: I thought the second way ²he tried to rebut philosophy was to prove it trivial; that is, by saying it didn’t really matter and that it didn’t change the course of history.

LS: I see. All right. Yes?

Same student: And the third argument was that it was difficult because men’s view of reality was conditioned by their particular economic situation, and therefore men

ⁱ Strauss responds to Mr. Kesselman’s paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

differently situated have a different view of reality and therefore couldn't communicate with each other.

LS: Yes, that is what you—

Student: They would talk about different things.

LS: Yes, but strictly speaking, that would be a kind of proof of impossibility, the last point, not only a difficulty. Yes, but would you not also have to consider this point, that according to Marx the philosophic possibilities have been exhausted by Hegel? I mean, in other words, whenever you try to philosophize, you will either be a Hegelian or pre-Hegelian; and therefore you come into a dialectical whirlpool which leads you eventually to Hegel, and Hegel is demonstrably wrong. Therefore the critique of Hegel is so crucially important for Marx. You remember that there were at least two remarks which we read last time to this effect. ³Marx accepts Hegel's bold view: the Hegelian philosophy is the end or the peak of philosophy.

There were two points where I'm not sure that you are right. Is consciousness according to Marx here essentially alienation, as you presented it?

Same student: No. I think he said that consciousness—the appearance of consciousness signals the appearance of alienation, but they weren't identical.

LS: Ah ha. Because otherwise the communist society would be a return to a prehuman state so that—so consciousness is secondary, but not in itself alienation.

Same student: Right. [Largely inaudible remark regarding the analytical scheme]

LS: Yes, I recognize the difficulty. First you have the relations of production, which would always remain. That's not abandoned. Then this gives rise to the political set-up, and then finally consciousness in the more abstract sense, to which belongs religion, poetry, philosophy, and so on. Now politics will disappear in the communist society, but thinking will not disappear. Yes? ⁴I think this difficulty was reflected in what you said. How—I mean, if we have this order: production, politics, thinking, why should only the middle one, politics, disappear, and not the third one? Yes? This, I believe, you had in mind. But there was another point which had to do with the question of natural inequality and there I did not—what precisely does Marx teach on that subject?

Same student: I don't think that there's very much mention of it at all in the *German Ideology*, but I think that when he treats of property it comes out; it's implied that the natural inequalities of men aren't so great, the reason being that he ascribes all inequality of property to inequalities that derive from social relations. And therefore he doesn't ascribe any inequality of property to men's talents or to the inequality of men's talents.

LS: Yes. Well, is this not a defensible thesis? I mean, must one be really very bright to be very rich?

Same student: Well, even—it takes a certain talent. I’m not sure—

LS: Yes, sure, the talent to acquire property, of which Madison speaks ⁵in the famous passage in *Federalist* number 10.ⁱⁱ But from time to time you hear big businessmen talk, and they write and so. Do they strike you as the most intelligent members of society? I think that, with all due respect to big business, I would not go so far. So, but still there are differences of intelligence, differences of talent, without any question. How do they arise according to Marx?

Same student: Well, they might—I said I don’t think he treats of this in the *German Ideology*, but to be consistent, I think he would have to argue that in some way or another society is responsible—

LS: Well, let us then come to that when we read these passages. Now there is only one purely historical point of information. We have read, discussed last time Marx’s criticism of Hegel, and here he deals with the post-Hegelian Germans, and the most famous among them is of course Feuerbach, ⁶who is also the primary target here. But the situation was generally this: the Hegelian school split after Hegel’s death into two schools, the so-called old Hegelians and the young Hegelians. The old Hegelians were those who stuck to the letter of Hegel’s teaching and gave it even a more conservative interpretation than it had in Hegel himself, so more emphatically monarchistic, more emphatically religious than Hegel himself was. And the young Hegelians brought out the revolutionary implications of Hegel, and therefore they turned away from the letter of Hegel by asserting that Hegel had deliberately accommodated himself to the Prussian state of his time—and this was not the true Hegel, that was only the appearance of Hegel. What does Marx say on this subject, by the way, ⁷or does he not discuss it in the first part? I really don’t remember.

Same student: Well, he touches on it, but . . .

LS: Yes, but Marx denies that Hegel accommodated himself. He takes him literally. In this respect, he agrees with the old Hegelians. But still, since Hegel was finished according to Marx, and especially by Feuerbach, the old Hegelians were of no interest. The interesting people were the young Hegelians, and there are two individuals whom he discusses in the *German Ideology*: Bruno Bauer and Stirner (S-t-i-r-n-e-r).ⁱⁱⁱ Unfortunately these parts are not translated in this easily accessible translation, and so we can’t read them here. The critique of Stirner is of a certain interest and I may speak of it when we come to the third part of the *German Ideology*, but before I turn to a somewhat coherent discussion of the first part of the *German Ideology* I would first like to find out what Mr. Cropsey thinks about Mr. Kesselman’s paper.

JC: I was wondering if . . . the question of how Marx disposes or fails to dispose of the question of nature. Because he speaks of it . . . man . . . with respect to nature . . .

ⁱⁱ “The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate . . .”

ⁱⁱⁱ *German Ideology*, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 166-69.

Mr. Kesselman: I think he has a somewhat relative view. On the one hand, I think he shows that society must develop because of the needs of men and their dependence on nature, and therefore the implication would be that they choose to go about . . . that's clear. And on the other, he seems to look to this, the original condition of man ⁸as to some extent the goal of the future development of society too, so that I don't think he treats it here . . .

JC: Yes, that is a problem here and I think it will become intensified when we take to the economic writings proper, but I thought it might be worth mentioning here because in one passage later in the first part of the *German Ideology* Marx speaks of the need for man so to speak to get on top of nature strictly speaking. As appropriators, in fact we form it in a way, control it. And then, but in another respect what he seems to drive at is a kind of return to a natural condition, although admittedly on a higher level; and then still another complication is added by the economic factor, where it turns out that the whole economic apparatus has to be formed in the light of a strictly natural relation between men and the non-human things around him. The natural relation is the essence of the productive act, and that act of production is a kind of return; but properly analyzed the most fundamental facts of nature, i.e., the . . . act of matter in motion. I would really wonder if Marx ever got himself altogether straightened out with respect to that question, but I thought that it might be useful to bring it up here . . . a place . . . that it might be discussed.

LS: Well, I think that Marx indicated the general answer to that question in what we discussed last time, especially the "Theses on Feuerbach."^{iv} The "Theses on Feuerbach" are a critique of Feuerbach as a materialist, and this implies already Marx is not simply a materialist. He agrees in crucial points with the idealists—that is, needless to say, chiefly the German idealists—and the difference is this: idealism stands for activity, for labor, for production, for the conquest of nature. So the materialists so to speak see only the power of nature and man as one natural being among others. Marx—that is his return to nature—against the Germans, ⁹the German idealists, he says man is a sensual being, a natural being and not a mere self-consciousness in his essence. But this particular natural being which is man is distinguished from all other natural beings by the fact that he can revolt against nature. This unity of the two is characteristic of Marx and, as will become gradually clearer (not today, I think), that is the essence of communism as Marx understands it. We only have to consider the moral equivalents of the two things to see that, the moral equivalents being for materialism, pleasure; for idealism, duty. The unity of both: that is the Marxian moral doctrine, but I cannot develop this now because it would at the moment be only confusing.

Now to repeat, man is that part of nature which alone can revolt against the whole of nature. That is, I think—Marx is not the first to have this thought, but Marx says it probably clearer than any of his predecessors. And so the power of nature, to repeat, that is the materialist heritage as Marx understands it. The conquest of nature is the idealistic

^{iv} The eleven short "Theses on Feuerbach" were written in 1845. The discussion Strauss refers to occurred in session 6, which was not recorded.

heritage, again in his interpretation. Or the German philosophers also were the philosophers of freedom versus nature, yes. This freedom means the freedom of man to revolt against nature, to say “no” to nature, to conquer nature. That is an essential part of the Marxist doctrine,¹⁰ but whereas according to the German doctrine this is made possible by a fundamental ontological difference between man and non-man, the difference between freedom and nature—freedom and nature, between the consciousness and nature—this difference is no longer stated in these terms by Marx. And therefore he can sometimes use very crude materialistic formulas, but he doesn’t mean them quite as crudely as the ordinary materialists of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries did.

Now there is one point I think I should add in connection, which is important regarding the fight against the German ideologists. There is one simple formula which characterizes these German ideologists, i.e., the people left of Hegel—the right is absolutely uninteresting to Marx—atheism, conscious open atheism, is characteristic of all these men, starting from Feuerbach. That means, in other words, Hegel, to say nothing of the earlier philosophers, idealistic philosophers, are disguised theologians, even disguised Christian theologians. And the whole controversy partly takes on this form: that everyone tries to discover the secret theologian in his opponent, and Marx finds that Stirner is a disguised Christian theologian; and Stirner replies in kind, and then it becomes of course a sheer play at this point. But still, the atheism is the common basis and the question is only, one can almost say: ¹¹Which atheism is the most consistent one? For example, Stirner, who Marx discusses in the third part (the third part is not what is called the third part in the translation; that is the fourth and fifth part), Stirner simply says: As long as you have to do with any universals you are still a theist. For example—well, Feuerbach had said God or gods are creations of man, of man, and the task consists now after this delusion has been seen through to take back these delusions to man and no longer love a product of man ¹²into which man has alienated himself, but to love man. Philanthropy instead of theanthropy.

Now, but what is man? There are only individuals, but every demand, every imperative, every notion of man’s destiny speaks in terms of universals, and according to Stirner it is therefore disguised theology. Strictly speaking, you can’t say more than “Be thyself” [and] not: Do not assimilate yourself to some universal ideal; that’s only a disguised god, to some universal concept. All such ideals transcend the real men and are therefore crypto-theological. The only thing possible to say is “Be thyself,” which of course suffers from the defect that it is again a universal, as Marx doesn’t fail to point out. But we must now turn to the details of *The German Ideology*. Let’s read—Mr. Reinken, do you have the copy? You are such a superb reader. Take the first sentence.¹³

Mr. Reinken:

Hitherto men have constantly made up for themselves false conceptions about themselves, about what they are and what they ought to be.

LS: Yes. You see, hitherto always; from now on no longer. From now on it is possible for men to have true conceptions of themselves. Yes? That’s implied. Yes. Go on.

Mr. Reinken:

They have arranged their relationships according to their ideas of God, of normal man, etc. The phantoms of their brains have got out of their hands. They, the creators, have bowed down before their creations. Let us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas, doctrines, imaginary beings, under the yoke of which they are pining away. Let us revolt against the rule of thoughts. Let us teach man, says one, to exchange these imaginations for thoughts which correspond to the essence of man; says the second, to take up a critical attitude with them; says the third, to knock them out of their heads and—existing reality will collapse.^v

LS: Yes. That is Marx's brief description of the spirit of Germany after Hegel. Yes? Not his own work. Hitherto man had wrong thoughts. Now they can have true thoughts; and the exchange of the true thoughts for the wrong thoughts, that is the revolution, the greatest revolution of all time. What does Marx say?

Mr. Reinken:

These innocent and childlike fancies are the kernel of the modern Young Hegelian philosophy, which not only is received by the German public with horror and awe, but is announced by our philosophic heroes with the solemn consciousness of its cataclysmic dangerousness and criminal ruthlessness.^{vi}

LS: Yes. Let us stop there. So in other words, the absurdity of the German ideology, i.e., of this left Hegelian, post-Hegelian movement, is this: that they believe substituting one kind of thoughts for another kind of thoughts is the salvation of mankind. These people¹⁴, what they do is merely to substitute one kind of thoughts, idea, one ideology for another ideology. These people, far from being revolutionary—Bruno Bauer and the others—in fact only reproduce the thoughts of the German petty bourgeoisie. Of course, the petty bourgeois would not recognize these thoughts in this terrific formula, but Marx proves it as follows: the practical consequence of these new thoughts is a legitimization of those institutions and of those political aspirations which are in fact the political aspirations of the petty bourgeoisie. It is a tempest in a teapot, in other words, and it appears immediately once one looks at those German things, say from France or England, and then one sees how parochial this whole affair is. And let us turn to page four of the translation at the beginning of the fourth paragraph.

Mr. Reinken: I only have three paragraphs.

LS: Well, the beginning of the—

^v *The German Ideology*, ed. S. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers), Preface, 23. This edition uses an earlier English translation published as *The German Ideology, Parts I & III*, ed. R. Pascal (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1938), with notes prepared by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow. The pagination cited is from the Progress Publishers edition, which is hereafter referred to as *GI*. Wherever possible, page references are provided to the selections from the *GI* in *The Marx-Engels Reader* as well.

^{vi} *GI*, Preface, 23.

Mr. Reinken: The German criticism?

LS: The German criticism, yes.

Mr. Reinken:

German criticism has, right up to its latest efforts, never quitted the realm of philosophy. Far from examining its general philosophic premises the whole body of its inquiries has actually sprung from the soil of a definite philosophical system, that of Hegel.^{vii}

LS: Yes, stop here. In other words, not only have they not questioned philosophy as such, they have not even questioned Hegelian philosophy.¹⁵ They took philosophy for granted. The relation of the old Hegelians and the young Hegelians, as Marx makes clear in the sequel, is that whether you accept the reigning thoughts, the thoughts accepted by the ruling part of society, or whether you criticize these accepted thoughts, they remain within the realms of thought.¹⁶ Philosophy is a realm within itself, that is the whole implication; and the other realm is reality, but reality is of course the only real realm and therefore that is a mere delusion. Reality is something radically different than thoughts. Well, but this is presented as a thought, that's the obvious difficulty. Now let us see. Let us turn to Marx's own beginning on the bottom of page 6.

Mr. Reinken:

The way in which men produce their needs of subsistence depends, first of all, on the nature of the actual needs they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather, it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, or with *what* they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.^{viii}

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. Marx begins the whole argument (we can't read that): the German philosophy, the Hegelian philosophy, claimed to be presuppositionless, to translate the German word literally. That word played a very great role in the whole nineteenth century. It was applied also to science. Science is presuppositionless. It approaches the things without any previous presuppositions. All presuppositions are to emerge through the analysis, through the thinking. Marx says: No, we must start with presuppositions, otherwise we can never arrive at any content. But the presuppositions must be nonarbitrary. The presuppositions must be necessary. And if we question the existence of human beings, then we can close shop immediately. We will never find out anything about human relations, which is sensible as far as it goes. What we find is human individuals and their conditions. And their conditions. You see, this formula is important. What is not man is a *condition* of man. Now Marx speaks here only of the terrestrial conditions, but obviously the sun and the stars too are, and which Marx is very

^{vii} *GI*, 29. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 148.

^{viii} *GI*, 31-32. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 150.

far from denying. Why does Marx disregard them here, ¹⁷the heavenly bodies and their motions, which are at least as much a part of the whole as minerals on earth? Well, because he wants to give a doctrine of history, and history takes place on earth. Therefore we do not have to go into that; that is not legitimate.

So what is man? What, then, is man? What is the nature of man? Marx gives here only a brief indication. The beginning of man's specification, the beginning: man becomes distinguished from the brutes by producing their means of life. The brutes do not produce them according to Marx. He doesn't go into the question of bees, for example. That's unimportant for him. Even if man chases a brute, Marx implies—a rabbit—that's something different from a dog chasing a rabbit, as will appear. But what is the condition for the fact that man produces his means of living? What's the condition for that? What does he say? It is conditioned by their bodily organization. By their bodily organization. Nothing about the mental organizations. Marx does not regard this as worth mentioning here, and later on we will see that this dogmatism, this disregard of the non-bodily, is essential to Marx's position.

Now what he develops in the sequel is this, something to which we will return on another occasion: production leads to division of labor. Think of what is going on in a chase, yes, where you don't have firearms. Some have to—the different members of the chase have to take a different function, and also the difference of the sexes is alluded to in this connection. And the division of labor in its turn leads to property. Then he gives a very rapid survey of history. He mentions three forms of organization: the tribe, the *polis*, and the feudal society. No attempt is made, and I believe Mr. Kesselman has become aware of that, at proving a necessary progress there. We must come back to that later. That is very important because if there is no necessary progress, there is no necessity for the emergence of communism. And that Marx would admit; he would only say we have a wrong notion of necessity. By a nonteleological necessity, certain changes took place which led to feudal society, and then from feudal society to bourgeois society. Here we are now in a bourgeois society in this situation. Given this state of affairs, communism is necessary. It is a purely academic question and even a meaningless question for Marx, ultimately, whether it could not have been different. It happened, and therefore there were necessary causes for its taking place. We will take this up on another occasion. Now let us turn to page 10 in the translation: the paragraph beginning “this whole view of history.”

Mr. Reinken:

This whole interpretation of history appears to be contradicted by the fact of conquest—

LS: Now then he develops the ordinary vulgar view of history, according to which history is political history and not economic history. He does not answer this question in the immediate sequel. The book is not finished¹⁸; [it] was never printed, as you know, by Marx.^{ix} It was published after his death, and one must assume that he would have

^{ix} The text was prepared for publication by David Ryazanov in the 1920s. Ryazanov (1870-1931) was a scholar and revolutionary who spent much of his early life in prison or in exile. He returned to Russia in May 1917. He founded the Marx-Engels Institute in 1921 and prepared editions of

changed that. He gives the answer much later in the translation on page 62, if you would be so good to turn to that.

Mr. Reinken:

Nothing is more common than the notion that in history up till now it has only a question of “taking.”

LS: Taking, namely, conquering. Yes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

The barbarians take the Roman Empire, and this fact of taking is made to explain the transition from the old world to the feudal system. In this taking by barbarians, however, the question is, whether the nation which is conquered has evolved industrial productive forces, as is in the case with modern peoples, or whether their productive forces are based for the most part merely on their association and on the community. Taking is further determined by the object taken. A banker’s fortune, consisting of paper, cannot be taken at all, without the taker’s submitting to the conditions of production and intercourse of the country taken. Similarly the total industrial capital of a modern industrial country. And finally, everywhere there is very soon an end to taking, and when there is nothing more to take, you have to set about producing.^x

LS: So in other words, that is an attempt to prove that production is always the basic fact and not such things as conquest. I only refer to that so that you see that Marx did not leave it at this very inadequate remark on page 10. Now this notion, this cleavage between political history and economic history ¹⁹has an important prehistory in Hegel himself, for what is the movement of history according to Hegel? Yes, surely: the mind, the intellect, reason. That is clear. But Hegel was very far from being abstract. He had very concrete notions of what happened. In his *Phenomenology of the Mind*, ²⁰which Marx justly regarded as his greatest writing, the beginning of the historical process is as follows: the beginning is political, Hobbean, the war of everybody against everybody. But it is even much more political than in Hobbes because the objective is recognition, as Hegel calls it. Take the simple case of two individuals. They fight for the sake of [being] admitted to be superior by the other. ²¹What Hobbes meant by pride is implied; that is the basic thing. Now there are two possibilities: (1) one of the fighters is killed. History is at an end; the other is, however, that one loses his nerves, as we would say, and submits. It is absolutely unpredictable who will lose his nerves and whether someone will lose his

Marx and Engels writings for publication as well as numerous texts that influenced or were influenced by Marx. On Ryazanov, see, e.g., Jonathan Beecher and Valerii N. Fomichev, “French Socialism in Lenin’s and Stalin’s Moscow: David Riazanov and the French Archive of the Marx-Engels Institute,” *Journal of Modern History* 78 (2006): 119-143. On the the compilation of the text and editorial interventions, see Terrell Carver, “The German Ideology never took place,” *History of Political Thought* (2010) 31: 107-27; Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank, *A Political History of the Editions of Marx and Engels’s ‘German Ideology’ Manuscripts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

^x *GI*, 90; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 196.

nerves. The submitter becomes the slave of the fellow who has shown courage. That is the master and slave relation according to Hegel. You see the crucial implication: there are no natural slaves. Whether you are a slave or a free man depends on an act of the will, basically, but that is only the beginning.

So ²²no history without a distinction of masters and slaves, but what is the further history? I can give here only the barest sketch. The master forces the slave to work for him, and what does the master do? He enjoys the fruit of the labors of the slave. Well, he fights also on occasion, but his life consists chiefly in enjoyment, i.e., that is an end; there is no further development there. How does the further development come? Entirely from the part of the slave. And what is the slave doing? Working, transforming nature; and out of this basic labor of the slave the higher forms of labor, intellectual production, emerge dialectically. So you see Hegel himself to some extent prepared Marx's notion by putting a greater emphasis on that work—on the activity of the slave, the worker—than on the work of the lord, the political ruler. Now in Hegel himself that is infinitely more complex, but that is an important point which we cannot completely disregard.

Now let us turn—we must look at a few passages. In the translation, page 14, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

In direct contrast to German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven.

LS: Yes. That's the clear formulation. Yes? The idealistic philosophers starting from the highest and trying to understand the lower in the light of the highest, and Marx starts from the lowest and tries to understand the high in the light of the low. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history—^{xi}

LS: Now let us stop here. That is of course an extreme overstatement, which is contradicted by Marx later on. They have a history but they have no independent history. That's what he means. Yes.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xi} *GI*, 37-38; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 154-55.

no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.

LS: That's the crucial sentence. Marx sometimes also says consciousness doesn't determine being, but being determines consciousness. That has the same meaning. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, as they are in actual life, and consciousness is considered solely as *their* consciousness.^{xii}

LS: Yes. Now that is a return not only from German idealism, but also from its predecessors like Descartes—in a way even the British philosophers, Locke and Hume—to the commonsense use of the older view: the consciousness is only a part of man, however important it may be. It is not man. Now how does he go on? He must give some reason because what he said up to now is insufficient.

Mr. Reinken:

This method of approach is not devoid of premises. It starts out from the real premises and does not abandon them for a moment. Its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation or abstract definition,^{xiii} but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists.

Where speculation ends—in real life—there real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men. Empty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place. When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of activity loses its medium of existence.^{xiv}

LS: Now let us ²³stop here. Here we have another reference to this positivism of Marx which we discussed last time.^{xv} The rejection of philosophy: only positive empirical science can give us revelation about what is. But we have discussed last time at some length that this positivism ²⁴is fundamentally different from present-day positivism; and the chief difference, to repeat this point, is that present-day positivism denies wholes. W-h-o-l-e-s. It tries to understand what presents itself as a whole, say, capitalist society, liberal democracy, communism, as the product of more fundamental elements which are present everywhere so that the differences between such wholes come out only as

^{xii} *GI*, 37-38; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 155.

^{xiii} In original: "rigidity"

^{xiv} *GI*, 38; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 155.

^{xv} That is, in session 6, for which we have neither recording nor transcript.

quantitative differences, whereas Marx is guided by the Hegelian view that quantity necessarily transforms itself into quality. There are essential differences according to Marx, not according to the positivists. But still we cannot leave it at that because, as I mentioned last time, ²⁵one cannot begin to study facts without having, without looking for something. ²⁶In other words, empirical assertion needs organizing principles. Now the principles with which Marx approaches the facts, namely, the fundamental character of the economic relations, if we may say so, are already results of empirical research according to Marx. But of what kind of research? Yes?

Student: Doesn't—you said that he went back to an older view in that one might say he rejects Descartes's autonomous reason proceeding to self-evident truths without reference to opinions; and on the other hand, he doesn't go back to the older view in the sense of accepting—

LS: Yes, sure. No, no, he brushes them aside. Yes, sure. And that is a famous shortcoming, as is shown in all historical studies of the Marxists—perhaps not in economic history, I don't know that; but surely whenever they try to understand intellectual history they do not take seriously what these authors say, because they know better in advance. Yes? Sure. But the question for us now here is: Granting that empirical research is the only way in which we can find out anything about empirical facts, where do we get the principles, the criteria of relevance without which no empirical study is possible? Let us look at the bottom of page 15. "The difficulty begins, on the contrary, there—"

Mr. Reinken:

The removal of these difficulties is—

LS: No, no, before. The sentence before.

Mr. Reinken:

On the contrary, our difficulties begin only when we set about the observation and the arrangement—the real depiction—of our historical material, whether of a past epoch or of the present. The removal of these difficulties is governed by premises which it is quite impossible to state here, but which only the study of the actual life-process and the activity of the individuals of each epoch will make evident.

LS: Yes. Now let us see. That is really very obscure. In the immediate sequel we will find a more precise statement, after the heading "History." Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

We shall select here some of these abstractions, which we use to refute the ideologists, and shall illustrate them by historical examples.

LS: Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

(a) History.

Since we are dealing with the Germans, who do not postulate anything,^{xvi} we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence, and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to “make history.” But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life.^{xvii}

LS: Now let us stop here. That is really the whole argument of Marx. Why is the economic interpretation of history manifestly true, that only people fooled by theological or philosophic delusions fail to see it? Why is it so? We must eat before we can do anything else—well, eat and some other things which Marx mentions. The satisfaction of our bodily needs precedes everything else. What comes first in time is therefore the fundamental condition out of which everything else must be understood. Yes?

Student: Marx says that man differs from all other animals in being able to produce his means of subsistence, but what is it about man that enables him to do that?

LS: Yes, a perfectly pertinent question. Sure, because the other thing—food applies to animals as well. Sure, that’s the point. But let us see whether Marx—how shall I say?—whether we cannot give him a rope with which he hangs himself. That is generally speaking a more convincing form of criticism than merely saying: You have forgotten that. Now let us turn to page 19, the second paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

Only now, after having considered four moments, four aspects of the fundamental historical relationships, do we find that man also possesses “consciousness” —

LS: Yes. Which were the other elements? I mean, he has to live. He has to live with others. Yes. All right. So now consciousness comes out in the first place. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

do we find that man also possesses “consciousness”; but, even so, not inherent, not “pure” consciousness. From the start the “spirit” is afflicted with the curse of being “burdened” with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language *is* practical consciousness as it exists for other men, and for that reason is really beginning to exist for me personally as well; for language,^{xviii} like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of

^{xvi} In original: “who are devoid of premises”

^{xvii} *GI*, 38-39; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 155-56.

^{xviii} In original: “language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness”

intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal has no “relations” with anything, cannot have any.^{xix}

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment first. What is Marx’s argument? Consciousness presupposes language, and language presupposes society; and therefore consciousness is, logically at any rate, after society, and this society is of course a society of production. That is no longer taken up. The question of course is (which was raised by you before): Do not the individuals working together already possess consciousness from the beginning, so that you cannot possibly say the production precedes in any sense language? Let us see what Marx says in the sequel. “Consciousness.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Consciousness is therefore from the very beginning a social product—

LS: Product, product. Yes? I mean, in other words, society is first and then the product, language. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

product, and remains so as long as men exist at all. Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the *immediate* sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time—

LS: Now listen: “*At the same time.*”^{xx} Man from the very beginning does not merely have a consciousness of this mountain at the end of the world, yes? Let us assume it’s a high mountain; and of the sun, moon, and stars in the evening, and animals, trees, and other human beings, and so on. At the same time, he has what?

Mr. Reinken:

it is consciousness of nature, which first appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men’s relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus a purely animal consciousness of nature (natural religion).^{xxi}

LS: Ya. Well, more literally stated, nature religion, and distinguished from . . . tradition or any higher religion. Now is this not amazing? Is not fantastic? Men are overawed by nature as the brutes, and thence he has a brutish consciousness of nature: nature religion. Who has every heard of brutes possessing a religion? Do you see that? Absurd. Now what is behind that? Pardon?

Student: . . .

^{xix} GI, 41-42; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 157-58.

^{xx} Strauss adds the emphasis here.

^{xxi} GI, 42; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 158.

LS: Yes, sure. He means something of this kind—doesn't make any difference. Fetishism, he probably thought of. It doesn't make any difference. But the point is here [that] original man has not only a consciousness of cats and whatever may be around in trees, he has also at the same time a consciousness of nature. And here nature is of course not understood as something to which man belongs or of which he is a product, but nature is here understood as a wholly alien, omnipotent, and unassailable power toward which men ²⁷take a purely brutish position. They are impressed by it like the brutes, and hence they have a purely brutish consciousness of nature (nature religion). There is no question. I mean, whether Marx would have kept it if he had published it I don't know; people are quite clever in deleting give-away sentences. But that would only mean that we would have to reconstruct that sentence in our own minds as having the impression of that.

Now that was the point I made a few minutes ago when I did not remember that passage. Marx does not take the present-day view of a gradual difference between man and the brutes, you know. Marx assumes an essential difference, and that implies a certain superiority of the Marxist doctrine and also of Marx's ideology over the positivistic ideology, which is compelled to regard it as a great problem whether we must not give human rights to robots. You remember that famous problem of present-day political science.^{xxii} The Marxists are not such fools [as] to worry about that, because they know that there is an essential difference between men and brutes. The essential difference between man and brutes is that man is a productive animal and not nonproductive like the brutes. Now you can say beasts are also productive animals, and Marx has disposed of that in a passage of *Das Kapital* which I read to you and which we will read again: the bee does not have a conceit, an image, of the hive before he builds the hive (or whatever he does in the hive) as the architect has a conceit, an image, of the house before he builds the house.^{xxiii} And teleological production, if you want this expression, that is characteristic of man. But let us leave it at Marx's expression: production.

But why on earth should the production be limited to so-called material production? The urgency of the need—we must eat before we can do anything else—is surely an important consideration. But Marx says, without good reason, at the same time in which man for example tries to catch a hare by some primitive methods, or pick an apple, he has some awareness of the whole which no brute has. There is an enigma for him there, and he responds to that enigma. That is primitive religion, myth. You can give it any derogatory term you please; that doesn't do away with the fact that there is no good reason for doubting that man's myth production is coeval with his tool production or his production of a means of living, to which Marx will probably answer: Yes. After this passage, he must admit that. But he will say: Yes, but the myths, this is all bunk; they are imaginations, whereas the tool which he makes out of the flint, that's real.

^{xxii} See Harold D. Lasswell, "The Political Science of Science: An Inquiry into the Possible Reconciliation of Mastery and Freedom," *American Political Science Review* 50 (1956): 961-979, 975-76.

^{xxiii} "[W]hat distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality." *Capital*, vol. 1, chap. 7. IP, 178; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 344.

Yes, but the question is this: Are men not influenced and deeply influenced by their imaginations, especially if these imaginations are collective imaginations? And you know all the trouble which Max Weber took in his *Sociology of Religion* to show that there may very well be an influence of religious notion[s] on economic matters was absolutely sensible. Of course, Engels himself has said on some occasions [that] the Marxists don't deny that the superstructure [LS writes on the blackboard]—here is the infrastructure; yes, relations of production; the superstructure, the ideologies, that they have an effect on the infrastructure. Yes, ²⁸but ultimately, ultimately the infrastructure is the cause. How do they know that, except on the basis of the dogmatic assertion? And the dogmatic assertion has of course a great plausibility, because it is not limited to the Marxists but is shared by many others and is perhaps a principle of the modern scientific mind: that what is prior as a condition of the higher or later is a sufficient cause of the higher. In other words, Marx derives a very powerful support from the antiteleological character of modern science, so that is not a peculiarity to Marx, of Marx. You know? This basic principle that what is the primary, what is primary in time—but to repeat, Marx does not in any way prove that's primary in time. He says “at the same time” the natural religion—the nature religion, say, some primitive notions, I don't care how—. By the way, in the meantime, the students of comparative religion have found out that these primitive religions are by no means primitive—those of which we know—that these are all elaborated cosmological schemes and not just elements of a primitive imagination. I mean, if there was such a truly primitive religion consisting only of isolated elements, it has not yet been discovered. But the main point is, as I said, this remark about this simultaneity. Yes?

Student: In German, does “at the same time” have the same ambiguity that it does in English?

LS: Yes, sure.

Same student: The phrase—because in English you could read that not as meaning simultaneous.

LS: But what?

Same student: You could mean it to be a phrase that means “such as,” on the other hand.

LS: Yes, but in German it means “at the same time,” literally translated.

Same student: It means chronologically.

LS: Yes, it does not always mean—you know, but it is—well, there is—

Same student: . . .

LS: . . . a time occurs there—you know, sure. No, I think even if he would have said, which is possible also in German to say, *simultan*, yes, simultaneously, it would not have—because that would simply push it back to the Latin because *simul*: that’s also primarily temporal. No, no. That is, ²⁹I think that truth compelled Marx to write that. But as I say, his argument would probably be this. The tool, yes, say for polishing or whatever they do or for cutting: that is real. It really cuts, whereas the sacrifice they bring to some demon has no effect except in their imagination. Yes? That he would say. Therefore, it’s not real.

Student: I’m just wondering if he isn’t admitting an earlier stage of religion than that where all religion is, is a dog’s fear of lightning or a beast’s fear of something strange and unknown, when man is not yet completely—

LS: Yes, but the question is really, Marx—even no one except some simple-minded religious people who believe that the elephant is the pious animal, or even a hen is—you must have heard that, a kind of folklore, ³⁰that the hen always looks to heaven after having taken some water, you know. But no man in his senses has ever credited brutes with religion, and Marx in a way is compelled to do so ³¹because of the dogmatic position he takes.

Same student: Yes, but he does that by making a specific definition or inferring a definition of religion which is different than those who would normally speak of it would use. By religion he means the sphere of nature. Now for those who are willing to concede that, nature is a religion.

LS: Yes, but look, let us take a simple example. A man is slain, or even an animal is slain and is lying there. Some animals run away. Horses, for example, don’t like that, but men have all kinds of reactions. One can look dispassionately at that corpse; others feel that’s something uncanny. Well, at any rate, a human being is as such in any stage of the development capable of thinking about this thing, and then all notions, all kinds of notions about afterlife, very crude notions, emerge. Brutes don’t. They forget. They forget, so as Nietzsche says³² (you remember that occasion),^{xxiv} it begins to think: What is that? But then it has already forgotten what it wanted to think about. Now man doesn’t forget in this way and therefore he has coherent thoughts, however crude they may be.

^{xxiv} Richard Velkley suggests that Strauss is conflating two passages in Nietzsche’s writings. First, what Nietzsche says about animals in “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” the second of the four Untimely Meditations: “If a human were to ask an animal, ‘Why do you not speak to me of your happiness but only stand and gaze at me?’ the animal would like to answer and say ‘The reason is I always forget what I was going to say,’ but it forgets this answer, too.” *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 60-61. Second, the account of the last man in *Zarathustra*, Prologue, section 5, which describes a kind of rebestialization of man in which “man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man,” thus implying an indifference to eternity. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (Penguin Books, 1954), 129. Thanks to Richard Velkley for his email to the Strauss Center on November 13, 2017.

Same student: But from this kind of argument, the normal position is that man also forgets like the beasts until he has produced language, so that like the beast he would react without consciousness until—

LS: Yes, but it is absolutely impossible to speak empirically or even quasi-empirically without assuming man to possess language. That is, one can't go back behind that and—that is a literally insoluble problem, as you know, because we will never find anything in any cave, in any geological stratum, which will make intelligible to us the genesis of language. Man is that being characterized by language. How the first man came to possess it is an unanswerable question; we cannot go back behind that. Let us look at a few other passages which are relevant to that here. Now let me see. There is another point, I think, which we should consider, on page—yes, a relevant passage on page 31, line 11, following.

Mr. Reinken:

This conception—

LS: Yes, of certain young Hegelians. Yes. Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

This conception is truly religious: it postulates religious man as the primitive man, and in its imagination puts the religious production of fancies in the place of the real production of the means of subsistence and of life itself.

LS: Yes. So. But one can only say this view, in its one-sidedness, is as true and as false as Marxism. I mean, if we want to proceed empirically we have no right to say that thing-production is a reflection of myth-production as we have to say that myth-production is a reflection from thing-production. We must be open-minded, empirical. Now let us turn to page 20, at the end of the first paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

It is mere herd-consciousness, and at this point man is only distinguished from the sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one.^{xxv}

LS: Ya. Now that is again only the essential difference between men and brutes: consciousness. Hence consciousness is not a product; it's coeval with man. Now from all this, it follows that world history strictly speaking exists only—no, I'm sorry, that is a summary of the intervening remarks which we cannot read; it's too long. Now Marx gives a survey of world history, and [it is] contrary to Hegel's teleological philosophy of history, which conceives of the whole history of the world—of all history as world history: for example, what was done in Africa originally tended toward all later development, toward China, Mesopotamia, Western Europe, and so on and so on. From Marx's point of view world history exists only since there is a world market, meaning an actual relation of all human inhabitants of the globe. Prior to that there was no world

^{xxv} *GI*, 42; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 158.

history. Hegel's philosophy of history is pure ideology. Now there are a few more passages which we should read before we can make a discussion. On page—^{xxvi}

Yes, but what is it in fact?

Student: It's a reflection of the productive forces of the way he lives.

LS: A historical product, let us say. So there is no essence of man to begin with, but what different generations called the essence of man is simply man and human relations as they have developed up to him. That's all to that. But the question arises still: Is there not an essential difference between man and the brutes presupposed by Marx? Yes?

Student: In the "Germanic Philosophy," when he speaks of species essence,^{xxvii} isn't he adopting a belief in the species essence of man?

LS: No. You see, that is a very bad translation, and that is due to a great ambiguity of the German word which is translated by essence. Now the German word which he uses is this. [LS writes on the blackboard] I write it in two words, lest it is too long for your view: *Gattung Wesen*. The Germans write that in one word and you can easily see that—how many letters. *Gattungswesen*. Now *Gattung* is species, yes, but *Wesen* is not simply essence. That has the same ambiguity which the Greek word has from which it is derived and which the Latin word does not have. The Greek word is *ousia*. [LS writes on the blackboard] Now what is an *ousia* according to Aristotle, in the first place? This, or a dog, or a tree. The essence as a species is an *ousia* only derivatively, in the second treatment. *Wesen* means in ordinary German usage a living being, especially a human being, but generally—ya, *Wesen*. *Gattungswesen* means he is a social being, a social being. That has—but you mean to say this is a statement of the essence of man. Sure, but ³³I'm not responsible for that. I only want to point out that Marx must assume an essential difference between men and brutes and must therefore assume that there is an essence of man. But ³⁴his justification is this: what man originally is—his basic constitution, let us say, mental as well as bodily—is uninteresting. The interesting thing is always individual men or masses of individual men, and they ³⁵have made something out of themselves or have been molded in a specific way, and that is the man with whom we have to deal in all social science and in all social thought. But that is of course theoretically a very unsatisfactory answer. A few more passages. On page 35 of the translation, line 9, following.

Mr. Reinken:

He does not see how the sensuous world around him—

LS: Feuerbach. Yes? Feuerbach. He means Feuerbach.

Mr. Reinken:

^{xxvi} The tape was changed at this point.

^{xxvii} The student probably means the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.

[Feuerbach] does not see how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society; and, indeed, in the sense that it is an historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, modifying its social organization according to the changed needs. Even the objects of the simplest “sensuous certainty” are only given him through social development, industry and commercial intercourse. The cherry-tree, like almost all fruit-trees, was, as is well known, only a few centuries ago transplanted by *commerce* into our zone, and therefore only *by* this action of a definite society in a definite age provided for the evidence of Feuerbach’s “senses.”^{xxviii}

LS: Yes. Let us stop here and let us read a parallel on page 113, paragraph two of your translation.

Mr. Reinken:

The socialist opposes to present society—

LS: “The socialist” is here some fool, yes, who Marx attacks. I mean, lest you are mistaken. Yes? Sure.

Mr. Reinken:

The socialist opposes to present-day society, which is “based upon external compulsion,” the ideal of true society, which is based upon the “consciousness of man’s inward nature, i.e., upon reason.” It is based, that is, upon the consciousness of consciousness, upon the thought of thought. The true socialist does not differ from the philosophers even in his choice of terms. He forgets that the “inward nature” of men, as well as their “consciousness” of it, “i.e.,” their “reason,” has at all times been an historical product and that even when, as he believes, the society of men has been based “upon external compulsion,” their “inward nature” corresponded to this “external compulsion.”^{xxix}

LS: Let us stop here. Yes. Now you see the same thought. One can also present Marx’s thought as follows: all philosophic thought or almost all philosophic thought—Hegel would be a conspicuous exception—is radically unhistorical. Therefore they speak of the essence of man and think that the essence of man can give us crucial information, but man and the world are historical. They are in a process of change. By historical change of the world Marx means such things as our environment: the nature as we observe it now is the product of human activity, as the example of the cherry tree. In other words, ³⁶when we speak sometimes of the commonsense world in contradistinction, say, to the world as presented by theoretical physics, the commonsense world does not exist. The commonsense world differs in different historical situations. To repeat, Marx admits that there is an essence of man, but he says that is very uninteresting. ³⁷The essence of man doesn’t tell us anything as to what we could or should do now; nothing whatever. That

^{xxviii} *GI*, 57; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 170.

^{xxix} *German Ideology*, vol. 2, part 1, “Second Cornerstone,” *GI*, 528-29.

can be found; nothing whatever. That it would not in itself give us sufficient information was always granted, but that it gives us no information whatever is the crucial point. We have to act in this world as we have it now, and all possible reasonable tasks are tasks of men living now; and only understanding this situation now—³⁸and not by any reflections on the essence of man, or the moral law, or anything of this kind which is transhistorical—can be of any significance. That is an absolutely crucial part of Marx, and Marx has played probably a greater role than any other individual in liberating modern man from the old-fashioned notions of the importance of the essence of man and any other abstractions of this kind.

What do you say to this proposition of Marx? I believe that is crucial. Is it possible? How does it work in practice? Let us give Marx all possible benefit of the doubt. How does it work in practice, that by understanding our situation we will know what we have to do? This knowledge of our situation includes of course also historical knowledge. We have to know the genesis of our situation, naturally, and to that extent the analysis of the present situation is inseparable from an intelligent knowledge of the past out of which the present grew. Well, ³⁹remember the *Communist Manifesto*. If this is the situation of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie: the progressive proletarianization of the intermediate classes and of a substantial part of the proletariat, and the ever-increasing degradation of the proletariat; and simultaneously with that the ever-increasing revolt of the proletariat against it. Well, you can have a selfish interest as a kind of parasite and because you don't like to fight—to continue your life if it lasts long enough as a parasite of the bourgeoisie or as a bourgeois, but as an honest man with your eyes open you have no choice. So given this analysis there seems to be no alternative. Well, and if there is no alternative you do not need criteria in which direction to change. You see, when Marx says “Philosophy has hitherto only interpreted the world, but what matters is to change the world,”^{xxx} the commonsense reaction would be: Yes, but in what direction? Then you must have principles justifying this or that direction. That is philosophy; so you come back from—and a philosophy which looks at what is, which is contemplative and which is not changing, giving you the standard. But Marx says ⁴⁰[first], such standards don't exist, and second, they are not necessary.

Student: When he talks of degradation, doesn't this already imply—the use of the term . . .

LS: Yes, but how would he argue? Yes, very true. How would he argue?

Same student: Well, this is—he would argue that this is not degradation that he is imposing on people. This is—they see themselves as degraded.

LS: Yes, and all parts see it according to the standards. It appears as degradation in the light of the standards of the bourgeois society. Whether that is sufficient is another matter, but where does the difficulty come in first? Yes?

^{xxx} The eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.

Same student: In long-term predictions, I suppose. If one would want to predict when the people would feel degraded in the future, but perhaps you might say that would be impossible.

LS: Yes, given—yes, there is of course a famous difficulty that this increasing pauperization did not take place, yes, and quite a few other things did in fact take place. That creates a great complication. There are situations which are simple, where one has really no choice. We know that in private life. They might also exist in public life. And of course, that Lenin was sure in 1917 [that] the revolution of the Western workers was just around the corner—you remember?—and he was very disappointed. And there were similar expectations at the end of the Second World War, that in France and Italy and so the communists would take over, you know. Again disappointed. But then they would simply say: “Oh well, Marx underestimated the resilience of bourgeois society; ⁴¹Marx thought in terms of hundred years and we may have to think in terms of two hundred years. That is not terribly important.” But where does the difficulty come in? I think, I believe in the first place because, as at least Engels already admitted and as today is rather obvious for other reasons, there is an alternative which they admit. The alternative is the destruction of civilization, maybe even the destruction of the human race in terms of the superweapons which you have now. ⁴²People may detest the prospect of a communist world society so much that they would use every means against that, and would use things which would bury both sides and not only one side, as Khrushchev would. So that alone, I think, shows—in other words, the question of choice cannot be disposed of. ⁴³Even in the case of an extreme, what we regard when we say he has no choice, that is not literally true. He always has the choice, for example, of committing suicide. Or he has no choice, he must undergo this operation—no, he can prefer to die, and so on. So the simply choiceless situation doesn’t exist for man. We speak of it ordinarily, but we always make some tacit presuppositions when we say that. Rabbi Weiss?

Rabbi Weiss: Well, why can’t one also choose to act in one’s self-interest as a member of the bourgeoisie?

LS: Oh, sure one can, but Marx had no doubts that they are going to do that. But they will be licked because they will be ever less, you know? And if you have then at the end Senator Kennedy’s family and Governor Rockefeller’s family^{xxxix} and some other families, and 178 million Americans in a state of ever-increasing, ever more hopeless misery—sure, they may hold on to their millions, but that will be a very simple process.

Rabbi Weiss: It’s a matter of victory, then.

LS: Yes, sure. Sure.

Rabbi Weiss: You’re really choosing your fate, then.

^{xxxix} Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy, Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York.

LS: Yes. ⁴⁴Yes, people who are so much benefitted by a given social order would in almost all cases love that order. That's Marx's premise. Yes? He would admit that there are some individuals, some sons of millionaires and billionaires who might even then become traitors to their class. ⁴⁵Of course he admitted that, but generally speaking the men who are benefitted by a certain state of affairs like that state of affairs. I think that is not a particularly Marxist thesis. Yes? People believe—love or believe to love what is profitable to them. That I think was an old insight and—

Rabbi Weiss: What I meant was that knowledge of the situation doesn't necessarily lead to action on the part of the proletariat.

LS: No, no, but the proletariat would be—

Rabbi Weiss: And any action is given by identifying with the proletariat.

LS: If the situation is as Marx described it, objectively so, could an honest and intelligent man fail to be a communist if it is so clearly drawn that it is only a selfish interest of a small part of the society which is responsible for this immense misery? I mean, if that is the true analysis, there would be no question. The question is whether it is the true analysis, but even granting that, I say there is no human situation in which one can say there is no alternative, and therefore the question of choice comes up. I believe that part of the reasoning behind fascism in some so-called gentleman fascists ⁴⁶had this character: rather the destruction of the world than the victory of communism. That showed at least ⁴⁷the possibility of such a choice. It failed in this form, but there is no—I can only repeat that both Engels and Lenin (and Engels, I'm sure; Lenin, I'm almost sure) say that. The victory of communism is the only alternative to the destruction of civilization. Yes, but the destruction of civilization is an alternative; even the destruction of the human race is an alternative and today clearer than ever for well-known reasons.

Yes, but this raises another theoretical question. The passage we read: Is it true that man and the world is simply historical? Are there not certain basic phenomena apart from digestion and so which are not affected by change? Basic facts, empirical facts: that we live on the earth, we are terrestrial beings, that there are various species of animals as well as of plants (however, some might have become extinct and so on), but that man is surrounded by them, lives from them and through them to some extent, the heaven above him: are these not crucial points which—is not the phenomenon of human love, love of the two sexes, fundamentally the same in spite of the historical variation which exists there in externals? In other words, that's what poetry is fundamentally about: this permanent core of man which shows in spite of the infinite historical variety. That would be one consideration. Now we have to consider another point which has very much to do with the point raised by Mr. Cropsey before, in the translation on page 51, line 7. Page 51. Yes. Perhaps begin with the—

Mr. Reinken:

The first advance beyond naturally derived estate capital was provided by the rise of merchants whose capital was from the beginning movable, capital in the

modern sense as far as one can speak of it, given the circumstances of those times. The second advance came with manufacture, which again made mobile a mass of natural capital, and altogether increased the mass of movable capital as against that of natural capital.^{xxxii}

LS: Yes, let us stop here. What I have in mind is this term which he translates by “natural.” Pascal, the translator, has a note there on the translation of this word. The German word is *Naturwüchsig*. You could say grown, grown in opposition to made. That is a part of it. *Wachsen* is to grow, what has naturally grown. Now this, the whole historical process, is according to Marx a victory of that which has not naturally grown over what has naturally grown. That has very much to do with that problem. What does that mean? What does natural growth mean?

Student: . . .

LS: Oh, not necessarily, without consciousness of that growth. That, I think, is the precise point. Take a simple example: people speak, have different languages, different dialects. No one made these dialects; they just develop and are there, and perhaps from time to time someone notes to his surprise that people talk now differently than they talked two hundred years ago. But that’s all. And then someone, say a king, wants to have a unified language for the Court and for the country, such things as happened in Italy, in France, in England. Here the process by which King’s English developed, or surely the French of the Academy,^{xxxiii} is no longer an unsupervised process but there are people who sit there and purify the language consciously. Now in other things, that’s still more obvious. Certain social institutions come into being. No one knows how. They are there; they are convenient; inconveniences are felt at a given point; one makes a change. In the course of decades, other changes: unconsciously the social organization has changed.

Entirely different matter: people establish a social order; for example, a constitution. Now generally speaking what is natural, what has grown without human supervision, is from Marx’s point of view the lower⁴⁸; for example, the difference between the countryside and the city has very much to do with that. The countryside is the more natural; the city is the more conscious, the more reflexive and reflected. So the whole process, historical process, consists⁴⁹ in pushing back even more the limits set by nature and by natural developments; and that goes together, as Mr. Cropsey has pointed out, with the fact that Marx’s whole doctrine presupposes in another sense a return to nature: a return from all ideologies, from all abstractions, to man’s sensual, sensuous reality and activity. Yes, I think these were the most important passages which I found in this part. Mr. Cropsey, would you bring up your point?

JC: I was wondering, is there any place where Marx denies the sociality of non-human animals?

^{xxxii} “The Real Basis of Ideology,” *The German Ideology*, *GI*, 70. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 181.

^{xxxiii} The Académie Française.

LS: Not explicitly which I remember, but perhaps he would say there are gregarious animals but not strictly speaking social animals. Something of this kind.

JC: I was wondering, because the question which was raised on the other side with respect to that German . . . *Gattungswesen*—

LS: Yes, which he took over from Feuerbach.

JC: But one thing: when he speaks about the beasts and the men he makes a distinction between them, but the distinction isn't sociality.

LS: No, no.

JC: It's with respect to the positing of the end before the end is realized, so that the question of any peculiar human essence becomes even more complicated in some places; and indeed, one could even say: Why is there not a historical process among non-human social beings on the ground of the fact that there is no clear distinction between human and non-human social beings?

LS: Yes, but I think Marx would say there is—the terms which he uses are production, as we have seen here, and production means conscious production; and therefore consciousness is the difference between men and brutes. And only such conscious beings, which can learn from experience and transmit this experience to the next generation so that the next generation lives differently from the first generation, can be historical. I think that is probably what he means there.

JC: It possibly has something to do with the workings of genetics, which has become a political question in all societies but more so in Marxist communities, is this translation of change in one generation, and maybe not in a massive way in the next generation, but maybe in—

LS: I believe that has no direct relation. I think the Lysenko question^{xxxiv} had this meaning: if Lysenko—I mean, if the Western geneticists are right, the natural inequality of men will be perpetual with men. Yes? The genes will take care of that. Now in other words, the equalization of men through the equalization of living conditions, education, and what have you, will be only skin deep. You have to begin again from scratch in the next generation because of the heritage, [because] of the biological, genetic heritage, and

^{xxxiv} Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976) was Director of the Soviet Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences in the 1930s under Josef Stalin. He advanced the theory that characteristics acquired by plants during their lives could be inherited by later generations. For example, grafting branches of one plant species onto another could create new plant hybrids that would continue in the offspring of the grafted plant. This was consistent with the Marxist view that human characteristics would be changed by living under socialism, and that they would be inherited by subsequent generations, thus producing a “new man.” The V. I. Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences announced in 1948 that Lysenkoism would be taught as the correct theory.

therefore we must postulate as good egalitarians that Lysenko is right: that acquired qualities can be transmitted. Is this not the point? I think that's the issue.

JC: Yes, direct genetics imposes a political question, but . . .

LS: No, because the fact of—I mean, say that we live in different dwellings than men fifty years ago, a thousand years ago, five thousand years ago, whereas storks and other birds and other beasts have the same kind of dwellings repeated identically in every generation. That's an undeniable fact admitted by everyone and which shows—I mean, if one wants to express it so simply: man has a history, whereas the other animal species do not have a history. That I think is really—has nothing directly to do with Lysenko.

JC: Well, my speculation is that what he asserts which leads to the growing egalitarianism among human beings is, if sufficiently extended, it's true, would take a very long time to take place in the direction of the egalitarianism of all living things in a way, given sufficient time. It's got nothing whatever to do with the political question, it's true, but when he denies the peculiarities of the human beings on the traditional grounds, then the species themselves begin to break down.

LS: ⁵⁰Yes, but Marx never drew this conclusion⁵¹; and I think communists are not vegetarians, to put it very simply. They do not assert an equality of the various animal species with man. ⁵²I really believe that's a different issue, which leads to Lysenko.

JC: I think that they ought to be vegetarians if they—

LS: No. No, no. ⁵³No, Marx is not a positivist, and he would simply say, taking the evolutionary scheme, that ⁵⁴the quantitative change, say in certain species of monkeys or apes, the quantitative change from a certain moment on became a qualitative change and a leap—a leap, a favorite phrase of Marx as it was of Hegel—and therefore man cannot be reduced to the brutes; and we misunderstand everything, small or large, if we do not admit that.

What our task will be in the next meetings is to understand what we have only touched upon hitherto: why Marxism, communism according to its own interpretation is a synthesis of materialism and idealism, materialism and idealism understood in the way in which Marx himself understood them in his early writings. And that requires indeed that we consider also Marx's moral philosophy, because he had to develop a moral philosophy if only in order to criticize the ideologists of his time; and he believed that they—well, the general situation was this, as it still exists for common sense. Problems, criteria for distinguishing between good and bad, and everyone preaching ⁵⁵what he regards as good, exhortation of some sort: Marx rejects that altogether. Prediction, yes; exhortation or preaching, no. But nevertheless, since his moral issues are issues, he is compelled to meet them on their own ground and show the hypocrisy or the alleged hypocrisy of his opponents by the proof that this is a misunderstanding of what they mean, of what one would have to mean by morality. And the crucial issue, as I said before, was that between an idealistic morality of duty and a materialistic morality of

pleasure. And the swindle according to Marx consists in this: ⁵⁶that the pleasure is good for those who have things, who can have pleasures, and duty is preached to those who have nothing to enjoy. That's the practical hypocritical use, ⁵⁷but the theoretical solution is that one must transcend this whole distinction, this whole antagonism of duty and pleasure. And that is what Marx developed, and that is an important part of his indications regarding the communist society. We will take that up next week.

¹ Deleted "I did not"

² Deleted "he tried to prove philosophy"

³ Deleted "that Hegel"

⁴ Deleted "so if"

⁵ Deleted "but"

⁶ Deleted "of whom"

⁷ Deleted "or is this not"

⁸ Deleted "as the"

⁹ Deleted "he says"

¹⁰ Deleted "but for Marx"

¹¹ Deleted "who is the most"

¹² Deleted "in which man has"

¹³ Deleted "**LS:** No, no, before; the preface. **Mr. Reinken:** The preface? **LS:** Yes. "Hitherto men—"

¹⁴ Deleted "and that is what is Marx's first—these."

¹⁵ Deleted "They have not"

¹⁶ Deleted "Let us"

¹⁷ Deleted "although"

¹⁸ Deleted "was not"

¹⁹ Deleted "is"

²⁰ Deleted "which Hegel"

²¹ Deleted "it is also"

²² Deleted "we"

²³ Deleted "we may"

²⁴ Deleted "has"

²⁵ Deleted "because"

²⁶ Deleted "We need"

²⁷ Deleted "are"

²⁸ Deleted "but say"

²⁹ Deleted "that"

³⁰ Deleted "yes, you know"

³¹ Deleted "to do so"

³² Deleted "on a"

³³ Deleted "that"

³⁴ Deleted "for him"

³⁵ Deleted "are always"

³⁶ Deleted "there is"

³⁷ Deleted "All—if we"

³⁸ Deleted "are we, and only by that"

³⁹ Deleted "if this, look at"

⁴⁰ Deleted "we don't need—that is absolutely—either—both it doesn't exist"

⁴¹ Deleted "that"

⁴² Deleted "there is"

⁴³ Deleted "There are"

⁴⁴ Deleted "Well, they are what Marx—well, Marx would probably"

⁴⁵ Deleted "that"

⁴⁶ Deleted "I believe"

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- 47 Deleted “that”
48 Deleted “and the”
49 Deleted “in ever more”
50 Deleted “Yes, but Marx never drew—I mean”
51 Deleted “nor”
52 Deleted “I think that”
53 Deleted “Marx still”
54 Deleted “the change in”
55 Deleted “that”
56 Deleted “that the people”
57 Deleted “and”

Session 8: April 25, 1960
The German Ideology, volume 2

Leo Strauss: The best thing to do is simply begin our discussion as if he were not, and see whether he hands in a paper to us.ⁱ Now the assignment which was given to Rabbi Weiss was the fourth and fifth part of the *German Ideology*. It is in the translation simply the second part, called “True Socialism.” It is the least interesting part of the book, but since we have to depend on what is available in English we had to assign this part. Now I suggest that we discuss a few passages in this section which are of some interest. I remind you only of *The German Ideology*, of the character of the *German Ideology* as a whole. This was written by Marx fairly early, around 1845, when he was about twenty-seven years old, and it was not published during his lifetime. It was published long after his death. I do not know at the moment whether it was published—no, it was not published by Engels, I believe. It was published only by Mehringⁱⁱ or so; in other words, in our century, and it is a fragment. Marx took the great trouble of discussing a few doctrines in Germany at that time, and it was very characteristic which kind of doctrines he discussed: only those left-Hegelian developments. In other words, he was not interested in the conservative reactionaries that he thought had been disposed of, and the question was only—what he tried to show was that the radical liberal or radical democratic doctrines which were developed by some people from the Hegelian school, that even they would not do, measured by the standard of freedom, and therefore communism alone was the solution. Now Rabbi Weiss, are you prepared now?

Rabbi Weiss: Am I prepared now?

LS: Yes.

Rabbi Weiss: I have a paper. Is that what you mean?

LS: Yes. That is what I mean. Then, please. We cannot permit you to take breath.ⁱⁱⁱ

Now—well, I will take up the points which you made, but first one point regarding the reliability of Marx’s criticism of, say, Mr. Grün, ya, the chief—and a certain Dr. Kuhlmann, who are representatives of that German socialism.^{iv} I would say I would have no doubt that in such matters Marx is absolutely reliable, and I mean he was not compelled to make such cheap tricks, you know, and denigrate a man merely in order to

ⁱ The student scheduled to deliver a paper, Rabbi Weiss, has not arrived; he does however arrive during Strauss’s introductory remarks.

ⁱⁱ *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Marx, Engels, und LaSalle*, Bd. 2, *Gesammelte Schriften von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, hrsg. Franz Mehring (Stuttgart: J. H. W. Dietz, 1902).

ⁱⁱⁱ Rabbi Weiss read his paper. The reading was not recorded.

^{iv} Karl Grün (1817-1887) and Georg Kuhlmann (b. 1812), German socialists who called their doctrine “true socialism,” an attempt to apply neo-Hegelian dialectical schema to the world of the workers. It sought a unity of production and consumption on the basis of a philosophical unity between life and the enjoyment of happiness.

win a victory. And I would say what he quotes is sufficiently proved. Grün must have been a very superficial and arrogant individual, and that is what it amounts to. But of course one could say who cares for—there are so many around at all times; why should we bother about Mr. Grün in particular? That is perfectly true, but why did Marx think it worthwhile? If you turn to page 97 in your translation, in the third paragraph Marx gives the reason: “If one considers the opposition in communism to the world of private property in its crudest form.” Do you have that?

Student: Should I?

LS: Yes. Or let Mr. Reinken read it. He is really very trained in that.

Mr. Reinken:

If one imagines the antithesis of communism to the world of private property in its crudest form, i.e., in an abstract form^v in which the real conditions of that antithesis are ignored, then one is faced with the antithesis of property and lack of property. The abolition of this antithesis can be viewed as the abolition of either the one side or the other; either property can be abolished in which case universal lack of property or destitution results, or else the lack of property may be abolished, which means the establishment of true property. In reality, the actual property-owners stand on one side and the propertyless communist proletarians on the other. This opposition becomes keener day by day and is rapidly driving to a crisis. If, then, the theoretical representatives of the proletariat wish their literary activity to have any practical result, they must first and foremost insist that all phrases be swept aside which obscure^{vi} the realization of the sharpness of this opposition and which hush it up. Such phrases actually give the bourgeois a chance to safeguard their interests by insinuating themselves among the communists on the strength of their philanthropic enthusiasms.^{vii} All these rotten qualities are, however, to be found in the catchwords of the true socialists and particularly in “true property.” Of course, we realize that the communist movement cannot be destroyed by a few German phrase-mongers. Nevertheless, it is essential to resist all phrases which obscure and dilute still further the realization that communism is totally opposed to the existing world order. It is particularly necessary in a country like Germany, where philosophic phrases have for centuries exerted a certain power, and where, moreover, class divisions are not so clearly marked as in other countries, with the result that the German communists are less keenly and decisively aware of the real issues.^{viii}

Further?

^v In original: “in the most abstract form”

^{vi} In original: “tend to dim”

^{vii} From this sentence on, the remainder of the passage does not appear in the Progress Publishers 1964 edition.

^{viii} *German Ideology*, vol. 2, part 1, “The Rhenish Annals or the Philosophy of True Socialism,” *GI*, 516-17.

LS: No, that's all. That's the justification. In other words, ¹Marx did not believe that the fight would be won or lost in Germany. He thought much more of England and France, but still Germany plays of course a certain role; and therefore it is necessary to awaken the German proletariat, and this awakening is prevented by those true socialist phrasemakers. That's the reason, the practical reason; and therefore Marx goes out of his way to criticize these German socialists, but also the German radical liberals because he felt that they befuddled the true issue by making the Germans believe that the liberal democratic state ²can be the end of the movement. We talked about that. So, no, I would say I have no doubt that Marx, in his criticism of Grün as a scholar, ³is absolutely right; and also what he says about the arrogance of these people: you know, superficial readers of Hegel, believing that they are the top of the world because they know Hegel and then want to teach the French, who know much better what is going on in the field of the social struggles. That is a point which ⁴[gives] me the impression of being absolutely sound. That doesn't mean of course that Marx's position itself is true.

You mentioned a few points which we have to take up later coherently; for example, that Marx's rejection of the essence of man cannot be literally true, otherwise Marx's own position would not make sense. And we have to see with what right does he attack these Germans for having had recourse to the essence of man. One part of your criticism, if I understood you correctly, was this: that Marx is "quote a naturalist unquote"; and then on the other hand he rejects, as you made clear by your very tough examples, that he rejects nature as a standard. Yes? Well, what ⁵Marx says is today of course trivial. I mean, people wouldn't use such examples nowadays, but nature is not a standard, because an urge of a young juvenile delinquent to kill his mother is as natural as his desire to be kind. You know, this kind of thing is trivial. And now today it is of course clear: today they say there are no standards. There are no standards; all values are subjective. How does Marx get out of that fix? Was this not a question which you at least implied in what you said? But how does he get out of that?

Rabbi Weiss: Well, I don't know. I think perhaps that man is—man can be different and still not be regarded as strictly a part of nature. There are different creatures within nature.

LS: In other words, there are essential differences within nature.

Rabbi Weiss: Yes.

LS: Yes, but still, even that—are not there all kinds of human actions natural in this sense, and yet some are preferable to others? Where is the standard?

Student: Is he using the greatest good of the greatest number? He's talking to men, and he can say what men really want is this realm of freedom that we are working for the possibility of.

LS: Yes. However that may be, one could perhaps say the full development of each man's faculties. That is one point. And he would have to show why the human equivalent

to what you said about the apes is a defective form of developing one's faculties, ya?
⁶Good. So that is not the difficulty in Marx. But then at the end you made this point: the determination of—you found a difficulty in the fact that Marx says human thought is determined by social conditions and yet Marx says or implies that it is possible to know the truth. How could one defend Marx against this criticism as far as stated?

Rabbi Weiss: Well, it's possible, as I mentioned earlier, to have truth as a standard and yet it is truth to be determined at a given stage of history.

LS: Yes, but what does that mean, truth as a standard? Is the determination of the consciousness by social condition in itself incompatible with human knowledge?

Rabbi Weiss: No, not if at a given point the social conditions are such that it is possible for—to arrive at truth. In other words, ⁷the final truth is determined by the final stage of history.

LS: Yes, but let us proceed step by step. I mean, what you imply—⁸otherwise your argument wouldn't make sense—is that thought, insofar as it is determined socially, is necessarily erroneous. Marx would say: Regardless of whether it is erroneous or true, it is socially determined. Where does the difference come in? Now in the first place, what Marx implies is there is always some knowledge of truth. Think: we could not possibly live for a day—I don't say for an hour—without having some true knowledge. We would constantly jump into one another if we were not aware that this is a solid human being: you can't walk through him, you have to—ya? And we couldn't possibly eat without having some awareness of the fact that this is a thing fit to be eaten, and so on. So there is always knowledge of truth to some extent, and there is always also error. Now ⁹what Marx means to say is: Regarding the most urgent things, men always have sufficient knowledge, otherwise they could never have lived; but regarding the most comprehensive things, men have hitherto been absolutely in error, namely, hitherto men have always had false notions about the whole of society and what is really the ground of it. Now at a certain moment, Marx says, men can understand this materialistic basis of society; [men] can see that. And this however is not merely a venture of thought: this is itself socially conditioned. As he makes clear, if there had not been capitalist society, Adam Smith could never have developed his doctrine of labor. The fact that everything had become an object of basically the same kind of production so that the difference, for example, between agricultural and industrial production had become less important, only that enabled Smith to develop his general notion of labor as the origin of all wealth.

Similarly, ¹⁰this ¹¹somehow affected all European countries, and the backward countries like Germany included, but in Germany that became visible only in the most abstract way. The Germans didn't develop economics, but they had the clearest reflection of that on the ideological level, meaning Hegel. Hegel realized, and Hegel realized more clearly than any other philosopher, that thought itself is essentially production. Hegel did not see that this was only a reflection of the basic form of production, of material production. That he did not, but he approached it. In other words, capitalist society is accompanied by a certain awareness, by a certain dim awareness of what is the true reality. Capitalism can

never have more than a dim awareness, because the capitalists as capitalists are sold on capitalist society. In the moment their thought would endanger the further existence, the survival, of capitalist society, they would stop. But there are some men who have no interest in capitalist society because they are only its victims, and these are the proletarians. Therefore the proletarians, again in a dim way, go further than the brightest representatives of bourgeois society. But there can be some men, some men induced either by the theoretical difficulties presented by Hegel or by the practical problems, because they see that the liberal democratic state does not bring freedom, and they are concerned with freedom. Some individuals can be induced by either or both of these difficulties to take a further step—to step out of capitalist thought—and these are Marx and Engels. Well, to some extent the earlier socialists, but [it was] Marx and Engels according to their claim ¹²[who] took the decisive step. ¹³Surely what determines them is the crisis of capitalism, and the crisis of capitalism which they are able to see from the point of view of the proletariat. This possibility exists. You see, they were after all marginal capitalists. Yes? I mean, Engels could live as a businessman quite well, but Marx was a so-called intellectual, you know, and he was very poor throughout his life ¹⁴and he had all kinds of experience. So that's easy, but some people even are rich and can nevertheless be sufficiently public spirited to be induced either by theoretical or practical difficulties to see ¹⁵what demands, what outlook corresponds to the proletariat's. That has happened. Then you raise the question: Well, ¹⁶the proletariat may be able to see something against which the bourgeois is constitutionally blind, to which the bourgeois is constitutionally blind; in other words, the proletarian position may still be a relative position. That was your point. ¹⁷Marx has considered that. What is Marx's reply to that? What is the peculiarity of the proletarian class compared with all other classes, past or present?

Rabbi Weiss: Well, for one thing, it represents the vast majority of mankind.

LS: Yes, but you could say the peasants represented the vast majority of mankind for many centuries, and that is no guarantee of truth. I think there is only one formula possible. The proletariat is the absolute class and therefore the proletarian consciousness, which doesn't have to be present in each proletarian individual, but that consciousness by virtue of which a proletarian can only understand himself consistently as a proletarian, is therefore the truth. That is of course the burden of Marx's point that the proletariat is an absolutely unique class: that class, the only class which ever was and is which cannot liberate itself without liberating man as man. And that is the point which one has to question, but Marx has of course seen this difficulty very clearly. I will take it up later.

Rabbi Weiss: Would that—wouldn't the proletariat still be a class even though—

LS: Yes, but a class, a class in which and through which class disappears.

Rabbi Weiss: But it hasn't disappeared yet.

LS: But—yes, ¹⁸but since its activity, its revolutionary activity is the transcending of class, therefore for the first time relativism is about to be transcended; and therefore that

is the basis for Marx's claim that the historical materialism or intellectual materialism—however you call its position—is true. I mean, that was a criticism of Marx. I think the formula stems from Max Weber, if I remember well, that one must apply Marxism to itself, i.e., to understand the Marxists in the light of their class situation and so on and so on. Yes, but¹⁹ Marx would say that he did that from the very beginning. The fact that Marx was not technically a proletarian—I mean in the literal sociological sense—is not important, because the French noblemen who took the side of the bourgeoisie and were in a way the leaders of the bourgeoisie in the French Revolution, at least in the early part, of course were also noblemen; and yet they had become traitors to their class and by this very fact they became, they could become, the spokesmen of the other class. One could even say, if one wants to do this kind of thing, that there is [a] particular probability, high probability that these switching men should be in the best position to understand [or] in the better position than the proletarian who is completely wrapped up in the immediate tasks of his class—you know, strikes and what have you—whereas this man who has had the leisure, the non-proletarian leisure to acquire a broad horizon would be in a much better position to spell out to the proletarian and on behalf of the proletarian what the proletarian intends. Yes?

Rabbi Weiss: Well, until the final stage of history is reached, the proletariat is not yet the absolute class.

LS: No, it is the absolute class. It is because it is destined by its situation. But you can say one thing. One thing is to call men to revolution, prepare the revolution; and another thing is to achieve the revolution and to live after the revolution. Now a revolution would not be a revolution if it did not have surprises, and the surprises—just as a war would not be a war if there were not surprises, and then it is simply a war or what, not a war or revolution. And now what men will do and think after the revolution cannot be—at least not be fully known in advance. Marx admitted that, and that is a part of the communist law, as you know. Therefore it is impossible to describe in detail the postrevolutionary society. You know that's axiomatic with communism, but still they say a lot about the postrevolutionary society in advance; and they are forced to say it because one wants to know a little bit whether the end, whether the outcome of the revolution is not likely to be another form of the old mess. Yes? You know? Marx has to *prove* that the revolution is not the substitution of one form of tyranny for another form of tyranny but that this is really *the* resurrection, the regeneration of man—[these are] terms which he uses. That is the difficulty. But in other words, Marx avoids the relativistic difficulty by a modification of Hegel's view, namely, that there is a peak in the historical development; and at that peak not necessarily full knowledge but knowledge of the decisive truth is for the first time possible. We don't need more, and who wants to have all details filled up? But if we know the decisive thing, that's all we need. And Marx claims to give that, and one must look into that, of course, but Marx has considered that.

There was one Marxist, and I must say I think the most intelligent Marxist in the Western world—outside of Soviet Russia, I mean—and that was Lukács, whose name I mentioned before,^{ix} who fell for this criticism of Max Weber and said: Yes, we must apply Marxism

^{ix} Session 5, p. 105 above.

to itself. And he came to this conclusion: that,²⁰ say, the doctrine of Marx is related to the proletarian revolution as the doctrine, say, of Rousseau, yes, or any of these men to the French Revolution. Now this is a beauty because Rousseau believes, or let us assume some of his disciples believe, that this revolution will mean, will be the emancipation of man from all tyranny. What came out? Bourgeois oppression. How can we know that the Marxist revolution will not lead to Stalinist oppression? Yes? We know it perhaps, that he was righter than he should have been. So in other words, you cannot apply Marxism to itself without abandoning Marxism. Marxism is an absolute position which cannot be relativized or it is nothing. That, I think, is all.

Now let us turn to a few special points. We have here—well, Marx begins with a critique of the ideological character of this true socialism.²¹ What does it mean? As he puts it, one formula is this: these people separate the consciousness of certain historically conditioned spheres of life from the sphere of life and measure it by looking at the true absolute consciousness, i.e., the German philosophic consciousness. In other words, they believe that thought can be understood in and by itself and not by transcending it in the direction of social reality. They take the theories as something independent, yes, and not as something radically derivative. Let us see a few more passages: on page 87, line 7 from bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

All epoch-making systems have as their real content the needs of the time in which they arose. Each one of them is based on the whole of the antecedent development of a nation, on the historical growth of its class relations with their political, moral, philosophical and other consequences.^x

LS: Yes. Let us stop here. You know, every system—for example, Spinoza writes a book, the *Ethics*, in which he tries to teach man, *man*, how he can achieve felicity; and that it was written in the seventeenth century is absolutely uninteresting to Spinoza. From his point of view, he could have written it any time; it so happened that it was written for the first time in his age. Marx says: No, the true content of that book are the needs of the time in which they emerged, i.e., we would have to understand Spinoza as the first man who openly did not belong to any religious community—he was a Jew by origin but was excommunicated and did not become a Christian—who lived in Holland, the first capitalist society. That’s the key to the *Ethics*. Now I think if you would try to do it, you would see that it won’t help. That won’t help. That it would perhaps explain to some extent his political writings, that wouldn’t do. So, but still that is of course the assertion of Marx.

Now then the point which you referred to: What is the characteristic of these Germans? Their unhistorical character. They speak of the essence of man. In other words, they disregard the crucial importance of the specific, of the historical, and therefore they talk also about nature: a certain sentimental view of nature to which they have no longer any right—that is what Marx implies—is to give the solution. Nature is harmonious and beneficent, and if men would only follow nature there would be not any conflicts. That is

^x *German Ideology*, vol. 2, part 1, “The Rhenish Annals,” *GI*, 508.

of course an infinitely old story. It is only—how shall I say?—outlandish in the nineteenth century after what has been done to nature and to the concept of nature in the modern century; and Marx’s criticism is here of course absolutely victorious, but it is in no way peculiar to Marx. Hegel and many, many others would have said the same thing.

There are a few points which we might perhaps read on page 100. “He gives now an invitation to a walk”—yes? “He addresses now an invitation to a walk to man.”

Mr. Reinken:

He now invites “Man” to accompany him on a journey, an invitation which “Man” readily accepts. “Man” enters the realm of “free nature” and indulges, among other things, in the following intimate confessions of a true socialist.

LS: Yes. Stop here. Good. Now we don’t have to read that because I would like to paralyze Rabbi Weiss’s example by some more pertinent ones. Yes? “‘Man’ can see a whole lot of other things in nature.” Do you have that? Skip the next paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

“Man” could observe a quantity of other things in nature, e.g., the bitterest competition among plants and animals; he could see, for example, in the plant world, in his “forest of tall and stately oaks,” how these tall and stately capitalists consume the nutriment of the tiny shrubs, which might well complain: *terra, aqua, aere et igni interdicti sumus* [We are forbidden from earth, water, air, and fire]^{xi}; he could observe the parasites, the ideologists of the vegetable world, he could further observe that there is open warfare between the “forest birds” and the “infinite multitude of tiny creatures,” between the grass of his “meadows” and the “mettlesome troop of young horses.”^{xii}

LS: Yes. In other words, this notion of nature as a sheer paradise of peace and benevolence and beneficence is just nonsense, as if there were no beasts of prey and poisonous snakes, you know? That is surely true. The question is how far I experience it. But this simpleton seems to have left—Grün seems to have left it at that. Now let us turn to page 102, the third paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

The first fact asserted—

LS: No, no, when he says “These are lilies on the field.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

“[C]onsider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and thy Heavenly Father feedeth them—”

LS: No, no. Before. Before.

^{xi} Mr. Reinken’s translation of the Latin.

^{xii} *German Ideology*, vol. 2, part 1, “Cornerstones of Socialism,” *GI*, 519.

Mr. Reinken:

Yes, consider the lilies of the field, how they are eaten by goats, transplanted by “Man” into his buttonhole, how they are crushed beneath the immodest embraces of the dairymaid and the donkey-driver!^{xiii}

LS: Yes, well that—but it’s very funny, but it is of course a very old story [great laughter] going back to Machiavelli at least. In other words, yes, there is no providence, no providence of nature or of God in any sense. That is—and he quotes as a counterpoise against this elementary view, ²²a little bit later; the paragraph, “This whole prologue is a model of naïve—”

Mr. Reinken:

of ingenuous philosophic mystification. The true socialist proceeds from the thought that the dichotomy of life and happiness must cease. To prove his statement, he summons the aid of nature and assumes that in it this dichotomy does not exist; from this he deduces that since man, too, is a natural body and possesses all the general properties of such a body, no dichotomy should exist for him either. Hobbes, also by invoking nature, produced a proof of his [war of all against all]^{xiv}—

LS: With much greater right, yes, he says. That is not in the translation? “With much greater right could Hobbes demonstrate his war of everyone.” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

that is much more conclusive that Herr Grün’s attempt to prove a contrary hypothesis.

LS: Yes. So you see he refers to the prehistory, and of course one would even have to go back beyond Hobbes. Yes. ²³That Marx is here easily victorious is not doubtful to me, but the question is whether it is not one of those victories which one ought to be ashamed of, you know, because they are so simple. There ²⁴is another point, problem touched upon which you have not mentioned in your paper, Rabbi Weiss, and that refers to the problem of equality, a problem which we have to discuss coherently after. Now turn to page 186, the second paragraph from the bottom. Yes, the difference between Mr. Kuhlmann and his—yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Herr Kuhlmann differs here from the socialists and the communists only by reason of a *misunderstanding*, the cause of which must be sought in his pursuit of *practical aims* and doubtless in his limitations. He confuses the *diversity* of faculties and capacities with the *inequality of possessions* and *enjoyment* conditioned by possession, and *inveighs* therefore against *communism*—^{xv}

^{xiii} *German Ideology*, vol. 2, part 1, “Cornerstones of Socialism,” *GI*, 520.

^{xiv} In original: “*bellum omnium contra omnes*.” Ibid.

^{xv} *German Ideology*, vol. 2, part 5, “Doctor Georg Kuhlmann of Holstein,” *GI*, 591. Italics in original.

LS: Yes. Do you understand that point, what he has to say? What does Marx—well, perhaps we read the other relevant passage and then we take it together. On page 188, the fourth paragraph.

Mr. Reinken:

The whole of this tautological—

LS: No, he says this: “Both [possession and enjoyment]” Yes?

Mr. Reinken:

Both [possession and enjoyment] conform to his labor [that is, to man’s labor]. This is the measure of his needs. [In this way, Kuhlmann distorts the claim that a communist society has, on the whole, always as many natural faculties and energies as needs.] For labor—^{xvi}

LS: Yes. No, and finally on page 189, line 10 from bottom.

Mr. Reinken:

So far everything had gone well.

But one of the most vital principles of communism, a principle which distinguishes it from all reactionary socialism, is its empiric view, based on a knowledge of men,^{xvii} that differences of brain, of intellectual capacity, do not imply any difference whatsoever in the nature of the stomach and of physical needs; therefore the false tenet, based upon existing circumstances, “to each according to his capacity,” must be changed, insofar as it relates to enjoyment in its narrower sense, into the tenet “to each according to his need”; in other words, a different form of activity, of labour, ^{xviii}confers no privileges in respect of possession and enjoyment.^{xix}

LS: Yes. Now that is the crucial point. What does Marx then teach regarding justice? Because that is of course a question of justice which is involved: the relation of equality and inequality. What does Marx then say if we limit ourselves to these passages here? Are men equal or unequal?

Student: They are equal in their rights, but unequal in their capacities.

LS: They are unequal in their capacities. Now, yes, he doesn’t speak of rights here. He speaks of possessions or enjoyments. Now what is the crucial point? What is the thesis? I mean, that men have unequal faculties was generally admitted. What is the problem? Where is the disagreement? What follows from the inequality of capacities according to the accepted view which Marx attacks?

^{xvi} The bracketed material is in the original.

^{xvii} In Progress Publishers edition, “man’s nature”

^{xviii} In Progress Publishers edition, “does not justify inequality”

^{xix} *German Ideology*, vol. 2, part 5, *GI*, 593.

Student: A hierarchical society.

LS: Yes. In terms of possession, what's the relation of capacities and—yes?

Student: An inequality of happiness, or enjoyment—

LS: So in other words, he who has higher capacities should have higher possession or enjoyment. Yes?

Same student: Yes, because he gets—

LS: Yes, let us illustrate it a bit to understand it, because that's really a crucial issue. You all remember, I hope better than I do, *Federalist* number 10. What is taught there?

Same student: Unequal ability to acquire property should be justly rewarded by allowing the fruits of that—

LS: They should be protected, but that means of course that the unequal capacity to acquire will lead to inequality of possession, and hence the inequality of enjoyment, yes?^{xx} And that is a natural and just relation, yes? He who earns more, has the capacity to earn more, should enjoy more; and that is of course based on the premise that the people good at earning are the industrious and rational part of society. If we accept this premise that the lazy and irrational are those in need, one could say^{xxi}—from a tough point of view, but one could say, [and] that would be still just to say: Well, if they are too lazy and too irrational they have only themselves to blame, and the others get their just reward by living in fine houses, having beautiful gardens and many servants, and so on and so on; that is just as it should be. Now what does Marx say to this position? There are violations of that thought,²⁵ but generally speaking, one can say mankind have—at least the political thinkers have thought there should be some proportion between faculties, not necessarily the acquisitive faculties in particular, but faculties and possessions or enjoyment. What does Marx say?

Student: That every person has the same basic physical needs and therefore—

LS: Yes, that is obvious, but what's the relevance of that? By the way, it's not quite obvious. But the problem concerns the relation between these two things: faculties or capacities, and enjoyment. Yes? And we have here a hierarchy of capacities. The just solution would be the strict correspondence of enjoyment to capacity, so the most capable

^{xx} “The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results; and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties.” *Federalist* 10.

^{xxi} Strauss uses the language from Locke, *Second Treatise*, section 34.

man would enjoy most and the least capable man would enjoy least. What's wrong with that according to Marx?

Student: This is capacities for production, and if we're referring to any capacities—

LS: That is here not specified. That is here not specified. As a matter of fact, he speaks also of the intellectual capacities, so it has nothing to do with that. For example—pardon? Yes? First, we must try to understand what Marx means—yes?

Student: Is it that the stupid man who has little capacity still exerts himself to the utmost, in a sense then exerts himself just as much as the brilliant man and therefore has a right to equal enjoyment of things as the brilliant man?

LS: One could say that, but is this a point which Marx makes here? Yes?

Student: Could they enjoy equally?

LS: Is this—but first let us see what Marx means here. Yes?

Student: They must all have equal enjoyment according to their needs rather than—

LS: That he implies, although the famous formula does not occur here. But ²⁶Marx's point is this: the difference, the inequality of capacities does not justify inequality of enjoyment. This subtle question of subtle joys and so doesn't enter. He speaks of the stomach. There is no sensible connection between the fact that this is a first-rate nuclear physicist and that he should eat five pounds steak a day, and the other who is not capable to do more than to carry burdens should only have a quarter of a steak today, and perhaps even a quarter of a steak in the week. That's the point which Marx makes here in the first place. Yes? From everyone to—he doesn't say, but he alludes to that. There is no direct connection between capacities and needs. We have to recognize the inequality of capacities, but this does not mean equality of needs. For example, the top nuclear physicist may be a man who needs only a room with a table and a bed, and curtains perhaps. There are such people, who detest everything superfluous. He is perfectly happy with that; and he is a bachelor, in addition. And then you have another man who is very dumb but has a family of ten—yes?—and ²⁷ they must have flowers on the table, and they must have all kinds of other ornaments of life: needs, needs. They need it if they want to be happy. So it is perfectly possible that this one man—you know, there are unequal capacities, there are unequal needs, but there is no proportion between them, and the assignment, the just assignment would be with a view to the needs, not with a view to the capacities. ²⁸Society demands more, higher things from the most gifted members because they can give more, but it assigns not with a view to capacities but with a view to needs. I think that's the Marxist thesis. Yes, one would have to go into all kinds of details to see to what extent it is true, and the crucial question for practical purposes, as you all know, is that of incentives. Yes? You know that: it is possible that there are nuclear physicists who would not work so hard if they would not be properly—what they regard [as] properly—compensated. You know? And the question therefore is whether the need

of incentives will disappear in the communist society. That is what Marx of course implies, and that is the moral regeneration of man: nothing short of that. Yes?

Student: Is this property incentives . . .

LS: No, no. There could be badges. Badges, yes?^{xxii} You know? That could do; but still, from the point of view of moral regeneration, badges are as bad as free trips to the Bahamas ²⁹because it is extraneous to the genuine needs as well as to the capacities. I will not go into the question which is I believe a major subject of present economics, namely, ³⁰how to determine needs; for example, ³¹sometimes people have very funny desires which are also called their needs, and whether you would not have to have some body of wise men who determine what a need is. Yes? I mean one can say, for example, say, that the need for some time in Arizona for someone suffering from TB can be more clearly established than a need of honeymooners, for example, to go to Arizona, or maybe even to places further west. [Laughter] Well, I didn't want to make a joke, but it was there. Now Mr. Cropsey, you have not had your say on today's problem.

JC: Well, there are a lot of important things. With respect to the last remark, I should say economics now doesn't concern itself much with needs. Hardly at all.

LS: Yes. What term do they use? Demands?

JC: Preferences or wants.

LS: Yes, because clearly when you speak of needs you imply a distinction between natural and non-natural needs, and natural is subdivided into necessary and non-necessary, the old distinction. And that of course is an objective distinction which is incompatible with the relativism of present-day social science. Yes.

JC: [Mostly inaudible remark comparing Marx's view of the extraneous character of rewards to Kant's view as to the immorality of obeying the moral law for the sake of the reward.]

LS: Yes. Yes, sure, ³²Marx tries, of course; that is true. One could state it as follows. Marx says morality is bunk. Morality is nonsense. As soon as man has become free, there is no place for morality, for any ought. Men will do as a matter of course the human thing to do. Yes? That's the point. That is however what one could also call the fantastic thing in Marx, and we must try to get a more precise formulation for this very general remark. Fantastic, in other words, whether men really, given the conditions, will have no other desire than to develop all their faculties. That would be a bit closer to what Marx himself said. We come to that. Yes, Mr. Faulkner?

Mr. Faulkner: Professor Cropsey's question is very interesting. Is Marx rebelling against the notion of duty?

^{xxii} See Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book 5, chap. 1, part 3, art. 2, "Of the Expence of the Institutions for the Education of Youth."

LS: Absolutely, also as he is rebelling against pleasure. That you must—well, I can only anticipate that. Both the hedonistic and the moralistic morality are wrong and hypocritical.

Mr. Faulkner: Both Kant and utilitarianism.

LS: Yes, and Epicurus and any—anyone. The only one who would perhaps at first glance survive, but only at first glance, would be Aristotle—but only at first glance. I will discuss this coherently, but I believe then I will now begin, if Mr. Cropsey and the class don't mind, with a kind of [coherent discussion, because we won't have a paper next time and I think we should devote this time at our disposal, the last time to a coherent discussion of Marx's philosophic premises. The situation, as you will recall, is this.]^{xxiii} One has to understand both steps of Marx: (a) the philosophically-based turn to economics, and [b] the economic teaching. If the economic teaching should prove to be wrong, that would surely be fatal to Marx. That's clear. But on the other hand, one must also—since a merely negative criticism is not very helpful, it is necessary to understand the foundations; and the foundations are not economic but they are philosophic reasons inducing Marx to find the base in economics. Now let me therefore devote the rest of today's meeting as well as next meeting to a coherent discussion of Marx's philosophic premises. This cannot be done without some repetitions of points made before, but you understand that.

Now what's the starting point? Hegel. Philosophy has been completed, and by this very fact history has been completed. Marx agrees with Hegel half[way]: philosophy has been completed. Hegel is the culmination of philosophy as philosophy. But history has not been completed. The practical problems have not been solved. Hegel's constitutional monarchy, so-called, is not a solution to man's political problem. Nor have the theoretical problems all been solved as Hegel claims. Therefore a new theoretical effort is necessary, but this effort can no longer be philosophic. The thought required for the solution of the problems, both theoretical and practical, is transphilosophic. I say transphilosophic because it presupposes the great development of philosophy; it presupposes that and transcends that. It is not, as in present-day positivism, a simple oblivion of philosophy. And this transphilosophic study has the character of an empirical study, especially of social reality: so, in other words, the same [as] what our social science claims to do. But what is the difference? The empirical study of social reality means for Marx the empirical study of the contradictions inherent in social reality, and therewith a criticism of social reality. We do not discover a harmony. From this we can infer that according to Marx, and I believe according to the truth [of] what is now called social science, is an attempt to discover the harmony in social reality by hook and by crook, and the best way of course is to abolish value judgments. Then you don't get any contradictions.

So the study, the empirical study, of social reality necessarily turns into criticism of social reality; and thus it produces indignation, revolution. There is a unity of theory and

^{xxiii} The tape was changed at this point. The material in brackets is not audible on the remastered audiofile and is taken from the original transcript.

practice which does not mean a coincidence of theory and practice. They must be distinguished, and it is rather this way: that in Marxian social science, social reality criticizes itself. No, more precisely: social reality criticizes itself. It has this conflict and antagonism within itself. But social reality becomes fully conscious of this inherent criticism in and through the scientific analysis; and therefore, without Marxism, no revolution. Only through the medium of this consciousness can the revolution take its proper place. That is to say (and that is partly an answer to points ³³made by Rabbi Weiss), the task, what we have to do, is prescribed by the present conditions. To understand the present conditions means to reveal what we have to do as intelligent and honest men. And not everyone is intelligent and honest; that is another matter. I [will] read to you a few passages.

So in other words, there is no ought. There is not [LS writes on the blackboard]—here is the ought and here is social reality. We do not have to look there in order to find out what we ought to do. We only have to look here. Here we find our task defined in concrete terms, because even if there were an ought, it would be too universal to be applicable to what we here now have to do. But Marx denies that there is an ought. There is no ought. Here in this reality there are tendencies, antagonistic tendencies; and the more concrete we are, the more we enter into it and understand it, we see our task described. So analysis is criticism, and criticism is an imperative. They are inseparable.

I read to you a passage from Marx which is important, and not only for this question but it illustrates it very well, and that is from his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, which was not available to us in a translation.

“The critique of religion, the purely cognitive critique of religion, ends with a teaching that man is the highest being for man and hence with a categoric imperative [mind you—LS] to revolutionize all relationships in which man is a degraded being.”^{xxiv}

Now to repeat, this categoric imperative is not here. It reveals itself here, but that of course has great conveniences, what Marx says, because it answers one question which Kant could not properly answer: Why was the categoric imperative discovered by Kant around 1785, and not five hundred years before or two thousand years before? Marx can answer it: this categoric imperative, to regard man as the highest being, could not have been discovered before . . . the situation. Man is the highest being not simply, but the highest being for man; and that, I think, shows both the difference between Marx and positivism and quite a few other things.

Now I make a second point. ³⁴The first point I made was this: to understand the transphilosophic character of Marx's thought. Marx's thought claims to be transphilosophic, and that means to involve a break with philosophy as such; but it presupposes philosophy, as is indicated by the word transphilosophic. Marx's position is more precisely a synthesis of two philosophic positions: the synthesis of the intraphilosophic alternative of materialism and spiritualism or idealism. Briefly, this:

^{xxiv} Introduction to *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Marx-Engels Reader*, 60. Strauss's translation.

looking back at the history of philosophy we can say there was a tug of war at all times between something which we may call materialism and something which we may call spiritualism or idealism. This conflict was never solved. Marx says it could not be solved because the solution would have been a philosophic solution. That's impossible: the solution can be found only by leaping out of philosophy. Now what is that? What is the issue? Marx states it naturally in terms of the most recent forms which this alternative has taken, the most recent forms being: Feuerbach, materialism; Hegel, idealism. Now what does Feuerbach say? In a nutshell: There is always something given. Man cannot, the human mind cannot construct the whole. The thinking being is man, not a mere mind lost in the human body. The idealist position of Hegel: what is that crucial point? The fundamental phenomenon is production. To understand means to produce, to construct, not to contemplate; and this production necessarily leads according to Hegel to the historical process: every product becoming objectified, calling forth a new productive action and so on. The historical process. Hegel is understood as a philosophic counterpart to Adam Smith, who had taught in the clearest form that wealth is a product of labor and not a gift of nature: [a] product of human activity. Hegel says the same thing philosophically. I remind you of one or two passages in Marx's *National Economy and Philosophy*.

Now we must raise this question. The synthesis of the basic philosophic alternative, materialism or idealism, is transphilosophic. Why is that so? Why can philosophy not solve it? Now what is the synthesis of materialism and idealism? Answer: Communism; and communism is not a theory but an order of life, a way of life. Why is that so? Now philosophy means, as Hegel understood, in its highest form full self-consciousness of the consciousness, but the consciousness is only a part of man. Philosophy presupposes that, the division of labor. Philosophy is the activity of a part of man or of some men; it is not the activity of man as man. Transcending philosophy means transcending the division of labor, and that's communism. In other words, divided labor is always social labor. There is a tacit working of society in my private working. Divided labor is always social labor. Applied to philosophy: philosophy, the philosophic labor, belongs to society without knowing it. Philosophy, claiming to give man the highest self-consciousness, does not give it to him because philosophy does not reflect on its own derivative character. The restoration of man's wholeness includes the *Aufhebung*, the removal, transcending, of philosophy . . . Yes, that occurs in this writing on *National Economics and Philosophy*, which we preserved here. "One sees," Marx says, "how subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism and materialism, only find in the social condition its opposite and therewith lose their existence as such opposites. One sees how the solution of the theoretical opposites is possible only in a practical way. It is a real task of life—or a task of real life—which philosophy could not solve precisely because it regarded it as a merely theoretical task."^{xxv}

Now I turn to a third [point]. This transcending philosophy presents itself as a return from philosophy to common sense, we can say. You remember the tough expressions which Marx used all the time: common sense. But we must correct this immediately. It is a turn

^{xxv} Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 89. Strauss's translation.

toward present-day common sense; the common sense of any earlier age wouldn't be of any help. Social science, the transphilosophic social science, leads therefore, because it is a turn to present-day common sense, necessarily to revolution. One formula which Marx uses in order to describe the difference between his view and philosophy is this: that philosophy has tried to interpret the world, to contemplate the world, to understand the world as it is, but what matters is to change the world.^{xxvi} Now we would raise the question: All right, in what direction do you want to change it? For Marx, perhaps the question is no question once you enter into analysis of present-day society. There is no alternative. There is no alternative. You know? I mean, after you have understood the situation, either you side with the manifestly rotten and dishonest—and some people would say: Yes, I side with it: *après moi le déluge*, the deluge comes after me and I don't care. But you cannot do this with self-respect, so there is no alternative.³⁵ Is this so? I read to you the end (or at least in this edition) of an early writing of Marx, his critique of Proudhon, *The Misery of Philosophy*. Proudhon's book was called *The Philosophy of Misery*, and Marx turned it round and called it *The Misery of Philosophy*, namely, of Proudhon's philosophy, and in a way of philosophy as such. This ends as follows, a quotation from George Sand,^{xxvii} a famous French authoress of the nineteenth century.

“Struggle or death, bloody war or nothing: thus is the question posed in a *unerbittlich*—”

Student: Inescapably?

LS: Yes, that is not strong enough, but it can do now. Inescapably. All right.

“Struggle or death, bloody war or nothing [bloody war, that's of course revolution—LS]. Or nothing.”^{xxviii}

Concretely, communism or the destruction of civilization, communism or the destruction of the human race, perhaps. Is communism preferable to destruction of a civilization? A question which we must raise. The very necessity of raising the question proves the need for philosophy, because that cannot be settled by social analysis as Marx understands it, to say nothing of the fact that Marx shows in effect that this is so by his setting forth a moral philosophy. And we got a specimen of it in this statement: From everyone to his capacity, to every one according to his needs. For the time being I repeat again the statement I read before.

“The critique of religion ends with the teaching that man is the highest being for man, and hence with the categoric imperative to revolutionize all relationships in which man is a degraded being.”^{xxix}

^{xxvi} The eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.

^{xxvii} George Sand, pseudonym of Aurore Dupin (1804-1876).

^{xxviii} A quotation from Sand's novel *Jean Ziska*, on the final page of *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847).

^{xxix} Strauss's translation. See Marx's introduction to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 60.

A categorical imperative implies the possibility of not living up to it, and that man is the highest being for man is such a normative teaching. Furthermore, in proportion as the social situation lacks the simplicity which Marx ascribes to it—here the perfectly just cause of the proletariat, there the perfectly unjust cause of the bourgeoisie—the necessity of philosophy becomes still more evident. In situations of extreme simplicity we don't have to appeal to deeper reflection, but if the situation is not extremely simple the necessity arises.

Now let us consider the other side of the matter. That's the fourth point I wanted to make. We turn from philosophy to the empirical study of society, but we turn to that on the basis of a presupposition which precedes the study, the empirical study of society, namely, that the basis of all social phenomena are the relations of production. Why are the relations of production the most fundamental? Marx suggests [that] first you have to eat before you can think, but that is of course a very inadequate argument because the condition of something is never the sufficient cause of it. We have seen last time in a passage in the first part of *The German Ideology* [that] Marx admits in passing, but unfortunately only in passing, the simultaneity of thing-production and myth-production. The earliest man—savage, however he might be—cannot but think the whole while about seeking food, shelter and so on. Perhaps Marx meant it this way: thing-production or tool-production is the production of something real. This stone is now fit for being used for cutting the throat of a deer. It cuts, so it works. It is real. In other words, thing-production ³⁶effects a change in the world and a change of the world, but myth-production produces merely something imaginary and therefore ineffective. Zeus does not become an effective force by being thought to exist. But of course that would seem to be a great fallacy, because there are the myths: while they may not effect real things by miracles, ³⁷they may very well be effective of man, to say nothing of the Marxist admission—and emphasis, even—that the so-called superstructure affects the economic infrastructure. Perhaps the following passage is of some help, which occurs in *The German Ideology*:

“Earlier such philosophic delusions could have currency in Germany, but today they have become completely ridiculous since international trade has proven sufficiently that bourgeois acquisition is wholly independent of politics while politics is wholly dependent on bourgeois acquisition.”^{xxx}

In other words, we look at today—today—and there we see the root of everything is ³⁸the economic relations of production.

Well, what Marx effected was only to show, at least to his satisfaction, that the political issues of the time can only be understood as reflections of the class struggle. He did not really show it regarding the intellectual life of his time. But what would follow from that? That would not justify a universal theory of history, that this was so at all times. The very fact that he says “today” would seem to show that there was a change. Already in the eighteenth century, politics had become so much dependent on trade that, for example, when the French state wanted to make a loan, a private man had to vouch for the state to

^{xxx} Presumably Strauss's translation.

the Dutch. Well, in other words, we have in modern times a very great power of the economic considerations and of the economic needs, of the economic relations. Does this prove that this was always so? Is the fact that the economic historians have to dig up the history of economics from most[ly] out of the way places, not from the great productions of the past, that surely proves that these people didn't believe that economics was so important. The most famous example: the greatest and most realistic historian of premodern times, Thucydides, is absolutely silent about any economic background of the Peloponnesian War. The present-day economic historians try to find that because they cannot imagine that people are so foolish to fight if they don't fight for markets and something of that kind. That we don't know. We don't know. But the certainty that it must have been so is of course a purely dogmatic certainty. I mean, when they fought, the Greeks—and we find these examples: they were very much concerned with the physical possession of the field of battle so that the enemy had to come [hat]^{xxxii} in hand, or whatever they had on their heads, to ask for the corpses for proper burial. That was a major consideration. You can say that was crazy, superstitious; I don't care. But it was a great fact, and ³⁹the assertion that even then the content of the struggle was always economical is unfounded, of course. In other words, the relative justification of Marxism is that in modern times the economic considerations manifestly play a much greater role than they had played in earlier times. Political economy as a science is a product of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. This alone shows the state of this, but Mr. Cropsey can tell you much more about that than I can.

Now Marx would perhaps also argue as follows. Let us look at the most important phenomenon, because that has a much greater popular bearing than philosophy can have had: religion. What is religion? Well, here Marx depends on Feuerbach. Now religion is a supplement, let us say, an illusory satisfaction for what cannot be satisfied in reality. ⁴⁰I'm trying to give the thought already in the Marxian form, not in Feuerbachian form. Therefore religion depends ultimately on the real dissatisfaction and its specific character: If people are dissatisfied in one way, they will produce religion A; if they are dissatisfied in another way, they will produce religion B. Religion means always this or that religion [and] can only be explained in terms of society, i.e., of this or that society. But this of course presupposes everything. Even if we grant Marx's basic premise—which is a very great question in itself—that religion is essentially a delusion, are all ills for which man tries to find a solution by religion or myth, are all ills social ills? For example, the death of the individual is not as such a social ill, and how much did it preoccupy the human imagination? I suggest this conclusion: the basis of Marx's social science is a dogmatic decision in favor of the basic character of the relations of production. Even if Marx's doctrine were true, [that] would have to be proven by empirical analysis of religion, of philosophy, and so on, a proof which has never been given; and whenever it was attempted it was done in a very superficial way except in certain stretches of modern thought. For example, the thing which is called sociology of knowledge, which is a decayed form of Marxism—no, honestly, that one can show historically, because Mannheim,^{xxxiii} who made this sociology of knowledge so famous,

^{xxxii} The word is unclear, but it is not "hat."

^{xxxiii} Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), was a Hungarian-born sociologist and author of *Ideologie und Utopie* (1929). An English translation was published as *Ideology and Utopia* by Routledge in

his work is based on Lukács's previous work on *History and Class Consciousness*. Yes, but what do these people prove? That a program, a part of the plank of the Republican or Democratic party program for the election regarding agriculture is influenced by the various organizations of farmers. Well, which child did not expect that from the outset? The question would be—an entirely different proposition would be ⁴¹really to show, for example, a connection between present-day theoretical physics and our society as it exists now, or a genuine work of art and that. That's a much tougher presupposition. It has never been shown in concrete or in any way.

The next point I would like to make is this. I do not know whether I still have time, because of a certain unreliability of my watch. Yes. No, I think I have to stop. Well, next time I ⁴²will raise this question to which Rabbi Weiss has referred in the first place, namely, the question of the essence of man. And this is very much connected with the question of Marx's moral philosophy in the fullest sense of the term. And perhaps I will find time to say a few words which by now may be a bit clearer than they could have been at the beginning: to what extent Marx is right in saying—not metaphorically or as a kind of joke, but seriously—that for Marx economics is metaphysics or metaphysics is economics. And this is not a cliché but literally true, and all the problems are concentrated in that. But ⁴³that is however only one side of the problem. The other side of the problem ⁴⁴is to understand—I mean, you have economic materialism. Let us assume that this is proven true; that in itself does not necessarily lead to the notion that the economic changes will bring about a state of man which is the redemption of man, the moral regeneration of man. What is the connection? How, by what means—not to say by what trick—does Marx succeed in linking up the economic teaching with this expectation from the future? How [are] these two ultimate problems, i.e., economics is metaphysics, [and] the connection between economic materialism and the expectation of the regeneration brought about by the final class struggle⁴⁵, related? That would be, I think, the ultimate task of an understanding of Marx. Whether I shall be able to give a clear answer to that question I doubt, but I will try. I will try.

¹ Deleted “in order”

² Deleted “can be the last”

³ Deleted “has very much to”

⁴ Deleted “is—makes to”

⁵ Deleted “he says”

⁶ Deleted “you know?”

⁷ Deleted “the truth is”

⁸ Deleted “is”

⁹ Deleted “the question is”

¹⁰ Deleted “by—because”

¹¹ Deleted “was”

¹² Deleted “they”

¹³ Deleted “they were”

¹⁴ Deleted “you know”

¹⁵ Deleted “what corresponds”

¹⁶ Deleted “the proletariat may still be—that may”

1936. For Strauss's review of the book, see “Der Konspektivismus,” *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, hrsg. Heinrich Meier (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2013), 365-75.

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- 17 Deleted “What’s the—yes, surely, but what is Marx”
18 Deleted “but it has”
19 Deleted “that is”
20 Deleted “Marxism has, is about”
21 Deleted “i.e., they”
22 Deleted “on”
23 Deleted “so that I think”
24 Deleted “are”
25 Deleted “but we don’t have to go”
26 Deleted “Marx’s conclusion, I think”
27 Deleted “they have all kinds of—they want”
28 Deleted “What society”
29 Deleted “yes, you know what I mean”
30 Deleted “that”
31 Deleted “whether the needs, you know”
32 Deleted “but it is not”
33 Deleted “which”
34 Deleted “Marx—the main point”
35 Deleted “That is”
36 Deleted “is.”
37 Deleted “but”
38 Deleted “the relations”
39 Deleted “and the ascription to all earlier men of—the assertion not to earlier men”
40 Deleted “therefore it”
41 Deleted “which they”
42 Deleted “will develop”
43 Deleted “there is”
44 Deleted “is the very”
45 Deleted “is”

Session 9: April 27, 1960
Marx's philosophic premises

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —position is explicitly to be said postphilosophic or transphilosophic. The possibility of a transphilosophic, postphilosophic, more generally nonphilosophic position is based in Marx's view on the assumption that there are no alternatives. If you understand the situation, you see there is only one possibility of change, of action. There are no alternatives, and therefore the question of principles of choice does not arise. And therefore the first difficulty we have here: Is this possible? Is not at least the alternative of a destruction of civilization there, to say nothing of the other alternatives which would come out in a more detailed analysis of the situation, whether it truly points in one and only one direction? Marx tries to replace philosophy by the empirical study of society; and this empirical study is however not simply empirical but it is based on a premise, the premise being that the relations of production are the fundamental relations. This, we can say if we look at it as we tried to do it last time, is a dogmatic premise. Marx himself admits in passing the simultaneity of what I call thing-production and myth-production, and that is in itself fatal to the whole position. ¹We must see later what the reasons for this dogmatism are, but I proceed now.

The presupposition of the empirical analysis of society is the primacy of the relations of production, and this in its turn is based on a certain notion of man. In the passage in the first part of *The German Ideology* where Marx introduces the basic premise, he says one can distinguish man from the brutes by consciousness, by religion, or by whatever you please. Men themselves begin to distinguish themselves from the brutes as soon as they begin to produce their means of living. So producing the means of living, that is the difference between men and brutes and the whole. All the so-called materialistic conception of history simply follows from that. We can also refer to the passage in *Das Kapital* to which we have referred: the distinction between men and beasts was the example. Man is distinguished from the beasts by the fact that he has a conscious project. Man is the only conscious social being. He is both conscious and social. In other words, in his way Marx says what Aristotle said: man is the rational animal. There is somewhere a passage (I don't remember where) where he repeats the Aristotelian definition of man as a political animal, as a *zoon politikon*, without any criticism. ²So Marx has a definite notion of the essence of man, but at the same time Marx says: No, man is a historical being, and therefore any essence of man is irrelevant. He doesn't deny that there is an essence of man. But it is irrelevant; and this finds its clearest expression in the rejection of anything called eternal ideas, of which we have found traces in the *Communist Manifesto*, because if there is an essence of man there would of course be an essential order of human things—something like justice, virtue, or what have you. That is simply denied by Marx.

So there is an essence of man, but this essence is irrelevant. The difficulty appears most simply as that called relativism. The emancipation of the proletariat is not simply the substitution of one class for another; the emancipation of the proletariat is the

emancipation of man. I read to you a few passages from his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, which we have not been able to read here.

“The proletariat is characterized by universal suffering. It does not claim a special, particular right because no special injustice is done to it, but injustice simply, the absolute injustice . . . The proletariat cannot refer anymore to a historical title [like the British constitution, you know?—LS] but only to the human title [to *the* human title—LS]. The proletariat is characterized by the complete loss of humanity and therefore it can only recover through the complete recovery of man.”ⁱ

The proletariat is the absolute class. The emancipation of the proletariat is the emancipation of man. In the same context, at the end of this work he says the emancipation of the German is the emancipation of man.

“The head of this emancipation is philosophy; the heart, the proletariat. When all inner conditions have been fulfilled the German day of resurrection will be announced by the noises of the French cock [meaning the revolution will actually begin in France—LS].”ⁱⁱ

But a day of the resurrection—and it is not merely the resurrection of either the Germans or the proletarians: it is the resurrection of man. There is an absolute difference between the proletariat and any other class. There can be no question of relativism. The proletarian revolution is *the* revolution and not merely one among many. But how can this be if there are no eternal ideas—³to use Marx’s expression, eternal ideas? How can there be an absolute class if there are no absolute standards? Otherwise Marx’s expectation from the communist revolution would be merely the specific ideology of the proletariat as one class among many.

Now, how does Marx avoid relativism? We can say this: the historical process is not infinite. It has a beginning and an end. A passage to which I have referred before in this [context]: communism is the return of man.

“Communism as completed naturalism under completed humanism. Communism is the true resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and spontaneity, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. Communism is the solved riddle of history and knows itself to be that solution.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The riddle of history, which was always unsolved, is now solved and known to be solved. That’s Hegel. Marx avoids relativism by fundamentally the Hegelian way. I referred also to the passage where he speaks that communism possess a consciousness which

ⁱ Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 64. Presumably Strauss’s translation.

ⁱⁱ Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 65. Presumably Strauss’s translation.

ⁱⁱⁱ Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 84. Presumably Strauss’s translation.

transcends or surpasses the historical movement. To repeat, it is a Hegelian solution. There is an absolute. There can be an absolute class because there is an absolute moment in history: the recovery of man, the resurrection of man. But does Marx have a right to such a Hegelian solution? Hegel had a right; whether Marx has a right is another matter. And Hegel had a right fundamentally because of the teleological character of his conception: the historical process is the unfolding of the mind, and this unfolding is a teleological process. The mind always wanted to know itself, desired that; and then it finally reaches this result in the full consciousness of the mind's activity in Hegelian philosophy. I will have to come back to that.

I turn to another point, another aspect of the problem of the essence of men or the nature of man. The proletarian revolution means the removal of self-alienation, the removal of the division of labor and private property, the establishment of the society of free and equals ⁴and the withering away of the state, therefore; the substitution of freedom for everything which has grown by nature—*naturwüchsig* in German; the moral regeneration of man. Freedom means the freedom of developing all my capacities with the knowledge that this freedom of developing all my capacities presupposes the freedom of everyone else to develop his capacities. Such a freedom means that everyone should become a universal man: in the language of Leonardo da Vinci, *homo universale*—you know, a man who develops all his faculties fully. There is this famous passage which we have not discussed in the first part of *The German Ideology*, which I read to you:

“In the communist society, society regulates general production and thus makes it possible for me to do today this, tomorrow that, to go hunting in the morning, to go fishing in the afternoon, to raise cattle in the evening [I mean, why the evening is a particularly good time for cattleraising, I don't know—LS] to be a critic after luncheon, as I like—as I just happen to like, without ever becoming a hunter, a fisher, a shepherd or a critic.”^{iv5}

In other words, the division of labor means that I have a job. ⁶For example, I happen to be a teacher. Someone else is a shoemaker and some other man is a playwright. You know, everyone is something, but no one is a *man*, a human being. The taking back of the *what*, of the qualities into full humanity, that is the human meaning of the overcoming of the division of labor. ⁷Marx would say that is not an eternal ideal; that is an ideal which could become visible to man only at a certain stage of the historical process. Men did not strive unconsciously for freedom thus understood—they were concerned with entirely different things—but once a certain state of productivity is reached, this is the goal which presents itself to man. So it is historical, yes, but it is also final. There is no question that this ideal or this goal, this notion of human perfection, however you call it, can ever reasonably be changed in the future. Therefore we have to look at that.

Now if we read this description of this fishing in the morning, cattleraising in the evening, and after dinner to become a critic and so, we can say: How can we distinguish this universal man ⁸[from] the jack of all trades? Is such a man who does all these things truly superior to the right kind of one-sidedness? What is the use of everyone being a

^{iv} *German Ideology*, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 160. Strauss's translation.

critic instead doing some work for which he is competent to do? Another illustration is offered by another remark occurring in this same connection.

“The true intellectual, spiritual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his actual relations. Through that the individuals are liberated from the various national and local limitations, are put into connection with the production, also the intellectual production, of the whole world—”^v

The wealth, the spiritual, intellectual wealth of an individual—which Marx regarded of course much more highly than his monetary wealth—depends entirely on the wealth of his actual relations. Now these actual relations become enormously enlarged as soon as you have a world market. You have relations to all parts of the globe, to all kinds of humanity, and this makes you intellectually or spiritually richer. You only have to think of a man like Shakespeare, who lived a considerable time before the full emergence of the world market, who never left England, who knew what he knew of antiquity in other places from certain books, and he was probably judicious in selecting these books: He should have less intellectual freedom than a globetrotter of the twentieth century? Absurd. This freedom of which Marx speaks here can hardly be described as a desirable one. This ideal can hardly be said to be superior to earlier ideals.

Furthermore, do all men in fact have capacities for everything? Is the one-sidedness of most men not natural, and therefore the division of labor not fundamentally natural? Are men all equally gifted? Now Marx admits the inequality of capacities, as we have seen last time. The capacities differ; in particular, the intellectual capacities, but nothing follows from that regarding reward or enjoyment. You remember that, because “From everyone according to his capacities, to everyone according to his needs.” Now I will not go into this question, although it is of course of the greatest practical importance. It is identical with the question of the incentives: whether most men will make the necessary effort required by society without having incentives other than the development of their capacities.

One could raise another question. That is admittedly a casual remark, but I found it very interesting; that occurs in his critique of Proudhon, *The Misery of Philosophy*. Society as a whole has this in common with a factory, that it also has division of labor. If one takes the division of labor in a modern factory as an example in order to apply it to a whole society, then surely that society would be best organized for the production of its wealth which had only a single entrepreneur as leader and who would distribute according to a plan the functions among the different members of society. But as you know, the opposite is true: we have anarchy of production. In other words, ⁹I do not know how relevant that is for the work of Marx as a whole, but I know it is a fact. Marx mentions occasionally the possibility that the anarchy of production can be avoided only by social planning, but that this social planning ¹⁰requires itself a hierarchy of planners and—in other words, does even precisely the communist society not require an inequality? Yet Marx, to come back to the crucial point, [the] inequality of capacities: Marx is hesitant about it, as would

^v *German Ideology*, part 1 (2) “Concerning the Production of Consciousness,” *GI*, 49. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 163-64.

appear from a number of remarks. ¹¹The clearest passages on this subject occur in his writing on economics and philosophy, which is now accessible in an English translation.^{vi} Partly basing himself on Adam Smith, Marx makes this suggestion: the inequality of capacities which is empirically undeniable is the effect rather than the cause of the division of labor. So the inequality of capacities, in other words, is a social product, not a natural datum. Great inequality of capacities is certainly the effect of the division of labor. The division of labor in its turn leads rather to the impoverishment of the activities of the individual. All this would seem to lead to the conclusion that with the abolition of the division of labor, eventually there will be equality of capacities. But does not the inequality have natural roots? Yet what is the historical process except the conquest of nature, and therefore also to some extent of human nature? But to what extent is the historical process a conquest of human nature and therefore a conquest also of natural inequality? Marx is unable to give a principle here, ¹²and that is a revenge for his contempt about the question of the essence of man; because if the essence of man¹³ remains so wholly indeterminate, how can you then have any principle here?

Let us read the clearest passage of Marx on the natural root of the division of labor: “With the development of property the division of labor develops. The division of labor was originally nothing except the division of labor in the sexual act.”^{vii} Period. In other words—that is of course an absolutely fantastic assertion, because if you want to be realistic you would have to say that this division of labor is not limited to the sexual act; it has to do with procreation as a whole. You know that men do not become pregnant but women do. But this wholly unreasonable limitation to the sexual act instead of taking the whole, procreation, is characteristic of the whole procedure. Now if you think this through, what is the conclusion? If the division of labor is rooted ultimately in the bisexuality of man—that is the primary form—and the division of labor is to be overcome, let’s get rid of the bisexuality. Yet don’t laugh. I mean, it is silly but it is a very serious problem, and there is of course—and you know, I’m not speaking of Mr. or Mrs. Jorgensen^{viii} in particular [laughter], but I’m concerned with the—people have given some thought throughout the ages to the question of producing human beings in test tubes. You know, the homunculus problem.^{ix} Well, that is a practically absurd suggestion; that is clear. But we are concerned now—what is the principle which allows us to say that is absurd and not merely some vague knowledge of what we can do and cannot do? Marx doesn’t have such a principle. But he does not have a notion of the

^{vi} Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. The first American edition was published by International Publishers in 1964. Strauss may be referring to the translation published by Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow. For more recent abridged editions, see *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. and trans. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Hackett, 1997) or *Marx-Engels Reader*, 66-125.

^{vii} *The German Ideology*, Part A. 1: History, 43-43. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 158.

^{viii} Christine Jorgenson underwent sex-reassignment surgery in 1951. Jorgenson, previously known as George William Jorgenson, Jr., became a celebrity after a front-page story in the (New York) *Daily News* in December 1952 told her story.

^{ix} Homunculus means literally “little man.” In an enlightenment theory of generation, preformationism, “the homunculus was the fully formed individual that existed within the germ cell of one of its parentes prior to fertilization and would grow in size during gestation under ready to be born.” Cera R. Lawrence, *The Embryo Project Encyclopedia*, <https://embryo.asu.edu>.

essence of man which is sufficiently clear; and yet Marx's position describes itself as humanism. How can there be a humanism if there is no relevant essential difference between men and brutes, and therefore if there is no relevant essence of man? No humanism without a fixed nature of man which may undergo any changes but which retains its identity within the change.

I must here praise our colleague Harold Lasswell. When he raised this famous question in his presidential address of the American Political Science Association, whether we should not give human rights to robots—you remember, because after all, they might do all kinds of computation as any social scientist does, and perhaps better than social scientists also—then he was in a way more consistent than Marx.^x Yes? Because if this is wholly undefined, what a human being is—or so loosely defined as a being which may do computations, for example—then it is of course impossible to draw a clear line between men and [brutes]. I mean, the interest which Marx necessarily arouses is based on the fact that he admits an essential difference between men and brutes, but he has no longer a clear principle to maintain that. The conquest of nature includes victory over man's nature. This has another implication. Who is the victor? Who is the conqueror? If man is changed in this process, man is as much conquered as a conqueror. There must be something in man which is a conqueror and something other which is the conquered. The clearest formulation is the distinction between the spirit and the non-spirit. In other words, here we see how true it is when Marx says that communism as he understands it is the synthesis of spiritualism and materialism.

Let me now turn to Marx's moral philosophy in particular. Marx starts from the phenomenon of the modern worker in contrast, say, to the medieval craftsman. The modern worker does stultifying work for the sake of mere life, mere subsistence, whereas the medieval craftsman did meaningful work. That has been said many times before Marx; and from this some reactionaries drew the conclusion: Let's return to the Middle Ages. Marx regards this as impossible, not only in a very general way, because you cannot turn the wheel of history back, as they say, but Marx says the medieval craftsman¹⁴himself was not in such a desirable situation. There was also a considerable lack of freedom there¹⁵and of intellectual limitations there. More generally stated, even there the medieval craftsman could not find full satisfaction in his work. Even there, there existed the cleavage of pleasure and duty. That we can say is the starting point of Marx's reflections. Marx rejects all moral teachings on this ground: either they teach pleasure or enjoyment (Epicureanism and what have you); or they teach asceticism, duty. Duty. And one point is very simple.¹⁶If you have an ascetic philosophy, that means something entirely different to the man who is compelled to live ascetically because he is poor¹⁷[than] it means to the other one, and still more so in the case of enjoyment. What does the hedonistic teaching mean to someone who is prevented from having any enjoyments of life? One must transcend this whole issue of pleasure and duty. In which way? Duty and labor belong together, of course. Duty, and labor, asceticism, self-denial; all this belongs together. And enjoyment or pleasure; and what is that? Creative expression of

^x Harold D. Lasswell, "The Political Science of Science: An Inquiry into the Possible Reconciliation of Mastery and Freedom," *American Political Science Review* 50 (1956): 961-979, 975-76.

life is the formula, a satisfying activity which is not as such labor. Even if it is a productive activity, it doesn't have this particular meaning of labor. Labor is connected somehow with pain and self-denial and the other things which Locke so eloquently described.^{xi}

So the solution of the moral problem is transcending moral philosophy, looking forward to a mankind¹⁸ where everyone is capable of the creative expression of his individuality, of his life: satisfying activity. This is of course not transcending moral philosophy. This in itself is merely to return to Aristotle, for what is the good life according to Aristotle? The life according to virtue. But that does not mean duty in this sense in which Kant perhaps meant it, but it meant to do the work of man, your work as a human being, and to derive enjoyment from this very fact: satisfying activity. Surely Aristotle spoke of virtuous activity, and Marx speaks of the creative expression of life. What does this mean? No, for Aristotle not everyone is capable of virtuous activity, at least not on the full level, partly because he is by nature unable to, partly because of the unsatisfactory conditions. What Marx does in opposition, in tacit opposition to Aristotle is to abolish the distinction between the necessary things and the noble things. Virtuous activity is noble, but to earn your livelihood is a necessity. There is nothing noble about that, and Aristotle does not expect a sensible man to find his satisfaction in the mere earning of his livelihood. He might be so fortunate as to earn his livelihood by doing the work of a human being, but that would be really accidental. The mere procuring of the necessities of life is necessary and not noble. Marx denies that. How can he do that? Ultimately because in the realm of freedom as distinguished from the realm of necessity, there are no longer necessities. There are no—I mean, otherwise the distinction is not fully justified.

One can also put it as follows, that is equally correct: that Marx, in opposition to Aristotle, denies that there is a hierarchy of human activity. So let us assume, for example, fishing, hunting, thinking, painting: these are all activities which people can enjoy. You can't say one is the higher and the other is the lower. One can also say (that is only one, only [a] different aspect of the same thing) Marx forgets in this statement about base actions because (1) if the possibility of base actions exists, then you admit the necessity of a moral teaching by virtue of which you distinguish between the noble and base. What Marx implies is that the moral regeneration of man will be the necessary consequence of the proletarian revolution. There will not be ultimately the moral defects and the cowardices, lazinesses, etc., which we find can only be understood in terms of the defective social conditions. Once man has come into his own, not only crime but any kind of lowness, meanness must disappear. I overstate it deliberately: everyone will become a beautiful soul, a soul which by nature craves the beautiful and noble and nothing else; a withering away of the need for moral effort, not only a withering away of the state. This fantastic implication of the proletarian revolution we must never forget.

The moral problem can also be stated in these terms: the private good, the good of the individual, and the common good. For Marx the expression of life is essentially social, [the] expression of a social life, expression of social life. Now in one sense, that is a simple empirical verity. When you see, for example, the most egoistic people—the

^{xi} See Locke's *Second Treatise*, chapter 5.

people who don't care at all for the common good, the simple criminals—in what do they find their enjoyments? That is always determined by the taste of the society in question. You know they also want to go to the most elegant nightclubs; they want to have the most expensive cars and that kind of thing. So the meaning of an enjoyment is socially determined. ¹⁹Generally speaking, in every expression of our life we express somehow the society to which we belong. But this is not what according to Marx is the end of the process. What is characteristic of communist society is the complete and conscious socialization of the individual. Complete and conscious. So the problem of duty has disappeared, because I necessarily find my satisfaction in being a member of society and acting in accordance with it.

Now here the difficulties are rather great, rather obvious, and the most obvious one is what shows the impossibility of a complete reconciliation of the individual and society: the fact of the death of the individual. Marx hardly ever alludes to that. There is a remark here: the death seems to be a harsh victory of the species over the individual and contradicts the unity of the species in the individual. Marx's answer is this: But the particular individual is only a certain definite social being and as such mortal, which is only a repetition of what we know already. The counterattack on Marxism which was made by existentialism we can say started from the phenomenon of the death of the individual as the clearest sign of the inadequacy of the social solution of the human problem.

Let me state the problem also in the following terms. If we look at the situation without the assumption of Marx, we can see that there could be such a thing as the interest of the proletarian as proletarian, and, as Marx would admit, the proletarian as proletarian is not concerned with the development of all faculties of each. He is concerned at the most with common ownership of the means of production and as little work and as attractive work as possible. That we can assume. This of course creates immediately this problem. As little work as possible: What about leisure? What about leisure? The famous problem of leisure, TV, etc. With what right does Marx assume that this problem will not arise: that people don't know what to do with their free time? With what right does he assume that this victory of the proletariat will bring about a moral regeneration of man so that the problem of boredom will never come, as it in fact comes? Basically, the difficulty is this: that the union of primacy of material production and the resurrection of man is problematic. Why should men, after having conquered nature by appropriation of the means of production, be concerned with developing all their faculties and not be lazy, etc., etc.?

If I'm not mistaken, this difficulty here is underlying not only the disagreement between communists and noncommunists but also the fight between Trotsky and Stalin. Trotsky, just as Lenin, still was very much concerned with the regenerating character of the communist revolution, with the liberating and spontaneous character of the movement, of a movement which claimed to be the movement of the large majority on behalf of the large majority. The policies devised by Trotsky were in agreement with that, at least in principle; therefore his attitude towards the problem of the peasants was entirely different from that adopted by Stalin, as you know. Trotsky wanted a period of ten, twenty years in

which the peasants would come to see for themselves that private ownership is not good for them. Stalin didn't see such a necessity for such a respect for spontaneous movements, and Stalin won. And Stalin, one could say, had very good reasons for winning that, because Stalin did not share Trotsky's and Lenin's belief that the revolution of the Western proletariat is just around the corner. And he looked at the massive dangers threatening him, potentially at least, from Germany and so on; and Stalin won the Second World War, which Trotsky would have lost in all probability. So by abandoning the great hopes, the hope for the regeneration of man, Stalin succeeded and Khrushchev succeeds. That, I think, is a kind of empirical, not proof, but empirical indication of the problem of Marxism itself, its concern.

And I think the clear sign for what is going on today, incidentally, is that when the famous thaw came in '53 and so, I always was waiting [to hear] that the name of Trotsky would be mentioned by Khrushchev. It never was mentioned and, on the contrary, Trotsky is still, to use a Trotskyan expression, on the dung heap of history. And it serves him right because, as Marx put it, when ideas are divorced from real interests,²⁰ then they have always made themselves ridiculous. And Trotsky's notion, after the success of the Bolshevik Revolution, which was due to certain very special reasons, became divorced from the interests of large masses of men. Marx believed that the massive interest of large masses of men will bring them into a situation where they cannot but be morally regenerated. That doesn't exist. That doesn't exist. You can have a bureaucracy, and a very efficient bureaucracy which wins wars and disposes of all revolutions—that you can have, but that has nothing to do with moral regeneration. And that, I think, is an indirect proof of the necessity of morality and therefore also of a moral teaching as such.

But to come back to the main point of the argument: I said Marx avoids relativism by borrowing from Hegel the notion that there is such a thing as alienation and the overcoming of alienation; therefore, a beginning and an end, and that the process is in some ways cyclical. That is in Marx, but²¹ there is also the opposite, for the cyclical process as Hegel meant it is teleological. Take the simple example: the seed leading to the fruit, and again to the seed, again to the fruit; but so that the seed is the less-developed thing and the fruit is the end, if an end which recurs again and again. Marx rejects teleology radically. Let us consider what that means. The common ownership of the means of production and the classless society is not *the* end of history, predetermined from the beginning, but the common ownership of the means of production and the classless society is the need of one definite class, the proletariat. Therefore it is not a mere idea but something tough, yes?

Let me make another beginning. We start empirically in our analysis of society from what exists now. We see now production is capitalistic, and this leads to these and these consequences and to this and this prospect, and this prospect is the communist society. But what about capitalism itself? Capitalism, that was not predetermined in any way, of course; capitalism is the unintended or unforeseen consequence of feudalism. You had a certain social order which made it possible for serfs to run away to the cities [and] become—the potential bourgeois of the future is the runaway serf. A runaway slave in classical antiquity was not the origin of a possible future class; and therefore antiquity

decayed, whereas feudalism was able to be transformed into the bourgeois society. Capitalism, in other words, is the necessary consequence of feudalism. It is not the end of feudalism. The feudal society, either the rulers or the ruled, didn't dream of capitalism. They did what they did for the reasons apparent to them, which were all ideological, religious or what have you, but nevertheless the necessary consequence was the capitalist order. Yes, but still, is it not strange that this (in the strict sense) meaningless process: men produce only with a view to immediate ends, the ends which they understand, and build up a whole social order; this whole social order suffers from contradictions, and without anyone really understanding what is going on, the society is destroyed [and] replaced by another society. This goes on and on and on, and then at a certain point you have the prospect of man's resurrection. In other words, you have something which you cannot but conceive of as the end of the process, and yet this end presents itself as a mere accidental outcome of a mechanically necessary process. Man is now for the first time coming into his own. Otherwise the whole Marxian teaching doesn't make sense. There is no teleology. There cannot be a teleology according to Marx, and yet there is a telos.

Spoken more popularly, Marx's position is characterized by an unfounded optimism. As I said before, in the case of Hegel that optimism, if we may use that word, was founded. If history is the development of the mind, it is at least plausible that there should be an end in which the mind is fully developed; but if history is the development of man's productive activity there is no plausible reason why a certain stage of that infinite development should coincide with the regeneration of man. Marx half accepts the Hegelian scheme without the Hegelian guarantee.

I raise again the question: Why should common ownership of the means of production—on the present level of productivity of course—be a sufficient condition for the resurrection of man? Why should the liberation from bondage be a sufficient condition for man's making a wise use of that freedom? Oppression is a good enough reason for fighting, for striving for liberation, but it does surely not guarantee a wise use of that freedom. Only if man is by nature striving for a wise use of his freedom, and only if his bondage to nature and, as a consequence of that bondage, his bondage to other men prevents him from achieving his end, then he truly comes into his own by that liberation, and there is no further question what he will do with the freedom thus achieved. In other words, the whole thing makes sense only on a teleological premise. But according to Marx man does not strive by nature for the full development of all his faculties and the other things. And there is not even a nature of man to speak of, as I have indicated before.

Now let me begin to come to my conclusion.^{xii} —nature is by itself, as he puts it. Let me read to you a few passages from these economic and philosophic writings again. Marx speaks of the being through itself of nature and of man. Let us try to understand it. Can man be said to be by himself? Must not one raise the question of the origin of man? Well, for the later Marx that was a foregone conclusion, especially after 1895,^{xiii} after Darwin's book, but let us see what Marx says about this question of the origin of man here in this early writing.

^{xii} The tape was changed at this point.

^{xiii} Strauss means 1859.

“It is easy to say to the individual what Aristotle has said already. You have been generated by your father and your mother, and an act of the human species has produced in you man. You also see that man owes physically his existence to men. You must not look at only at the one side, the infinite progress, according to which you will ask: Who has generated my father, who his grandfather, etc. etc.? You must also consider the circular motion which is sensually visible in that progress according to which man repeats himself in the act of generation, and therefore man always remains a subject. [It’s always man generating man, regardless of what the individuals are—LS] But you will reply to me: This circular motion granted, you must admit to me the progress which compels me to continue to ask who has generated the first man and nature altogether. I can give you only this answer: Your question is a product of abstraction. Ask yourself how do you come to raise this question, whether you do not raise your question from a point of view to which I cannot give an answer because the point of view is wrong. Ask yourself whether that progress [namely, to the cause of the first man—LS] is one which exists for a reasonable being. When you ask about the creation of nature and of man you abstract from man and nature, you posit them as not being, and yet you desire that I shall demonstrate to them that they are.”^{xiv}

This passage is important for more than one reason, but I limit myself to one point which Marx seems to make here. The question of the origin of man does not make sense. That he surely says, and that is interesting. For some time, Marx went so far in trying to conceive of man as self-subsisting, as coeval with being. If he had spoken only of nature, the difficulty would not arise in the same way, but he speaks of nature and man in the same breath. That’s remarkable. Yes, and then he goes on to say, speaking to his questioner: I only ask you about the act of genesis, just as they ask the anatomist about the genesis of a bone, etc. But for socialistic man the whole so-called world history is nothing except as a generation of man through human labor, as a becoming of nature for man. Man becomes man through himself. Metaphysically expressed, man is the *causa sui*, the cause of itself. I don’t believe that Marx ever repeated these points, but they show what he wished. Marx wished to make man the absolute being, the highest being. As he explicitly says, man is the highest being for man. But he wanted more: he wanted to make man the highest being simply. Man is the substance, to use a Hegelian expression. Why is that? Proceeding empirically, we know only man and the subhuman beings. We try to understand. We cannot leave it at the mere juxtaposition: man, subhuman beings. We are in need of an ultimate unity, but—and that is the implication of Marx—we cannot understand man as derivative from the subhuman. That’s a common vulgar naturalism, as you know. Is it not perhaps possible to proceed in the opposite way, to understand the subhuman in the light of man? Another remark from this writing:

“the human being of nature exists only for social man, for in society nature exists for him as the bond with man, as the existence of himself for the others and of the others for him. Only in society is nature, exists nature, as the basis of his own human existence. Only in society has his natural existence become his human existence and has nature become man

^{xiv} Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Strauss’s translation. See *Marx-Engels Reader*, 92.

for him. Hence, society is the completed essential unity of man with nature, the true resurrection of nature [why does nature need a resurrection?—LS], the carried through and completed naturalism of man and the carried through humanism of nature.”^{xv}

Let us try to understand that. Through society, nature becomes man. Man is natural and nature is human, and therefore there is one science which deals with nature and man, as Marx says elsewhere there. But granting that for a moment, are not at least the points of view different, the points of view of a science of man and of a science of nature? I cannot read you all the relevant passages, but at least one, the most striking one, I should read. In *German Ideology*, part one, we read this:

“the famous unity of man with nature [you know, the famous unity of man with nature of which the poets have spoken and of which quite a few people have spoken—LS] the famous unity of man with nature has always existed in industry. [Not the poet communing with nature at a brook in a forest, but in industry this unity exists—LS] Industry is the actual historical relation of nature to man.”^{xvi}

Not the relation of man to nature, but of nature to man. How remarkable. The practical expression or the external expression of this, that the one all-comprehensive science which deals with the two parts of being, man and non-man, is economics. Everything subhuman is essentially material for human life, potentially, and it becomes actually material by industry. As I put it at the beginning of this course, economics is metaphysics, the true science of the whole. We can put it this way: production discovers nature as material for human life, as objects not of contemplation as a mere theoretical scientist would, but as objects of transformation, as objects of labor. Production dissolves nature into products of man and therewith does justice to them. You do not understand the hare properly by looking at it, describing its qualities. If you don't see the hare as a potential food, you do not see the hare sufficiently. That means to go beyond the theoretical understanding, and that means to have a productive understanding. A productive understanding, now an understanding from the point of view of human production, that is: that is the true natural science, the true metaphysics. Because nature becomes human through industry and thus comes into its own; because nature becomes human through industry and thus the unity of being is achieved, the relations of productions are the fundamental fact. In other words, the dogmatism of Marx still remains dogmatism, but it is deeper; it is not a mere assertion about the process of history, that in given situations that generally speaking the relations of production are the cause or the key to the political, religious and artistic ideas of a people, but it is ultimately an attempt to account for the unity of the whole on the premise that man is the highest being.

Now we discover two fundamental difficulties if we look at Marx's philosophy, and the first is the dogmatic historical materialism, and the basis of that is the fact that Marx conceives of economics as metaphysics, the true science of the whole. And the second

^{xv} Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Strauss's translation. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 85.

^{xvi} *German Ideology*, part 1. Presumably Strauss's translation.

difficulty, of which I have spoken before: Why should the victory of the proletariat be identical with the resurrection of man? Is there a unity between these two propositions, the dogmatic historical materialism, and secondly, the victory of the proletariat is the resurrection of man? If the whole becomes human through industry and therewith man becomes truly human through industry, the victory of the proletariat is man coming into his own. In Marx's thought man takes the place of the pure mind or the pure spirit of German idealism, as we have seen. Marx's siding with Feuerbach against Hegel means exactly this. But there is this difficulty: by virtue of the conquest of nature the nature of man or man as a natural being disintegrates. Only through that disintegration can one get rid of the natural inequality and of the natural distinction between the necessary and the noble things.

Now I have talked very long, but I would like to add my conclusion. Yes, I think I will be through in five minutes. My view of Marx does not mean of course that I have not learned very much from Marx, and I hope will still learn much from him. For me the most important point in Marx, the positive point in Marx is this: his notion of alienation, meaning his attempt to understand modernity in particular as the period of man's alienation. I think that can be shown that it is so on the basis of an argument which Marx to my knowledge never uses. If we look at modern thought at its highest in modern times, modern philosophy: modern philosophy begins according to the textbooks with Descartes; and Descartes's beginning is a universal doubt. What does a universal doubt mean? The whole is alien to man, alien to man, and man must conquer the whole. He must appropriate it in order to understand it. (I mean, you see incidentally the link up with the so-called economic things when Descartes calls man the master and owner of nature. That only in passing.) Now this view that the whole is alien to man implies an alienation of man himself, man's self-alienation. Because man can no longer understand, he loses his own status by conceiving himself as a stranger in the whole. Alienation implies that there was a state of things in which man was at home in the world; otherwise alienation wouldn't make sense. He was at home in the world as long as he took the whole as given and not as an object of conquest and of construction. This was the original understanding of philosophy and the original understanding of man as man wholly apart from philosophy, and the classic expression of that is Greek philosophy.

I conclude my remarks with a quotation from Marx about the Greeks. That occurs in the introduction, not published by Marx himself, to his *Critique of Political Economy*. There he speaks of the classic character of Greek—not philosophy, but of Greek poetry. And what does he say there? Yes, Marx admits that ²²the Greeks are the classics. From the point of view of art, Greece is always the model.^{xvii} The difficulty is not to conceive that Greek poetry, Greek art and epic poetry, is based on certain social conditions. The difficulty is: How can they still be enjoyed by us and remain to some extent the norm, and be inimitable, be models which cannot be rivaled? That Marx admits. How come? Answer: There is a childhood or an infancy of the human race; and this infancy, just as in the case ²³of individuals, it may also be true of the race or of peoples: there are naughty children and precocious children. How do you say? Precocious children. Ya? And all other nations of whom we know Marx says were either ill-bred or precocious. Normal—

^{xvii} See *Grundrisse*, section 4, on production. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 246.

the Greeks alone were normal children, and therefore that is the reason why their charm remains unaltered: because we cannot help thinking, as belonging to the mature epoch of mankind, looking back with longing admiration to the infancy of the human race at its highest. That I think is simply the question, disregarding altogether Greek philosophy—whether, say, Homer, whom he means when he speaks of [the epic poets], or the other poets—whether their understanding of the human situation was infancy or was not perhaps more mature than that of the nineteenth century, and in particular, Marx.

This is all I wanted to say. I'm sorry it was so long. I have not succeeded in what I hoped to do, ²⁴namely, in giving a perfectly lucid, unified account of the basic difficulty of Marx. I could only bring a number of points which I believe are important, but I have not succeeded in getting a lucid account, and perhaps we can help one another in arriving at that. Yes?

Student: You stress one point to begin with, earlier in your lecture today, and that is that humanism is impossible as long as there is no distinction between man and brute or man and beast. Does this mean that it's impossible to accept theories of evolution like Darwin's theory of evolution and still be a humanist?

LS: What does it mean, possible? There are many millions who think that, and think and write that it is so, and you can say the conclusion from what is actual to possibility is surely valid, but that is not quite literally true, as you know, because many absurdities have been said. I think it is, if there is no essential difference—I gave this simple example, which I do not hesitate to repeat: the fourth freedom, freedom from want.^{xviii} Roosevelt didn't mean freedom from want for lions and rats. He meant freedom from want for human beings everywhere: clear-cut distinction, essential distinction, to which we always presuppose in ordinary life. You know, there have been attempts made on the basis of evolution to account for the fact that in spite of all gradualism of species, [gradual] change²⁵, there are also jumps, leaps, essential differences. And for Marx that was not difficult to see, because he had learned from Hegel the simple thing: that gradual changes, quantitative changes, may become qualitative changes. Yes? Shall I give you a simple example of this deep truth? [LS writes on the blackboard] You have hydrogen; you have oxygen. Yes? And you have all kinds of combinations of the two, but then you make this combination and they cease to be gases; they turn into something qualitatively different from gases, namely, liquids. And in many other cases. ²⁶Evolution in itself is not incompatible with the admission of essential differences, but the preponderant interpretation of evolution is of course incompatible with that. Whether the biologist as such is competent to solve this question is in itself a problem. Yes?

Same student: In order to be a humanist, do you have to reject the most widely accepted interpretations of evolution?

^{xviii} In his State of the Union Address on January 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented reasons for America's support for Great Britain and for domestic war industries. The United States was in fact fighting for universal freedoms, possessed by all: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and the freedom from fear. These ideas formed the basis of the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Declaration of 1942.

LS: Yes, but I believe it wouldn't help you much, because I first think that humanism is strictly speaking impossible because man cannot be conceived of as the highest being. That's impossible. And if we say: Well, man is the highest being for man, that means a lion is the highest being for a lion, for example. That won't help you²⁷. I think humanism is really—well it has, if properly defined in certain contexts; you know the famous humanists of the sixteenth century, and there were some other people in other countries at different times, for example, in Germany around 1800: their humanism had a very defined meaning and didn't mean what you say now or what you imply now. That can be defended, but strictly speaking I think it is impossible.²⁸To put it very simply as follows: man—this I think we can today assume—man is not eternal. The human race has come into being. Yes? And if it can be fully understood in terms of the subhuman out of which it is said to have come into being, yes, then this subhuman is ultimately the key to everything. That is old-fashioned materialism, or with some fashionable changes. That is at least to begin with a possibility; and equally the other one: that something suprahuman is the key to man.²⁹Man cannot be understood through himself. Man is not self-subsisting,³⁰to deny explicitly what Marx says. That I think one must face that.

Same student: Then if that is so, how is it possible to postulate that man has an essential nature, if he is not self-subsistent?

LS: ³¹First of all, there are characteristic differences between men and the brutes. That you would admit, yes?

Same student: You could say there are differences in degree.

LS: Yes, ³²all right, that is of course a very common view to say man is—the only thing which we can find is that man uses verbal symbols. Yes? That's a clear-cut difference. That is often said. But the question is: Can the use of so-called verbal symbols and their invention be understood without assuming a radical difference between the human mind and the mind of brutes?

Same student: I'm not sure that the answer to that has to be a no.

LS: You see, you must not forget one thing. If someone wants to start from a premise and wants to defend it by hook and by crook, he can do all kinds of things; but is it simply reasonable to begin with in such a very provisional discussion as we have here?

Same student: I would say maybe not, because experiments with cats, for example, and conditioned reflexes have shown that they react to symbols; for example, squares differentiated from circles will cause them to react in a different way. Now maybe this is a difference in degree between man's reactions—

LS: Yes. Well, in other words, that would prove that cats, for example, have the possibility of seeing a difference—yes, seeing that somehow that this shape differs from another. That is, in Aristotle's language, that they have common sense in the Aristotelian

sense of the word, which is not our sense. That has nothing to do with the problem of reason.³³ It is a very massive fact which is frequently mentioned, that cats fundamentally live now as they lived as long as we have any records of cats, whereas men live differently in different parts of the world, and especially [at] different times. The inventiveness of man is obviously enormously greater, to put it mildly, than of any beast we know.

Same student: This is so. I mean, I could admit this. I used cats as an example of simple reaction, but of course you may—if you discuss man in relation to apes, Piltdown man,^{xix} as they called him, and other men—Piltdown man is bad because that's been shattered, but other anthropological constructions of a link between man and—

LS: Yes, but then we would simply come to the old question that, taking the Hegelian formula, when you have the switch from quantity to quality there are borderline cases³⁴ where it becomes difficult to distinguish. The same way—that exists everywhere. There are spheres in which it is impossible to say that's a plant and that is a brute, and yet that does not make undoubtful the fundamental distinction between plants and brutes. We have only to say there is a certain area in which the distinction is not clear. There are always, in every field, extreme cases which are abnormal, however you call them, and the question is whether they can be understood if we do not start from the normal case.

Same student: Well, the assumption that the borderline is abnormal doesn't necessarily—

LS: Yes, but you have to give an account of the clear difference, say, between an oak and a lion, and you can also take more homey examples than a lion, and you have to account and try to understand this peculiar motility which the plants generally speaking lack. The fact that you have no right to assume that plants have sensations of pain and pleasure³⁵ which we observe in the brutes, that's of some importance.

Same student: Yes, I'm not saying that all matter is undifferentiated—

LS: Yes, but the question—yes, the question concerns then what is the status of the differences. What is the status of the differences? And I believe one cannot consistently in any field of human investigation get along without making a difference between differences of degree and differences of kind.

Same student: Granted, a boy is different than a man qualitatively, but you might say that a man is part of the process: [a man] is one end of the process which starts out with boy. Now this is a restricted formulation of a—in theory you might postulate that there is some essential unity between all matter; that coal is essentially fossils or once was living

^{xix} In 1912, amateur archaeologist Charles Dawson claimed to have discovered the “missing link” between ape and man when he found part of a human-like skull in Pleistocene gravel beds near Piltdown village in Sussex, England. In 1953 the claim was exposed as a sophisticated fraud: the jaw fragments came from two different species, a human and an ape, probably an orangutan.

being, that energy is essentially conserved. You might make that kind of formulation and still establish gross categories of differences without admitting—

LS: You must never forget the fact that normally speaking, the differences of species have support in the fact that cats generate cats and dogs generate dogs. In other words, that is not a kind of mere classification, external classification.

Same student: Now what we see is cats generate other things similar to themselves—I mean, this is essentially what people say as a result of evidence. But supposedly some geologists postulate that sea-living animals at one stage generated land-living animals. Maybe they're incorrect, but this is—there are a lot . . .

LS: Yes, ³⁶you yourself distinguished between ³⁷what we have evidence [of] and what is postulated. Now we must always begin with what we know, and then regarding—³⁸we may be compelled to make postulates of some kind, but then we have to go back to the basis of the postulates, you know, and what is the perspective, what is the cognitive interest in using man to prefer this kind of postulates to other kinds of postulates. One cannot simply accept the whole body of facts plus hypotheses of a science and say: This is the authority, this is a starting point for any possible inquiry. That we cannot do. I mean, I know that is generally done, it is frequently done; but I think that is a sign of the fact that science has become what by definition it was never meant to become, namely, an authority.

Same student: Granted that we must assume a skepticism of the scientific postulates, but I think we also must assume a skepticism to a postulate which rejects—

LS: Yes, sure. Sure.

Same student: scientism.

LS: Yes, sure. But ³⁹I think we cannot deny the fact that the starting point of all science, namely, our understanding of the world in daily life, [is something] that we can never lose sight of; that this is the beginning and therewith also ultimately the end for all intellectual orientation. And in the case of Marx—after all, we are here now first concerned with Marx—we see this: Marx differs ⁴⁰from the now most common view by admitting an essential difference between men and brutes. I read to you again this passage: “man begins to distinguish himself from the brutes by the production,” as he puts it. Yes?

Same student: This is not to me admitting an essential difference necessarily. It depends what you mean by the term “essential difference.” It could be that he establishes an arbitrary line, and that man begins to produce things or he begins to have certain consciousness—

LS: Yes, but then you take the other passage in *Das Kapital*, where he confronts the building of a beehive with the building of a house and says there is a radical difference

between the building which animals do and human building. That's one specification of that. ⁴¹Marx's whole doctrine, I think, is unintelligible if there is no essential difference between men and brutes.

Same student: I don't see that it is unintelligible that way.

LS: How would you do that? What then does it mean, that man is the highest being for man? I mean, what does it mean? There is a clear gulf between man and non-man when you say that.

Same student: There's a gulf even between the boy and a man.

LS: No. No, a boy is a potential adult. I mean, if he doesn't die, he will become a man. And we treat boys not as we treat puppies and kittens; that's perfectly clear. A boy is a human being. A newborn baby is even a human being as much as a grown-up man, but not yet fully developed. But you can take a puppy and you can take a grown-up dog; that is in no way a potential human being.

Same student: I may say that the ape is really essentially the same as I am if I trace myself all the way back. Yet this does not mean that I have to have affection for the ape.

LS: Yes, but can you really say in any serious sense the ape is a potential human being? I mean, to say nothing of the famous difficulty that the precise possible ancestor of man has never been—you know, there are great difficulties all the time up to the present day. But I refer only to one point. Your whole position presupposes that ⁴²the transformation from quantity into quality is irrelevant. For Marx, it is very relevant. That I think settles the issue. And the interesting difficulty in Marx is this: that he somehow hesitates between these two views; and not on your ground but rather on the other ground, because he doesn't want to have—the ultimate idea is this, I think. If you have a fixed human nature, that is a conservative principle, to express it—yes? For example, ⁴³you have the difference between men and women, and the traditional view is, therefore, the function of man is different from that of woman, not only as far as procreation is concerned, but also the woman has to—her place is within the household and the place of the man is in the marketplace. Yes? This kind of thing which Aristotle speaks about. Every fixity of this kind seems to establish a principle of the stationary, of the conservative, and Marx wants to have an open horizon for all kinds of progress. That I think is the motive why Marx is so uncomfortable with the developed doctrine of the essence of man. It is not this theoretical problem, I think. ⁴⁴It would be an interesting question to see how far this concern with progress of man is not underlying much of the seemingly purely theoretical difficulties we have in the sciences. That would be also an interesting question. Rabbi Weiss?

Rabbi Weiss: On the question of the relation between history, the historical forces and our community, would you say that it could be maintained that the appeal of different ideas at different times can be traced to a considerable extent to the modes of production? For example, say, the appeal of future life in times of scarcity, and with the development

of technology the possibility for a different kind of life here—the decrease in the appeal of this kind of thought—. Or to take another example, say, the appeal of existentialism under different historical circumstances in different parts of the world at different times.

LS: Yes, why not? I mean, that always depends on special investigation of the situation. You know, ⁴⁵that is not the question. The question is whether the relations of production are the ultimate key to such intellectual fashions, let me say. That's the question, and one cannot leave it at very general remarks. For example, according to a very widespread view the Old Testament is rather free from a belief in the immortality of the soul, yes? I know that not everyone admits that, but the prevalent view among modern biblical scholars is that. Is this correct? Good. Well, could you say that the Jews in biblical times, say, between 1500 and 500 B.C., were in a particularly happy situation so they did not have to think of an afterlife? I mean, every turn of the foreign policy situation between Mesopotamia and Egypt brought misery and so, but they apparently didn't think of that. So that doesn't seem to be as simple as that. ⁴⁶For example, Max Weber wrote an interesting book on the sociology of biblical Judaism in the third volume of his sociology of religion,^{xx} and he brought out some very interesting things which I believe no one has ever considered, namely, what was the social stratification of old Israel? Yes? And quite a few terms which had been translated traditionally without any understanding—*gibor chayil*—I don't know what the usual English translation of that is: "brave hero" or something of this kind was the German translation which I remember. And Weber was able to show that this is a very definite social category. It means something like a squire who can equip himself for cavalry service. ⁴⁷It is not of any great importance for the understanding of the Bible, but still this particular part of the social order of old Israel became somewhat clearer. That you can do, but that you can understand the emergence of prophetism, that peculiar prophetism of Israel out of the social [relations] and the relations of production prevailing in Israel seems to me a mere assertion without any evidence. How to—well, perhaps there are things where an explanation is not possible. In the case of the Greeks, people speak sometimes of the Greek miracle. Well, that may be an unscientific expression, but I have never heard a scientific explanation in terms of relations of production, or geography, or what have you, which really explained it, why this science and poetry had this particularly high development in this part of the world at this time. Yes?

Student: Are you reducing Marx here to an economic determinist position, or is there no distinction between historical materialism and economic determinism?

LS: Yes, what is the—what would you say is the difference?

Same student: Well, I would think that the difference would be the superstructure, in Marx.

LS: Yes, sure. Yes, but ultimately that is the point. That is the beautiful ambiguity, but what does it mean that the super[structure]—there is then an action and reaction between the superstructure and the infrastructure. With what right do you say that is the basic

^{xx} Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (1920), chap. 15.

thing? That's the question. If you can empirically observe only an influence of the relations of production on the so-called ideas and an influence of the ideas on the infrastructure and you have to leave it at that. That is what bourgeois social science does, but what is then the meaning of the assertion? This is ultimately the key. That would be the question. I think one cannot begin to understand history if one does not assume that man is a being which is simultaneously thing-producing and ideas-producing. Which is in a given case more important than the other, that ⁴⁸ I think cannot really be decided, because that is very different in different individuals. And from the point of view of the economic interpretation, what Marx basically means, it would of course be the society as a productive association as a whole. But in the case of ideas, ideas are not produced by many people; if I may use these awful words, ideas and so are not produced by men, they are produced by individuals, by rare individuals much more. And when Marx gives these examples of the simultaneous discoveries—you know, Newton and Leibniz, the calculus and some later examples where there were even four or five men who made the discovery at the same time—but that is really a very recent phenomenon. And whether in the olden times there was as far as the great discoveries or inventions were concerned that could be traced to a single individual, and that the invention of the idea was made because there was a previous need for it, is a mere assertion. The invention may have created the need. I mean, Marx is simply not empirical enough there. I know of no case in which it is useful for the understanding of a doctrine to refer to the conditions, to the relations of production as such as helpful for the understanding of the doctrine. That may be so to a certain extent in certain secondary things in the nineteenth and twentieth century, but in the case of economic doctrines that goes without saying, because economic doctrines deal with the relations of production and we look at that.

But in other cases, ⁴⁹I don't know a single example. I mean, if you take parties representing the interests of large-scale industry or farmers or workers or what have you, that these party demands would reflect the interests of the groups behind them, that's trivial. I mean, ⁵⁰that's not a serious assertion because everyone knows *that*. If you take, for example, the case of the importance of the fight against the nobility in the more educated part of the middle classes—I say middle classes and not bourgeoisie because that would still need a proof that they can be subsumed. I mean the commoners who had high public office, or were professors or writers and this kind of thing. That they resented the arrogance of a decayed nobility and [that] this plays a certain role, for example, in German literature, classical literature, it's undeniable; ⁵¹it would be perfectly compatible with a political interpretation of the whole thing. It does not yet require interpretation in terms of the relations of production. ⁵²On the level of the most common discussion, you have two great poets at the same time who have similar views regarding society, even, and you may say: Well, according to Marx himself you cannot trace [that], because his own case ⁵³and the case of Engels shows that there are switches from one class to the other, at least as far as the outlook is concerned. But how would you explain the individual differences? How do you explain the differences between Aristotle's and Plato's teaching by saying Plato was a descendant from one of the oldest families in Athens, and Aristotle came from northern Greece? That would not be of the slightest help. Or Plato's account of Socrates, Xenophon's account of Socrates: Plato belonged to the nobility, Xenophon to the knights, the class of knights in Athens. No help whatever.

Surely then the more sophisticated Marxists will say: We are not vulgar Marxists; I mean, we do not believe such a simple correlation. All right, then they should show us in a sophisticated way the connection, and I have not seen that. That the relations of production, as Marx called it, play a role for society as a whole goes without saying, but that in itself was not a new discovery; I mean, Aristotle's *Politics* is full of that. The question is only whether they are *the* key, the ultimate key; that's alone the question. But Mr. Cropsey, you haven't talked before.

JC: I think I can take these things up next time.

LS: I see. I see. It will come up. Now is there anyone else who would like to bring up something.

Student: [Mostly inaudible question about the relation of nature and man, the generation of mankind and the goal of nature]

LS: Yes, sure, because of the rejection of teleology. There cannot be an end. I mean, that is clear. One can say that the general characteristic of the modern development is to get rid of teleology, to get rid of all teleology, to give an account of everything including human history in nonteleological terms. And that has had various stages, especially the sophistication with . . . ^{xxi}

¹ Deleted "we have later"

² Deleted "and that is"

³ Deleted "how can you, or"

⁴ Deleted "without"

⁵ Deleted "that"

⁶ Deleted "I am"

⁷ Deleted "this notion"

⁸ Deleted "of"

⁹ Deleted "here seems to be"

¹⁰ Deleted "must itself"

¹¹ Deleted "he develops this in"

¹² Deleted "for the very"

¹³ Deleted "is so"

¹⁴ Deleted "itself"

¹⁵ Deleted "in the"

¹⁶ Deleted "if you address"

¹⁷ Deleted "as"

¹⁸ Deleted "who are capable"

¹⁹ Deleted "we cannot"

²⁰ Deleted "as he puts it"

²¹ Deleted "it is also"

²² Deleted "they are truly"

²³ Deleted "of human"

²⁴ Deleted "but"

²⁵ Deleted "there is a certain"

^{xxi} The last sentence is not audible on the remastered audiofile but appears in the original transcript.

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- 26 Deleted “so that wouldn’t”
27 Deleted “and that is”
28 Deleted “Man, no man—one”
29 Deleted “I don’t want”
30 Deleted “to say”
31 Deleted “Is he not—I mean”
32 Deleted “but the question is”
33 Deleted “the fact that”
34 Deleted “there are borderline”
35 Deleted “which the, which surely the”
36 Deleted “you see, yes that is”
37 Deleted “what for”
38 Deleted “and surely we must have”
39 Deleted “still we must make this crucial”
40 Deleted “from these”
41 Deleted “I think one can”
42 Deleted “the jumping from”
43 Deleted “if there is a clear—if the”
44 Deleted “and one may even”
45 Deleted “that but that it, but the real”
46 Deleted “I don’t believe that the”
47 Deleted “that, I mean it has”
48 Deleted “is”
49 Deleted “I’m not”
50 Deleted “no one”
51 Deleted “that”
52 Deleted “and to say nothing of, I mean”
53 Deleted “you know, but that is not yet”

Session 10: May 2, 1960
***Capital*, part 1**

Joseph Cropsey: [In progress]—a technicality. Part 1 is very long in comparison with part 2 of *Kapital*, and I'm sure that with the introductory matter and treatment of the content of part 1, the discussion will run over into next time. So the approximate distribution of class time as vis-à-vis the content of the book will be about one-and-a-half sessions on part 1 and about half a session on part 2, but with the understanding that whoever reads the paper on part two has a very difficult job because he has to have digested thoroughly part one. Mr. Brown somewhere? Mr. Brown—and well, then you probably know what the difficulty is, so your paper will be although ostensibly [on part] 2, it will have to reflect part 1 in that, you will I'm sure have grasped that by this point. [Laughter]ⁱ

JC: Well, that was a very good summaryⁱⁱ of a complicated and extended mass of material in the first part. While there were many points that you raised, ¹I think it is better to try to deal with them more or less in the normal course of things as we go over the ground. But there were two questions that I thought maybe you could say something about. For example, the relation that you correctly ascribed to Marx between the quantity of money and the number of transactions and the price level and the velocity of money: Do you happen to know any other formulation of that?

Student: . . . the quantity theory of money?

JC: Now then, the answer must be yes, because that is the quantity theory of money.

Student: . . . ⁱⁱⁱ

JC: We are equipped for the negation but not for the acclamation. [Laughter] . . . awkward. Somebody might remember that in ordinary and conventional economics of some years back and now resurrected by a very impressive school of monetary theory that has its locus upstairs,^{iv} there is a formulation of what's called a quantity theory of money, and the symbols are *M*, *V*, and *PT*. You probably have seen that somewhere before: $M \times V = P \times T$, you know that? The quantity of money times its velocity is equal to the price level times the number of transactions. [JC writes on the blackboard] This has sometimes been connected with the name of Irving Fisher.^v [JC continues writing on the blackboard]

ⁱ Mr. Brownstone then read his paper. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Cropsey responds to Mr. Brownstone's paper.

ⁱⁱⁱ There appears to be a problem with the tape recorder at this point.

^{iv} That is, upstairs in the Social Science building at the University of Chicago.

^v The Quantity Theory of Money, devised by American economist Irving Fisher (1867-1947).

Generally speaking, what Marx was asserting could be reduced to this form (I think we're not doing any violence to it). The quantity of money times the velocity of its circulation, for example, a thousand dollar bills multiplied by three, the number of times they go from hand to hand on the average, one of them might pass thirty times and another one might not go at all for six years, but the average then would be three. If there was something called the general price level, suppose that the average price of one transaction for five dollars—then the other term would fall out in consequence of the tautological character. I think that is what the . . . thousand should be. [JC writes on the blackboard], this, this number of transactions. Now what this implies is that there is a necessity for a quantity of money to do a certain volume of business, to do a certain number of transactions on the supposition that the velocity, the inclination of the people to transfer their money from hand to hand, is somehow or other a parameter within the situation; it's a variable in principle but in any given situation it has a value. I only say this to refresh your memories of certain things; now I am sure you must have seen this one way or another at some time. Now Marx ²seems to allege something similar to this. In fact, what Marx alleges about the need for a certain quantity of circulating medium of money to fill the channels of trade in a community is a restatement of things present in Petty—William Petty,^{vi} and Locke very massively, and a large number of people long before him; that's not his invention. I don't mean to derogate his work, but this is the point: Does that seem like the assertion of a rule which is true generally speaking in virtue of the nature of money and goods and exchange?

Student: Hard to say, in terms of . . .

JC: Yes, well that's the question, whether this is an assertion which has some peculiar relevance to capitalist production or whether it could be imagined to have some broader application.

Student: . . .

JC: That it might have some broader application. I think it might. And now that raises the following question. The name of this book, as you know, includes—well, it's called *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy*. Now if we had vast resources of time and so on I think it would be worth devoting the first meeting to that title, to take this thing apart. In the first place, if you were to ask yourself why he gives the thing the name of *Capital*, that is a serious question because he did not give the name frivolously, I'm sure of that. Somehow or other capital was the central phenomenon and it's even shown to be so by the name that he and others commonly give to this system. It's a system whose principal characteristic somehow or the other is derived from this thing called capital. That will come up very shortly on the basis of things Mr. Brownstone said. Now those who call it *Critique* and call it *Critique of Political Economy*, really meaning by that a critique of capitalist political economy—and Marx, ³in the preface, in one of his prefaces (on page

^{vi} William Petty (1623-1687), English polymath whose travelled with Cromwell's army in Ireland as physician general, acted as personal secretary to Thomas Hobbes, and was a founder-member of The Royal Society. He wrote three influential works on economics between 1662-1682. They are available in two volumes in the Online Library of Liberty.

24 in your edition, near the very top of the page), says “the old economists misunderstood the nature of economic laws when they likened them to the laws of physics and chemistry.” Top of the page on the left-hand side: “the old economists misunderstood the nature of economic laws when they likened them to the laws of physics and chemistry.”^{vii} Now Marx’s point here I think is fairly clear: the laws of economics don’t have the same durability or the same universality as the laws of physics and chemistry, and it was a mistake of the earlier economics to represent those laws as if they had that imperishable character.

Now Marx by his own deeds therefore should be evolving a strictly critical economics such that this is meant to be: this is a critique of a certain kind of economics, but he obviously cannot confine himself to critical observations at all times and so his criticism is often couched in the form of an opposing assertion. Now the assertions in some cases tend to take on the character of affirmations in which the purely historical characteristic is hard to detect. And now I mentioned this at the beginning, at the outset once and for all Marx as you know said many things on the noneconomic side, and then he said many things on the economic side; and what he said on the noneconomic side has the character of what we sometimes call methodology. Let me use that term for the time being. What he says in the noneconomic works includes many observations on science: how it’s affected by history, and how it has an infrastructure and so on and so forth, of which it is the superstructure, lots of things about how it comes into being and how it passes away. And you might say he has a sort of metascience, a sort of science about sciences. And everybody knows that’s rather easy to do. I think it’s—one could say it’s easier to do that than to go about constructing a science.

Now it happens that economics is the only science, as far as I know, to which Marx turned his hand and attempted to develop a form of it. So in the case of economics one sees more or less how these, I repeat, methodological propositions can be made concrete or actually transformed into something, and I believe that some part of the difficulty that is intrinsic to the assertion of a pure historicity of the sciences shows up when Marx tries to construct his economics, and on several occasions it’s led [him] to make remarks which don’t have any visible time dimension and which don’t seem to be affected by these or those historical circumstances. So I repeat, when he himself goes to construct a science on the principles which he asserts ought to be applied, it isn’t [in] any way clear that he is simply under the influence of some local temporal conditions and that his product has this purely historical characteristic. It seems, in other words, as if the temptation to which the orthodox economists succumbed, mainly to construct an economics as if economics, economic laws had the same character as the laws of physics and chemistry, somehow or other prove in cases too much for him too. At least this is part of what one has to be very cautious about and something which I point out to you now, so that as you read *Das Kapital* you’ll think about this and raise internally the question all the time whether this or that assertion . . . very much is the historical kind or whether it resembles the laws of physics and chemistry more than Marx would like it to do. Incidentally, that remark is not a quotation from Marx, that thing on the top of the

^{vii} *Capital*, Afterword to the Second German Edition (1873) (International Publishers, 1967), 18. The International Publishers edition will hereafter be referred to as “IP.”

page 24; that's a quotation from a book review of this volume which Marx quotes with approval as being a decent statement of his own point of view.

Student: How good of a statement on the velocity or quantity of money be taken as a total generalization rather than as purely an historical one and Marx can see that money-type economy itself as a historically . . . commodity theory.

JC: Well, you see that's a question. Now he does not say very much about the details of the prospective society. There is one passage, and we'll come to it, in which he says in ⁴a little over a page what he thinks it would be like under the other conditions. And now it isn't clear from that, that communities under those circumstances will be able to do without money.

Student: I'm sorry, I mean history . . . not later. In other words, you can have an exchange truly on a barter basis at one time. Now the velocity theory or quantity theory couldn't apply to those times because there was no money.

JC: Yeah, sure; that's quite clear. If there is such a thing as a prehistory from his point of view—you know, some very remote time—and something is true under those circumstances which is relevant to the social condition of man in concrete now—I mean, one can say: Very well, surely there was the barter and the premonetary epoch of man, and the same things which were true about exchange then will continue to be true about exchange later on.

Student: I'm sorry. I don't think I'm making myself clear. What I am trying to say is this: you're suggesting that the velocity theory of money is . . . Marx says is a generalization not really for capitalist economy but transhistorical, and I'm suggesting that since he deals with money, and since money has a limited period of life within the history of economics, therefore it can't be a total generalization; it must be historical.

JC: I think I do understand it, but then apparently I am not making that clear, so let me try another approach. Suppose I were to say to you: What about the laws of aerodynamics? Now the laws of aerodynamics presumably always were true—I mean, so far as they're laws and I'm no judge of that, but I suppose there are some true assertions: they were before there were aircraft, long before, and if there is going to be a time when there won't be aircraft anymore, then those laws of aerodynamics, I take it, will still be true laws. Now if we want to raise the question: Is a law a law when there is no comprehending mind? I mean, that's a very difficult thing, and I'm sure you—that's not really what you are driving at now. So if this relation between money and so on so forth is a truth, and in fact the objection of most economists is that it's so much a truth that it's a useless truism, a mere tautology—but never mind, it's still true. And then it was true before there was money and it will be true after there is money and so on and so forth. It might be irrelevant, as for example the laws of aerodynamics would be utterly irrelevant among certain savages, that's quite true.

Same Student: Well, in truth, there would not be a truth for Marx for the same reason that Galileo or da Vinci understood aerodynamics, and until he had light metals you couldn't put it into practice. And in the same way, before you have money these are not especially important truths; therefore they're not truths for Marx because the systems that it proves have meaning in society . . .

JC: Yeah sure, I know. That's part of the difficulty, that if one wants to connect the truth with some historical epoch, naturally this is the point. But now I am only in a certain way raising again the question which has been raised many times, but in a somewhat different form and with an application to this economic material. But you are absolutely correct; that is the question. Please.

Student: . . . this is an analytic truth . . . synthetic truth. You could call it reversing the order of summation. You are just adding up all the sets. In the one case you sum first over the objects, and in another case you sum over the individual business in currency. So the thing is much less of the mathematical truth and the aerodynamics . . . and the equation might be a synthetic truth, but what this theory corresponds to is some simple process of simplifying one of the terms. You could have an equation of the form: the force is equal to the pressure and something else. Now this is a meaningful assertion . . . content . . . but you could carry out the mathematics of one of the terms, and that's what this is a form of.

JC: Well, that would raise certain difficult questions, and I don't want to go into that because then we would have to deal with the economics external ⁵to the Marxist system. Some part of the controversy, I'll mention only in passing, has to do with the character of that [JC points to the blackboard], the velocity of money and to what extent that is fixed data and to what extent ⁶it varies. Now if this was a simple relation with that, reciprocal in effect, then almost nothing you do to this will have any effect on either of the variables here, because every change here will be negated by an equal and opposite change in velocity. See? And then you won't have any way of influencing, for example, the number of transactions, which is to say the level of the national income and the volume of employment and so on. I don't want to go into all of that. There is an empirical question which is involved and that's beyond our present scope; but taking it apart from all those complications, one fact about it is—as you have asserted—that this and that can't be different in value at any given time. They can't be different in value. This is a tautology in principle, and if it has any value at all for economic analysis, the value that it has is [that] it divides the same quantum according to two different principles, and therefore it makes visible the fact that the same quantum can be viewed as being composed of the different variables, some of which are more interesting in one economic situation than in another. And therefore it provides a kind of handle for operation, you know, that you can usually see it—for example, the main problem is somehow or other to have an influence on the price level here, and there are things that one can do presumably in there assuming there are no offsetting changes. So now, but apart from all of that: I only mean to raise the difficulty which I think is inherent here, as to whether Marx himself is able altogether to avoid the assertion of these things in a general form which doesn't have that historical, provisional character. But all right. So now, well, then the other question, Mr.

Brownstone, was this: Does Marx prove the connection of exchange value and labor, the expenditure of labor in part 1?

Mr. Brownstone: No, he doesn't, he doesn't draw it out . . .

JC: No. On what is it based?

Student: . . .

JC: That very important relation—in a certain way that's *the* important relation between exchange value and the amount of socially necessary labor time expended. Well, you know, that was what you said, and correctly. Do you know of any way in which he establishes that? How does he establish that? Does anybody know? Please.

Student: . . . process which he shows you that things will exchange for the same amounts and he says if they exchange equally there must be something in common between them, and then he just simply asserts that this something in common must be labor.

JC: Yeah, that's absolutely correct. He simply asserts it. It's on the basis of a kind of inference: they do empirically exchange the one against the other, this commodity and that commodity. You see it. Now that's a very curious thing, that they exchange, because one of them is eggs and the other one is hats; and that's very remarkable, because how can one find the principle of commensurability between hats and eggs? There isn't any, as far as anyone can see, and yet they go on exchanging all the time. Now Marx said people had thought about this question for a long time, and this is the point that he introduces Aristotle and the *Ethics* and shows, incidentally, why Aristotle couldn't possibly have known the answer to this question. He couldn't have known the answer because of the conditions under which he lived, the historical, the social conditions that prevented Aristotle from seeing the fact, the underlying fact. So you have this peculiarity: qualitatively different things meet on a level of quantitative homogeneity, so that qualitative heterogeneity is overcome by a quantitative homogeneity. How does he know this? That's merely a statement, a description of what one sees going on all the time; that's only a pedantic way of saying that people exchange hats for eggs. That's all. Now but ⁷how does it come about? There are generally speaking, let's say, two different kinds of answers. One of them is suggested by that passage from Aristotle in which the exchange is referred to a merely empirical occurrence. It happens that the people involved in the exchange on the basis of their relative demands, their wants, agree to do it.

Now that's not the whole story, but that's as much of it as makes any matter for Marx, and Marx says: No, that isn't it, that's not it at all; what really connects them is a quantitative link. They exist on the same level of quantity. But what is it about them which is quantitatively comparable? And then he says: It must be the only one thing which they have in common, namely, they're both the objects of human labor. Now, but that in a way doesn't help a bit, because one of them was the object—well, the eggs is not such a good example. [Laughter] It's a very bad example, in fact. But let me take now

instead of eggs, boxes: boxes and hats. Now people exchange them, let's suppose, and what's there in common between them? Only that. Now that's not so obviously true, that they have nothing in common except that they're both the objects of human labor. It might be that they both have in common that they're both the objects of human want. That's also a fact, that the boxes are wanted by A although owned by B; and the hats are wanted by B although owned by A. Now I don't know whether that's relevant or irrelevant, but it's a fact. It's also true as well that they are both the objects of human labor. Now he has some reason, in other words, for excluding all the characteristics—and for that matter you could say: Sure, and in addition to this that they consist of matter, matter in motion, with void in between the particles and so on and so forth—which he would be the first one to admit or even insist on, that there are lots of things in common.

Now, but he is not on such bad ground as this would make it appear, because he asserts this act of exchange—this is what he calls a social act. This happens among human beings, and you have to find out what is humanly relevant, let's say. And he is willing to make that kind of distinction (and I will come back to this in a minute) between what is humanly relevant and what isn't. And so, but I must say ⁸it is by no means a clear and demonstrative line of reasoning that points up to the labor theory of value in Marx; the labor theory of value is in its important aspect simply asserted on about the second or third page of the treatise, and after that it is taken and it is never proved. I point that out to you. I don't know whether that has a devastating effect on Marx's doctrines or not, but it is a fact that I know of no proof of this except by exclusion, that when Marx sits down to try to think of what kinds of things that qualitatively heterogeneous commodities have in common, what they have in common which would make commensurability possible, he in effect says: I can't think of anything else except the incorporation of human labor. And not only human labor, which would only lead to the same problem because human labor, as Marx insists a thousand times, is the labor of boxmakers, the labor of hatmakers and so on and so forth—I mean, qualitatively different. Not only therefore is it human labor, but it must be that there is some basis upon which all human labor can come to be compared and made commensurable.

So then the problem of the hats and the boxes is only reflected on a more interesting level in the problem of the hatmaker and the boxmaker, see? From the ⁹hatmaker proceed hats; from the boxmaker, boxes. What's true of the hats and boxes is simply a repetition of what's true about the hatmakers and boxmakers, so if you have commensurability among the commodities you must have commensurability among the makers of commodities. This is what he calls the qualitative differences. If you think that I am going to point out now, lead up to some big problem that he failed to see, you're wrong. ¹⁰I am only telling you now what he said but in somewhat different words. Please.

Mr. Benjamin: To a certain extent, and of course this is not a final answer, but he can and does fall back on the tradition of economics as a science. This theorem of the labor theory of value had been developed prior to him through Smith and Ricardo, so that in a sense to prove it is unnecessary. It's been done.

JC: Yeah, that's only true in a certain sense though, Mr. Benjamin, because Marx is in the position of asserting that nobody else has really understood economics before him, and he was as much a self-conscious destroyer and regenerator—I suppose there is Hobbes on the other side in the bigger dimension—no, and of course not only Smith and Locke, but Petty, who was in a way more important. Petty has a certain observation about labor being the father and earth the mother^{viii}—form and the matter in other words, of the process of production, which certainly must have made Petty appeal to Marx, and he does, but fundamentally none of them ever understood the process of production properly. Nobody before Marx grasped—that's right, nobody before Marx grasped the labor theory of value, and I will tell you that there is something to this claim, too. That's no idle nonsense on his part, that the radicalization of the labor theory of value was never achieved until Marx, as far as I know. And you won't understand the full bearing of this until you come to part 3, which is a terrific piece of work; and you will have great respect for the man who conceived it when you see how he handles the question of surplus value, the mass and rate of surplus value on the basis of his findings. It's a very impressive achievement. But still, let's answer the question and how about that the level on which the qualitatively different kinds of labor can meet. See, if you can't find that, then everything collapses after this.

Mr. Benjamin: Well, he refers to total labor or the totality of social labor, and says that given labor to others may not be commensurable, but you can measure it in terms of the total labor of the society at a given time.

JC: No, that has to do more with the transformation problem, Mr. Benjamin, the problem of the transformation of the values into prices. Where he says there's not an exact coincidence that the value of this and the price of it, but if you take them all together, sum the values and sum the prices, then—and this has something to do with that: his theory of money is the link with sum of the values and sum of the prices. Then it works out to be perfectly all right, but that's not the answer to this question.

LS: . . . position . . . shoes . . . an exchange qualitatively different . . . by which he can establish that the . . . is more than just one pair of shoes . . .

JC: Well, yeah, sure, ¹¹if the shoemaker . . . x number of shoes for an appendectomy. Marx would say that it is not a question of how badly the shoemaker wanted the appendectomy, that if he felt very much concerned and terribly upset he could give a hundred pairs of shoes. Well, so then the question must be: What principle is this?

LS: That's true . . . the shoemaker has the shoes in the position is perfectly clear . . . how much, and Marx has no . . .

JC: That's the point.

LS: . . .

^{viii} *Treatise of Taxes and Contributions* (1662), chap. 10. In *Economic Writings of Sir William Petty*, volume 1. (See Online Library of Liberty)

JC: The whole labor theory of value leads up to that, exactly the solution of that question. That this man gives so much of his for so much of the other and this is not arbitrary; it's not, as Aristotle said, simply dependent on how they feel about things and practice and law—in other words, demand and prescription and things like this, but that can be reduced to a perfectly intelligible, quantitative relation which overcomes the qualitative. Mr. Benjamin?

Mr. Benjamin: The number of hours' work that each do, and he does not give any kind of discount to . . . the number of socially useful objects, they operate—

JC: The talent.

Mr. Benjamin: I mean, in other words, he does not—you would think the doctor's hour would be worth more than the shoemaker's hour, but he just says his basis is hour per hour.

JC: No, no. No—who, Marx?

Mr. Benjamin: Yeah.

JC: No, no. Marx says, no—oh no. ¹²He says [that] if one man's labor somehow or other could be known to be twice as complicated and intense and so on and so forth, then you have to take that into account. Oh, yes . . . but still that doesn't answer the question: Why is it that that one hour of one man's labor can somehow, even though he's a hatmaker, be translated into one power of a shoemaker's labor? Let's make believe. What is it that's common to then both? You have to think about it. He speaks of it from time to time, but not openly.

Student: . . . time . . . it's not anything to do with . . .

JC: Yeah, but ¹³time is not of the essence here, no.

Student: . . . the concept of average labor, labor and time which he points . . . concept from day to day or year to year—this concept of average which he thinks is . . . absolute of the . . .

JC: Yeah, the averaging helps out in the computations, but it doesn't solve the fundamental problem. Well, look, let me ask you a question—Mr. Brown?

Mr. Brown: . . .

JC: That makes it worse, because they all require the same subsistence.

Student: No, because he talks about skills and education that is required for skilled labor . . . go into subsistence level.

JC: So in other words, if a man has to spend four years in graduate school, you have to add on the four years' subsistence spread out over a long period of time later on.

Student: In some way, yes. I don't know how to establish how to do it, but—

JC: No, it doesn't exactly, but look: suppose that you have a shoemaker sitting in front of a pile of leather and a hatmaker sitting in front of a pile of felt, and suppose ¹⁴they spend two hours sitting there, each, in front of this matter. Something has to happen before these piles of material become transformed, as he says. The reason I spend so much time on this is that if you won't be able to understand a certain very difficult part in the third part unless this lesson comes home early. Now something has to happen to that matter that's sitting in piles in front of these two men.

Student: Machines.

JC: Well, let's make believe the machine—let's leave the machine thing out of it for the time being, because that's only a more advanced form of the same process. With machines and without machines, in the fundamental respect it's the same, because the machines are congealed labor from before. And it's only a devious way of doing this thing.

Student: . . . the labor and materials that . . .

JC: Yeah, somehow that's a good figurative way to begin; Locke would say maybe you have to mix his labor with it. But what does that mean, more exactly? You have something there which is inert and motionless, the matter, in front; and what has to happen to it? Will it change if there isn't motion applied to it, and energy, something of this kind? Miss Holmes?

Miss Holmes: Well, no, I don't know enough about this to carry on, but isn't it something commodity-like?

JC: It will become that when the things become transformed into commodities, yes; but could you not say, as Marx himself does, that the whole productive process could be understood as the bringing together of nature and man? That's what he says. He says it much more emphatically, much more clearly in the contribution to the *Critique of Political Economy*, and I'll come back to that in a little while. But you have the nature, the substantially inert for the time being, and man, which is the source of energy—and Mr. Brownstone used that term, he used it, he went over it very quickly and so you might well have missed it, but that was in a way a key to the whole discussion. The laborer, the human being, is a source of motion, the human being is a source of motion and a force which is applied to inert matter, and it's on that basis ultimately, and I believe only on that basis, that these qualitative differences can be resolved. You could in fact look on these men as if they were automatons. If you had sufficiently intelligent machine-makers, that would eventuate in machines of a sufficient degree of call it for the time being

intelligence. They could replace human beings. As a matter of fact, to a certain extent they have. What does a machine supply to the inert matter? A motion. ¹⁵Marx himself even says this from time to time.

Now I'm at such length on this question because it appears to me as if the overcoming of the qualitative differences in the concept of the homogeneous socially-necessary labor time is only one step away from the reduction of the labor process to strictly mechanical operation by which nature is moved by some other natural forces; and then if you begin to think of the wage question, you'll notice the subsistence operation is a kind of restocking, a fueling up of a source of energy. And what is about the wage level under some conditions, the wage level but also the relation between the surplus time and the necessary time? Those of you who have read ahead will know what this means. That there are those horrific abuses of the working people, young and old, ¹⁶in England in the nineteenth century, there were absolutely unbearable conditions. Those were to some extent merely a source of indignation, and to another extent a spectacle of physical abomination, because there was an attempt to get more output, more energy output than energy input. And he speaks about this:^{ix} that they were in a way like run-down machines, these men and children. And if you try to get a man who would ordinarily live fifty years to work, instead of twelve hours a day, sixteen hours a day, he will be exhausted at thirty-seven years. It's very simple because there's a certain—he writes there is a certain energy and motility which is contained in the organism as a source of motion, and you can extract that as an effluent, either at a slow rate, [a] somewhat more rapid rate, or a very rapid rate. That has something to do with the length of the working day, that famous question. Mr. Dennis?

Mr. Dennis: It seems a strange view, because how can Marx ever account for things like service? In computations of national income with national product, you count goods as well as services, and it seems to me that the case of the physician or the educator or any of this rather large sector of our economy which is comprised solely by services, this sort of relationship simply doesn't hold when we . . .

JC: Well, I think, Mr. Dennis, that's not quite fair to Marx. I don't think he would have any trouble handling the situation of a certified public accountant, for instance. Now the accountant doesn't produce a product in the ordinary sense. He might only order the . . . books, something like this. If it takes him fifteen hours to do it, and Marx sees that this is not an usually inefficient man or something but he does everything in the proper way, then he would say: Well, he has produced a product ¹⁷worth fifteen hours, you know; and if you compare it with fifteen hours worth of [a] surgeon's work, it's about equal or something like that. If you mean that the product must be tangible, he didn't fall into that error.

Mr. Denis: . . . source of energy upon inert matter—

JC: In most cases that's true, yeah. What the—

^{ix} See e.g., volume 1, chapter 10, "The Working Day."

Mr. Denis: . . . the source of energy—this physician acting on his patient, or an educator acting on his pupil: Is this really something you can translate into terms of energy or to motion, one of these two?

JC: Yeah, I would be the last one to try to . . . the operation of a teacher on his students into something like that. I don't know that it can be done in important cases, and really what I suspect is in the most important cases I believe it can't be done. But on the other hand, if it is not somehow or other at the bottom of what Marx is asserting, then I fail to understand the ground on which these qualitatively different activities are made to meet. No, this is all that I mean to assert: I believe that the real ground of Marx's resolution of the qualitative differences in the concept of homogeneous human labor, I think that that resolution comes down to a further reduction of the homogenous human labor to some lower level, which is to say an output of energy; and that the process of production and consumption with distribution and exchange in between, that can be viewed as a kind of conservation of energy. And Marx's problem, why he calls this thing *Capital*, this book *Capital*, and why he calls the system capitalism and why the explanation of capital is so extremely important, I think all this has to do with a difficulty that he saw trying to understand how something which starts out of a certain size [has] at the end of a particular economic process¹⁸ a larger size. It's more at the end than it was at the beginning.

This is looking ahead. [JC writes on the blackboard] He has these famous formulations which you will notice if you look ahead to the next chapter. A certain amount of money being transformed into a certain amount of commodities, that's purchase; and then the commodities being transformed into money again, that's sale; and he says what a remarkable thing: if you compare this and that, they're unequal in value. This is a prime, n prime. The only way that this could happen would be if there were somehow or other an apparent denial of a law, of the law of conservation of mass. Something gets to be bigger than it was to start with, and you can't find the accretion. He says there is an equality at each point, the amount of money given for the commodities—that's exactly on the basis of the labor theory of value, let's suppose. No cheating, no advantages, nothing. Then this commodity gets transformed into a certain amount of money. It's more, and yet there's still that same equality, and he tries to understand that. You know what it is, the difference between the two. [JC writes on the blackboard] That difference is surplus value, or what in more conventional language is called profit; that's what he's trying to understand.

Now the problem of capitalism is that accretion: how it happens with nobody being cheated, from one point of view. Now I know what you are thinking, that of course somebody is cheated, and he makes it quite clear that the laboring man is being exploited. I mean, that's the way that the . . . takes place. But that has to be explained: it looks as if it's impossible. Some mass has grown into a larger mass. It's only explainable according to Marx on the basis of the labor theory of value, on some peculiarity of one kind of commodity, but only one kind of commodity, which can be put into that position and for which this accretion will take place. That commodity is labor power, as will emerge

shortly. But the general principle, the conservation of mass, that's built-in energy; that's built in, so to speak, into the labor theory of value.

Now, why all this? There is an objection made to the formulation of the economic laws as if they were similar to the laws of physics and chemistry. It's remarkable that that should have been said, and that Marx should have approved the observation of his book reviewer. It's probably the only book, the only book I know in which the favorable reviews are quoted in the preface—even some unfavorable reviews, come to think of it. But why? Why was he so fond of that remark that was made about his book? Because for one thing, his doctrine with respect to the historicity of all views of economics requires it, so that the laws of economics cannot have this character of being immortal, like the law of the conservation of energy. But yet at the same time I believe that he would not have been able to overcome the problem of qualitative heterogeneity without resorting to something which doesn't seem to have a dimension in time. You see? That's really what makes it possible. As well as I can understand it, I believe that this is what Marx's formulation depends on. He doesn't prove any of this and doesn't assert it in these words, except sometimes it does emerge.

LS: . . . almost Marx is the only man to have succeeded in building up a social physics. . . I think you are right. But this social physics is for Marx different from ordinary physics, because . . . as known as economic . . . is outside . . .

JC: That is unclear to me. I don't see what the alternative is, because if one tries to consider what is meant by the process of production under any conditions, say, postcapitalistic—he says man and nature always, always—and what will the process of production amount to, except the putting together of these two masses? And then you have something like that critical effect where they have a little fissionable material here and a little fissionable material there, and when they're put together that leads to the qualitative change in the surroundings. I mean, it's not a terribly good analogy, but I don't see how it could be different in postcapitalistic society.

LS: . . . that there are certain categories which are permanent—

JC: Yes.

LS: . . . exchange of man and nature, and this is in no way affected by . . . all these things are, so to say, eternal verities . . . contradiction . . . the different is . . . Marx must admit . . . in a communist society.

JC: That would be one form of my contention. More generally put, I don't see from Marx's treatment how much of what is asserted to be peculiar to the capitalistic system is not really dependent on things which would carry over fundamental characteristics into any economy, i.e., that postcapitalistic economics might resemble capitalistic economics in more ways than he himself is prepared to admit, as we see from the ground that he himself must appeal to in examining capitalistic economics; that, in other words, it's a

very dangerous thing to develop a social physics and at the same time a philosophy of history.

LS: . . . a society where human labor has become completely objective and . . . then of course you get social physics . . . it must be so true of this society, for this reason it is wrong for any other society.

JC: Well, let's look at a—and incidentally, that passage is one that I have marked here. He says at the top of page 268—not in what you have, in a book which is virtually unobtainable anymore:^x

“Whenever we speak therefore of production, we always have in mind production at a certain stage of social development, or production by social individuals. Hence it might seem that in order to speak of production at all we must either trace the historical process of development through its various phases or declare at the outset that we are dealing with a certain historical period, as for example with modern capitalistic production which, as a matter of fact, constitutes the subject proper of this work, but all stages of production have certain landmarks in common, common purposes. Production in general is an abstraction, but it is a rational abstraction insofar as it singles out and fixes the common features, thereby saving us repetition. Yet these general or common features discovered by comparison constitute something very complex whose constituent elements have different destinations. Some of these elements belong to all epochs, others are common to a few. Some of them are common to the most modern as well as to the most ancient epochs. No production is conceivable without them, but while even the most completely developed languages have laws and conditions in common with the least developed ones, what is characteristic of their development are the points of departure from the general and common. The conditions which generally govern production must be differentiated in order that the essential points of difference be not lost sight of in view of the general uniformity which is due to the fact that the subject, mankind, and the object, nature, remain the same. The failure to remember this one fact is the source of all the wisdom of modern economists, who are trying to prove the eternal nature and harmony of existing social conditions. Thus they say, for example, that no production is possible without some instrument of production. Let that instrument be only the hand. That none is possible without past accumulated labor, even if that labor consists of mere skill, which has been accumulated and concentrated in the hand of the savage by repeated exercise. Capitalism, among other things, also an instrument of production, also past and personal labor. Hence capital is a universal, eternal, natural phenomenon, which is true if we disregard the specific properties which turn an instrument of production and stored-up labor into capital.

“If there is no production in general, there is also no general production. Production is always some special branch of production or an aggregate, as, for example, agriculture, stock raising, manufactures and so on. But political economy is not technology. The connection between the general destinations of production at a given stage of social

^x There is what appears to be a brief gap in the tape at this point; when the tape resumes, Cropsey begins to read.

development and the particular forms of production is to be developed elsewhere. Finally, production is not only of a special kind, it is always a certain body politic, a social personality that is engaged on a larger or smaller aggregate of branches of production. The connection between the real process and its scientific presentation also falls outside of the scope of this treatise. We must distinguish between production in general, special branches of production, and production as a whole.”^{xi}

Now there are lots of things in that passage. I raised the question that I did, not because I thought Marx was unconscious of the difficulty; on the contrary, it seems to have been very much present to his mind that in a certain way he was saying things which are affirmations about an unchanging subject and an unchanging object: that’s man and nature, and it might surprise you that Marx went so far as to say this. But I mean, thinking of certain things that he asserted, that might appear to be a bit off the main line of his general speculations, but he says that: there are the permanent things, man and nature, and then there is the fluctuating or historically ascending and descending (maybe) condition of combination of those two. He somehow or other has to find his way between them, between the permanent and the obviously transitory, in order to give an account of the whole. The way in which he tries to do that is I think only made concrete in his economic treatise. That’s what I meant when I said before that in his other works he spoke about the sciences, but in the economic he had to try to *do* it. And then it becomes, you know, it becomes very difficult; and it doesn’t appear to me that the enterprise has been made altogether successful, but I’m not sure whether everybody agrees. I think Dr. Strauss is not—

LS: That I have made . . . seems so evident that I can . . . As regards the [LS refers to something said by Mr. Benjamin]—

JC: Mr. Benjamin, yes.

Mr. Benjamin: . . .

JC: Well, that would be all right in one case, but he says it can’t be true for the whole system, because capitalism means that sort of gain. And it couldn’t be true, incidentally, for the whole system in virtue of the fact that it doesn’t take a full day of labor to maintain the man and his life for a day . . . the working day is what’s called by Marx as a . . . that guarantees that there will be that positive difference . . .

Student: . . .

JC: People, yes, but that it—well, you might say no, but if you look at the statistics from 1932 . . . was negative for the whole national income. That’s a peculiarity of the method of keeping records. Well, I don’t mean to say there was cheating, but it couldn’t be true for the whole country, which I prove to you by the fact that there were seventeen or

^{xi} The passage is from Marx’s introduction to *The Grundrisse*, notebooks written by Marx in 1857-58. See *Marx-Engels Reader*, 223-24. We have been unable to identify the “virtually unobtainable” volume.

eighteen million men out of work and substantially nobody starved to death. So the surplus shows up as being manifested in that differential, but that's a bit off the point—

LS: . . . Now I think you will agree Marx admits, it is more . . . you remember when we discussed the essence of man—

JC: Yes.

LS: . . . but what he says is this . . . it would be possible to compare to say if . . . a good day . . . I don't know— anything, some initiation rites, or I some rites, or . . . or don't know what . . . And therefore the question arises, the old question, there are various stages, but there can be undeveloped, embryonic stages and more fully developed ones. If you take merely the most . . . you have something sub-embryonic which is . . . so the best thing to do is to look at the fully developed: the fully developed, there you get only a clear vision of how these universal concepts really fit together and what their implication is. Now regarding this, Marx says in this treatise that the feudal economy is a key to all earlier economy, i.e., the only economy empirically known to us . . . and which has the advantage of being the most developed . . . Therefore, we study it, but we do it with the understanding of at least the possibility that there might be a superior form of . . . and think that belongs to the whole thing . . . but it is also theoretical . . . if you have slaves or serfs . . . free labor . . . but with the following understanding, which is of course absent from the . . . this may be changed, that labor . . . Marx is sure . . . but we . . . transforms the certainty here into a reasonable doubt . . .

JC: Well, I would go further and say I am as sure as he could possibly be that it's not the end, on the ¹⁹highest principle that all things that came into being have to pass away. Sure, but the question—

LS: Which Marx did not sufficiently consider.

JC: I think [laughter]—yeah, not at the other end. No, I wouldn't doubt that, but my point—and let me only try to say it very simply: there will also have to be something which in the present time is called, say, capital formation. Now he would say, of course, it's not called capital formation . . . but the process of production, taking man side by side with nature, man applies this molehill force, transforms it. Now if he eats up everything that he makes in the course of the year—the community does—that has a certain effect on the prospects for next year, which are irrespective of capitalism, communism, or the Hottentots. Now where does that—what the conventional economists call surplus—come from? It comes from the fact or has as its necessary condition that it does not take a full day's labor to keep a man alive for a whole day. Now that's irrespective of all social forms. What is dependent on historical circumstances is [that] in some cases a man might have to work for a day in order to stay alive for only twenty-two hours, in which case there will have to be some subsiding of the population; but in other cases, a man could stay alive for two weeks on the output of one day's work. So that's social all right, but that the prospects for accumulation depend on this differential, that's not social; that's as physical as a law of mechanics. So in a communist society there will still have to be

accumulation. The accumulation will be possible or impossible, rapid or slow, depending on some privations. People are going to have to give up some part of their daily output for the sake of this other end. What will be the mode of determining the relation between how much they're allowed to consume and how much they must give over to the other function? I don't know of any answer to that question which is strictly authoritative—well, Marx didn't say, surely, but what Lenin would say, I don't know. It's a difficult thing. It might be in that same class with the lynching problem, that is to say by public opinion.

LS: That is my question—

JC: Yeah.

LS: . . . that Marx did not think through . . . of communist society . . .

JC: Yeah, and it more than even being awkward, it's in a way a kind of calamity that certain things are represented as being quite easily foreseeable; and what's not foreseeable is a sort of detail, whereas as a matter of fact what's not foreseeable is really the most important thing²⁰. So it's only from this point of view that I would say certain things don't appear to depend, and by Marx's own reasoning don't seem to depend, on simply . . . historical things and I—let me say I leave it with you as a question: How far? Because if you try—I go back to the first point: if you try to understand on what basis the overcoming of the qualitative differences by quantitative comparison of homogenous things, on what basis that rests, I don't know of any foundation other than this, let me put it that way. And one might say: But this is only a critique of capitalist economy and therefore it isn't meant to apply to all situations. I would say that's both true and not true. It certainly is true without qualification so far as what he means is we're trying to account for the process of exchange: things exchanged by capitalists, private owners of the means of production, and you have to make use of this thing because it happens all the time and you have to give an account of it. What would take the place of this in the postcapitalist society? Well, it would not be exchange, presumably; there wouldn't be exchange, there would be from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs. So I take it that means that everybody would work as hard as he was disposed to work under the influence of a good conscience, and that the output would go into a common storehouse, and that everybody who wanted to could come day or night and cart away refrigerators, and sailboats, and everything. Honestly. But people wouldn't do it. I mean, they wouldn't just come away and be swine about it and move out with a truckload of refrigerators because they could do it and no one—

Student: It would be useless.

JC: Which would also be useless, except if by that act they could develop a black market. [Laughter] Yes, but let me—I don't want to descend into petty details. Under those conditions, it's true: no exchange, no exchange of the visible kind; there would simply be taking. And ²¹Marx says they can't be always taking if there isn't some production, and he takes care of that: there will be plenty of production. Everybody will produce exactly

the way they take: out of a good heart. Yeah. Sure. What? [Addressing an inaudible comment from the class] Now that doesn't rest on any social physics. That doesn't rest on anything. [Laughter] The other thing, the other thing rests on social physics. That you can understand and compare it to thermodynamics and aerodynamics and all the other things; they were long before us and they will continue long after us, and they always were true and will be true. That's never been true and I don't know whether it will be true, but there is a kind of presumption against something which has never been true or found to be true, you see. So that's what I mean by saying that what's peculiar to this other thing that transhistorical, that's altogether pie-in-the-sky. But what the analysis of physical things rests on, and an incredibly deep analysis, that has to be depreciated as being only historical, see, by his own terms. It's very odd.²²

Incidentally, in line with this same notion, let me point this thing out to you. The introduction to the *Critique of*—the introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, that's from what I read you; that was 1857. If you look in the Oxford—any one; OED or any one of the Oxford dictionaries, you will find this definition of work under “Physics and Mechanics”: “The operation of a force producing movement or other physical change, especially as a definitely measurable quantity.” 1855, that's the date that they have attached to this definition.²³ They don't say where they got it or what, but I take it that's from some book about physics or something which appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century, 1855. Now I don't mean to draw any powerful conclusions from this, but I think it wouldn't be going too far to say that Marx was after all not altogether free of the influence of positivism and of some attempt to account for the human things by a reduction of the human things to the non-human things. And how this was this was achieved by a blend with historicism and with this terrific inheritance from Rousseau, that is a very large question. But I suppose my speculations to this point could in a way maybe summarized as follows. I believe that his support for the labor theory of value itself rests rather heavily on a kind of scientism, scientism as crudely understood—maybe even positivism—and that this was very much at home in Marx's doctrine because it is about materialism. You could put it even that way, maybe: that the true basis for the labor theory of value is Marx's very radical materialism. Maybe that would be even better, that Marx made economics really articulate with radical materialism and that that is the basis for the labor theory of value.

Now there are very many points in this first part, and I'll try to come back. Now we still have a half of the next meeting to give over to part 1, and then the second half we will deal with the rather short part 2. But before closing altogether I'll tell you one of the points that we ought to have in our mind for the next discussion, and that is again a recurrence to the title of this thing. I have to tell you just a very little bit about the coming to be of the book as a book. Book 1 he published in his lifetime, 1867. He promised three others, if I remember correctly. Book 2, which was to be the process of capitalist circulation, and book 3 the capitalist process of production as a whole. This one, volume 1, is book 1, the process of capitalism production. What we have spoken about so far is the capitalist part of this title, the capitalist production and whether Marx succeeded in generating a critique of capitalist production without somehow or other being compelled to rely on things which transcended capitalism and the capitalistic period. But the second

point is: Why capitalistic production? Why did he begin with production? And that question has been raised; Dr. Strauss spoke at some length and you know already why the production theme is so important on the other side, on the noneconomic side. We'll have to pay a bit of attention to the place of production on this economic side. And there are some passages which I'll read to you from the *Contribution to the Critique* in which he makes that clear.

Then let me explain one additional thing: Why do we have to have so much recourse to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*? This book contains several false starts on *Das Kapital*, in effect. He began it and then he stopped. Now this is a respectable-sized book; quite a few people would be content to have written a book of this size. This was only a bad start for him and he didn't throw it away, but what he did was to realize that he didn't begin in the right mode. If you look at the introduction to the *Contribution*—it's printed here at the end, the last thirty or forty pages—that, I believe, was probably his very first beginning. I'm not sure; I am surely no scholar of these manuscripts or texts, but I believe that was probably his first beginning. [18]57, [18]59, the body of this thing, what's called the *Contribution to the Critique*. Then 1867, finally book 1 as we have it. If you look at the first introduction he deals very explicitly with these abstract themes, which from our point of view is best. He talks about nature and history in compact form, and we can grasp what he is talking about and the concepts are clear. That evidently that was not what he was out to do and he realized it would have been a bad show that way.

I mention this for the following reason. Book 1 as we have it is prolix to the point of being—well, it could drive you to despair, because there are places of pages and pages and pages of repetition of what looks like a very little point, and indeed it is a very little point. It could have been said very much more briefly. If he had continued in the style of the first introduction, he would have had a short book, but that was not, I believe, his purpose and he was well advised not to proceed in that way. He then would have been in a position of having addressed a bunch of scholars and not having addressed the bulk of mankind, and I believe he meant in this book as we have it to be absolutely crystal clear beyond the power of any third-grade human being to misunderstand him. There is a question as whether he achieved quite that, because there still are places in this book which are very tough, as you know. But that I believe is part of the reason for the book having its general character. I believe it was addressed to the mass of mankind as well as he was able to do that, [and] that its virtues and its vices are connected with that fact.²⁴ If you want to have a more abstract, condensed statement of the theoretical skeleton,²⁵ you might look to some of his discarded draft beginnings. It is too bad that he didn't finish them and put them aside. He was a man of infinite patience and industry, a man who taught himself the whole body of economics down to his time, who was a thoroughly accomplished economist and a man capable of extraordinary²⁶ inventiveness. He invented this system to a large extent. That the elements existed before him is totally uninteresting because they never meant that to anybody else but him. And he did this thing, and with great consistency and very impressive structure; and that he describes at great length. That it was also a calamity is . . . in many ways as beside the point for the time being. All right, so then we will continue with book 1 next time.

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- ¹ Deleted “but”
 - ² Deleted “alleges”
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 - ⁴ Deleted “about a page and”
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 - ⁹ Deleted “from the”
 - ¹⁰ Deleted “This”
 - ¹¹ Deleted “if the”
 - ¹² Deleted “That’s”
 - ¹³ Deleted “time is not the, time”
 - ¹⁴ Deleted “each”
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 - ¹⁶ Deleted “in the”
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 - ¹⁸ Moved “has”
 - ¹⁹ Deleted “on the”
 - ²⁰ Deleted “and what’s fore—yeah, what”
 - ²¹ Deleted “and he says, and”
 - ²² Deleted “well now, yeah”
 - ²³ Deleted “I don’t”
 - ²⁴ Deleted “and that”
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Session 11: May 4, 1960

Joseph Cropsey: [In progress] —from last time that Dr. Strauss has a few observations that he would like to make, and so we will begin with that and then proceed to other order of business.

Leo Strauss: Well, the points which I want to make have become necessary, I believe, after Mr. Cropsey's very incisive and clear statement last time, so that we do not lose track of the philosophic problem. I said one should begin from the fact that Marx's doctrine or position presents itself as transphilosophic, a turn from philosophy to empirical study. Now this point has become much clearer last time because the empirical study proved to be much more precisely social physics, because what Mr. Cropsey said amounted really to this. Marx discovered, as it were, that the social physics sought, for example, by Comte and by many others is ready at hand if you understand economics properly. Now in passing, this view of Marx that economics is a true, exact science of society is in a way confirmed by present-day practice in so-called bourgeois society. Economics appears to be the most scientific of the social sciences, and I thought for one moment we should consider why this is so and what we can learn from Marx—at least what I learn from Marx—[about] why this is so, why economics has this great advantage.

Now two reasons appear to me. In economics—I mean, the general situation in the social sciences I believe can be stated as follows. You strive for exactness, but exactness doesn't guarantee relevance, and the criterion of relevance has nothing to do with exactness and vice versa. But in economics it seems that the most relevant is at the same time the most exact, and therefore it works there. Now what is the most relevant according to Marx? The homogenous labor. Homogenous labor. That you have to find again in all forms of labor as well as in all forms of commodities. Ya? And so the most basic, the most substantively relevant, is the very root of all possible exactness. I read to you one passage at the beginning of today's reading assignment:

“If we abstract from the material substance of the circulation of commodities, that is, from the exchange of the various use-values, and consider only the economic forms produced by this process of circulation we find its final result to be money. This final product of the circulation of commodities is the first form in which capital appears.”ⁱ

We abstract from the matter, the material substance, and limit ourselves to the form. That is not materialistic language; that's the language of mathematics traditionally understood. Ya? In this sense only is the Marxian position, just as the modern scientific position, materialistic.

The second point is this: money. Money is a conventional thing, but there is an essential difference between money and all other conventional things as follows. Let me take this example. We cannot think without using language: thinking is a natural process; language

ⁱ *Capital*, chap. 4. IP, 146; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 329.

is essentially conventional. Money is also conventional and has to do with the quasi-natural process of exchange. But there is this difference: there exists no universal language. People have tried to make it, but that was an effort—which hitherto has always failed—of individuals. But in the case of exchange of money, you do have something: a universal means which emerges without any inventor discovering it, namely, gold and silver, as Marx said. Now that of course is also, as becomes clear even on the basis of general knowledge . . . of Marx that it is not—gold and silver are not strictly speaking the means of exchange universally, but they are quasi-universal. In other words, here in the field of money, in the field of exchange, the convention has a quasi-natural character which it does not have in other fields. Those¹, I think, are important points. But let me come back to what Marx intended.

The social physics of capitalist society: but that means also that only capitalist society, or at any rate precommunist society, can be understood as social physics. That was the point where there was a slight disagreement in formulation, I believe, between you and me. Now here the crucial point is this, and that became very clear last time in the discussion between Mr. Cropsey and me, that the fact that the communist society can no longer be understood in terms of a social physics is based on the premise of Marx that the communist society is based on a moral regeneration of man (I use non-Marxian terms), because if that were not, you would always need these lousy incentives which you need in capitalistic society. There are two formulations of Engels which are helpful, which I have here in his writing on *Scientific and Utopian Socialism*, where he says:

“These laws [of exchange and so on—LS] are unknown to the producers and must be discovered only through long experience gradually. These laws are effective without the producers and against the producers as blind working natural laws of their form of production.”ⁱⁱ

The product rules the producers. Therefore there are natural laws. There is the social physics. Now, but what will be the situation in the communist society?

“The laws of their own social doing which hitherto looked like foreign natural laws dominating man are in communist society applied by man with full knowledge of the matter and therewith these laws are controlled by man.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Here you see the ambiguity. The laws are still effective but they are now used, now consciously used, whereas in capitalist society they are effective and not used, not controlled. Here you have both the case for your interpretation and against it. In one sense the laws go on, but only man uses them now consciously and therefore he is no longer simply subject to them. The other view however is they are no longer effective there, these laws. We must leave it at that.

ⁱⁱ Engels, “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific.” Presumably Strauss’s translation. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 705.

ⁱⁱⁱ Presumably Strauss’s translation. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 715.

Now the crucial point, however, for any limitation of the social physics is the assumption of a moral regeneration. The moral regeneration consists—in the communist society all men live spontaneously according to the maxim “From each according to his capacity and to each according to his needs.” No other incentives are required, which means of course that each knows somehow what the capacities of each and the needs of each are. But how do they know the truth of that maxim “From each according to his capacities and to each according to his needs”? Everyone desires not merely just to live, but to express himself, to develop all his faculties; and reason tells him that he cannot develop his faculties fully if everyone else does not do the same. In other words, ²what I have naturally is the desire to develop my faculties. But what I do not have naturally is that I think of the other fellow that he also develops it. How can Marx make this transition from what I desire to what reason tells me? To see the fallacy of Marx’s maxim, one has to consider the fact that it is a modification of an earlier maxim, namely, this: that no one’s freedom can be secure unless everyone is free. Kant’s and Rousseau’s thesis. But that thesis implied, realistically, that it is perfectly possible for some men to be free while the others are not free, only the freedom is not secure. There is no . . . for that. That’s another matter. And after all, it is not difficult to show empirically that men can develop their faculties in an amazing way, whereas not all members of their society were able to do so. Think of Plato, Shakespeare, and other interesting examples. Now the expression of this utopianism of Marx, the superfluity of selfish incentives, is the distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity. Now the mere mortality of the human race, which was emphasized especially by Engels all the time, shows the untruth of this premise. If the human race cannot guarantee its eternity, the realm of necessity is coeval with man.

Now how does this untrue premise, the possibility of a realm of freedom, affect the social physics? That’s the last point I want to make. Marx sees the economic world as a whole in the *Kapital* because he stands outside of it. He is not a capitalist nor a believer in capitalism. Marx’s economic world is a derivative world. The primary fact is not the world; world is not the world of commodities. That is to say, the genesis of that capitalistic world becomes for Marx the guiding problem. Now there are two ways of standing outside of the capitalistic world: the first is the precapitalistic; and the second is, we may say, the postcapitalistic. The first is represented by Aristotle most clearly; the second by Marx. And Marx was fully aware of it: in a crucial passage of the first part, page 66 following, he speaks of Aristotle’s analysis of fundamental economic facts.^{iv} Now what’s the difference between Aristotle and Marx? For Aristotle the starting point is a natural society, a society in which the exchange of commodities is not in the center of life. Ya? Is not in the center of life. For Marx the starting point is not the natural society in the Aristotelian sense but the anticipated communist society. So in other words, the basis of Aristotle is truly empirical: there are such societies and have been. The other is merely anticipated. In other words, the Aristotelian economic world is one which can be taken in well in one view by every producer or consumer. There is no need for an economic expert there. The Marxian postcapitalistic world requires the infinite complexity of the social plan which is drawn up by economic experts. This alienation, in the sense of [it not being possible] ³for everyone to understand the whole, exists of course

^{iv} IP, 59-60.

as much in the postcapitalist society as it exists in capitalist society, although in different ways.

Now this is connected with the deepest substantive difference. Aristotle raises the question exactly as Marx does, and Marx knows that: What makes possible exchange of qualitatively different things? The eggs and the hats, ya, we had last time. What makes it possible? Marx says because they are both products of labor. Aristotle says: No, labor is the same as production. No, what makes it possible is that there is something equal on both sides, namely, need. Need or want. The economists call it demand, but I stick to the Aristotelian expression, the need. What does this mean? ⁴What does this difference mean? Aristotle has in mind here, as well as in the other points, man's *dependence* on nature. The emphasis on labor and production in Marx is the emphasis on man's *mastery* of nature. You see how this general point I mentioned before is connected with it. Is there a possibility of a realm of freedom, i.e., where man is simply the master? [This is] denied by Aristotle, asserted by Marx, and reflected in the analysis of economics: whether one asserts need or production to be the most fundamental fact.

Yes, and this is of course crucial for Marx in *The Critique of Political Economy*, to which Mr. Cropsey referred last time. Marx tries to prove that the ordinary distinction into production, distribution, and consumption is superficial—merely commonsensical—and that a deeper understanding would show that *the* fundamental fact, and the overarching fact, is production. Consumption is not the end: the very needs, the needs which are satisfied by consumption are themselves generated by production, and such other arguments of the same nature. I think I leave it at that now because otherwise I take up too much time.

JC: I can see a possibility that we'd stay on part 1 indefinitely if I try to respond to some of the things that Dr. Strauss said, and I won't do that. I simply won't do it. There were many points that were raised which are a clarification of what went on last time, and then other points to which I might have something to say—not by way of rejoinder, but by way of some expression of how it strikes me—but I think that I ought not to, and we'll get on with what I regard as my duty, namely, to give a more or less connected account of the . . . down through Mr. Brown's paper, and then we will pick up.

But I'm obliged to say that Dr. Strauss's remark on the qualified conventionality of money in Marx's formulation was almost in the same terms that I meant to point out, and in a way cut the ground out from under a certain portion of the subject under discussion, but not harmfully; and I would only call your attention now by anticipation to the fact that I believe Marx was addressing Locke and similar people. In Locke the argument that money is arbitrary and strictly speaking conventional is very prominent, and it has something to do with the also conventional transition from the state of nature to the state of society. In Marx I would have said that money is not so much conventional, arbitrary, or accidental as [it is] necessary, that the nature of economics dictates money and that sooner or later it must show up, and more or less in the form in which we have it, but I think I ought to—.

So in what will follow, I'll try to give, as I say, a connected account of the matter of part 1 in the first volume. Marx begins with the notion of commodities and defines them in a way which we can render as things of use and value. Commodities are roughly speaking things of use and value. The distinction between use and value leads to the distinction made on the top of page 42 (I won't read it, but you might look it up) leads to the distinction between quality and quantity as appropriate to the things of economics. This distinction between use and value, which leads to the distinction between quantity and quality, is repeated or leads on a higher level to the distinction between utility and value simply. I will use the term utility. Marx doesn't use it, but I think that it will not distort the discussion. So you have use, use and value, quality and quantity, and then utility and value—value now in a more technical sense, which emerges from the following consideration. Utility Marx asserts to be connected with or to flow from labor as specific labor, i.e., the labor of this or that kind of working man, a spinner, a hatmaker, a carpenter. As opposed to utility there is value, which emerges from labor as homogeneous labor or undifferentiated labor. Not the labor or this or that kind of artisan but the expenditure of human energy: muscular, nervous, and so on and so forth. Marx on page 48 refers to his discovery of this distinction as being of the utmost importance. He says: "I was the first to point out and examine critically this two-fold nature of the labour contained in commodities. As this point is the pivot on which a clear comprehension of Political Economy turns, we must go more into detail."^v As far as I know he doesn't emphasize any other single finding as much as he does that, and we have to take him more or less at his word, at least for the time being.

Now in speaking about specific labor as distinguished from undifferentiated labor, he remarks on page 50: "We see, then, that labor is not the only source of material wealth, of use-values produced by labour. As William Petty puts it, labour is its father and the earth its mother."^{vi} So with respect to use value it would not be proper to say that it arises only out of the expenditure of human effort. Use value really differs from value simply because use value has as its elements or its progenitors both man and nature, and man as specific artisan rather than as the mere source of an undifferentiated energy. Now specific labor is what eventuates in use value, and use value or the usefulness, the want-satisfying power of the goods. That we can say depends upon perfectly transhistorical elements: man and nature. Homogeneous labor or undifferentiated labor, that leads to exchange value under the capitalistic form of production and social organization. That exchange value as it emerges out of homogenous labor by way of values simply, that [it] is a historical product, results from the desire to produce for exchange rather than to produce for use, i.e., from the social organization of production for gain. That social organization has as its primary characteristics the private ownership of the means of production and the free sale of labor power, those two characteristics, the private ownership of the means of production and the sale of free labor power, those are so to speak the institutional bases for production for exchange or production for gain, which in turn leads up to that line of categories back through to quantity. That is to say private ownership of the means

^v Chap. 2, sec. 2. IP, 41.

^{vi} Chap. 2, sec. 2. IP, 43; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 309. For Petty's remark, see William Petty, *Treatise of Taxes & Contributions* (1662), chapter 10, in *Economic Writings of Sir William Petty*, vol. 1. (See Online Library of Liberty)

of production and sale or free sale of labor power are a certain form or stage of freedom, of human freedom, a certain kind of social organization which is characteristically described as free but which is of a kind of freedom which according to Marx has to be overcome or superseded.

Now Marx's treatment of these questions leads to or is based upon a distinction between utility and value, or exchange value in the capitalistic condition, and let me say for the time being he lays these both side by side; utility and value are laid side by side but value is decisive with respect to the conditions of exchange. Value is decisive because it is the category which is most intimately connected with production. Production is, in the Marxist understanding or in Marx's own understanding, objectifiable. One can speak of production as objective, and that has to do once more with the considerations raised last time flowing out of the development of a social physics. Let's say therefore that the attempt to put economics on a perfectly scientific base led Marx to attach decisive importance to production and to play down what was taken by other people to be of some importance, namely, the utility or usefulness of the commodity.

Now political economy—which I contrast with the Marxian understanding—political economy also makes use of the notions of utility and value or exchangeable quality, but in political economy utility is equitable with demand and is not simply need or want, but demand is want mitigated by purchasing power, to begin with. Value on the other hand is a sufficiently close restatement of what Marx means by the conditions of production or the conditions of supply, and so out of this one has the putting not side by side but athwart each other utility and value. Both are asserted to be decisive with respect to the determination of exchange value, but exchange value is now for certain reasons called price rather than value. One could say then that political economy admits consumption along with production as having a bearing on the determination of the value with the understanding that value now is reflected as price, and those of you who have read the material will know that Marx takes note of this distinction and we will come back to it and try to clarify it in his terms as well.

Now when one admits consumption as one of the determinants of value or price as political economy does, then one has admitted or allowed to enter what the modern economists call consumer preference. Consumption means the preferences of consumers, and that we could say is perfectly subjective. So that to contrast the Marxian understanding with that of political economy, we could say that Marx attempted to make the determination of value perfectly objective by causing production to be decisive, and that political economy in ways which I couldn't try to explain right now causes the determination of value to be quite subjective, visibly through the introduction of consumer preference but more subtly by the redefinition of cost also to include a reflection of consumer preference. Those of you who had some exposure to economics will know what I mean when I say that the modern understanding of cost is reducible to the doctrine of alternative cost. That is to say there is no longer any such thing as the absolute or intrinsic cost for the application of a certain factor of production, but that the cost of applying a factor of production in line of use A has to be understood in terms of

the maximum forgoing about what in all the other lines of production to which that factor of production could have alternatively been applied.

If necessary I will make this a bit clearer. If a ton of iron could be applied to the production of locomotives, structural steel frameworks, or magnets to be used in children's toys, the cost of applying that ton of steel in any one of these directions is not intrinsic but is given by reference to how much of value has to be given up by depriving the other two lines of the use of that one ton. Is that sufficiently clear? So that, in other words, not only is the consumption or demand affected by the subject of consideration of consumer preference, but supply as it is now called it also affected by a shifting of the ground and a refusal to allow even the condition of cost to be inherent to the thing whose cost is being considered. All right, that is the doctrine of alternative costs. All right, so that we could say this subjectivism of the determination of price in the formulation of political economy has some connection which we couldn't develop here with the doctrine that nothing is intrinsic to the thing, that all of its characteristics are let's say imparted to it or empirical. And how this is congenial to Marx's doctrines of total lack of an essence, and how on the other hand it leads to an entirely different conclusion from that of the Marxian denial of an essence, is something else that we can't go into now but which I would call to your attention as a question.

Now Marx goes on from this point to consider the form of value or exchange value, i.e., the expression of the valuableness of a thing, of a commodity, and he develops the notions of relative form and equivalent form of value. That's the example in which he speaks of the twenty yards of linen as being equal to one coat. The problem is to find some way of expressing the value of the twenty yards of linen. Now he begins with the perfectly sensible observation that you cannot say [that] twenty yards of linen equals twenty yards of linen, because it would be true but it wouldn't be in any way helpful. It would be perfectly firm and unobjectionable, but not useful. Therefore it becomes necessary to find something other than the primary object in the terms of which one can express the value of that primary object. To put this more abstractly, the value of any one must be expressed in terms of other. And I think if you were to conceive this remark as written down with word One in capital letters and the word Other in capital letters, you might be reminded of Marx's observation in that short paper that we read at the very beginning of how no object is intelligible, or possible really, except in the light of Other; and therefore some difficulties arise with respect to the possibility of a whole and so on and so forth, but I don't want to get into that.

Now⁵ as the result of this observation, a specific thing must therefore become the "quintessence"—in quotation marks because he doesn't use the term—of value. Because you cannot express the value of twenty yards of linen, you must express it in terms of something else, some other—say, coat—and the value of the linen becomes in a certain sense objectified in or alienated to that other thing, which is still a coat but becomes for the purposes of this expression a mere embodiment or crystallization of the valuableness of the other thing. So the twenty yards of linen have a value which is the result of their incorporation of labor, and then on the other side you have a coat and that coat looks perfectly different from the twenty yards of linen. It is not itself value. The coat isn't

value, but the coat contains or embodies a value, and for the purposes of this relationship it can be thought of as being nothing but the incarnation of value in the same degree to which it exists in the twenty yards of linen. Now you might say this is a terrific amount of trouble to go to prove something which is quite simple. The fact of the matter is that this is what leads up to and makes possible Marx's discussion of money. Obviously, you must be able to see this thing coming: that money is what does this for all of our commodities, and therefore this preparation is not capricious on Marx's part but it is necessary.

Now it's at this point I think that we could take note of Dr. Strauss's observation that money is not simply arbitrary in Marx's scheme but is strictly speaking necessary, both in its character as well as in its simply empirical function. If we look at page 99 in the text, we see where he even says it in so many words. Beginning of the first complete paragraph on the page: "Money is a crystal formed of necessity in the course of the exchanges"^{vii} and so on and so forth. It is bound to arise. Now money, we could say, is implicit in the notion of homogeneous labor. If there were not homogenous or undifferentiated labor, then it wouldn't be possible for one thing in its specific or qualitative character still to be the incarnation of the valuableness of other things, so it's the incorporation of labor in things, and eventually in that thing that becomes money, that makes money possible and even necessary.

However, this has some consequences; this way of building up to the idea of money has consequences which accompany Marx's development entirely through from beginning to end. I'll put it for brief purposes as follows: Marx conceives money in such a way that he is saddled with a hard monetary policy—a hard theory, let me say; policy would be absolutely out of place. He is saddled with the impossibility of monetary policy, is what it amounts to. Significant monetary policy would be substantially impossible in a community; that has got nothing whatever to do with what happens in the Soviet Union, obviously, where they have monetary policy. What I mean by hard monetary theory is this—hard monetary is unfortunately the phrase which is imposed on me in trying to say something about hard money. Hard money has as its adjective hard monetary, that is the way in which I mean it. That means in effect the domestic and international gold standard, without qualifications. Money gets its, let me say the metallic metals get their character as money because they are the embodiments of a certain quantity of homogenous, undifferentiated human labor. How much money there is, what the relation of money will be to a day's wage, the relation of gold to a quarter of wheat, all of this is in one sense determined by the amount of labor that is absorbed in the production of an ounce of gold.

Now that becomes a point of great consequence later on. I'll tell you only in the short form by anticipation what the consequences could be. Marx is led to accept certain traditional formulations with respect to the quantity of money as a result of his beginning from these premises. The acceptance of those premises and the conclusions that flow from them compel him to regard effective monetary policy as impossible: the quantity of money is itself determined by certain other variables. The quantity of affected money is determined by those variables—I could remind you of the formulation we had on the

^{vii} Chap. 2. IP, 86.

board [JC writes on the blackboard] last time: the quantity of money here, that . . . Marx says these—and he has a very sophisticated grasp, incidentally, of this view with respect to money; he saw many things. These are variables: the price level, the bulk of the transaction, or the quantity of output, and the velocity of the money. These are variables. Once they are somehow or other settled for that community, this falls out as a necessary consequence. Now you can have, you can try to jam into that system three times as much money as would be indicated by the solution of the other relation. What will happen will be hoarding. Then there will be a certain amount of saving and all money into stocks, stocks of money—I mean not securities. There is a channel of circulation, and that has to be filled. He speaks of the conduits of trade and circulation of exchange that has to be filled. In order for there to be a sufficient filling there must be a reservoir out of which and into which some commodities can flow in order to keep the conduit sufficiently full itself; but fundamentally there is a quantum of money which is required by the circumstances of the society, and that is what there must be. There can quite a few variations in prices—we'll come to that; he doesn't by any means ignore some empirical circumstances of modern life but his understanding of them is, we could now say, primitive. And I don't mean to make this point in order to show what a superficial thinker he was and how clever the subsequent economist have become: that's not at all my object but the point is the extent to which he has in a way been mistaken goes to the root of his understanding of economic and political things.

I will be very brief. If money is really a dependent variable, and if there is a kind of immutable law in capitalism—I say nothing about transcaptalist things—if there is an immutable law in capitalism that makes the economy money conform to some other variables, then one can say the line of causation always goes from right to left in this equation. I say nothing at all about what might affect these, but suppose that they are somehow or another at a particular level. Then the quantity of money falls out as a dependant variable. Now the whole understanding of monetary policy at the present time is to the contrary effect, namely, that money can be understood as itself as an independent variable, which has consequences for the price level for the bulk of transactions and maybe even for the velocity of money. Now you might say that's not terribly interesting except to people who are curious about some obscure, recondite matters; but that is not so because this P has a very much to do with the level of economic activity, i.e., the control of what Marx called crises and what we now call fluctuations in the level of business, or business cycles. To the extent to which it's in any way true that the credit phenomenon, the increase or decrease of the flow of money itself has an effect on any other direction from left to right, his understanding of the inevitable collapse of capitalism is affected. I wouldn't say that everything turns on this, but this is symptomatic of something. The extent to which it is possible to control certain developments by policy is by Marx minimized, and if it were not possible for Marx, and maybe even necessary for Marx to minimize the control over events by policy, I think much of what he says about historical materialism or the determinism of the historical process in response to some underlying economic conditions would be made insecure.

This is not taken to be, I don't intend it to be a sweeping contradiction of Marx's whole position, but I think that it points us to a very large difficulty, namely, to what extent his

motion of the institutions so much governed by things by which he regarded as quite beyond human control.^{viii} You see, the question becomes of some concern because Marx apparently had at the end of his view the overcoming of the alienation of these economic laws. They work so to speak under the capitalistic system as controlling man, and Marx says this is in a way a version of the correct order of things: the economic laws are not things in themselves which have an existence and an authority independent of the human subjects; they only appear to be so under capitalism; and when we look at the section called the fetishism of commodities we will see another example of this: how relations among objects are mistakenly regarded as being somehow self-subsisting, that they have their own meaning and their own validity. And Marx says: No, when once it becomes to be understood that these things are really subject to human operation, then in a way capitalism will be on its last legs practically as well as in principle.

Now I mention this because to the extent to which his monetary policy leads him—I beg your pardon, his monetary theory leads him to a certain conception of the policy possibilities under a capitalistic order, those possibilities being very, very limited, then he is put in the way of making enormous mistakes. Now you might say that’s merely empirical. The point here precisely is whether the course of history is or is not merely empirical. If the course of history is itself more empirical than Marx would have one believe, then one can’t say these considerations have no great abstract merit; and then what you are trying to assert is that the prospects of capitalism depend on certain shifts which we can devise and so on. But I would say that’s quite possible, that the prospects of capitalism or any other order depend upon certain shifts—if you like to call them so, and which some men like Edmund Burke found a more elegant way to describe. But Mr. Dennis, I believe you have a difficulty.

Mr. Dennis: I think I follow your general line of argument, but I got a bit lost in some of the details. Perhaps some others got lost too, so maybe I can ask one question about—is this, is this the equation Marx would buy, I mean as you stated it here—

JC: Yeah, pretty much.

Mr. Dennis: Pretty much? So if price here is . . . the price level of what? All these goods at a particular moment.

JC: Yes.

Mr. Dennis: And transactions would be what, the—

JC: The volume of goods.

Mr. Dennis: The volume of goods. I see.

JC: Yes. Let me see if I can find you the exact . . .

^{viii} This sentence is an accurate transcription of the audiofile, but it is possible that there is a word or phrase missing.

Mr. Dennis: . . .

JC: No, no, no. No, no. P is the price of goods. It's the reciprocal of the value of money. The index of the price level will vary reciprocally with the value of money.

Mr. Dennis: . . .

JC: Well, let me give you a very simple example. If at one point [JC writes on the blackboard] one dollar will buy one pair of socks, and if at another time the price of a pair of socks becomes two dollars, then whereas before one dollar would buy two socks, it will now buy only one. It requires two dollars to get both socks, right? So then that would mean that whereas the value of socks in terms of dollars is doubled, the value of dollars in terms of socks is fallen to a half. Each dollar will buy half as many socks as before. That's what I mean by saying that 'the changes in the price level are related reciprocally to changes in the value of money. But I think that he would have said something very much like this—I'm trying to find the page, it's in the chapter on exchange. You can look it up.

Mr. Dennis: The products of money really never . . .

JC: He doesn't speak of the price of money. You could speak of the value of the monetary metal or the value of a pound sterling; that's right, that would change with the change in the technique of producing the monetary metals.

Mr. Dennis: It seems difficult to see the price of the changing in these kinds of circumstances.

JC: Oh, it does, all the time.

Mr. Dennis: If he has, if he had the value of things—

JC: Well, the value of money doesn't enter into this as a— V is the velocity of money. Is that possibly a source of difficulty? V is the velocity of money, the number of times on the average that one unit changes hands. Now this formulation I by no means properly explained to you because it has two different bearings; I mean, one with respect to total transactions, and one with respect to income. There are two V s: income velocity and the simple aggregate velocity of money; and we would have to take that up if we wanted to go into this for its own sake, but I didn't mean to get so far into that. But is it all right so far?

Mr. Denis: Yes, I think I see now.

JC: Mr. Benjamin, please.

Mr. Benjamin: . . . the same thing but I can't . . . the read V equals PG over F , but I can't understand that money equals PG over V . In other words, the total transactions, times the price divided by the amount of money would indicate the velocity of money was going, was moving—

JC: [JC writes on the blackboard] You mean this?

Mr. Benjamin: That would make sense, but this . . .

JC: Well, Mr. Benjamin, you astonish me. I mean, algebraically there is nothing to choose between them, is there?

Mr. Benjamin: No.

JC: Nothing.

Mr. Benjamin: But there—

JC: Well, let me put it this way. I think that always, incidentally, it's a good idea to try to reformulate the relation between these variables in some non-mathematical or quasi-mathematical way. One could say the quantity of money varies directly with the product of the value of goods sold, and inversely with the number of times on the average it changes hands.

Mr. Benjamin: Yeah, the problem I guess is that the velocity would have to be determined by something else—

JC: Yes.

Mr. Benjamin: —and therefore, you know, I can't see how you would derive a figure for the velocity, whereas I can see easily how you would derive a figure for M .

JC: Yeah, you've seen something which is of considerable value to the working economists. When in practice they try to use these things, it's quite true: V is the one which is the residual. That's the one that they can only find out by consulting the relation of the other three. That's quite true, but which only really means that's the one they know the least about. And they don't conceal that fact; it's the hardest one to understand. That is the one which is most nearly connected with what people feel like doing, and what they feel like doing can be affected by thousands of things and it's very hard to make that precise. But I think Mr. Nelson—did you have a question before?

Mr. Nelson: . . . Marx's formulation is on page 135.

JC: 135, yeah, it's in that neighborhood. Yes. I believe that, as a matter of fact, that's where I have in noted in the margin of my copy. Mr. . . . ?

Student: Well, I just wondered about this, I understand that the . . . must be taken to be incisive . . . relevance.

JC: Yeah.

Student: But the later writings indicate that price fluctuates and—

JC: Varies.

Student: Varies . . .

JC: Yeah, he makes the . . .

Student: He never speaks of the value of money in the same way.

JC: The value of money as varying?

Student: . . . the price of money.

JC: Yeah, the value of money would be the reciprocal of the price level once more; he understands that thoroughly, sure, the value of money in that sense.

Student: . . . price in relation to both.

JC: Yes. Sure, that can happen. ⁷In *The Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* he tries to show how the conventional economists have misunderstood this problem, and he analyzes Ricardo and a number of other people with great skill. I mean, he really grasped that subject. He had a thorough understanding, and his understanding was always illuminated by the fact he knew what he wanted, you see; he knew where he was going. And he always had a point of view from which could look into these others, and he saw certain things about their formulations which really they would have had to have answered. Ricardo was long dead when this was done, it goes without saying, but the question of the relation of price and value is taken up by Marx in volume 1—although you are right in saying that it isn't of primary importance there, but he knows that it is of primary importance and it is promised for later treatment. ⁸I think everybody knows the history of that subject; I won't go into it that.

Marx died before volumes 2 and 3 would be published, and so Engels had to put them together out of very difficult manuscripts, and he did, apparently, a remarkable job. And it's in volume 3, which came out in the 1880s if I am not mistaken—no, it must be later than that, maybe 1890s—in which he deals with what's called the transformation problem: the problem of the transformation of values into prices, and that let loose a terrific dispute which had been burgeoning for a long time. And a man by the name of Böhm-Bawerk,^{ix} who was one of the leading Austrian economist of the Marginal Utility School—i.e., of the Subjective Value School—then wrote a book called *Karl Marx and*

^{ix} Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, *Karl Marx and the Close of His System* (1898).

the Close of His System, which has been republished in the late 1940s, and in this country you can probably still get it. And it was edited by a man called Paul Sweezy,^x a very competent American Marxian economist who indicates, and I will pass this on to you, that the close of his system didn't mean the demise of his system but simply the publication of volume 3, the bringing to an end of the long written discussion. Now that's true that Böhm-Bawerk also believed that it meant the showing up of the fallacies in this system and the impossibility of solving the transformation problem in Marx's own terms. And then there was a lot of controversy back and forth, and it became highly mathematical—and in late years very highly mathematical—and I think nobody really cares anymore [laughter] because when you look at the operation of a Marxist community, i.e., a community which tries as well as it's possible to operate a large economy on the basis of Marx's fundamental principles, it turns out that what was called the transformation problem is solved empirically, and so that the precise relation becomes irrelevant—and as well as many other things, it goes without saying. Please.

Student: . . . different between value and price supplied . . .

JC: Yes, indeed.

Student: And that was . . . also plays a role in the difference between value and price in relation to money. I don't see why Marx said . . .

JC: Yeah, because obviously there is this difficulty: the supply of money you can easily understand, but the demand for money is a complicated notion.

Student: . . .

JC: That—as well as I know, that is not discussed, the demand for money. He speaks of hoarding, and there is a subsection in one of the chapters on hoarding, and that would by modern economists be called one of the elements of the demand for money. But Locke dealt with the question of the demand for money in a few sentences. He said in effect it's infinite, so there is no [laughter] theoretical difficulty. With Marx that wouldn't go down so well, so—I mean, it's not very satisfying theoretically. But I think probably we ought not to bring it longer on this question. It really is outside the scope of volume 1 and would only be introduced if we tried to say something about the theoretical completeness of the whole Marxist system. In volumes 2 and 3 he goes at great length into the questions of credit and business cycles and things like that, and shows how very deeply he thought about all these questions. He was not a dilettante in economics and no one should get that idea at all, but we simply can't do it.

Now section 4 in chapter 1 is very important; it's called the fetishism of commodities. I will try to state in one sentence what this fetishism—and in the first place, a fetish as everybody knows is an object of superstition. It's something which is thought to have a power or a character which in fact it doesn't, and everything of any interest about a fetish

^x Paul Sweezy (1910-2004), Marxian economist; he was co-founder (in 1949) and editor of *The Monthly Review*, an independent Marxist journal.

is simply thought onto it. You might say a little doll or something like that; and then somebody says: Well if you do certain things, stick pins in it, it will do so and so to somebody, and if you genuflect and so on and so forth. Now, but according to Marx it's sheer superstition. Now the relations of use values and values, i.e., of things, is presented as objective rather than social or historical. That's the fetishism of commodities. The relations of use values and values, the relations among the things is presented in the light of this fetishism as being objective rather than being social, but social here means historical. It isn't objective in the sense that it is really in the things, it's only imparted to the things. It's of the nature of the subject more than of the nature of the object.

⁹This is in a way Marx's way of showing his disrespect for Hegelian idealism. Whereas Hegel would say the substance and subject must eventually coincide and do coincide, Marx would say [that] as long as the substance is really tainted with the subject, in a way it isn't yet thoroughly understood. But there is an element of error or imagination or whatever in this case of the historical of the nonobjective, and the historical replaces the subjective in this formulation as the transient or the impermanent, and I think generally speaking one could say if Marx asserts of a certain relation or understanding that it's merely historical or that it's social, having to do with the character of this or that society, that's a way of depreciating it as being not of the character of the real. Now we won't raise again the whole question of what's the real against the background of a shifting historical foundation. It's in the section on the fetishism of commodities that Marx has a very important—as far as I know, the only account of communist society that even pretends to be a little bit pictorial. It's on page 90.^{xi} —this ¹⁰looks like an exception to what I've just said, and in a way it is.

“Everything produced by him was exclusively the result of his own personal labour, and therefore simply an object of use for himself. The total product of our community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as means of subsistence. A distribution of this portion amongst them is consequently necessary. The mode of this distribution will vary with the productive organization of the community, and the degree of historical development attained by the producers. We will assume, but merely for the sake of a parallel with the production of commodities, that the share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by his labour-time. [That formula has to go, as you know—JC] Labour-time would, in that case, play a double part. Its apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community. On the other hand, it also serves as a measure of the portion of the common labour borne by each individual, and of his share in the part of the total product destined for individual consumption. The social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution.”^{xii}

^{xi} The tape was changed at this point.

^{xii} IP, 78-79; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 326.

Now this is not put forth as, in so many words, as being a statement about a postcapitalistic society, but it obviously has much in common with what we have been led to expect from Marx's writings; and you'll notice that at the crucial point [about] how would they, how would the output be distributed, he says: ¹¹That would depend; it would depend on circumstances. What he means by that is [that] one wouldn't be able to assert anything about to each according to his needs or wants except if the productive system was so enormously elaborated that there would be no scarcity. That is to say that everybody could have as much of everything as he wanted, or everybody would be so conscientious in the technical sense that even if there were literal scarcity there wouldn't be any need for an external or an imposed system of distribution or of rationing such as the price system now imposes on all consumers. But that's left altogether open, and Marx doesn't say anything about what could precisely be expected, and that's simply a sign of his realism in the best sense.

Now that's been the gist of chapter 1, in brief. Chapter 2 is entitled "Exchange." The point of this I believe is that exchange is primarily a relation among men and is not primarily a relation among goods as it seems to be. It's social and hence historical, and money plays a role in that process which is not simply arbitrary or accidental but is necessary. Exchange without money is ultimately incomprehensible. That leaves, obviously—and you notice the clear line of progression in the argument: that leads to the third chapter, called "Money." First chapter was called "Commodities," then "Exchange" (i.e., the exchange of commodities), and then money—that which the exchange of commodities leads up to necessarily. "Money," subtitled "Or the Circulation of Commodities." The first subdivision of that chapter is on the measure of values. You will notice the next one is called the "Medium of Circulation"; he is now dealing with what are now called the functions of money as you will find them laid out in any textbook of economics: that money serves as the method of value, as the medium of circulation, a store of value and certain other things.

Now money as a measure of value is intelligible only under the authority of the doctrine that money has a value as a commodity itself. Let us say money is a metal which absorbs a certain amount of labor: there is a process of production of money; it has to be mined, smelted, so on and so forth, minted, and that's what determines the value of money. Now on page 114 he has a statement about price. The question of the relation of price and money and value is bound to arise. He says: "Price is the money name of the labour realized in a commodity."^{xiii} "Price is the money-name," that is the top line on the page. "Price is the money-name of the labour realized in a commodity." Now that of course is part of the difficulty as to whether price is simply the money name of the labor realized in a commodity.

Now he understands that, and then he begins to speak about the disparities between ¹²price and value, and this occurs on page 114. Here again, further down the page, he says "If now circumstances allow of this price being raised to three pounds from two pounds" and so on and so forth, then some other things will arise: circumstances. What those circumstances are is not of particularly great interest to Marx. One could say that that's

^{xiii} IP, 101.

what distinguishes him from the political economists. Those circumstances are of great interest to the political economists. Those are the conditions of the market, i.e., what are reflected in the variations of supply and demand; and the difference in point of view is obvious and is not worth dwelling on. The political economists are interested in explaining the operation of the market system, and Marx is interested in understanding the fallacy of that operation and in how to transcend it and what will succeed it. But it doesn't quite settle the question, because if his understanding of that same set of occurrences or phenomena differs radically from theirs, the difference would have to be resolved one way or the other, and then something for his overall understanding might emerge from the rightness or wrongness of his view of that set of phenomena, i.e., the disparities between price and values.

Now Marx's notion of the rectification of the relation between the price and value depends entirely on the unhindered operation of the gold standard. Some of you who know a bit about international trade will be aware that there is a relation between the rates of exchange and the currents of trade and that when, to take an obvious example, ¹³the price level rises in a certain country for some reason (never mind what), that country becomes a bad place in which to buy, and that country will then experience a net deficit on its current account with an outflow of gold; and the outflow of gold shrinking [JC writes on the blackboard], this, will cause the price level to decline. The relation between this and the numerator is a direct relation. Right? And then the price levels fall, and that country will be a better market in which to buy, and the current flow of gold will be reversed in exact synchronization with the reversal in the current of trade, right? So that one doesn't have to assert any changes in the value of the gold proper; one only has to refer to the ratio of the gold and the goods, and call this a temporary maladjustment which will automatically extinguish itself by certain adjustments in the distribution of the monetary metal over the whole world. Right. That is the simple statement about the articulation of the domestic and the international gold standard. This was developed before Marx and was adopted by Marx. It is certainly the view of money and the currents of trade which is most consistent with the labor theory of value rigidly construed.

All right; so now obviously if the experience of the world with respect to the gold standard has any meaning, i.e., if the abandonment of the gold standard by every significant nation in the world has any significance—if, in other words, it's possible only empirically, I don't know what this means theoretically, but empirically it's possible for nations to survive, prosper, live, all kinds of things in the absence of the rigid domestic and international gold standard.^{xiv} I suppose somebody professing to make a theoretical account would sooner or later have to recognize it. It might have something to do with

^{xiv} At the Bretton Woods conference in 1944, delegates from forty-four nations created the International Monetary Foundation (IMF) and what would become the World Bank, and they agreed to institute a fixed exchange rate system. All currencies would be linked to the U.S. dollar, and the dollar would be linked to gold. However, "in the end it proved too inflexible to deal with the rising economic power of Germany and Japan, and America's reluctance to adjust its domestic economic policy to maintain the gold peg." In 1971, President Nixon severed the link to gold and a floating exchange rate system emerged. "What was decided at the Bretton Woods summit," *The Economist*, July 1, 2014.

the irresistible currents of history and so on and so forth. I'm talking now, in other words, about the possibility that political judgments might somehow be able to have an effect as a countervoice against these alleged economic immutabilities.

Now the second section of that chapter 3, called "Medium of Circulation": this is where he deals with the metamorphosis of commodities, a very important question for the subject that Mr. Brown someday in our life is going to get a chance to tell us about in greater detail. This metamorphosis of commodities is the act of selling and the act of buying. He represents it by notation C to M. Transformational metamorphosis of commodities into money, that is selling (if you had to be told); and transformation of money into commodities, that's buying. And now you might say it's in the course of the discussion of the transformation of commodities into money, i.e., of selling, that Marx pays his respects to the problem of demand. I can't afford the time to go into it, but I refer you to the pages 119 following in *Capital* where he speaks about the possibility of changes in demand and how this will have an effect on price but not necessarily on value; and then the rectification of disparities between price and value will occur, as I have already suggested to you. He also deals with the question of the socially necessary labor time at this point, and for purposes of brevity I'll say only this: the amount of labor socially necessary is what really determines the exchange value, not the amount of labor incorporated simply. If a man feels like doing something in an inefficient way, he cannot thereby increase ¹⁴the value of his product. That's number one, a clear case. What about if a man occupies himself with the production of something in a thoroughly efficient way, using minimum resources, but he ends up making something that nobody wants? It won't have any value according to Marx, notwithstanding its incorporation of so much of human labor. It causes a certain difficulty, but let's say he understood this problem; he did not give it the same place in his formulation that the political economists would insist it has to be given, and then we are back where we were at the beginning of the lecture and I don't want to start that all over again.

Now, when he combines the two metamorphoses, then he comes to the . . . formulation C–M–C: the transformation of a commodity into money and then the retransformation of the money into the commodity. Somebody first sells something in order to be able to buy something else. So far, there are no particular problems. At this point in the discussion, from pages 127 and following, Marx discusses a question which it took the large part of the economics profession quite a long time to catch up with him in respect to which [laughter]—I could recast that, but you know what I mean. It took until about approximately until the time of Keynes before economists were massively impressed by this thing which Marx understood perfectly well: that it isn't true that every time somebody makes something, somebody else is going to be around to buy it. It seems like a simple observation, but it could have been sidetracked and was, for various reasons of the impetus of some theoretical developments. It was known already to Malthus^{xv} in a certain form, and in a rather sophisticated form, and it was not Marx's invention; but it took a certain amount of common sense to see it and that wasn't always available. What he asserted was that you could have crises, fluctuations in the level of aggregate activity as the result of the fact that a lot of people would make things and a lot of others

^{xv} Thomas Malthus (1766-1843), *Principles of Political Economy* (1820).

wouldn't want them. And then as a result, some people would be thrown out of work in order to restrict the supply, etc. etc. And Marx ascribed to the process the same approximate source as many other people have done since, something having to do with the distribution of income: that because some people got a great deal and quite a few others didn't get very much out of the whole national product, the possibility arose that some people would not have to spend their whole income. A man who gets a million dollars a year does not have to spend his whole income. [He] doesn't have to spend it. That means there is always the lurking threat that he will withhold some part of his income and desist from returning it to the stream of income, and then there might be a constriction later on which will eventuate in the unemployment of some number of men. That has to do with the question of the relation of saving and investment, and I think you'll agree we don't have to go into that right now.

Now it's at this point that Marx's treatment of monetary phenomena would become of some practical importance, and I repeat that in the area that we are now moving in, things which are of practical importance eventually can come to have even theoretical importance. If there is a way of overcoming these difficulties by policy, by taking back these tough rules and making them pliant under the hands of political men, then some of these inevitabilities can perhaps be avoided; i.e., in simple language: if there is such a thing as competent monetary and fiscal policy, then some anticipated difficulties of the revolution of the proletariat through perpetual immiseration and so on and so forth, not to speak of the proletarianization of the bourgeoisie would be substantially mitigated. I wouldn't say any more than that, which could be of some interest.

Now at this point we're ready for Mr. Brown, but it is ten minutes before the hour, and let me ask Mr. Brown: Do you think you could do your job in about, say, fifteen or twenty minutes?

Mr. Brown: It is right around twenty minutes.

JC: Twenty minutes? Dr. Strauss, what do you suggest? Should we do it or should we let Mr. Brown start next time?

LS: . . .

JC: Yeah, please.

LS: . . . unless you take two papers . . .

Mr. Brown: . . . answer some of this, so we'd better . . .

JC: You mean you are going to raise certain questions which you think I might answer next time?

Mr. Brown: Yes.

LS: . . .

JC: Yeah, and then how about that? Then Mr. Brown will lead off next time. That gives us approximately eight minutes in which we can try to stave off the opposition that I suppose has been generated among you, or maybe not. Mr. Brown, is that all right with you, if we start with your paper next time?

Mr. Brown: I, my point was that you were concerned with time if I presented it now, then maybe you could answer it—

JC: Answer it next time?

Mr. Brown: Yes.

JC: Well, it depends partly on the disposition of your audience. I think they have a legal right to leave after seven minutes from now. [Laughter] And they might. [Laughter; inaudible comment from the class] I wouldn't undertake to say.

Student: Let's hear it.

JC: Why don't you do it, Mr. Brown, and we will impose this learning on the rest of the people.^{xvi}

Well, there are a number of points. I'll take up the small ones first. Marx, contrary to what I took your assertion to be, would agree that everyone is better off with the exchange or barter, but that this is irrelevant for the . . . that there is an augmentation of use value but there isn't any augmentation of exchange value, unless I misunderstood you; you said that you would deny that this increase of the aggregate . . . but that's not terribly important because . . .

Mr. Brown: You mean he was not necessarily better off?

JC: No, not necessarily, but after all, the . . . man has bread and another one has wine, and they exchange it voluntarily. The assumption is that they are better off. And now with respect to your objection, the labor theory from the examples of wants and needs, I think he would say that's not very interesting. [Laughter] I mean, the truth of it is substantially . . . this argument. That kind of illustration has always been present as a sort of thorn in the side . . . that and modern economists have devised something called the category quasi-rent, which takes care of some examples like this, and which only means that the cost of production becomes rather unimportant because of the impossibility of duplicating . . . and therefore substantially . . . the demand. And now with respect to Marx's notion of the possibility of squeezing out more labor through overtime or speed up the—of course that is the subject of the chapter, long chapter, on the length of the working day that speaks of the rate and mass of surplus value, so that—well, I am sure you know that . . . if I understood what your argument was.

^{xvi} Mr. Brown read his paper. The reading was not recorded.

Mr. Brown: . . .

JC: I believe he took care of it, but we'll have to wait and see.

Mr. Brown: The objection occurred because through labor saving devices, you don't necessarily have to depreciate the value of labor; in fact, experience seems to be the contrary.

JC: Well, that depends on how you take the application of those labor-saving devices to be. If you mean the labor-saving devices use the point of production that workingmen consume, that's one thing; but if you mean labor-saving devices that displace working men from their work, that's another.

Mr. Brown: But in either condition . . .

JC: Yeah, but then you would have to be fair to Marx's assertion that these labor-saving devices are themselves congealations of labor; and if you use a million-dollar machine, on the one hand that might not be a net reduction in the amount of labor, which is an argument against technological unemployment that makes very good sense, as we now see. We have more, higher . . . of labor than ever before, but in population and the work force has to see increases. You don't find large numbers of people out of work, you know, without an . . . But the interesting question was whether Marx's discussion of the value of labor power really has the effects we believe it has.

Now there is a very important distinction that has to be made, and that is the distinction between the value of labor power and the value of the output of labor. Suppose—this is ¹⁵in a way an anticipation of things to come, and I won't go into it now but I will sketch an answer to what Mr. Brown has raised as a difficulty. Suppose that it requires six months to grow the grain and produce the food and everything else that are the food for a workingman's family. If we understand him that this is at such a level that the population of workingmen is neither decreasing or increasing—so in other words, this is not the condition for every workingman and his wife having a family of ten children, nor is it the supposition that on this level workingmen will not be able to support any children, but it means that the population of workingmen will be substantially steady. And suppose that in that same half year the food and also the clothing and everything else which you correctly say is part of the subsistence level as conventionally determined—he does say that, it's quite true. Sure. Suppose now that six months takes care of ¹⁶the requirements of the working population for a whole year. Let's reduce the scale. That means that in a working day of twelve hours, six hours must be supposed devoted to the subsistence of the workingman. All right? If a half a year, then also a half a day is what Marx would call necessary labor . . . or necessary labor. He makes the distinction between necessary labor and surplus labor later on, which corresponds to the distinction between surplus value and the whole bulk of that, but we'll not take that up right now. Now suppose that the equivalent in monetary metal of the subsistence for a workingman, i.e., the monetary metallic equivalent of six hours of labor in a workingman's day of twelve hours is equal

to five dollars. So there is the same amount of labor incorporated in five dollars worth of metallic metal as there is in the subsistence of the workingman and his family for one day.

Mr. Brown: . . .

JC: No subsistence for the whole day. Five dollars [JC writes on the blackboard] equals the value of subsistence for a whole day, but five dollars worth of monetary metal can be produced in six hours. [JC writes on the blackboard] That's only another way of saying the subsistence for the workingman and his family can be produced in six hours, but it's enough to keep him going all day. The value of his labor for a whole day, the value of twelve hours worth of labor power, let's see, is equal: it has the same value as the output of six hours of labor. You have to keep clear the distinction between the value of his labor and the value of his labor power. His working for a whole day eventuates in twelve hours worth of output. That can be bought by a certain man, the capitalist, by paying him the equivalent of six hours worth of product, either in the form of money, or let's say in the form of goods, or whatever it should happen to be. The value of his labor power for twelve hours is equal to the value of his labor or anybody's undifferentiated labor for six hours. That's the ground for that transformation that you very correctly brought out [JC writes on the blackboard]: the consumption of his labor power, that commodity, labor power, is absolutely unique. That's the only thing that you can buy, the only commodity you can buy the consumption of which leads to a larger mass of value than what you had to begin with in order to buy *it*. And the reason for that is one thing and one thing only: that there is a difference between labor and labor power. Laboring is what the man does the whole day, and it's the result of his labor power being in him. He exerts his labor power over the period of twelve hours, but for the reason that you properly asserted, twelve hours worth of labor power has a value which is different from the value of twelve hours worth of labor performed. That difference is the difference between the whole working day [JC writes on the blackboard] and that part of it which Marx calls the necessary part of the working day surplus. I believe that the difficulty that you raised really is not a difficulty on the strength of this set of facts. I believe that you didn't give due weight to Marx's own distinction between the value of labor power, which you properly asserted, and the value of the output of that labor power as transformed into labor. You see, labor power, you can say, is a kind of locus of potentiality, power. That has to be transformed. It's transformed through moving arms and legs and so on and so forth; and the body, it is a perfectly physical thing that you describe as an output of energy—which is interestingly not my idea; it's Marx's own formulation.

Mr. Brown: I think he does make this distinction between labor and value.

JC: Sure.

Mr. Brown: And labor and process or labor . . . but this made me question whether or not your search for some standard of commensurability for labor value itself in terms of actual labor power rather than in terms that Marx himself says is the commensurable standard—that is, what will maintain in the labor itself that is subsistence. This was . . .

JC: Yeah, well, I tell you what, I believe we won't be able to settle this in a short time. Why don't we stipulate this: that at the beginning of the next meeting time we'll try to dispose of the question, you know, reasonably briefly. Maybe you and I can discuss it in the meantime, so for the benefit of the class it won't be a long exchange. And with that understanding, let's close this session.

¹ Deleted "that"

² Deleted "it is not only"

³ Deleted "not being able"

⁴ Deleted "Aristotle means"

⁵ Deleted "a specific thing"

⁶ Deleted "the price level"

⁷ Deleted "I mean, he speaks"

⁸ Deleted "now you"

⁹ Deleted "so I suppose what"

¹⁰ Deleted "this is of course is a"

¹¹ Deleted "that would"

¹² Deleted "money"

¹³ Deleted "when"

¹⁴ Deleted "his"

¹⁵ Deleted "a way of"

¹⁶ Deleted "the working"

Session 12: May 9, 1960
***Capital*, part 2: surplus value**

Joseph Cropsey: I would like to finish the discussion of part 2, which was begun last time by the Brown who read his paper at the very end of the hour—you remember we didn't have a chance to speak about the matter in Marx. Then after that brief statement, Mr. Nelson will read his paper on part 3, which is on the production of absolute surplus-value, and then I will try to give some account also of the matter in part 3.

First then, a few remarks on part 2. Part 2 is called *The Transformation of Money into Capital* and begins with what Marx calls the general formula for capital, which culminates in that [JC writes on the blackboard] . . . money being changed into commodities and then the commodities being changed into money again, with the understanding that the final M is larger than the primary M—and properly speaking should be written with a prime, with the further understanding of purely formal M' equals M plus some increment called delta-M. And one could say that the problem for some part of the text from now on will be to explain how that increment delta-M arises, that is to say, what there is about the investment of money in the capitalistic process that leads to profit. And now this delta-M, which is called technically by Marx surplus value, arises only under the conditions of capitalism, that is to say it arises only under the conditions of the purchase of labor power by an investor, an entrepreneur, and then his consumption of that labor power under such conditions that the consumption itself has something to do with the augmentation of the values in the process of circulation.

Now having stated the problem in chapter 4 roughly as I have just outlined it, Marx goes on in the fifth chapter to speak of what he calls the contradictions in the general formula of capital, those contradictions being essentially reducible to the difficulty in explaining why something can be exchanged for something else of equal value, and that something else can then be transformed into something still else and the value be larger at the end than at the beginning without any fall in the process of exchange—that is to say there isn't any point at which you can say: Here somebody was cheated and the thing which he turned over to somebody else didn't have the same value as what that other party gave back to him in exchange. And yet nevertheless, in spite of the fact that what everybody exchanges with everyone else is equivalent in value, nonetheless at the end the quantum of value is greater than at the beginning.

Now then Marx takes up two main hypotheses which might be used to explain this augmentation for the sake of rejecting them. The first is [that] the increase of aggregate use value might be the source of the increase in value, that is to say (as Mr. Brown brought out perfectly adequately and I won't go into it), if two men exchange, one man his wheat for another man's wine, and each one feels better having what the other formerly possessed, that could be described as an augmentation of the aggregate of use values. But it doesn't say anything whatever to the question of the increase in value proper, because the two must have been exchanged as equal values, [equal] exchange

values to begin with. That was the ground for there being exchange, as was elaborated in the earlier part. The second possibility—nor is it a mere adventitious gain by one party against another; that is to say, it isn't true that what one capitalist gains comes out of the loss of another capitalist, because that would lead to a surplus value or a profit equal to zero net for the whole community. And Marx says: No, 'if that were true there wouldn't be any capitalism; what we're trying to explain is the positive *net* aggregate, not the zero aggregate—or in other words, not the individual case. The conclusion therefore is that this delta-M is not produced by the process of circulation. It must be produced by something else than the mere transferring of the values from one hand to the other, and that leads Marx to give his own affirmative explanation in chapter six, which is called The Buying and Selling of Labor power, labor power being the C in there [JC evidently gestures to the blackboard], the commodity. Now Marx's formulation is that in the process M–C–M', the change in value takes place in the course of the consumption of C, labor power, as a use value, and I believe that the best expression of this comes on pages 185, 186: "The change must, therefore, take place in the commodity bought by the first act, M-C, but not in its value, for equivalents are exchanged, and the commodity is paid for at its full value."ⁱ The labor power is bought at its full value; there isn't any cheating at this stage.

Now as to value of labor power, I'll come to that in a little while. I'll add parenthetically that Brown and I had an extended discussion since the last meeting of the class, in the course of which I think we resolved our differences; and I would take too long to go into the details, but the net consequence of our conversation was his suggestion that maybe if the explanation of the value of labor power and the difference between labor power and labor were made somewhat ampler, the difficulty that he and I had in understanding each other might not have arisen to trouble the rest of the class, and so I will try to follow that suggestion in the proper place. And now let me repeat: "for equivalents are exchanged and the commodity," i.e., labor power, "is paid for at its full value. We are, therefore, forced to the conclusion that the change originates in the use-value, as such, of the commodity, i.e., in its consumption."ⁱⁱ Now this C therefore is to be understood as labor power, and that raises the problem of the possible definition of the value of labor power. Now Marx has already laid down a rule, which is to the effect that the value of every commodity is given by the quantity of socially necessary labor time incorporated in its production. Whatever it happens to be, it was stated as a perfectly general rule.

Now at this point one might think Marx is going to be embarrassed by the definition that he gives of labor power as itself a commodity, because it would appear that he would now be compelled to say the value of all commodities is given by the quantity of labor absorbed in their production, labor power is itself a commodity, and therefore he's stuck with the need to say that the value of labor power is itself given by the quantity of labor incorporated in its own production—which is precisely what he says, so there is no awkwardness whatever. The only difficulty is: How could one explain the quantum of labor that goes into, let's say the quantum of time that goes into the production of labor power? And that's not so difficult, really. Marx says that means the amount of time used

ⁱ Vol. 1, chap. 6, IP, 167. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 336.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

up in the production of the means of subsistence, so that if it (and I know I am repeating something I said that other time, but it bears a bit of repetition) if it should take six hours to produce the subsistence that will maintain a laborer at the level that will itself sustain the race of laborers for a whole day, then the value of one day's labor power is equal to six hours worth of output, which is, let's say, a half a day's work. The practical consequence of that is that one can buy the services of a man for a whole day—and it goes without saying, therefore, appropriate the output of that man as his labor is spread over twelve hours—but give him only the output of six hours because that is the value of his labor power. The labor power is literally a potentiality, a potency; and when that potency is translated into act it has a different character. But labor power is such a commodity that it needs to be paid for only at the value it has qua potency, to use somewhat extraneous language, but [it] might be intelligible to some. If one properly understood all of this, in a way the rest of *Das Kapital* would—volume 1 would be superfluous, because everything else follows from that: that's the source of profit. Certain comparisons made internally to that explanation lead to the various ratios and masses and so on and so forth that Marx describes, and ²from now on the book is in a way an elaboration of this fact: that it's possible to buy labor power at a price which is equivalent to its value, but the thing bought, i.e., the labor power, when it is used, i.e., ³when it as potency is transformed into it as a concretion or an act, that leads to an expansion, an enlargement of value. And there is no other way for value to be brought into being. That's a corollary which will have its full meaning only in the third part on the production of relative surplus value.

Now Marx's clearest expressions are on page 189 and 191 with respect to this. "The value of labour-power is determined, as in the case of every other commodity, by the labour-time necessary for the production, and consequently also the reproduction, of this special article."ⁱⁱⁱ So labor power is in no way an exception to the rule of the value of commodities. And then on page 191, almost in the middle the page, the beginning of the second complete paragraph on the page: "The value of labor power resolves itself into a definite quantity of the means of subsistence."^{iv} The value of the means of subsistence. Now Mr. Brown very correctly pointed out last time that the subsistence level is . . . by Marx to have a conventional character and isn't simply that minimum input of matter which would enable a human being to continue to live and do his proper work, but that there is an increment to that which comes about from historical circumstances. But it must be said that Marx makes nothing whatever, as well as I can understand it, of that distinction, so that from there on the subsistence wage is treated as if that qualification to it didn't have any particular importance.

Now that settles the question then of the value of labor power, and what we have to do next is a rather small matter: to see how that value is itself expressed in a form of the wage; and in order to understand that simple transition from the value of the labor power to the wage one needs simply to remind himself of Marx's doctrines with respect to money. The labor time necessary to produce a given quantity of gold, i.e., money, is translated into the labor time necessary to produce the subsistence of the worker, so that

ⁱⁱⁱ IP, 170-71; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 339.

^{iv} IP, 172; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 340-41.

if the necessities for the laborer which it takes six hours to produce constitute his real wage, then his money wage will be the same amount of gold that could be produced in that same period of time. So the six hours' production of gold would constitute the wage or the price of labor power spread over twelve hours; and you can easily see right away how the differential would arise, because if the output of twelve hours is sold for let's say four days' output of gold, whereas the wage constitutes two days' production of gold, the profit would be equal to the value of that difference, which is two days' production value of gold. That would be how you would find it in money. So as far as this goes, Marx has no particular difficulty. You'll notice that he does pay attention to the difference between the wage and the value, and I might say more largely that he pays attention throughout between values of things and their prices, but in a certain footnote to which we will come later on, he says he reserves the resolution of that difficulty to volume 3, to book 3 of *Das Kapital*—and then I told you that there is an enormous difficulty as to whether he actually resolved it. I will add parenthetically that the most recent judgment on that question culminates in the following proposition: the transformation of the values into prices depends—or let me put it more exactly: if Marx's whole structure with respect to the transformation of values into prices is valid, it is made valid by a certain assumption with respect to the organic composition of capital in the gold mining industry. It's this on which the whole thing theoretically turns. The organic composition of capital means the distribution of the investment of the entrepreneur between constant capital and variable capital, and we will come to that distinction later on; but this is not simply a colossal point, this organic composition of capital.

Now one could say there is something odd about a vast theoretical construction which either stands or falls on the basis of some proposition with respect to the organic composition of capital in the gold mining industry. Now this was the epoch of a Marx . . . ⁴and incidentally, a very well-trained economist who made the best effort that he could to evaluate the controversy and decided without prejudice against Marx, let me put it that way, so this was not regarded as an attempt to trivialize Marx's conclusions, but on the contrary to show how they might be perfectly sensible. But I leave you that thought simply to ruminate on. It has something to do with the argument concerning the absolutization of economics and how much ultimately then must be made to depend upon some technicalities, and if those technicalities are themselves questionable, then the consequences are enormously out of proportion to the interior interests of those technicalities themselves.

Now, that by way of a preparation for the more interesting matters which arise in part 3, on the production of absolute surplus value. Part 2 is very important, but it's preparatory. The foundation is surely there; now we have to see in what way Marx exploits that preparation. And Mr. Nelson, if he will be so good as to read his paper.^v

Thank you very much Mr. Nelson. Very good, but I would suggest this, that I take up a very few points that you made which struck me, and then I believe Dr. Strauss has a number of things that come up partly here. ⁵So maybe this would be a good point at which we could—but first, with respect with those very few things: your remarks, Mr.

^v Mr. Nelson read his paper. The reading was not recorded.

Nelson, with respect to the unity of the productive process at the beginning were not quite clear to me.

Mr. Nelson: No, they are not clear to me either.

JC: Well, I can—

Mr. Nelson: I just feel something that's—

JC: Well, there is a difficulty there, and now when you ask why the uneducated are so, Marx has an explanation which is different from yours, but—and Marx's explanation resembles in many ways what is generally thought to be true by hoards of non-Marxists. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* he has a short piece on money, and he there says: "The overturning and confounding of all human and natural qualities, the fraternisation of impossibilities—the *divine* power of money—lies in its *character* as men's estranged, alienating and self-disposing *species-nature*. Money is the alienated *ability of mankind*." "The alienated ability of mankind." Now what does he mean?

"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*."

"If I long for a particular dish or want to take the mail-coach because I am not strong enough to go on foot, money fetches me the dish and the mail-coach: that is, it converts my wishes from something in the realm of imagination, translates them from their meditated, imagined or willed existence into their *sensuous, actual* existence—from imagination to life, from imagined being into real being. In effecting this mediation, money is the *truly creative power*."^{vi}

And then he goes on to speak further by saying, in effect, that the answer to your question would be—

Mr. Nelson: . . .

JC: Yeah, that's the whole thing; and he says that those who have the vocation of being a scholar but who don't have any money can't be scholars, and those who have no particular vocation—that's the word which was used in the translation, I suppose it could mean something like a calling or an inclination or something—⁶they can at least look like scholars or go through the motions, you know; and so he would say: Yes, what we have to do is get rid of that hindrance through the want of money, and have universal opportunity for education up to the highest level provided socially—by the state, that goes without saying—under the best conditions. But I think he would deny the overtone

^{vi} Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 104. Italics in original.

in your argument about primary inequality, although the truth of the matter is, in Marx's various statements (some of them contained in this book) the concessions he makes to inequality are a bit surprising, and the point of his objection to communism and the need that he sees for it to be replaced by socialism is the—

Student or LS: . . .

JC: Pardon? No, communism is the—

LS: Well, he takes communism—

JC: That's the—yeah, the trouble is [that] communism is crude equalitarianism, as he says; and only when one rises above that into that final realm of freedom, but that's—

LS: . . . of pre-Marxist usage . . .

JC: Which means simply suits the bourgeois, I suppose or—

LS: No, which was simply the proletariat, which would mean . . .

JC: Yeah.

LS: . . . equally gifted, not equally ungifted . . . communism would reduce the higher to the lower. Marx wants to elevate the lower to the higher . . .

JC: Yes, he speaks of a difference between the alpha and beta and so on, then when he speaks about the final condition however, this is on page 141, if anyone is interested. It's a very remarkable statement that he has:

“Assume *man* to be *man* and his relationship to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, and so on. If you want to enjoy art, you must be an artistically-cultivated person; if you want to exercise influence over other people, you must be a person with a stimulating and encouraging effect on other people. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a *specific expression*, corresponding to the object of your will, of your *real individual* life. If you love without evoking love in return—that is, if your loving as loving does not produce reciprocal love; if through a *living expression* of yourself as a loving person you do not make yourself a *loved person*, then your love is impotent—a misfortune.”^{vii}

Which seems to imply that even on this ultimate condition, there are some irreducible differences which might even look like inequalities when properly evaluated; but I don't want to go into that because it is a very long thing and I suspect Dr. Strauss has a few things to say on that very question. Now as to your remark, Mr. Nelson, about the imputation of value on account of the variable capital, I think it might be that I misunderstood you and that I didn't catch the drift of it, but actually the variable capital

^{vii} *Marx-Engels Reader*, 105. Italics in original.

isn't so much responsible for imputation (as distinguished from custom capital), but it's responsible for the addition for which you brought out very clearly in other passages.

Mr. Nelson: . . . imputation when you're through in the accounting procedures . . .

JC: The whole increase; yeah, that's correct. And then finally your remark to the effect that the Factory Acts were maybe the result of the reactions of the workers: I really wonder about that, and I think that one gets the impression even from Marx's own treatment that this was a kind of gratuity handed down not through the agitation of the laboring men but because there were some people in positions of influence—clergymen, and factory inspectors, and others—who saw that these conditions were really abominable and that something must be done because it was inhuman to go on like that. Because in the early time that they were talking about, there was no political—they didn't vote, among other things.^{viii}

Student: Chartists.

JC: That was later. I mean before the whole working class got the suffrage, I think this movement for the reform was incipient, some people still saw that this was—

Student: . . .

JC: Oh sure, there were . . . and long before that too. There were objections against what was called technological unemployment, and the peasantry revolts and so on could be classed in the same thing, but as for the Acts of Parliament with respect to these abuses, I think that there was probably as much of the, let's say conscience, speaking up, the ruling classes. That's how the agitation worked. But Dr. Strauss, I think you have a—

Student: . . . did Marx on the part of the landed aristocracy to embarrass the new rising industrialists?

JC: Anywhere else—

Student: This would be available.

JC: Anywhere else than where, besides in this—I don't know where else.

LS: I don't know, but it really was here.

JC: Yeah, well that has something to do again with some things present in Ricardo and in Adam Smith, who, when these two men laid out the scheme of distribution, they saw that there was a tension between the well-being and the secular development of the distributive shares respectively of the landed gentry and for the rent payers and the manufacturing class. Very simple argument: as the pressure of population increases, rent will increase because of the taking into production of increasingly bad land—unfertilized

^{viii} See *Capital*, chapter 10, "The Working-Day."

land; and therefore increase of differential rent, which leads to an increase in the money wage in order to subsist labor and therefore a decrease in the share left for profit, with eventually in Ricardo the rate of profit falling to approximately zero. And of course the contention over the Corn Laws^{ix} was as much a dispute between the two property-owning classes as was any other single thing. So that was long before Marx; that was well understood.

LS: Yes. Well, there is one point which I would like to take up which I regard as very important, but I believe I do it at a later stage, and that has to do with Marx's interpretation of capital—of the capitalists in contradistinction to labor. ⁷I think Marx is compelled by his principle, and also by the whole situation, to conceive of capital itself as labor, but he calls it dead labor, congealed labor, versus living labor. And that has something to do with a much broader issue which arose much earlier in political theory than in economic theory, as far as I know, namely, the question [of] the proper relation of the past and the present. For example, in the traditional notion of liberty, of freedom, it was meant freedom under law. That was clear. But what about the law itself? The law could be the law of the past, and in the traditional notion of freedom, say, in the Middle Ages, it was taken for granted that the law is very old but this very old law protects present freedom. And now in connection with the modern doctrine of sovereignty, the modern doctrine of sovereignty can be expressed as follows: the sovereign is the present sovereign because otherwise he wouldn't be sovereign. That seems to be trivial, but it is of crucial importance. It means, then, also this: you are not free if you are subject to a law to the making of which you have not contributed. In other words, the law must be the present law. The present law. Now as long as the old law guarantees your freedom, the past—as they say now today, the tradition—is stronger than the spontaneity of the present generation. And Marx's doctrine is a strict parallel to that in terms of the economic problem. It is living labor which produces value, not congealed labor. We have to go into that, I believe, on another occasion.

But the point which is immediately connected with chapter 3 is this. Now you said, Mr. Nelson, you said at the end of your paper—you sketched the difference between Marx and Aristotle. Could you restate it? I have forgotten the precise formulation.

Student: It has to do with the proper relation, the proper economic relation between man and nature outside him. And the Aristotelian formulation—I'm following book 1 of the *Politics*—the proper economic relation is that between man and the use that he makes of the—

LS: I remember now what—well, may I try to restate it? I spoke of it also. The place which labor or production takes in Marx is taken in Aristotle by need, by the needs. Yes? That's the fundamental difference, and that has to do with a wholly different understanding of man; and now that has very much to do with the question of teleology to which we have referred more than once. I would like to say we have here a few very

^{ix} The Importation Act of 1815 imposed tariffs “on types of grain that shielded British agriculture, a sector dominated by powerful landowners, from foreign competition and forced consumers to pay higher prices.” The tariffs were repealed in 1846. *Mises Daily*, June 20, 2007.

interesting passages on that subject. As regards the term “social physics,” I saw now somewhere—and that may by no means be the first occurrence, but that is much older than the coming of Marx: that is in Quetelet,^x a Frenchman of the eighteenth century, and⁸ he called what is now called vital statistics social physics. That I mention only in passing.

Now here, the passage which I have in mind is on page 198:

“The elementary factors of the labour-process are a) the personal activity of man, i.e., work itself, b) the subject of that work, and 3, its instruments.”^{xi}

There is not a word said about the end. I mean, the labor process takes the place of what in Aristotle would be productive art, i.e., what Aristotle calls art. And the art of, say, the shoemaker can of course not be defined with reference to the end. On the same page, at the top: “setting in motion arms and legs, heads and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature’s productions in a form adapted to his own wants.”^{xii} The form is absolutely secondary compared to the appropriation. Labor is primarily appropriation. So even the form, what Aristotle calls the formal cause, is absolutely subordinate. The product is outside of the process. On page 201: The product, i.e., that at which we aim, the end, is outside of the process; and since we have to consider the process the end is irrelevant. On page 203: There are no ends in themselves. Whether something is an end or not is determined by the process. So the labor process is the overriding consideration.^{xiii} Page 205, top: labor process “is the necessary condition for effecting exchange of matter between man and Nature.”^{xiv} I believe it’s that passage you had primarily in mind in your exposition. The human action is the condition; the human action, which as such is of course teleological, is only the condition for such an exchange between matter and man which could then be understood as a mechanical process.

There is something even clearer on page 199 in the note; note one, the quotation from Hegel. I haven’t found the exact passage; I don’t have this edition of *The Logic* and couldn’t find the page, but I think the only passage in *The Logic* which I know where he speaks of the ruse—of reason’s cunning—is one in paragraph 209 of Hegel’s *Logic*—no, in the *Encyklopädie*, in the *Encyklopädie*, paragraph 209.^{xv} However this may be, what Hegel means and what appears, I think, also partly from Marx’s quotation: there is a

^x Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1874), Belgian astronomer, essayist, and statistician, author of *On Man and the Development of his Faculties, or an Essay on Social Physics* (1835). Quetelet’s training as an astronomer contributed to his interest in the predictability of statistics concerning social phenomena, such as crime. Such statistics demonstrated a remarkable constancy, leading Quetelet to observe that in spite of (allegedly free) individual acts, there appeared to be social laws that governed individuals *en masse*, i.e., society.

^{xi} Chap. 7, IP, 178; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 345.

^{xii} Chap. 7, IP, 177; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 344.

^{xiii} IP, 182; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 346. These points are summarized by Strauss.

^{xiv} IP, 183-84; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 349.

^{xv} *Encyklopädie der philosophischen wissenschaften*; see *The encyclopaedia logic, with the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of philosophical sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1991).

mechanism. There is a mechanism. Reason causes objects to act and react on each other in accordance with their own nature. In this way, without any direct interference in the process—carries out reason's intention. So the process itself is a purely mechanical or maybe chemical affair. But of course, what Marx does not emphasize: the one thing is the mechanism or the chemism or whatever it may be, and the other thing is the use of that mechanism for which you establish that.

Now what then is the reason for this quasi-oblivion of the end? I believe this: the end is embodied in the use-value, in the consumption. But in the infinite process, M-C-M', we abstract from the use-value. The use-value is subordinated to a process in which the use-value and therefore the end does not occur except as a purely extraneous end of profit which the capitalist of course has.

Now there is one more passage on page 218 which I have. Paragraph two:

“If we proceed further, and compare the process of producing value with the labour-process, pure and simple, we find that the latter consists of the useful labor, the work, that produces use-values. Here we contemplate the labor as producing a particular article; we view it under its qualitative aspect alone, with regard to its end and aim. [Shoemaker, shoe. Even the egg, properly understood as having to be fetched away from the hen—LS] But viewed as a value-creating process, the same labour-process presents itself under its quantitative aspect alone. [And here Marx is simply silent about the end or aim—LS] Here is a question merely of the time occupied by the labourer in doing the work; of the period during which the labour-power is usefully expended.”^{xvi}

Of course the end is still there, but the end becomes almost invisible in the labor process understood as a process.

Now that of course is in perfect agreement to the thesis of his earlier *Critique of Political Economy* according to which production, not consumption, is the overarching phenomenon. But it is important also to realize that this nonteleology reappears on the highest level. The highest is—you may recall this from Marx's discussion of the moral problem—you have ethics of duty and you have an ethics of pleasure. Both are one-sided, he says, and even hypocritical. The true unity is satisfying activity, which as satisfying has something in common with hedonism as activity has something in common with duty, but it does no longer appear as a duty because it is satisfying.

Now this satisfying activity is also called by Marx *Lebensäusserung*, expression of life. Expression of life, ya, but an expression of something has of course a nonteleological character. You do not aim at something. That follows from the fact that you live, that this life expresses itself. And therefore I think Aristotle would deny this only on the following ground. He would say *Lebensäusserung*, say, expression of life: that means of course the right kind of expression of life. Some form of expression is also exploitation, to take a Marxian example. But this one, through the virtuous life, is of course an end in itself and

^{xvi} IP, 195; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 359.

therefore it does not have an end outside of itself. But for us who are not always virtuous, the virtuous life appears of course ordinarily as an end, and must appear so. But still for Marx, as we know, the virtuous life, or the spontaneous expression of life, or the full development of the faculties, as he also calls it, is a foregone conclusion. It follows without effort given a certain state of society. Incidentally, development of human faculties is itself of course also a teleological expression. Yes? You have them first undeveloped . . . That was all I had to say on this point because the other things can be dealt with, will be dealt with by Mr. Cropsey.

There is also a remark on the materialistic philosophy of history which is interesting, I thought, on page 200 in the note.

“The least important commodities of all for the technological comparison of different epochs of production are articles of luxury, in the strict meaning of the term. However little our written histories up to this time notice the development of material production, which is the basis of all social life, and therefore of all real history, yet prehistoric times have been classified in accordance with the results, not of so called historical, but of materialistic investigations. These periods have been divided, to correspond with the materials from which their implements and weapons are made, viz., into the stone, the bronze, and the iron ages.”^{xvii}

That, I think—this usage throws some light on the meaning of the term materialistic theory of history. Material production. And this has even to do in the first place with the production of material, which is not so clear throughout. And that only confirms what I said before. I said on an earlier occasion that the primary supposition of Marx’s whole analysis of whatever it may be is this dogmatic assertion that man is primarily a material-producing being, to use his language, and secondarily a thought-producing thing. And that is, of course, never—has never been proven. And in some way or other that is bound to affect, although I cannot show this in detail at all, his very analysis of the economic phenomena. ⁹Whether you look at man, say, from the Aristotelian or from the Marxist point of view will naturally show in your analysis of economic phenomena as well. That is trivial. That’s all I have to say.

JC: That passage on page 218 that Dr. Strauss referred to is a difficult one, where Marx contrasts the process of producing value with the labor process, pure and simple. The process of producing value, that’s connected with the absorption of homogenous human labor and leads under capitalism to the exchange value. Now the other alternative is the viewing of the labor process under its qualitative aspect alone, i.e., with regard to its end and aim. That has to do with the production of the use-values. Now from a certain point of view, I think what this means is Marx criticizes the capitalist mode of production and economy generally because it elevates the quantitative, the one which leads to value and therefore to exchange value, and it doesn’t do what the process of production ought to do simply, i.e., to aim at use values, those things which are produced with an eye to the end and aim and which would, if properly attended to—that is to say, if the social situation were such as to make this possible—would have the following consequence. People

^{xvii} IP, 180, n. 1.

would simply work. They wouldn't work for the sake of making this which they can turn into a larger sum of money; that's part of that fetishism of commodities. It looks as if the commodities are really good only for the sake of doing that with them, and Marx says that's like genuflecting in front of the golden calf or something like that—the Israelites in the wilderness, or anything else. It's a superstition. That's not what the goods really are for, but that's only sort of a historical encrustation. Now apparently, then, looked at from the broadest point of view, the productive process ought to have more that character of consulting the end and aim, I think, and less this other which is the capitalistic perversion of the—yes. And so that, I think, is an extension of the remark that—I mean, looking at this remark that Dr. Strauss made from this somewhat more technical point of view, but it comes to the same thing.

LS: Yes, but on the highest levels, surely you produce things for the sake of human life. That's clear. But how is the human life itself understood? And there it would appear that human life itself is understood as a kind of aimless production. You have enabled me to state it more clearly than I said it before. *Lebensäusserung*, expression of life for its own sake. And that of course makes sense, but it is very inadequate once we consider the absolute ambiguity of that, and we have to find out what kind of expression it is.¹⁰ What kind of human doings are genuine expressions of human life? Then you have immediately an end again, and that Marx tries to avoid.

JC: Yes. No, this is only a provisional remark and doesn't—

LS: Absolutely necessary to make, but I think that the difficulty reappears.

JC: Well—yes, surely one would have to consider what this economic thing is all about, so to speak; that is to say, what kind of a social arrangement it's supposed to support, even under the best conditions—which this doesn't do: the subtitle of this book is “A Critique of Capitalist Production,” as you know, and it is really more negative than affirmative. But still a great deal is implicit about the affirmative that Marx would have in mind.

Well, now I have to do one of these rather uninteresting jobs from your point of view, I'm afraid, and simply try to clarify things that he said, because the argument is at some points hard to follow for merely technical reasons. I think I would not be doing my simple duty if I slighted those difficulties because they are not inspiring, terribly interesting—they happen not to be from most points of view. But they have to be grasped; otherwise what happens afterwards doesn't hang together.

Now part 3 is called “The Production of Absolute Surplus-Value.” This is to be understood in contradistinction to the title of part 4, which is “The Production of Relative Surplus-Value”; and then part 5, which is the production of both: absolute and relative surplus values. So there is a development which is very clearly indicated in the titles of the divisions of the book, and then in Marx's case as much as in any other book that I know of, one is repaid by looking at the outline of the work as it is reflected in the titles

of the chapters and subchapters. He was very, very orderly in how he proceeded and he gives great help in the table of contents alone, for example.

Now [the] first chapter in this part, chapter 7, is called “The Labor-Process and the Process of Producing Surplus-Value,” and to begin with a section on the labor process simply, the labor process or the production of use values, so that the distinction that’s made is the labor process as production of use value, and then the labor process as it leads up to the production of surplus value. Now at the outset there are some nontechnical observations of Marx’s which are interesting, in which he speaks of man’s self-development through labor: the subduing of nature is also the subduing or self-control of man. And if this remark is sufficiently well understood, one gets some notion of what Marx had in mind by speaking of the importance of the process of production for the formation of human life. Whether he is right or wrong is a separate question, but what he meant at any rate is of some importance, and this is what he meant. He says [that] in the course of the process of production, we not only impose our will on the externality but we have to construct ourselves in such a way that we conform to the notion we have of the end of the productive activity. To begin with, we have to be such men as can fit into that process of production. Now that would be very different, for instance, under the conditions of factory industry from what it would be under the conditions, let’s say, of pastoral-nomadism. Different kinds of men [are] brought about under the different circumstances, and I think everybody has agreed that there is something to this. Aristotle spoke of it, different kinds and characters of men under the different conditions and so on and so forth, and everybody has seen this more or less, I think. In Xenophon there are observations like this, and elsewhere. Now this is dealt with generally in the early parts, pages 197 to 198. I won’t read them, but I recommend the passage to you that goes from the bottom of the one page to the top of the next.

Now that leads up to his remark that Dr. Strauss called attention to a few weeks ago contrasting the worst architect and the best of bees, that the architect knows at the beginning what he’s going to do and the bee has no conception but works by instinct. And it’s interesting to see how Marx conceives the coming about of that state of things. This is the top of page 198. Speaking of the process of production he says:

“We are not now dealing with those primitive instinctive forms of labor that remind us of the mere animal. An immeasurable interval of time separates the state of things in which a man brings his labour-power to market for sale as a commodity, from that state in which human labour was still in its first instinctive stage. We presuppose labor in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.”^{xviii}

But you see, even that isn’t supposed to be at all times and under all conditions true of man; apparently that had to come to be same as everything else. That has its historical

^{xviii} Chap. 7, IP, 178; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 344.

dimension. He says we are separated from that by an immeasurable interval of time. He doesn't try to say how long it was ago that man was in that state in which human labor was still in its first instinctive stage, but even this, apparently—that reminds me, at any rate,¹¹ of Rousseau, where in his writings^{xix} one gets the impression that even the very passions themselves somehow have to be brought into being, and that man didn't have the same structure of soul, didn't have a soul in the same sense that he has now in the very early time, and even that is historical. He didn't know resentment, for example, to take a very simple example, and that is not to say anything about avariciousness and that kind of thing, and bad self-love; a good kind of self-love he might have known, very low level, very mild kind of thing which, when connected with a prior lack of memory, didn't even prepare the ground for a decent human resentment of one person by another. So it all had to come into being, and apparently Marx has something of the same kind of thing. Mr. Brown, please.

Mr. Brown: How does this fit in with what Dr. Strauss suggests on the simultaneity of thing-production and myth-production in *The German Ideology* as indicating that Marx conceived of some kind of human essence as separate from animal essence?

JC: Well, I think I know the answer, but your question is essentially directed to Dr. Strauss, so I—

LS: I will answer him gladly. I would put it this way: you have the answer here. He says “that stamps it as exclusively human.” In other words, there was a stage in which all information—I mean, let me make a distinction, a rough distinction, between uninteresting things and interesting things. We are not concerned with the digestive system, ya, the digestive system as such. So for example, take instinctive self-preservation. Every dog, every cat has it as well as man, and it means appropriation in all cases, of bones or whatever it may be. Good. Well, bones are perhaps a very bad example for self-preservation, I admit that. Now from a certain moment on, projecting, conscious projecting takes place. In that moment, production becomes exclusively human. And in applying it to your question now, which includes your question from some time ago: in that moment in which man is capable to project his imagination—say a cave, even, which he wants to build—in that moment there is no reason why he should not be equally able to figure out something atrocious and primitive and what have you—but still doing something which no other animal can do—about the whole, about where people go after their death. And that the latter should be a replica of the former¹²—say, if he is a nomad he will have this notion of what death means, and if he is a farmer he will have that notion of what death means—is of course a mere assertion. That would be my answer to your question. There may be a stage when man was subhuman. Marx says so here, and Rousseau started that; but of course in Marx's time Darwin has already made this a very popular view, at least among the more up-to-date men among whom Marx certainly found himself.^{xx} So that men were of course subhuman, but from a certain moment on they became human in the sense of doing things which are *exclusively* human; and¹³ there

^{xix} Especially the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755).

^{xx} Cf. session 5, p. 103 above, where Strauss distinguishes Marx's view from Marxism “in the Darwinistic transformation.”

is no reason why his production from that moment on was not coeval with his imagination about the whole. And that issue is never met by Marx. Never met. ¹⁴The proofs which are given for the primacy of—and the authoritative character of the substructure are not proofs. ¹⁵They are not really proofs, and this difficulty is of course concealed by the Marxist trivialization, by saying: Of course, there is also an effect of the superstructure on the infrastructure. But we are not concerned with this plain admission; we are concerned with what right do you call that the infrastructure and the other the superstructure. You know, that is the point.^{xxi}

JC:—with Mr. Brown’s question answered, now it does raise a terrific question as to how Marx could possibly continue to live with these various constructions of man’s—the historical in man and what isn’t historical, and what guides the historical and so on. It’s a very hard thing to understand, and I believe much of it depends on assertions, on their assertions. The necessity of the progress of the argument is not self-evident, let me put it that way, the real necessity. In the case of Hegel there was a terrific effort to make the argument necessary under the light of the necessity of that to which the argument addressed itself, so the necessity was not only present in the exterior but also in the reasoning. But I think Marx simply was able to rise to that height and the necessity is not so visible, and I believe that’s maybe part of what Dr. Strauss means by saying it’s nearly esoteric; and at least I don’t see the proof that either most . . . The labor theory of value, I pointed out to you earlier, in a way rests on a very brief assertion. This whole structure we’re talking about, that could be thought of like a pyramid standing on a point and a little push would be enough to make it wobble, to say the least. But never mind.

Now Marx goes on to speak of the process of labor as being essentially man plus nature. This has a very important bearing which doesn’t emerge right away—I mean literally in any sense right away. Later on, you look back and you see how carefully he prepared his argument. The idea that there is nothing in the productive process except man and nature could be said to exclude, if you think about, it the artifacts. The artifacts, in other words, don’t have a separate or an independent status, and that’s what he means to work up to. The artifacts are, in other words, nothing more than another form of labor. There is not, ¹⁶as the conventional economists say, land, labor, and capital. They describe the factors of production in these terms and assign to them all equal status in the process of production. Marx is preparing at this point for the subtraction of C, of constant capital, from the equation for the generation of the value of the commodities. It begins this far back; at least you can find in fact the precise beginning when he says that the real factors of production are man and nature and not capital at all, with the understanding that capital simply is an expression of human labor. Now it’s in this connection that he makes the remark on the top of page 205 about the exchange of matter between man and nature that Dr. Strauss already referred to. It begins on 204.

“The labour-process, resolved as above into its simple elementary factors, is human action with a view to the production of use-values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements; it is the necessary condition for effecting exchange of matter between man and Nature; it is the everlasting Nature-imposed

^{xxi} The tape was changed at this point.

condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather, is common to every such phase.”^{xxii}

And then a little bit later on: “man and his labour on one side, Nature and its materials on the other, sufficed.”^{xxiii} And that’s what he means would be generally speaking true of all social conditions, meaning by that of course to imply that the capitalistic mode of production introduced what could be called as an irrelevancy. It couldn’t be helped; there was no way to avoid it historically. It had to be; but for the same reason it had to be, it had to be superseded or will have to be superseded, and that is the injection of the idea that artifacts have a self-subsistent character and that capital, in other words, is in the real process of production itself contributory and hence deserving of a reward, as ordinary economics would assert it. And he says “no”; and in a way his whole argument in this part and for a lot of the whole book is to show why that isn’t true, to show that the real process of production can only be understood if you suppose all value to emanate from labor; and artifacts (I repeat for the tenth time) are only a kind of expression of human labor, and if you take them to be anything else you’re simply thrown off, that’s all, misled.

Then on pages 201 and 211 there are some remarks about this importance of labor in creating value which I would call your attention to. Just in the middle of page 201 at the last two, at the last sentence but one in the first complete paragraph on the page. The paragraph begins, “In the labor process therefore” and the sentence that I will call your attention to is: “That which in the labourer appeared as movement, now appears in the product as a fixed quality without motion.”^{xxiv} It’s one of a number of passages, a more or less comprehensive list of which I’ll supply on request, in which the point is made of labor being reducible to matter and motion with a transfer of the motion to the object, and that is the underlying character of the process of production.

The other passage is on page 211, the beginning of the first complete paragraph on the page. “While the labourer is at work, his labour constantly undergoes a transformation: from being motion, it becomes an object without motion; from being the labourer working, it becomes the thing produced.”^{xxv} So that motion and the laborer working, as you can see, are two parallel terms in the analogy, and I think this can be drawn out at more length than it would pay us to try to do. So we could say this general teaching, therefore: labor is the concretization or immobilization of motion in a product.

Now in the next section of this chapter, Marx goes on to speak about the production of surplus value. What is it that actually happens in the course of the productive process and for the purpose of explaining the generation of surplus value, i.e., profit, he speaks on page 207 of the fundamental duality of the process of production under conditions of capitalism, at *least* under conditions of capitalism. Beginning of the first paragraph:

^{xxii} Chap. 7, “The Labour-Process.” IP, 183-84; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 349.

^{xxiii} IP, 184; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 349.

^{xxiv} IP, 180; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 347.

^{xxv} IP, 189; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 354.

“Our capitalist has two objects in view: in the first place, he wants to produce a use-value that has a value in exchange, that is to say, an article destined to be sold, a commodity; and secondly, he desires to produce a commodity whose value shall be greater than the sum of the values of the commodities used in its production, that is, of the means of production and the labour-power that he purchased with his good money in the open market.”^{xxvi}

Now at the bottom of the next paragraph: “Just as commodities are, at the same time, use-values and values, so the process of producing them must be a labour-process, and at the same time, a process of creating value.”^{xxvii} I am at what you might regard as painful length in pointing these things out, because the language that Marx uses occasionally sounds like double-talk, like a mere repetition of the same words in another order, and it becomes confusing. But he is perfectly clear all the time, as far as I am able to understand it, and there is no mixing up. You have to keep straight the difference between a use value and value, and value and its relation to exchange value all the time; and you must equally keep in mind the difference between labor power and labor, and the value of labor power as already defined as distinguished from the value of the object of labor: that which labor turns out in the course of a working day. It’s those little details; I grant they are very petty and so on, but if they are not kept clear there is no way to understand how he develops his argument.

Now, so here he begins the discussion of the labor process as being essentially dual in its character, and that is carried through this entire part with a large number of accretions, but there is a line that runs right through, down the middle of his whole discussion and everything falls on one side or the other—all the way down, beginning with this distinction between the production of use values and the production of values. The duality is very carefully preserved and it culminates in the distinction between constant and variable capital. What begins here ends there, a hundred or so pages later on. It’s very carefully developed by Marx. Then he has this example on page 208 which I won’t read to you, but I recommend to you the example of the spinning of the yarn and the raw material, and the transfer of some value and the production of other,^{xxviii} but we’ll go into that in detail in the longer illustration that will soon come up.

Now, so the distinction begins with the diremption of the labor process between the production of use value and the production of value. The production of use value is connected with one characteristic of the working, the labor process; the production of value is connected with another characteristic of the labor process. The labor process has these two qualities or two characteristics. One, the working of this man, this given man, you’re looking at some worker that has to be thought of as being a) the work of a spinner or the work of shoemaker, or the work of the carpenter. He’s this kind of worker, and it’s different from all other kinds. That’s number one. But in the second place you have to look at him and realize what he’s doing is putting out energy, motion, and transforming matter, and from that point of view it doesn’t make any difference whether he is a shoemaker or a spinner or a hatmaker. That’s the aspect that any man’s work has of being like every other man’s work. That’s the

^{xxvi} IP, 186; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 351.

^{xxvii} IP, 186; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 351.

^{xxviii} IP, 186 ff.; *Marx-Engels Reader*, 351 ff.

homogeneous or the undifferentiated labor. That's simple enough; I believe that's clear. Every man's work has that character, this duality; it's specific and it's also undifferentiated.

Now from this a lot follows, and one has to keep one's eye on the ball. Now this specific labor, this character of the spinner as spinner, that Marx relates to the quality of the working of this man. The undifferentiated labor, homogeneous human labor, that is relatable to the quantity of the work—not the quality of the work, but the quantity of the time spent and of the amount of motion which is possible to enclose in that time. Now this labor considered as qualitative, as qualitatively different, that is done for the sake of the end and aim. That is oriented towards the production of utilities, use values. The labor regarded as homogeneous or undifferentiated and viewable as being measured by quantity and time and motion and so on, that is what is for the sake of profit, not for the sake of utility. That is what leads to the generation of commodities as commodities.

Now at this point Marx breaks the argument and starts a new chapter called “Constant Capital and Variable Capital,” and he does that for a certain reason which will soon emerge. When we consider the argument now as if it were unaffected by the chapter heading, we could put it this way: this duality of the labor process starting with use-value side and a value or exchange-value side, that leads down to this question with respect to the solution of the primary problem. I repeat: that establishment of the duality leads down to the following speculation with respect to the primary problem, the primary problem being: Where does the delta-M originate in the sequence $M-C-M'$, with M' equalling $M + \text{delta-M}$ —remember that's our object. Where does the delta-M come from? And that chain of reasoning down to the present, beginning with the duality of the labor process, leads to this consideration on the part of Marx. In one of its aspects, the labor process leads to a mere transfer of value from things already in existence, but in another aspect of its working the labor process leads to the coming to be of an increment of value. So you see right away that's going to have something to do with the solution of this problem.

I repeat, the labor process has this dual character: in one of its aspects it simply transfers or preserves value, carries it over from previous time. We'll be more specific later on. But in another one of its aspects it causes the coming-to-be of increments of value. Now we have to make this development. It is in its character of specific labor as oriented towards use value that it does nothing but carry forward the incorporations of value already present. But it's in its character as homogeneous or undifferentiated labor that labor has the value-adding potentiality. The duality asserted by Marx at the beginning now begins to bear visible fruit. You see?

Now in what way does he carry this distinction forward another stage? He says if we look at this C, this—now I have to explain something to you which is purely petty. Money is capital, that's Marx's assertion. It's represented by the letter M down to this point, but from this point on, capital has an initial in its own right, and that unhappily is the same one that used to stand for the commodity in the repetitive sequence. So from now on, when we say C, big C, we mean capital. It's no longer commodity; we already dropped that out. He does the same thing with respect to necessary labor. Up to a certain point, necessary labor means how much labor is socially necessary to produce a given commodity under the present circumstances of production. From a certain point on, necessary labor

means that amount of labor which must be given over to the production of the working man's necessities. Marx says he's doing this and he says that it's childish to object to it—and it would be, but you have to remember that he did it.

Now, so at this point we're now going to use the letter C as he does henceforth to mean capital, which is the same thing as the M in the previous formulation. He is now about to tell us that this capital can now be understood as having two components. That capital consists [JC writes on the blackboard], as Mr. Nelson adequately said and I won't repeat it, of a constant portion and a variable portion. So the total of capital equals the $C + V$. Now we could reformulate the original problem as follows: How does C become transformed into C' , that is to say what is the character of the increment in value? Marx says the capital consists of an expenditure by the the capitalist on some means of production, and then it also consists of another part with which that man pays the wages of labor. ¹⁷[These are] the only two possibilities; that's all he can do. Now if we bear in mind the things that have already been said about where the value originates, what is the source of value, i.e., in labor, it turns out its perfectly clear the increment must have something to do with the V, the variable capital part, because we've already shown how surplus value can come into being. We've already shown that there is a difference between the value of the labor power and the value of the output of the working man during a whole day. Do you remember? If the working man can work for twelve hours on the basis—or supported by an intake of material which it takes only six hours to produce and he has to be paid for twelve hours, only the value of six hours worth of output, that's a problem that . . . solve. The man buys his commodity, labor power; he gets the whole output. Very well.

So now we have to pay attention to things we've already learned. V is the amount of money that a capitalist spends on labor power. That's by definition; that's not analysis, that's an assertion. All right? So now it must be coming back. The back portion that the excess of C' over C arises—that is Marx's allegation. I mean, I foreshorten this considerably; his account is much more full of detail and so on and so forth, but this is the summary. Now the duality of the labor process finds an expression in the distinction that Marx makes between the two kinds of capital: constant, called so because it leads to no increment in value; and variable, for the reason that it does lead to an increment in value. All right? Then we could say that solves the question: Why is C' greater than C? C' is equal to C plus the increment which is from now on what we'll call S for surplus value, or, in its expanded form, $C' = C + V$ (which we had to begin with) plus S. You'll find that expression strewn literally throughout the pages of the portion of *Das Kapital*.

All right, so now is this much clear so far? It's just factual, it's just a statement of what Marx said. All right? That's where the surplus value comes from: from the expenditure of some part from the transformation of this money into capital, meaning by that the purchase of labor power and its application to the means of production, the means of production being totally inert and they don't contribute a thing except the opportunity for the labor power to be employed. By the employment of the labor power on the inert mass, the living augmentation is generated. Mr. McLean?

Mr. McLean: I don't quite see your identification of use value and constant capital. Can the value be variable? Can you try to make that—

JC: Well, that identification was more or less along the way, but let me put it this way. He says: Why is the spinner able to make the yarn? How can he make the yarn? Well, you have to combine a spinner with a certain kind of machinery with spindles. If you combine the spinner with cobbling machinery, he couldn't make the yarn, so there is something specific about this man's working in combination with that kind of machinery. I'm saying when you buy a man's work, you have to buy the kind of work that that man can generate. What he does in consequence of being that kind of man, i.e., a spinner, is to make use-values. You see? That's all on this side. [JC writes on the blackboard]

Now two other points. When he tries to get the benefit of the assertion that the constant capital really contributes nothing to the output—qualitatively it contributes a great deal, but quantitatively it doesn't contribute anything—when he tries to get the benefit of that, he does it by setting little c equal to zero. And then he says: Let us now consider henceforth not the old value of the product; the whole value of the product is equal to $C + V + S$. The whole value. Then he said: That's not interesting; let's consider hereafter only the increase in the value. Let's talk, in other words, about $V + S$ [JC writes on the blackboard]; and he said the arithmetical reason for doing that is that the C would be the same quantity on both sides, so what you would be doing would be subtracting $C + V$ approximately $+ C + S$ and then $C + V$ and then you'll get it that difference. And he said now, in effect: Why don't we just write that off because it's going to appear on both sides? Somebody might also get the idea: Why don't we also draw a line through the V , which also appears on both sides? But then Marx put a reply to that: You can't do that, because if you do that you can't figure out the rate of exploitation of the working class, which is given by two ratios, one of which I will deal with now. It's called the rate of surplus value; it's a simple comparison of the amount of surplus value with the amount of the variable capital that led to its coming into being. And Marx's examples all tend to run in the neighborhood of a hundred percent somehow or other. I mean, that's a very impressive rate of profit. Naturally, his point is that if you were to take the amount of surplus value and compare it only with—and compare it with the sum of $C + V$, it's perfectly obvious that percentage would go down a great deal. That's what the capitalist, the sycophants of the bourgeoisie, suggest always that we do in their trashy books on economics, that we should take the surplus-value and compare it with the whole investment. But he says: No, that doesn't make any sense, because this doesn't add anything and then we're . . . which is really the point of it. If you apply the surplus value to the whole investment, then you are not giving its due weight to the fact that capital doesn't deserve a return. He never puts it in so many words, but it's perfectly clear that that's what it comes to. There is no reason for rewarding capital, the constant part: it doesn't do anything. It simply passes out of the inert state into the product unchanged, and to pay attention to that would be in the first place to misunderstand the labor process, but in the second place to draw altogether unwarranted conclusions with respect to the justice of distributive order, which obviously he has in mind.

Now this in turn leads to other things which are more interesting. Before we come to the most interesting other things, let me call to your attention footnote 1 at the bottom of page 239. Now we get into the other chapter called "The Rate of Surplus-Value." In chapter 9, footnote 1, he says: "What Lucretius says is self-evident: nothing can be created from nothing; out of nothing, nothing can be created. Creation of value is transformation of labour-power into labor. Labour-power itself is energy transferred to a human organism by means of nourishing

matter.”^{xxix} Which is I think about as close to the reduction of the labor process to a . . . what he takes to be a traditional materialist basis as he tries to do in any passage that I know about, anyhow. I believe he wrote his doctoral dissertation on Democritus and Lucretius?

Student: Epicurus.

JC: Epicurus, right. Yes. But he knew that old literature very, very well, I’m sure, and his own formulations simply reminded him of that, or vice versa. Now in any case, as he goes on to consider the consequences of his analysis to this point, he makes the distinction between necessary labor and surplus labor; and as to that, I won’t dwell on it. Necessary labor is so much of the labor[ing] day, of the working day as must go into the production of the necessities. Surplus labor is the remaining part of the working day, and Marx’s conclusion is that the ratio of the surplus value to the variable capital is equal to ratio of the surplus labor to the necessary labor. Right, so then you have the two alternative ways of putting it.

Now this leads up to something that Marx does a great deal with later on: an equating of the times, the times and the sums, the times involved and the sums of money which are involved which we’ll come to after a while. And now he makes in passing this observation on page 241; it’s about the eighth line down from the top of the page: “The essential difference between the various economic forms of society, between, for instance, a society based on slave-labour, and one based on wage labour, lies only in the mode in which this surplus-labour is in each case is extracted from the actual producer, the labourer.”^{xxx} That is, it simply makes it a bit more concrete for you what he means when he says that the process of production is decisive with respect to the social form. Then if you take this ratio of S over V, or surplus labor over necessary labor, you get the rate of exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie or whatever other oppressive gang it happens to be.

Now on page 244, in the note Marx makes a reference to what has come to be called the transformation problem, which I have referred to here a number of times and I direct your attention to the note so that nobody should possibly think that Marx was trying to fudge on this question. He knew that there was a difficulty and he didn’t try to avoid it at all. And he says here: “The calculations given in the text”—that’s a misprint, obviously—“are intended merely as illustrations. We have in fact assumed that pricess equal values. We shall, however, see, in volume^{xxxi} 3, that even in the case of average prices the assumption cannot be made in this very simple manner.”^{xxxii} So what he meant was [that] he will show how the thing can be worked out properly in volume 3. But as you know, he didn’t live sufficiently long to finish that, and so volume 3 consists of materials put together by Engels for Marx. And then there’s a whole long question not only as to whether Marx could have done it, but as to whether any human being could do it, because there is a question as to whether it is intrinsically possible; and then we come back to the question as I left it with you at the beginning of the hour, Sweezy,^{xxxiii} a competent man, asserts that everything turns on the organic composition of capital in the gold producing industry, and that’s not exciting.

^{xxix} IP, 215.

^{xxx} IP, 217.

^{xxxi} In original: “Book”

^{xxxii} IP, 220.

^{xxxiii} See session 11, n. x, p. 218 above.

Now he gives a very long illustration beginning in section two of this chapter which it would be very good for us to consider. He knows how difficult this is, and therefore he was very careful to spell it all out; and he even gives little exercises to the reader and says: Try this to see whether you know how to do my method. And it's a good thing to do that, if you have the fortitude.

Now I will only give you a very quick intimation of how he means to proceed, and I think everybody who can follow it will gain from it. What he does is to take this simple example of a spinning process, and I would suggest that we look at it this way. Let's suppose that funnel increases in the downward direction. It's like, in effect—I don't know if you know anything about this kind of representation—it's like an inverted diagram but one of the axes—well, there are two axes, but I won't label them as such. Now . . . is cotton, let's say, which occupies part of this hopper-like thing. Suppose this is the cross section of a funnel, and there is a kind of partition in here [JC writes on the blackboard] and there is a spindle on the other side. So those two things that are on top of this funnel and he has values for them. The cotton is worth twenty shillings; there are twenty pounds of cotton; this is raw cotton and the spindle is four shillings, and the working day is twelve hours. So from here to here is twelve, and if he were—that's six hours down to there. Now in addition to this, there is another little extension on this tubular funnel-like arrangement, and that's labor. Now what happens is that this partition has to be regarded as having holes in it or something like that so the two can mix down inside there. But the whole dimension of this tube across here now can be thought of as being equal to the value of the product. What happens? In one—let's say I've got now roughly equal partitions here: each one of these corresponds to one hour. By the end of the first hour, a certain part of that cotton has fallen down in there, and a certain part of that spindle also has so to speak fallen down in there, and a certain amount of labor has come together with them. [JC writes on the blackboard throughout]

Now all you have to do is to know the wage per hour and the number of hours over which this twenty shillings' worth of cotton (and unfortunately of course the spindle will be consumed), and you can figure out what happens. Now on account of the spindle and the cotton together, there's obviously a transfer of two shillings of value, see, because the twenty-four will be spread out over the twelve hours. So in each one of the twelve hours, it will be one-twelfth of the twenty-four shillings total; that's going to be two shillings, on account of the spindle and the cotton in the first hour.

Now what about the labor element? Marx asserts—to take the example: three shillings will be the wages of labor for a day [JC writes on the blackboard]; that's the value of the labor power for one day over one-twelfth of a twelve-hour working day, it's going to be one-twelfth of three shillings per hour, or one fourth of a shilling. Now the English probably have some—

Student: Three pence.

JC: Yes, three pence. But I'm going to call it one-fourth, partly because it's more simple, but partly because subtraction is easier for arithmetic. So there should now be, on account of labor, an addition of one-fourth of a shilling, so that this ought to be equal (but I'm only saying "ought") to a total value of two and one-fourth. Now it turns out that's not the case at all, because when you add up all the twenty pounds of yarn that will be made from the twenty pounds of cotton, assuming no waste, the ginned cotton goes into twenty pounds of the twisted cotton (that's all transformation); but when you find out the price of it, it's thirty

shillings at the end. Now that means that the twenty pounds get transformed into thirty shillings worth of yarn, and over twelve hours that becomes two and a half, not two and a quarter shillings per hour. In other words, two and a half shillings times twelve hours, that would give us the thirty shillings equal to the whole value at the end. Now what's the matter? We don't have any—do we have any other source of value here? So far we've only been able to extract two shillings on account of the materials, and another quarter of a shilling on account of the labor. There wouldn't be any profit in that; and the value wouldn't come out to be thirty; it would be twenty-seven.

Now for this Marx has the following explanation. He says the necessary labor is six hours during the day, down to here. Necessary. What about the labor for the rest of the day? That's all surplus. Now you can look at it either way: you can think of all necessary labor being expended up here and then all the surplus labor down here, that's going to be unpaid for altogether. So from here on, you'll have nothing but two shillings—excuse me; but nevertheless the value is going to be two and a quarter, because every hour of labor has that value equal to one-twelfth of three shillings' worth. So you can look at it either way: you'll have twelve hours of labor performed and these increments of labor are going to be applied all the time. You can even think of them as being paid for in one part of the day and unpaid for in the other part of the day; or this is what I would suggest to you. You make the division down vertically, like this: the hour of labor that the man gets, the capitalist gets, he really pays for as if it were a half an hour. That follows directly from the fact that he gets a whole day's worth of labor but pays for it only as if it were only half a day. That's all he has to pay in money for it.

So the value is increased by another quarter of a shilling on account of surplus labor; and then we could think of each hour of labor rather than the whole day, each hour being divided between necessary, which is paid for, and surplus which isn't paid for; and the both together . . . the increment in the value. That's what the increment in value comes from. Now if you want to know where is the surplus value: the surplus value is all of this, which adds up to three shillings, which is Marx's calculation. That's how it started out, that there's three shillings of profit: that he had to pay twenty-four shillings; he had twenty shillings for the cotton, four shillings for the spindle, and three shillings for labor. That's constant; this is variable; they add up to twenty-seven, and yet the value of the output is thirty. That's surplus value. You see? Is that clear? It's not easy, I mean the first time you have to drag yourself through it, but it's not unintelligible either.

Student: Isn't surplus value the cost of management?

JC: Oh well, the cost of management—he has a long rejoinder to these various traditional explanations for profit. His way of getting rid of it, of that one, is to laugh at it. He says, and then all the . . . laugh at each other when they say this thing about the cost of management, because think about—they're paid as supervisors who really do the managing, and while they're off enjoying themselves. That's absolutely shallow because it abstracts altogether from the very large number of ulcers and other disorders that real working businessmen have in the course of doing the process of production.

That leads to a different question. Marx took care of it in another way. He said some shallow writers on the subject assert that this is all a social question, and you have to get the process of production taken care of somehow, and one way of doing it is by entrusting it to private

individuals, and another way to it through common ownership of the means of production and whatever else. And then they go on to assert that it doesn't make much difference; you have to pay the cost of it one way or the other. And Marx said: No, that's not true, because the manner of organizing the process of production isn't only a question of getting the work done, but it also has an effect on the lives and beings of all the human beings; and therefore it's not just a question of how you like to do it, but it has to be done really so that it contributes to the best for man as man socially and so on and so forth. But no, I would recommend that you look at the earlier part in which he disposes of these questions, at least to your satisfaction.

But before we get onto that, I want to make sure that this is by itself reasonably clear [be]cause it's not easy. Well, let's assume it's reasonably clear. That leaves us with only a small amount to do in this book, and we're very late now, so I'll take up chapter 10 on the working day next time; and then after a few minutes at the beginning of the hour, Mr. Steintrager, would you be so good . . .

¹ Deleted "that's"

² Delete "all"

³ Deleted "when it's"

⁴ Deleted "and a very"

⁵ Deleted "but were there not some things that—yeah, and"

⁶ Deleted "and they can be"

⁷ Deleted "the difficulty"

⁸ Deleted "he called social physics"

⁹ Deleted "you know, I mean"

¹⁰ Deleted "all you have to do"

¹¹ Deleted "that reminds me"

¹² Deleted "you know, that"

¹³ Deleted "and in that moment"

¹⁴ Deleted "what one can—I mean"

¹⁵ Deleted "they are, they have a certain"

¹⁶ Deleted "in other words"

¹⁷ Deleted "that's all he, that's"

Session 13: May 11, 1960
***Capital*, part 4, chapters 13-15**

Joseph Cropsey: [In progress] —complicated order of proceeding because of the fact that there was one chapter left hanging over from the last part, and that chapter, on the rate and surplus value, happens to be of considerable importance for what follows, and so I would like to make sure that the technicality is reasonably well in hand. And now on page 332 in the text Marx gives two simple formulae, and the full understanding of these two very simple expressions which in a way are simply different forms of the same thing is preparatory to much of the development in the subsequent book, and so for that reason we must pay some attention.

Now these are . . . I'll separate them, although he doesn't in this case. Now S stands for the mass of surplus value or what we could say is the aggregate of profit or absolute profit. S over V is either the ratio of the surplus value to the variable capital, or to put it more compactly, the rate of surplus value; and V , capital V , is the amount of the variable capital, once more. So that simply said, you could say if the rate of surplus value [JC writes on the blackboard] were a hundred percent and the amount of the variable capital were a thousand dollars, then obviously the whole amount of the profit, the mass of the profit, would be equal to a thousand dollars, using the rate in its form as an absolute number for the purpose of the arithmetic operation.

Now, however, if one looks at the formula in its original form, it's obviously the barest of tautologies. That's to say [that] S over V times V of course equals S , if you do what children in the olden time were taught to do in the third grade, anyhow, and so then you are left with this simple more or less repetitive statement. Now the fact that it has this arithmetically trivial character shouldn't mislead anybody as to the substantive importance of it. It has a great deal to do with what follows, and the more useful expression of the content of the first formula is given in the second way of putting it. Now once more: A' over A , to take the middle term first, equals the ratio of surplus labor to necessary labor. And that we saw from previous work is equal to the rate of surplus value. Let's represent this by a single symbol, we'll call it ρ or Rate. Now P and N taken together refer to the labor power being employed, and it's the number [of] labor powers being employed, that is to say: the number of units of labor time, of undifferentiated labor being put to work by the entrepreneur. And P is the value of one labor power, so that if the number of labor powers were, let's say five hundred, and the value per labor power were two dollars, that would be the whole value of the labor power being put to work: one thousand dollars. That obviously is the same thing as V , the variable capital. All right. So in other words, V in the first formulation could be replaced by N times P . Is that all right so far? Now moreover, A' over A , we have seen from previous work, is equal to S over V , so that A' over A replaces S over V in the previous formulation. Right? And then we have those two terms being equivalent to each other so that the second one, P times A' over A times N , if you reorder the terms and put the P and the N next to each other, N times P equals the value of the labor power or is equal to the variable capital.

Now why does Marx do this? Let's rearrange the expression on the second line once more. If we were to put all of the numerator terms together, that is to say, regarding P as P over 1 and N as N over 1 and reorder them, then we would have $A' \times P$ times N over A , and then we could say the mass of surplus value varies directly with this product $A' P$ and inversely with A —or even more simply, S varies directly with any one of these, all the others remaining constant. It varies directly with any one pair of the three terms in the numerator and inversely with the one term in the denominator. Or alternatively, if we now replace A' over A by some symbol, ρ , we come to an almost primal statement of this: the surplus value, the mass of surplus value, is a function of rate of surplus value or the ratio of surplus that to necessary labor and of the value of the labor power and of the number of labor powers, or finally, ρV : the rate of surplus value and the variable capital; so we are back in the place where we started from.

Now if there should by some chance turn out to be something in the process of production under capitalism that inevitably causes one of these to go one direction and the other to go the other direction all the time, you can't help it, [I] suppose; that would lead to what some people would call a problem but what Marx would call a contradiction or an antagonism, and then the resolution of that antagonism might have some importance for the prospects and the future of capitalism. How to work out such a tendency as is implicit in the fact that that on which surplus value depends directly is split down the middle and tends to go two ways at once because of one single kind of deed done by capitalists inevitably, that would lead to some interesting consequences. If capitalists are always having their eye on S , on the mass of surplus value, and they must do those things which tend to increase it, but S is a function of ρ and V ; therefore to increase S you must operate on ρ and V . But the same thing, the one thing that the capitalists must do in order to operate on ρ and V leads ρ in one direction and V in another direction, suppose. Then how would they solve their problem? Maybe the ultimate solution of that problem would lead to some transformation in the underlying conditions of capitalism and possibly to its ultimate extinction.

Now in order to work out this difficulty, Marx has written the next part of the book. The next part of the book would be the evolution of the factory system and machinery.ⁱ That has not only the very tremendous social consequences that Marx is talking about, but it also has some economic consequences [that are] indicated in this formulation. Is this all right now? If one has this reasonably well in mind, the three laws that Marx asserts about the rate and mass of surplus value follow as “quote verbalizations” of these symbolically expressed facts. See now the first law: “the mass of the surplus value produced is equal to the variable capital advanced multiplied by the rate of surplus value.” That's hardly a—that's nothing different, that's only this. [JC writes on the blackboard] That's on the top of page 332. Then he shows how—let's see, in the last paragraph that is begun on page 332, at the beginning of the paragraph, he says: “In the production of a definite mass of surplus-value, therefore, the decrease of one factor may be compensated by the increase of the other.”ⁱⁱ That I have put in the form: the surplus value varies inversely with some

ⁱ That is, part 4, “Production of Relative Surplus-Value.”

ⁱⁱ Chap. 11. IP, 304.

things and directly with other things. That means some have to be increased and others decreased in order to make the quantity grow. So that is simply an expression of what's already present.

So now on page 334 there is a second law, the top line and following,

“The absolute limit of the average working day—this being by nature always less than 24 hours—sets an absolute limit to the compensation of a reduction of variable capital by a higher rate of surplus-value, or of the decrease of the number of labourers exploited by a higher degree of exploitation of labour-power.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In other words [JC writes on the blackboard], you can go a certain distance in the reduction of N times P by the increase of ρ , like over here, if ρV is what you have in mind, ρ is (a'/a) . If V decreases, you can make it up in an increase in ρ , but you can't do that indefinitely because ρ has a value which is limited by the absolute length of the natural day, and so beyond a certain portion of that working day, you can't—of that natural day, you can't go in putting men to work. See, that means that decreases in V cannot be made up indefinitely by increases in ρ , (a'/a) , right? Incidentally, how could you make a decrease in V ? How could you compensate for a decrease in V by an increase in ρ ? If ρ is (a'/a) it varies directly with a' and inversely with a , once more. So to make ρ increase means to make the numerator a' increase. Now can you keep doing—

Student: Or a decrease.

JC: Or a decrease, yes. Now what are the limits to doing that?

Student: Well, a is limited by—no it's not, the twenty-four hours because in the—

JC: Yeah, the twenty-four hours; that's the absolute limit to how much you can make that ratio go up, you see, by increasing the numerator or decreasing the—

Student: . . . by six hours . . .

JC: By six hours or something like that, yes. So this ratio (a'/a) is affected by or in fact is a sort of index of the productivity of labor, i.e., by reducing the portion of the day which is necessary. See, you correspondingly increase the proportion which is surplus. And how far can you go in reducing the portion of the day which is necessary, and how do you do it? Answer: generally speaking, machinery, i.e., simplify it a bit, more machinery. What does that mean with respect to the formulations you've already had about the sum of capital being the sum of constant and variable?

Student: You would reduce . . . the amount of variable.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chap. 11. IP, 305.

JC: Exactly. So this then, in other words, decreases: let's say V approaches zero. But V is the part of the investment that leads to surplus value. That leads to profit; so exactly as entrepreneurs, capitalists try to increase the productivity of labor by more investment in machinery, they must necessarily reduce their investment in that living or self-magnifying part of their wealth, and that's what leads to this contradiction. And so then they move faster and faster and faster, try to make up for the decrease in one by the increase in the other. But that's limited: you can't do it indefinitely. And then that in turn leads to the expansion of the markets internationally, colonialism, imperialism, crises, immiseration, pauperization—everything else, and the collapse eventually. That from the purely technical side. All right? So this formula is by no means a little afterthought on Marx's side, but it has very much to do with the course of the argument, and that's why I spend this much time on it.

Now the third law is at the bottom of page 334 and is also on 335 expressed two ways: "With a given rate of surplus value, and a given value of labour-power, therefore, the masses of surplus-value produced vary directly as the amounts of the variable capitals advanced."^{iv} Right, that we've already elaborated and that finds a different expression on page 335: "the masses of value and of surplus value produced by different capitals vary directly as the amounts of the variable constituents of these capitals . . . *i.e.*, as their constituents transformed into living labour-power."^v That means the variable capital, once more. So when you take all of these together you get the basis for the inner contradictions in capitalist technology. The question is more complicated than what I have led you to believe, but we simply don't have time to go into it because coming after this is an absolutely elephantine subject with enormous difficulties and complications, and we can't spend the time. At this point, if Mr. Steintrager would be so good as to read his paper, but with this proviso: if Dr. Strauss has anything?

LS: No, no.^{vi}

JC: Thank you. Well, that was very good, Mr. Steintrager. You had a very, very difficult task. That was a very long text, and it was very well presented. But let me ask you a few things. When he speaks of cooperation and manufacture, what does he mean by those terms?

Student: Cooperation *in* manufacture?

JC: No, *and*. What does he mean by cooperation, and what does he mean by manufacture?

Student: Initially, it's simply just people working together in the same building, although it turns out to be something more; that is, their labor becomes interdependent on one another.

^{iv} IP, 306.

^v IP, 306-7. The ellipses indicate that Cropsey omitted part of the sentence.

^{vi} Mr. Steintrager read his paper. The reading was not recorded.

JC: Yes, it's an early stage of common productive activity.

Student: He says it's a quantitative increase over the old handicrafts—

JC: To some extent, yes; it's having five men plow five acres instead of one man plowing one acre at a time, or something like that, something like this.

Student: . . . for example, Burke.

JC: Yes, the well-known sophist and sycophant Burke.^{vii} And what about manufacture?

Student: Manufacturing is when this cooperation, in addition to this simply increased production . . . to the gathering together of people in the same building. I think then it takes on its characteristic as the radicalization of the division of labor; at least it's the beginning of that breaking down of each task in parts, so that productivity is increased by greater skill.

JC: Yeah, well, the reason that I asked the question is that the word is a bit misleading because now, for example, what we would speak of as manufacture is what he later on calls modern industry, and there's no distinction. But I think he was simply using the term more literally. The first part of that word, manufacture, is from a root meaning hand; and that's what he was—I don't know what the German word he was translating.

LS: He called it *manufakturieren*.

JC: It was the same word? Well then, the point there is a bit strengthened, even. He's talking about a succession of productive forms which lead up through the increasing use of machinery and the radicalization of the division of labor according to some scheme, in the course of which the skills of men degenerate and the human activities are increasingly appropriated by mechanisms.

Student: At least one set of skills were first increased, weren't they? That is, the skill on this detail. In the most general sense, the skills decrease, but don't the skills initially increase?

JC: Well, I don't think so. He describes this process as starting with a certain human material that's there to begin with.

Student: But this is how the process of production increases, as I understand it, is that this particular worker learns how to perform his function with his hands better, and in that sense the skill increases.

JC: Oh, I see what you mean. Yeah, the division of labor has exactly the consequences that Smith and others spoke about. And incidentally you might know or be interested in

^{vii} In *Capital*, volume 1, chapter 13, Marx refers to the "celebrated sophist and sycophant, Edmund Burke." IP, 323.

knowing that Marx's description of the effects of the division of labor could be almost a copy, almost in some places verbatim, from *The Wealth of Nations*.

LS: He says—may I mention this very historical point?—that Smith himself plagiarized that from someone else.

JC: Well, sure. Apparently, this was an intolerable literary situation that existed in Germany, at least at that time, and pettiness was rampant in addition to some other very admirable qualities, and apparently they constantly accused each other of all these things in a low spirit of controversy. Now, for example, Marx in a note calls Malthus a great plagiarist—a crook, in effect, who simply took everything, the whole theory of population is lifted from somebody else. He doesn't say from whom, but I guess he took it for granted [that] everybody must know that the theory of population was well developed before Malthus. Well, as a matter of fact, plenty of people had speculated on problems of population, but people nowadays tend to say very much the same kind of thing about Marx without the animus. You speak to any economist, they'll tell you the labor theory of value, that long antedates Marx; principles of the division of labor, that he could have got from any number of people, and so on and so forth. It has nothing whatever to do with the value of the final formulation, and it would be wrong to call Marx a plagiarist, because the elements of his work to a large extent existed elsewhere. But that's not terribly interesting. The fact of the matter is that Marx does admit that there must be an increase in productivity through division of labor, and that's another one of these contradictions, so to speak. It has its good and it comes at a price, and then history so to speak is the resolution of that and many other complications.

At one point, Mr. Steintrager, if I heard you correctly, you reversed the order of surplus and necessary labor in the statement of the variables and the ratio, but you might look it up, just to—it's surplus to necessary rather than vice versa. But that's—

Now he does not, Marx does not speak about the abolition of the division of labor in this coming society. He speaks about the abolition of the old division of labor. He doesn't stress that, it's true, but it's there. Now what he means apparently is that there will still be different inclinations, different talents and aptitudes. That he says elsewhere at greater length, that people will continue to be different. And it's only this corrupt kind of communism, this early communism which looks to some doctrinaire egalitarianism of everything on all hands, and so on and so forth. He says: No, that won't be. But you're correct in saying that he is not very clear as to what kind of division of labor there will ensue.

Student: That's what I—

JC: Yeah, except for the fact that he has a very interesting, illustrative footnote about a French artisan who went into the American West around that time, and who was a typesetter or typographer of some kind, and he couldn't find work as a typographer; and then he worked at various other things: he mined gold and he was a plumber and lots of other things. And then he said, in recounting his experiences later on, that for the first

time he really felt like a man; that he realized he could do all kinds of things, not only this one little job. And it made him feel competent, which is absolutely sound. I'm sure that if one realizes that he can do certain things which he never tried to do or never achieved before, of course there is a sense of satisfaction that comes from it. As to whether this purely private fact can ever become the basis for the solution of the problem of society and technology, that's another question, because the mere demand of efficiency might impose certain things on men which Marx would call contradictions, and which he might therefore say necessarily have a resolution but which other people would say are not contradictions in this systemic sense, but they are certain irreducible problems about human beings and there is no resolution of them. I mean, you can shift it around and cause one side rather than the other to be emphasized in this pair of conflicting claims. But the conflict of the claims must remain as long as human beings are not omniscient, omnipotent, immortal, and everything else.

Student: If I understood correctly, you were suggesting that efficiency may lead to making it necessary, the division of labor, to continue to have it. I wonder whether Marx wouldn't have an answer to that thought by the increased production, and with the increased distribution of wealth this would—efficiency would become a low consideration.

JC: Yeah, but I would ask you for a moment to consider what would be the effective basis of that vast standard of living if not effective working on the part of men. If you have a man who says: I would like to be a lathe operator. And that means very, very careful machinist work—which takes a long time to develop, incidentally, one should mention; and they'd throw this typographer out instantly if he came to such a plant and said: I've been a typographer and a plumber and several other things now, and now I would like to turn my hand at machine work. And they'd say: That's interesting, but how do you know you can do it? For instance, that kind of thing. And he'd say: Let me try anyhow. And he would spoil innumerable items, without a doubt, in the course of his learning. So then Marx would say: All right, but still you don't have to put him to work in the plant right away; send him to school for a while. Wherever he wants to go to school, let him. And so then you can imagine there would be a very large number of very curious human beings—I mean, curious in the sense of wanting to know—who would spend all their lives in schools. [Great laughter] Some individuals like this were known in the armed services, for instance. They didn't do it voluntarily, but they found themselves always in school. One school, another, and another. One could make an occupation of that. It's a kind of intellectual virtue. No, but no, there are some real difficulties. Not to mention what everybody knows, that if a man were to say not "I want to be a hunter in the morning and a fisher in the afternoon and a critical critic at night, but I would like to be a mathematician in the morning, a brain surgeon in the afternoon, and a repairer of electronic equipment in the evening," then somebody would say: This is a kind of exalted paranoid [laughter] or somebody who at best would become a handyman, a very elevated handyman.

Now I mention this at the beginning because the whole thing leads up to that. That's what the end of this book, this part—you have the spreading out of the rounded man once

more. And Marx seems to suppose that if a man is able to do many things—I leave out now all the practical difficulties—to do many things, a versatile man, that would in effect be a kind of guarantee of his human excellence, which is I think indefensible. If any of you have ever known a very competent, versatile handyman, you'll know that he can be an abominable human being, and [yet] be able to do all sorts of things. There are lots of people such as the kind that Marx describes as his ideal, more or less. Not brain surgeons and mathematicians and everything else, but you can find quite a few men who work on farms who are amazingly versatile. They fix their own machinery—they must, it's too costly to hire someone to do it; they plow, and they do woodwork, and all kinds of things. Very versatile. And they're—some of them are just terrible people in every other respect. And so what would that prove, you know, about this high level of . . . but I don't want to, well—

Mr. Benjamin: The only thing is, is the . . . that we're breaking down the categories by types of employment, and I think both fit into the idea of the well-rounded man being—there being some guarantee of his excellence. And to make it feasible, you might think of the categories in a different sense: one technical capacity; one capacity with respect to the humanities; one with respect to living outdoors or something that builds the body. In other words, each job chosen to develop a whole area of human potentiality, but not the attempt to master every trade, which is somewhat different.

JC: Yeah, but you see, Marx compels us to think about it in these more technical terms, because he says the whole character of life is given to it by the mode of production. And now that doesn't mean that what you do with your spare time, if any, or how you develop hobbies or what books you read. He said that only follows maybe more or less incidentally. But what men do, their activities, their productive activities—

Mr. Benjamin: But the mode of production is changing in a precise sense, namely, one sense is the mass industry which will give them a great deal more free time. Thus, so the economy has come to take a significant portion of human day, of human activity. And therefore the mode of production will be less—well, it still is determinant. It's less specifically determinant of the particular things they do; rather, it's determinant in the sense that it gives them more time to do things, and in this way, again . . .

JC: Yeah, but I think that that slights a large part of his own doctrine, Mr. Benjamin, because I think that he means that what you do as a productive individual has very much to do with what kind of a human being you are at large. You see? And so therefore it isn't only a question of what you do as a hobbyist or something, but that's always only strictly derivative. And you always have to come back to how men spend their lives, either at lathes or digging or something like that.

Mr. Benjamin: Let me try just one other point on this. In working under the capitalist system, when you work for another person, there's a clear delineation between a hobby and a job. A job is what you do and get paid for, not a hobby. In the system as Marx envisions it, where you always work for yourself or always work for society no matter what you do, to get it out of the way, this delineation no longer exists. And your hobbies,

so-called, are as much productive activity as is your job per se. So that, again, I still envision there's some creative facet to it . . .

JC: Oh, very good. So in other words, working productively under those conditions will mean working as much for yourself as working for other human beings, and the distinction between benefitting yourself and benefitting others will disappear.

Mr. Benjamin: Yes.

JC: Yeah, which is a tall order, but—and for which, I mean, there isn't any evidence whatsoever, you see, that such a thing is in any way a possibility. But maybe this is what he means, that everybody's work will become his hobby, and all people will love their work so that you won't be able to keep them away from it.

Student: I mean, I generally define work as doing things I don't want to do, and non-work as doing what I want to do, whether or not—whatever the specific activity is. And while this is an oversimplification, in these terms there would be no work but there would be production.

JC: Yes, all play and no work. That's, maybe that's the simple Marxist—

LS: It means a symbolism, of course. It means neither work nor play but satisfactory expression of the . . . Both. But the question is about the means, of course. Is it “quote realistic,” ya?

JC: Yeah, and of course particularly interesting. I don't want to keep up a running skirmish with Marx because then we'll never learn what he tried to say, but especially since he dwells so much on the equation of the real with the sensuous and the actual, and he is at such pains to heap scorn on the merely speculative and the merely noetic and what's only in the thoughts and so on, then you might expect some sensuous, i.e., empirical evidence for his major assertions. And that being absent somehow or other has a detracting effect on the power of the formulations. But anyhow. Now what, Mr. Steintrager, ¹would you say that in this part of the book there is some implicit notion of the good for man?

Mr. Steintrager: In—?

JC: In this part that you summarized.

Mr. Steintrager: Well, there certainly is in the sense that has something to do with, well, production, that seemed almost trivial, thing is therefore—

JC: Well, now, what about that material at the end?

Mr. Steintrager: Well, towards the end of the part—oh, where he talks about agriculture and the family?

JC: Yeah, and he speaks more freely there about the future state of mankind. He never does it at great length, but there is more there than in many other places.

Mr. Steintrager: . . . cooperation . . .

JC: I mean, he also says that cooperation is what helps the individual—

Mr. Steintrager: And says that man is a social animal.

JC: . . . the individual and become a species. And to move towards the species-character of the individual. Again, I don't know what word is being translated there, because—

LS: *Gattungswesen.*

JC: I wouldn't be surprised. [Laughter] But I don't know. That's the word that's translated as species-essence in the other book, but I suppose it's the same here.

Mr. Steintrager: I don't know really whether I could piece together something. That is something that's somehow seems to be true of very free interaction among human beings in all degrees.

JC: That, well, there is distinctly some sort of an intimation about a good life for man. Now that's not such a novel idea; people have been talking about a good life for man for a very long time. But under other circumstances, it used to be thought necessary to support those notions of a good life for man with something other than what looks like . . . That is to say, the good life for man is supposed to rise out of what a man is, with the simple . . . that a good life for men and a good life for pigeons or something should be understood very differently, because what you're starting with is very different in the two cases. So something about what conventionally would have been called, say, the nature of man would have been thought to be necessary as a part of the argument to build up towards the good for man, or the good life for man. That's not very substantial in Marx, is it? I mean, there isn't much of that support.

Mr. Steintrager: Also concerning his emphasis on science and technology, he seems not to offer really any substantial basis for why this is the full development of all of man's capabilities, since he himself apparently . . . the massive talents of Shakespeare. Yet he puts all of this full development in science and technology.

JC: Yeah, but that has to do once more with the production problem and how science becomes the means for solving the problem of wants for human beings. But science, like every other thing that has been touched by capitalism, has been perverted by it and put to a bad end rather than to the good—well, all right, we'll come to all of this. One other question: Did you, do you get the impression that, that a communist society under its full development would make use of modern technology?

Mr. Steintrager: Would make use of . . . You mean modern technology versus communist . . .

JC: No, whatever. Either way. But, say, as he understood it and as it has come to be developed. I would imagine so. I mean, I don't see how they could afford it.

Mr. Steinterager: He talks about the, in the . . . section, just before where he talks about the capitalist use of machinery doing one thing while the real machinery is doing the other. Free laborers . . .

JC: Yeah, but now the means of production are very important in Marx. Let's understate it. The means of production are said by Marx to be decisive. Now it isn't simply the means of production, however. The means of production lead to some social conditions, and therewith some status for man. What about the possibility that even under the communist organization or disorganization—which I mean not without disrespect, but loosening of the organization—that the influence of the means of production would according to his own understanding still have some effect? And how could you help it? If you have to chain a man to a machine, that's going to be true whether it's in Soviet Union or in the United States, pretty much, isn't that true? Do you notice any progress that anybody is able to make in the Soviet Union with respect to releasing the men from the machines or anything like that? Wasn't he in some sense more true, more correct than he ought to have been? Because if the evolution of science and therefore technology really is independent of the difference between communism and capitalism, then what he says about the effects of the mode of production on the lives of men comes to have a graver implication for that later condition of society.

Student: Well, the dominant economic effect for capitalism is capital or machinery capital, but the dominant effect for the present movement which abolishes the present state of things—namely, for communism—is mass industry, which destroys the conditions of scarcity. And here the dominant problem that men . . . is not bound to the machine, because he would only work the machine an hour or two a day at most in order to produce everything that is needed. So that the economic determination of product . . . again is the thing which gives them their freedom. It's a different set of economic determinants.

JC: Not exactly, though, because it doesn't do to talk about a machine system such that a man has to work only an hour or two a day. As to whether that is technically feasible, we still don't know. It might be that just as there is in the minds of the physicists an absolute heavy body, a body which is of the absolute maximum weight, maybe there is such a thing as the absolute minimum working day. That is to say, given by conditions of depreciation, the mere wearing away of matter, and maybe there—I say maybe, because he doesn't take the question up—and until the question is somehow or other resolved, this formulation about the reduction of the working day to twenty minutes or an hour or two hours is altogether speculative. We don't know anything about it. In other words, under the best conditions it might take more than that merely to replace machinery—to say nothing about progress, you know, which means more output and so on. But I don't

want to quibble, except we're now talking about things nobody can know, and we should be instructed a bit by Marx's own difficulties in forecasting, you know, so we don't make the same mistake. But I would suggest to you, incidentally, there are some really atrocious blunders with respect to the mere facts in this part of the book. For example, ²if Marx is right—and for the time being let's say we can't figure out where he's wrong—but if he's right, the increase in the standard of living, generally speaking, for the western world can't be . . . It's impossible. It happened, but it's impossible, one would be bound to say. Now on the old principle that if a theory departs too far from observable things, it ought to be re-examined, then I would say this is a candidate. Rabbi Weiss?

Rabbi Weiss: On your earlier point, doesn't Marx maintain the fantasy . . . not merely because he's using a machine but because he has become a commodity vis-à-vis the technology under capitalism? But in the postcapitalistic stage, the relation to technology will change because he is no longer a commodity used by someone else in the productive process.

JC: That surely is part of what Marx meant. But that web of social relations, that was in a way dictated by the underlying means of production, modes of production.

Rabbi Weiss: In the past?

JC: Has been, and as far as we can tell, always will be.

Student: Well, doesn't he maintain that this is part of the nature of capitalistic history, and in a postcapitalistic time man will be the master of technology?

JC: Yeah, that's exactly the point, though I would like to know what is meant by man being the master of technology when it's still going to be true that man is going to have to stand up or sit down in front of a machine, and he's going to have to stand up or sit down in front of *that* machine for some extended period of time and probably he'll have to keep coming to back to that machine. Otherwise it would be utter chaos. Who can imagine a productive system in which every morning everybody would re-examine the question of whether he's going back to the same place of work as he went yesterday? What sense does that make—not to say, speaking of whether he'll go back after lunch.

Student: Well, but does repetition lead to enslavement?

JC: Yeah, no, it's—

Student: As much as being used as a commodity, that is—

JC: No, no, I don't care under what conditions, no matter who owns it or for whom he's working. He could have the machine in his own backyard. But if he goes to that same machine and does the same thing day after day for a normal working day, whatever, eight hours, that has a stultifying effect on him which is irrespective of any social conditions. It

can't help but make him a narrow man. That's part of what Smith said, Marx, everybody else.

Student: . . .

JC: Yeah, variety is what's important, and I question whether that's anything but someone's dream, under these or any other technological conditions. In the old time, tremendous training was necessary because it was all skill. Now tremendous repetition is necessary because it's all machine, not skill. That's got nothing to do with the difference between capitalism and communism; that has to do with science. And science pervades them all: it's super-economic, you could say. So there's a real question whether, how far you can go in reducing the understanding of social things in the modern world to economic relations. Well. So there are lots of question. But Dr. Strauss, what—

LS: Yes, I have a few points on this chapter which I would like to point out. Now to deal with a purely historical question: To what extent did Marx understand the earlier doctrines? And I must say in this respect, I'm not speaking now of the economic doctrines, of which I know much too little, but about the social thought in general. And in this respect Marx is very impressive in my opinion, and also, for example, what is—I give you two examples which show that. On page 400 to 402 he speaks of the difference between the ancients and the moderns. Marx was a very well-read man, of course. I mean, he must have read the whole classical literature also from the point of view [of] what he can learn from that regarding economic facts. Ya? I mean, in other words, originally he read it just for enjoyment, but later on he did it as hard labor. And now here what he says about the difference—what the division of labor means in Plato that this has to do with a use-value, of course, not with commodities. That goes without saying, ya? He is perfectly right in that. But he doesn't meet the issue of Plato, the real issue, namely, that division—one man, one job—is the condition of a good job, you know, and versus his painter and fisherman and so on.

Now, and here is the point which I enjoyed very much, when he speaks of Xenophon and he refers to a passage in Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, book 8, and he says: "Xenophon, who with characteristic bourgeois instinct, approaches more nearly to division of labor within the workshop,"^{viii} i.e., the division of labor, shoemaker, carpenter—ya, but subdivisions of shoemaker. Now I think Marx has here—I would not be surprised if you wouldn't find any observation regarding Xenophon in the so-called bourgeois literature which comes so close to an understanding of Xenophon. The expression which Marx uses, "characteristic bourgeois instinct," is wrong, not to say absurd; but that Xenophon came closest of all ancient writers to the modern ideas, I think that one can prove. I mean, I knew this passage, but I thought of entirely different things in Xenophon and I stated this as follows. The originator of modern thought properly understood is Machiavelli, and the key passage in Machiavelli is that all men have a natural desire to acquire; and ³that is a natural desire, hence not blameworthy. Acquire means of course more and more; and the only difference therefore between human beings can be whether they are good or bad at acquiring; and to be a virtuous man means to be a

^{viii} Chap. 15, sec. 5. IP, 366.

good acquirer, i.e., a tyrant, who is much bigger than any bourgeois could be. But⁴ in this respect that has been anticipated by Xenophon, but the interesting point which Marx did not see and which indeed he couldn't see given his premises, is that Xenophon is *playing* with these things, you know, like a somewhat naughty man who plays with extreme possibilities. To mention one example which has to do with economics in particular: the general notion is [that] a gentleman has to be a gentleman farmer, not a merchant. But Xenophon plays with the interesting possibility of being a dealer, a merchant, in estates. You know that story: you buy rotten estates—ya, buy rotten for cheap money, and then you improve it because you are a good farmer, and then you sell it dear and you go on and on.^{ix} You know? So you combine, have a synthesis of a farmer and a merchant. Still, that is one point.

Now the other, which has to do with the same question, is the note on page 426, where he says (that is also interesting) at the end of the note:

“In the preface to Sir Dudley North’s ‘Discourses upon Trade’ (1691) it is stated, that Descartes’ method had begun to free Political Economy from the old fables and superstitious notions of gold, trade, &c. On the whole, however, the early English economists sided with Bacon and Hobbes as their philosophers; while, at the later period, the philosopher *kat’ exochein* of Political Economy in England, France, and Italy, was Locke.”^x

That is very sound, and I think in the ordinary books on this subject you will not find remarks which come—as far as sound historical perspective is concerned—come even within hailing distance of that. And that he mentions Descartes is perfectly sound, too. I had never—I didn’t know that passage. It’s very true and is of course borne out by Locke, who traces the real change which has taken place characteristically not to Bacon but to Descartes, although Locke was an Englishman and Descartes was a Frenchman. And there are other remarks of this kind and I believe—Mr. Cropsey knows that infinitely better than I do—the sketch of the history of economic theories which is embodied in Engels’s *Anti-Dühring*—you know, that part was written by Marx, the history of economic theories—must be very valuable still, and I’m sure superior to what you ordinarily find on that.

Now we come now to a substantive question which has been up all the time, the question of human nature, because the previous discussion all turned around this question: Is there some permanent, unchangeable element which would not be affected in any way⁵ by any transitions from any historical change? There are a few references to human nature which I thought are very interesting. For example, page 435, line 2 to 3, which is not a quotation, where he speaks: “there arises an unnatural estrangement between mother and child”^{xi} under certain capitalistic conditions. So there is a natural relation between mother and child. That is nothing very novel, but nevertheless important. In other words, not everything is natural. That has immense consequences. I mean, the present-day social

^{ix} Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 20. 21-29.

^x Chap. 15, sec. 2. IP, 390.

^{xi} Chap. 15, sec. 3. IP, 398.

scientist would not do that, I believe, except in a state of relapse [laughter] into metaphysical thinking.

Now on page 436, where he refers to Engels but doesn't quote, where he speaks of the "state of mind clearly distinguishable"—yes, of the "intellectual desolation," and so on, "artificially produced" by capitalists, "a state of mind clearly distinguishable from that natural ignorance which keeps the mind fallow without destroying its capacity for development, its natural fertility . . ." ^{xii} "Natural fertility" has teleological implications: able to, disposed toward something in the future. Page 440, paragraph two: "in those industries first invaded by it, for lengthening the working day beyond all bounds set by human nature." ^{xiii} And which means more than you can't work twenty-four hours a day and need some minimum of sleep—which is also, by the way, not entirely uninteresting, this need for sleep, but Marx means here much more by that.

There occurs even a reference to natural right, although in a quotation only, but that's very interesting: page 536, line three. That is from a factory report, I suppose—ya. "The children and young persons, therefore, in all such cases may justifiably claim from the legislature, as a natural right, that an exemption should be secured to them." ^{xiv} By the way, this refutes a somewhat simplistic notion according to which in the bourgeois era natural right meant only natural right of property. You must have heard that *n* times, but that was a statement made, I don't know when, but I suppose around 1840, '50 or so. What does he say in this connection? Mr. Steintrager referred to that in his discussion. In Marx's own comment: "However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear." In other words, Marx feels as any decent human being would feel naturally, and he does not regard this as in any way class bound—obviously not class bound because the decent capitalists and the decent proletarians felt exactly the same about that.

"[N]evertheless, modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part of the process of production outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economical foundation for a higher form of *the* family and of *the* relations between the sexes." ^{xv}

These are other constants: the family, the sexes, of course. I mean here, when he speaks concretely, Marx is not fantastic at all. But still we would like to know: Does Marx mean there should be a new form of polygamy? Because when you speak of family you don't mean promiscuity, that's obvious. Surely not, because polygamy, as is the general view, depresses the women too much. So you have monogamy, probably with easy divorce (that's another matter), but still family and a certain responsibility for the children which, I suppose, would act as a restraint regarding very easy notions of divorce.

^{xii} Chap. 15, sec. 3. IP, 399.

^{xiii} Chap. 15, sec. 3. IP, 403.

^{xiv} Chap. 15, sec. 9. IP, 489. (From the final report of the Children's Employment Commission of 1866)

^{xv} Chap. 15, sec. 9. IP, 489-90.

As for the development of the human faculties, there is also a passage here in this neighborhood, 529 following, and quite a few remarks in this very section 9 which we cannot read. And indeed, what Marx says here in this concrete form is very sensible. Development of all faculties means simply here a development of—no stunting of bodily growth accompanied by development of the mental faculties and vice versa. That is perfectly sensible, but that has nothing to do with the question of equality⁶, obviously not; I mean, with the ultimate equality which Marx somehow had in mind. And regarding this question, I repeat only the fundamental issue. I would contend it is impossible to have an orientation in human matters without a reference to human nature as somehow supplying the standard. That is the old story, accepted until the end of the eighteenth century, generally speaking. But yet since the seventeenth century, in conflict with that, the notion of a conquest of nature;⁷ and conquest of nature of course for the benefit of man, related to the nature of man and to man's natural wants. But it took on this character now, that not only do we have to conquer non-human nature in order to satisfy man's natural wants, no, we have to conquer the nature of man itself. And from that moment on—well, it took some time until it became a matter of public knowledge—the whole thing becomes unintelligible. Conquest of nature, including human nature, for what? And to that extent present-day social science is an honest expression of our dilemma. Any odd value you choose will do.

As for the question of equality, there is one passage which repeats something we have read in the earlier writings, but I had forgotten that passage so I couldn't find it. Here we have it on page 363, near the top.^{xvi} —is bound to be a direction of human beings at the same time, and a direction of human beings is undistinguishable from an authority. You cannot always—that is only the political equivalent to the argument which Mr. Cropsey made regarding the economics—you cannot always have your soviet of that particular enterprise decide what should be done, because there is after all someone who is better trained and has better knowledge who simply is given the authority. And the authority can of course not merely be directive, because what can you do if someone is lazy or drunk or disturbs the peace among the workmen and so on? There are other references to that. Ya, and of course that is of some importance also for the judgment on the capitalist. However vicious and profit-seeking the capitalist may be, he may very well⁸ happen to be the directing authority in the enterprise, and that is an absolutely necessary function. Marx usually presents it as if the capitalist were merely a profiteer and all the directing authority is done by poorly paid white-collar workers or whatever he may have thought of.

Now let me see; there is probably one more passage. Ya, that is on page 391, indeed, and where he uses even the argument—at this point against capitalist doctrine. The capitalists emphasize the necessity of an hierarchic order or of planning within the factory and oppose that hierarchic order and that planning in society at large. Now what would follow immediately from this argument, disregarding all other complications, would be this: you need planning, i.e., a directing authority, in society at large. The vulgar word for that is government, because you cannot do it with mere directions without some sanctions, you know. Sanctions, you know what that means. And therefore that point, I think, has to be

^{xvi} The tape was changed at this point.

considered for the whole notion of Marx's communism. The usual argument, of course, would be this, if one makes such points: the arguments taken from present-day communist states, which are very much governments, as you know, is that it is only transitional. It's only transitional; and therefore they would regard such arguments as irrelevant, immaterial, and what have you. But the question is: What is that final state to be achieved by the next hundred years? Or maybe earlier, maybe later; probably later. What is that? You know, ⁹is this not mere—¹⁰a promise unsupported by anything? Or otherwise Marx must show us what experiences we have in any sphere of human activity which supports this thesis. And this promise is indeed nowhere supported, that one must say. It's just a hope, an unsupported hope.

JC: Well, it was a foregone conclusion from the beginning that we wouldn't be able to give an account of this part of the reading in the time allotted, because it's vast; as you know, it's well over two hundred pages and very rich in details and in analysis of all kinds. But let me only try to give a very short indication of what sort of development occurs in this part of the reading. Now Marx had begun with some statements about profit, about relative and absolute surplus value, and you could say that he is trying to show, by referring to the history of the mode of production, how the directors of the means of production under capitalism are compelled by an inner necessity to intensify and radicalize capitalism itself in pursuit of profit. He has shown what are the arithmetic and other grounds for the quantity of profit, and he has shown how a certain course of investment is indicated for capitalists. They must do certain things in order to benefit themselves. What they must do is suggested to them, or in fact imposed on them by that technology which they themselves set in motion by harnessing science to their own purposes, to the purposes of production. I say their own purposes because it's taken for granted that the men work for themselves; the entrepreneurs work for themselves, they don't work for the good of society. At one point (I won't look up the passage right now) Marx says that, in effect, that doctrine of Smith, the invisible hand—that men are led as by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of their intention, their intention having been the private good but the unintended end being the common good—he said that's absurd. Not at all: when they pursue their private good, that's what they get. They get their private good, and the private good is easily distinguishable from the common good. What's good for one man could be very bad for all the others around him; and that's obvious too, incidentally, and Marx doesn't let that point slip by. It's obvious so far as it goes.

Now then the point is what more specifically: [What] can the world look forward to while the mode of production is dictated by capitalistic purposes? And the key to that, I think, could be described as contradictions: that at almost every stage the profit-seeker is confronted by an impossible dichotomy of actions, developments, whatever. He tries to improve his profit situation. That leads him to invest more in machinery. That at the same time has the effect of worsening his profit situation, to give a very simplified example of it. What about the factory ¹¹legislation? It's at the same time good and bad. Of course the entrepreneurs don't want it, but it's imposed on them. Now once it starts to be imposed on them, what must their attitude be? (A) They don't like it, so they'd like to push it off; but (b) competition, the very character of capitalist production, compels them to want it,

and not only to want it but to want it generally and in its most extended form. Very simple reason: we find the same thing to be true among businessmen now confronted with unions. They don't want unions in their own plants, but once they've got them, they jolly well want to make sure everybody else gets them too. That's the point. So now if the factory acts are passed and they apply to you, and you're in the textile business and you're a big manufacturer and it's easy to enforce the law with respect to you because you're plainly visible, the first thing that you have to do is to see that, to begin with, the enforcement is made very good or very bad, either so you get away with it too or else that everybody else is compelled as much as you to obey the law. And now that spreads from one section of industry to another, so it's not from benevolence that the factory legislation becomes extensive. It grows by an inner law. It must. That's part of what he says. Now, so what happens after that? Well, then the conditions of industry begin to become more and more difficult. So the very thing that the capitalists must promote in the end turns out to be fraught with contradictions. I give you a very simple and a very small number of examples.

Now one can't help but be reminded of things in Hegel. That's no surprise, but in the introduction to *The Philosophy of History* Hegel speaks about how the progress of man is in a way brought on by the vices and the passions that move men, and so while they seem to be aiming at some immediate object dictated by low interests, in effect they're bringing about the progress of mankind towards a high, and maybe even permanent, condition. I think that what Marx says has very much in common with this. The low impulses of men are shown to work themselves out, driving others down and down and down; society always descending into graver and graver complications and difficulties which are, through the mysterious nature of things, the ground for the ultimate resolution of all the difficulties, but literally all the difficulties.

Now why that should be true is not explained, I believe. In other words, why this is not a mere construction based on terrific speculations, hopes, and similar things? Why there is the necessity for the good to emerge out of the contradictory? That is not clear on the basis of mere materialism. If that were to be based on some notion of the ideas, of a life of the immaterial, a real life within the sphere of the rational qua rational, maybe something could be said for this; but that's exactly what was bound to be so terribly objectionable on the part of the idealists—I mean, objectionable by the Marxists as it was held on the part of the idealists. So now why materialism should have this meliorative inner working, that is not plain. It comes out as a very impressive construction, there is no doubt, in Marx, but we find ourselves always plagued by the doubt as to the reality of the remote, the more remote; and we see how, as in the case of some earlier constructions with respect to astronomy, the more the time that elapsed after the construction of the system and therewith the making of the forecasts, the greater the divergence between the observed things and the pretended foreknowledge, which—please.

LS: I hate to interrupt you, but I must do it because I believe that's a point where I can make clear something which I stated at the beginning and where some of you might have thought it was superfluous, and at this point I think it will become clear. Now let us look back at the two men—you mentioned Hegel, but permit me to go for one moment to

Kant. In Kant you had this construction: vices, not morality, bring about by the antagonisms they engender the rational society, the society demanded by morality, namely, in Kant's formula, a nation of devils—a nation of devils—will bring about that society by a mere mechanism of self-seeking. But Kant made it perfectly clear: institutional progress is not moral progress. In other words, the need of the moral effort of the individual remains in the final stage as much as at all times. But still, the interesting point is already in Kant: that the mere play of the passions without any higher motivation will bring about the establishment of *the* rational society. Now that is only however the historical form of Adam Smith. What Adam Smith means [. . .]^{xvii} simultaneously is here now said of the historical stretch. The private interests, without giving a damn for the public interest, bring about the public interest¹² within a society. In the Kantian construction, the Smithian invisible hand is the key to the historical process.

Now Hegel comes surely closer to Marx still than either Adam Smith or Kant did, but because for Hegel the progress is at the same time—is not merely institutional. I mean, the nation is not a nation of devils merely; other things enter. But still,¹³ Hegel's doctrine is in one respect more rational than that of Smith and Kant because he says what is working in these acts is Reason with a capital R. There is a cunning of reason. And secondly, in defense of Hegel we must also say Hegel understood the final state to be a state and not a withered-away state; and therefore Hegel had no doubt that the final state of man will have as many criminals, poor citizens, and self-seekers (the despicable self-seekers), or perhaps even more, maybe, than, say, you had in a Greek *polis*. In other words, you still need gallows, to use a simple symbol of that tough side of the state. Whereas the fantastic thing in Marx is that¹⁴ without reason effective as the hidden ground of the whole movement, you get at a certain moment a moral regeneration of man which would make any forms of compulsion wholly superfluous. And that's it. Forgive me for interrupting.

JC: No, surely. In fact, it was scarcely an interruption. I think we could stop at this point, because I think there has been as much as we can do within any reasonable length of time to give the general development within this part. So you could say then, as little as it appears to do this, this very technical part points towards the question of the real ground of the doctrine of history in Marxism, with the understanding that the doctrine of history rests according to Marx on a strictly material basis. And how that's intelligible, that is the question that we've just tried to speak about. Now that brings us down to Mr. Bartholomew next time, on parts five and six. Mr. Bartholomew, are you all primed and ready to go? Good.

Student: I will be!

JC: You will be, yes.

¹ Deleted "did you"

² Deleted "if you"

³ Deleted "so the"

⁴ Deleted "here that"

^{xvii} There is a brief gap in the tape at this point.

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- ⁵ Deleted “by any traditions”
⁶ Deleted “because”
⁷ Deleted “and which was then inevitably”
⁸ Deleted “be”
⁹ Deleted “is this really”
¹⁰ Deleted “than”
¹¹ Deleted “system”
¹² Deleted “within a given”
¹³ Deleted “Hegel’s reasoning”
¹⁴ Deleted “you have”

Session 14: May 16, 1960
***Capital*, parts 4-6, chapters 16-18**

Joseph Cropsey: [In progress] —go over, and that was very good.ⁱ One of the parts in this, one of the pieces in this part, in part 5, that calls out most cryingly for some clarification is exactly that chapter 17, which you wisely decided would be impossible to handle. You know? I mean, it wouldn't do any good; and so therefore we'll have to spend a bit of time working that out here. Could you distinguish, Mr. Bartholomew, between the effects of productiveness of labor and intensity of labor, or just plain distinguish the two things for the class?

Student: Well, in effect, productiveness of labor does not lead to any increase in the total value of the product of the work, whereas you can say—you mean, in their nature, what they mean?

JC: Yes, well, to begin with what they mean, then we'll—

Student: Well, productiveness is simply increasing in the same . . . let's say, the length of time needed to produce a certain product, intensity in these terms is the—

JC: Well, that—it's very easy to get the two things confused. I didn't mean to try to stick you at all. But I was hoping that this would be—

Student: Well, you did. [Laughter]

JC: I see that, and that's why I'm apologizing. But I didn't mean to do that. I thought that we could find our way into the discussion of this thing starting with the definition. Well, I dare say that you're not the only one who had a bit of difficulty with that, and especially since Marx himself says a few different things on different places. On page[s] 570, 575, and 580, he makes different remarks about the effects of the change of productiveness of labor, and we're going to have to come to that. Let me indicate the problem in this way. Almost immediately following the numeral 2 on page 570, in the second sentence of that paragraph, Marx says, "A variation in the productiveness of labour, its increase or diminution, causes a variation in the opposite direction in the value of labour-power . . ."ii Now on page 575, at the beginning of the second paragraph from the bottom of the page—well, the only ¹complete paragraph on that page, he says: "We know that, with transitory exceptions, a change in the productiveness of labour does not cause any change in the value of labour-power, nor consequently in the magnitude,"iii and so on and so forth. Now on page 580, under the numeral 2: "Increased productiveness and greater intensity of labour, both have a like effect. They both augment the mass of articles

ⁱ Cropsey comments on a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

ⁱⁱ Chap. 17. IP, 520.

ⁱⁱⁱ Chap. 17. IP, 525.

produced in a given time. Both, therefore, shorten that portion of the working-day which the labourer needs to produce his means of subsistence or their equivalent.”^{iv} Which would of course have an effect on the value of labor power, right? So there are two to one, two observations there against one. Did anybody straighten this out? Mr. Wortman.

Student: I think in one case he’s referring to absolute labor power, and in the other one, the other two I think he’s just referring to the two in relative terms, because productivity increases . . .

JC: He speaks about absolute and relative surplus value, but not absolute and relative labor power.

Student: He says that increase in productivity can increase the value, both of—

JC: Yeah.

Student: . . .

JC: An increase in productivity can increase, can increase the total value.

Student: Can’t.

JC: Can or cannot?

Student: Cannot.

JC: Cannot.

Student: So it only increases the labor power in relation to surplus value. But it can’t² increase labor power without increasing the surplus value.

JC: Yeah, that’s not entirely clear, I think. I’m trying to imagine this from the point of view of somebody who doesn’t understand it yet, and I think he might—you probably do understand it, but I think that wouldn’t have cleared it up altogether to somebody. That’s why I was trying to approach it from the point of view of a definition of the difference between productiveness and intensity, because Marx is perfectly clear with respect to that. That’s almost simple. And then he makes another distinction which we will have to keep in mind while discussing the effects of these two things, namely, where the change in productiveness or intensity occurs. He doesn’t use the term wage goods in this piece, but we could. It’s a term which came into use later on. A wage goods industry is one which produces something commonly bought by working men and which enters into their means of subsistence, their standard of living. Other industries produce things which don’t, obviously. So in other words, the industries which produce ordinary foods which are likely to be consumed by working men. Their clothing—and not the tuxedos, necessarily, or silk hats but, you know, work clothing, that kind of thing, what goes into

^{iv} Chap. 17. IP, 530.

the Bureau of Labor Statistics cost of living index, or used to: the means of consumption of an ordinary urban working family. Well, let's call those wage goods industries. Now a change in productiveness or intensity of labor there would have one kind of effect. But a change elsewhere, Marx says, wouldn't have any effect, wouldn't have that kind of effect. That's the first distinction. But that is meaningless without some reference to the difference between productiveness and intensity.

Now let's see if we can't work our way up this thing a bit more systematically. At a certain point, it makes sense to define those two; and then I'll do that, and that will be very shortly. But before we lose sight altogether of Mr. Bartholomew's very useful paper, may I ask, Mr. Bartholomew, if you could make any sense of the distinction that Marx makes between the price of labor and the wage of labor? Again, it's a question of a definition, and I'm not out to embarrass you.

Mr. Bartholomew: Between the price—

JC: The price of labor and the wage of labor. Did you happen to notice that as you went?

Mr. Bartholomew: No, I didn't. I thought he was—I thought in many instances he used them interchangeably.

JC: No, he's rather careful to avoid doing that. He makes this distinction: the price of labor is the hourly wage, what we would call the hourly wage; and what he calls the wage of labor is the daily or the weekly wage. And then he develops a law which is perfectly obvious and hardly deserves all the attention, but nevertheless it's there: the difference between the wage per hour and the wage per day, because if the day is the unit—if for example you say, I'll pay you twenty-five dollars per day, and the man starts to work for you at the rate of eight hours a day, and then you increase the day to twelve hours but the compensation remains the same per day, the price per hour naturally is considerably affected. And he wants to consider that, because he talks all the time about changes in the length of the working day.

At one point he speaks about competition among the capitalists, and he says he won't talk about the effects of competition in this place, but he knows that it exists and he mentions some of the effects of it. What effect does competition have on the working man according to Marx, one of the big effects?

Student: What has the biggest effect is—it takes place between workers?

JC: Yes, no, no. No. Let's say between the capitalists now. Between the working man, you rightly pointed that out.

Student: Well, the price of his labor power is depressed, in effect. I mean, the competition between capitalists leads to the effect that, let's say, a constant depressing of the price of the commodity.

JC: Yes.

Student: Which in turn means that the price of labor descends, too.

JC: Yeah, it isn't quite so simple, but generally speaking, one could say Marx asserts that the competition among the capitalists leads to the passing on to the consumer of some part of the advantage that comes from increasing productivity or increased intensity of work done by the working men. Now suppose once more that this were a wage goods industry in which this takes place. Then who would the consumers be?

Student: What do you mean, wage goods industry?

JC: The same thing I meant before; that is, an industry which produces items for working men.

Student: Well, this is . . .

JC: Yeah, it would benefit the working men. He doesn't bring that out particularly, for I don't know for what reason, but we would have to go into that. But it would certainly mitigate the effect of his argument. Or what it would mean, in other words, would be that there would be an increase in real wages, and wages would be enhanced in a roundabout method. Now you rightly said that he speaks of piece wages as being the culmination of capitalist exploitation. Cheating. He uses that word here, in volume 1. I thought that it—I didn't remember that it was here. I know that it's in volume 3, where he speaks about this thing as cheating.³ Have you ever heard the name of Stakhanov, and therefore Stakhanovites?^v

Student: Yes.

JC: What does that have to do with anything with the question of piece rates, as we call it?

Student: . . . It's connected with the extent to which it, piece rates, most of . . . worker intensifies his labor, the longer the working day, and yet this conversely had the effect of cheapening his labor or the productivity.

JC: Well, but even more simply than that. Let me approach the question another way. Does anybody happen to know which is the prevailing principle of wage payments in the Soviet Union as between time rates and piece rates? Well, they're very heavy on piece rates. You can understand that.

Student: We're heavy on time.

^v Alexey Stakhanov (1906-77) was a Soviet miner who greatly improved the efficiency of coal mining. At a trial of his method, in 1935, Stakhanov and his team produced fourteen times the targeted amount of coal. Stakhanov became a celebrity, and a Stakhanovite movement was started. He received the distinction "Hero of Socialist Labour" in 1970.

JC: We're much heavier on time rates, yes, and not only time rates but hourly rates, you see. I mean, during the steel strike,^{vi} for instance, not so long ago, you'll remember, I'm sure, that all the issues, all the monetary issues were expressed with respect to the number of cents per hour. And not only that, but the length of the working day is strictly regulated, you see, so that there is no possibility either of increasing the length of the working day or of forcing this, therefore, compression of the rate per hour, because they're all fixed. And not only that, but the overtime rate is fixed also by strict conventions. So much of what Marx asserted with respect to the practices, where it's not terribly interesting, it's got no theoretical interest whatever, and therefore can easily be passed by, you know. It's altogether empirical; there's nothing a priori about it. Is something done this way or isn't it done that way? You can't sit any place to find out; you must ask somebody or go look. And then when you've found [out], that settles altogether the question of whether it's likely to happen or not likely to happen that way. It did happen this way, see, and it happened exactly the opposite from what he said. Well, I mean—and as to the earlier question that I meant to raise only in passing ⁴several chapters back, about the depopulation of the world, not to mention the immiseration of the whole world population as it shrinks, it has no connection whatever with anything that has really happened. But I am at constant pains to point out what seems and can easily be neglected as of the least interest, namely, the simple facts. But it's important to have that in mind.

Now, so in other words, piece rates probably are characteristic of that stage of industrial production where the need for rapid development is most urgent for one reason or another, either because of the low rate of productivity generally or for some other reason. And the Soviet Union of course understands that very well, and they try in every way to get the maximum benefit of incentives. Stahkonov and similar people are simply urged to kill themselves quickly in the cause of an excess of labor intensification, a kind of speed-up which in this country would bring down the house with screams of exploitation. Except of course one can say [that] surely it's done there voluntarily and for the sake of the homeland and so on and so forth. I wouldn't want to go into that, how far that's true. But as for the mere externals, there isn't any question about where the labor intensification is most successfully applied. Well. Now, so let's begin—I beg your pardon, Dr. Strauss, was there something?

LS: No, no . . . Mr. . . . wanted to say something.

Student: I was only . . . to answer . . . the ratio of time, time spent at the job.

JC: Ratio of time worked? The time? You mean as, for example, if there was somebody who made frequent trips outside to smoke or something like this?

Student: . . .

^{vi} On July 15, 1959, U.S. steelworkers initiated a strike that was brought to an end 116 days later by President Eisenhower, who invoked the Taft-Hartley Act.

JC: That would be one, yeah, but they have different sources, changes in productiveness and changes in intensity. And that's important for other people, even, too because that's something to do with the application of more capital. See, the productiveness has to do with the increase in the helps given to labor and intensity doesn't. But we'll come to this.

And now, as for the difference between absolute and relative surplus value, that we should have in mind at the outset. Absolute surplus value has to do with the prolongation of the working day, and relative surplus value has to do with the reduction of the necessary part of the working day. And I think that this simple visual formulation [JC writes on blackboard]: if the entire day is represented by the whole length of that bar, and if the upper part is surplus and the lower part is necessary, then we could say that in the first six hours of the working day, the working man replaces, by his contribution to the value of the product, the means of subsistence which keep him going through that day. Then the rest is the unpaid labor or the surplus, and it's clear that this surplus can be increased in one of two ways or both. Either by re-moving the line up or down: upward decrease it; downward decrease it. Up would decrease the amount of necessary labor and reduce the amount of surplus; down, vice versa. And so relative ⁵gets its name from this fact: the relation between the mass of the surplus value and the mass of the necessary labor, the surplus labor and necessary labor in the course of the day. Now obviously the other possibility would be simply to lengthen the whole thing, and assuming that the line which separates the necessary from the surplus remains at the same level, then the surplus can be made to grow. Right, that would be absolute. The principle of the absolute surplus. Now here he brings the two things together, and this is in a way a kind of climax to what has gone before.

Now there are a number of remarks in this chapter 16 in which Marx speaks about the whole natural framework of the productive process, and some of these remarks are very interesting and would be useful for us to consider if we had more time. I can only draw your attention to a few of them. For example, on page 561 to 563, he speaks about the growth of man's productiveness and at the same time how man—that's toward the very bottom of the page: "It is only after men have raised themselves above the rank of animals." [Page] 561, the fourth line from the bottom, fourth and fifth. "It is only after men have raised themselves above the rank of animals" and so on^{vii}. So in other words, the process of evolution is really an artificial thing. Then on 562 at the end of that same paragraph he says: "The productiveness of labor that serves as its foundation and starting point, is a gift, not of nature, but of a history embracing thousands of centuries."^{viii} That means hundreds of thousands of years, you know, so it's hard to know exactly what beginning point he had for this thing, but surely it was what we ordinarily call in very remote prehistory.

Now then on page 563 he continues in the same vein, about the sixth line from the bottom of the text: "This mode is based on the dominion of man over nature. Where nature is too lavish, she 'keeps him in hand, like a child in leading-strings.' She does not impose upon

^{vii} Chap. 16. IP, 512.

^{viii} IP, 512.

him any necessity to develop himself.”^{ix} Now I wouldn’t want to push this too far, but it certainly raises the interesting question [of] what Marx expected would be the case in a condition of man in which nature didn’t push at all—you know, in which there was virtually no pressure or no problem. I think Nietzsche was the one who really understood this thing and showed how in a way this was the source of a terrific objection to that condition of “the last man,” if I’m not mistaken, or the end of human development. Another man long before said “Sweet are the uses of adversity.”^x I’m not sure he meant precisely the same thing, but he might have meant something similar: that the solution of all problems for man would be the basis for the most colossal problem of all; and Marx somehow or other apparently knew something about the reasons that might underlie that, but it didn’t work itself out.

Now—yes, and then, well, on the next page he goes on to say, “Favorable natural conditions alone, gave us only the possibility, never the reality, of surplus-labor”—that’s the paragraph that begins “nor, consequently, of surplus-value and a surplus-product.”^{xi} I point that passage out to you because one could say Marx’s general tendency is to try to show how these things which are taken by the political economists to be natural phenomena are not natural at all. They’re historic. That is to say, they required to be brought to completion or fruition by some acts of men under the influence of necessity, solving their problems of production and devising or being compelled to devise various modes of production under the influence of growing technology, the prior history of the satisfaction of wants, the development of new wants, and so on and so forth. So Marx’s constant struggle is to show that the political economists were wrong in this fundamental respect: that they took the present condition to arise more or less directly out of nature. And Marx was at pains to show that this didn’t grow out of nature directly. It grew out of nature, if at all, only in such an indirect way that the manner of its growing out had to be regarded as still an operative, energetic force, i.e., history; and that what grew out of nature if it grew out at all in its present manifestation will be replaced by something else that can equally be said to have grown out of nature with the radical mediation of history.

LS: This raises the more basic question. ⁶Let us try to see—after all, we are not interested in doing what Khrushchev does; let us try to see whether one cannot make a case for Marx. Could he not say this: without necessity, without need, without misery, in other words, man would always have remained a kind of banana-picking monkey? Yes? So ⁷man had to be forced to work. That’s the old story. But this work changes man too, and at the end of this process we find a being formed by history who has needs. Needs, which needs then explain sufficiently why he would work. Does this make sense? Acquired needs, not natural needs. The natural need is that for food; but acquired needs, for example, say, for music, these acquired needs cannot be satisfied except by a mild kind of work, and so you have then here a society in the realm of freedom—you know, as distinguished from the realm of necessity. You have beings who simply by desiring to express themselves or to—how is the word of Marx?—to express their lives, *Lebensäusserung*, to upturn their life, which in the primitive condition was simply a

^{ix} IP, 513.

^x The Duke Senior in *As You Like It*, Act 2, scene 1, line 12.

^{xi} IP, 514.

desire to run around and to lie in the sun, or to perhaps have some brawl from time to time, is now a desire which, simply accompanied with a reasonably developed reason, tells them they have to work four or five hours a day so that they can listen to music and paint in the afternoon. Could this not be?

JC: Yes.

LS: That, in other words, something—nonteleologically developed needs, nonteleology: just the outcome of the historical process, and they alone make intelligible the way of life and the ends of man in that state. Could he not say that?

JC: I believe he probably would say something like this, but without making provision for one large difficulty. Both precapitalist and capitalist economists recognize one way or another that leisure is a good. Now with a simple transformation, one could say idleness is a good. As far as I know, he has no provision for a relapse into that state of the banana picking—almost. I mean, I understand that really that's pushing much too far, but there is no provision against a subsiding to a very low level out of mere laziness, say, because of the lack of pressure.

LS: In other words, Marx would be compelled to show on the basis of man as he is now, that . . .

JC: Yes, precisely. I mean, he couldn't know anything at all about what's likely to happen on the basis of something he can't see anyhow.

Student: It surely means that certain institutions create the existence of these social conditions—is enough to sustain, is enough to arouse in a man these needs. Now that these conditions are in existence, in other words, they can't just pass away.

JC: Well, it's very hard to know, Mr. Faulkner, what could or couldn't happen, because such a thing as what Marx contemplates has never really been known among men, and one has absolutely no ground for asserting that energy is more likely to be called forth than lassitude is likely to be encouraged. I don't know; it might be that these men would be—under the freedom from all competitive and other drive, it might be that they would become a very bland and easily satisfied collection of men. I don't believe it for a minute because, as a matter of fact, I don't believe that it would ever come to that, but apart from this, on the basis merely of a prognosis, I see nothing whatever anywhere either in empirical or a priori things to settle that question. I don't mean to say there's a stronger presumption one way or the other, but I think that there is no presumption—

LS: . . . Yes, but still there is one more point and that is not limited to Marx, incidentally . . . Does not the anti-Marxist economic theory require a doctrine of the nature of man?

JC: Yes.

LS: How does it get it?

JC: Well, I think from earlier discussions one would have to say it's simply scraped up together. It's sort of put together, but—acquisitive: it's the decayed elements of much earlier formulations . . .

LS: Yes. Well, the difficulty is raised, I think, especially by the Germans—you know, the historical school in Germany—that you cannot impute to man what you observe every day on a stock exchange, ya? And there is a famous story, you know, about the relativization of economic man. The economists must face that, don't they?

JC: I believe that if it were a question of trying to find the better statement among the political economists, Marx's stock objection to them would be very strong, namely, that they take to be universal the particular experience that they observe. So I don't mean to imply that Marx's shortcomings are met in the opposite school, but they have a shortcoming which is characteristic, but it's different from Marx's.

LS: Yes. And may I⁸ come back to another question which seems to me extremely interesting because it has a bearing much beyond the subject of this seminar? It's the question which you said—I don't know which expression you used about the embarrassment in which you are constantly: Shall you go into these things which are not facts, so to say, which Marx assumes as facts and of which we know they are not facts? But do we not have the same problem in every or almost every political theorist or social theorist? Think of Aristotle. Aristotle asserts certain facts explicitly or by implication, of which we know they are not facts. Ya? For example, Aristotle would regard it as impossible to have a decent degree of freedom in a large society—I mean very much larger than a *polis*. We know that isn't true. So do we do in such cases what you, if I may criticize you, did: Let us run away from these unpleasantnesses, and not face it? After all, Marx is—whatever we may say against him, that's a systematic thinker.⁹ Everything hangs together. Now if, say, a number of things [LS writes on the blackboard] which hang together so; and some of these, let me say, we know now are simply wrong, ya? You know? Good. But still we have to understand the connection. It's not true? And that is by no means a purely historical thing. It's of the utmost practical importance, because the successors to Marx who saw that Marx's prognoses regarding capitalism were wrong did not therefore scrap the whole thing. They rewrote it, and this process of rewriting is not always . . . and they claim that this rewriting maintains what was really important for Marx, whereas these things were, as he wrote them, not so important. In other words, whether the trick of capitalism is the exploitation of the European proletariat—or the American proletariat, for that matter—or rather imperialistic policies in Asia or Africa is ultimately unimportant. Marx had an inkling of that, you know, when he spoke of the workers' aristocracy in Britain. Yes? There is a remark to that effect. Do you see what I mean? I think we have to do in the case of Marx what we would also do in the case—the famous goose and gander argument. Yes?

JC: Yes. Well, I'm far from saying, or at least meaning that I wanted to escape from the problem of the facts. I was only trying to point out that one could spend too much time

arguing only about the details. But I tried to draw attention to this thing which I believe is true about Marx: that one could say that his whole structure stands or falls on the soundness of his understanding of history. If there was something really radically wrong with his understanding of history, not enough would be left to make it worthwhile.

LS: Yes, ¹⁰but here I'm sorry to—but that is not so easy, because it would then come down to a question which ¹¹can justly be described from Marx's point of view as accidental. ¹²Originally, as you know, he seems to have thought [that] in about fifteen or twenty years after 1848 the whole thing will blow up. And then he learned to his chagrin that capitalism was much more tough than he thought, and even when he died things looked very bad in 1883 for him—you know, the German Social Democratic party was growing but he didn't know what a bureaucratic party that would be . . . although he had some inkling of it. Well, at any rate—and then we remember '18, how Lenin and Trotsky in Petrograd or Leningrad kept their fingers crossed: When will the German proletariat rise? Well, some rose¹³, but the German Social Democrats took so wonderfully easily care of that rising, so there was nothing. Then I remember some crypto-Marxists who said in '44, well, after the Second World War Western Europe is completely communist because communists are the only ones who really fight in the *résistance*, which—that other point is partly true, by the way, let us even say ninety percent true, and absolutely nothing happened in the West. Ya? So, and then now of course they have written it off, at least for the duration, and they think it will come about via Mao and certain things they expect from Africa. Yes? That's clear. But what I'm driving at is this: whether the thing happens in twenty years or in three hundred years, what a Marxist could say is really a purely quantitative question, i.e., not decisive.

JC: But quantitative changes, I believe, are known by Marx to have some sort of a qualitative bearing after a while.

LS: Ya, ya. But I must say let us not—I happen to be opposed to communism in every way, but precisely for this reason I cannot take the view which a businessman can take: if it comes after my lifetime I don't care. I care very much whether it comes after my lifetime, and therefore the real issue is whether it is altogether feasible with—I mean, that they may win militarily I regard as absolutely feasible, but whether it can be at the same time the true liberation of man, that alone is of course the question.

JC: But this, Dr. Strauss, is what I mean to be saying. I mean, that it might happen I too am perfectly aware, but I think if it happens because two billion people rise up against one billion and—the same way that Alexander the Great did it, that is not at all a tribute to Marx's prescience. [Laughter]

LS: Yes. ¹⁴Yes, but the question would then be this. What then—along the lines which you suggested, we must somehow be able to draw a line in a principled manner between the really basic teachings and the teachings which could be replaced from Marx's point of view by others, and then of course . . .

JC: Yes. Well, that's part of the difficulty in Marx. Exactly because he was such a good generator of a system, the foundation is a real foundation and what comes from the foundation really comes from it; and he reasons very strictly from the labor theory of value up to the rest. And that's what makes it very hard to find this line of distinction between what really counts and what doesn't count so much.

LS: All right. To this I will give you a strictly orthodox Stalinist answer. That the . . . by Marx is stated, and this constant issue of communism on the basis of the . . . literally what Stalin said.

JC: Yes. Then in that case, it's up to Stalin to say why we have to study it at all any more, because one could say it's all dated.

LS: Because Marx discovered, they would say, the decisive points to the extent to which it was possible to do so in 1848 following, and that we could say. We have to rewrite it, but the basic principle is the realm of freedom at the end, and the general terms of communism to be prepared by a dictatorship of the proletariat. That remains, and this crucial step, they claim, has been proved possible because it has become actual. And then of course one would have to go into the nice question: Is dictatorship of the Communist Party identical with the dictatorship of the proletariat? It's the issue between Trotsky and Lenin on the one hand, and Stalin on the other. And so on. Sure.

JC: Yes. That would surely be one of the questions, but I believe the other question, which is perhaps even more important, is whether it is not true that the ultimate success of the Marxist system—assume it for the time being—isn't exactly for the reason that Marx denied could ever be decisive. I believe if it ever comes to pass that this dominates the world, it will be because there was a man, and he thought certain things and his thoughts had a certain effect; and I believe that they were probably three-fifths wrong, but it makes no difference. And what really matters is many people were convinced and received into their minds an opinion which was a wrong opinion, and that was what was decisive, and no nonsense about history and the material—

LS: Yes, yes; sure.

JC: —formula. Yes. But that, I think, is really why it's so important to see that his prognoses are not facts: they're wrong.

LS: No, no; that's perfectly true. But the question which we cannot take up here of course is to what extent, say, Lenin's and the later ones' modifications are only of such a nature that they are perhaps not yet refuted. Ya?

JC: It could be. Yes. That's mere footwork. That's dancing around and helping out. [Laughter] Sure. Well, this is always very attractive. One can hardly keep from it. But it's, there is—

Student: I think what's also relevant to Marx's economic thinking is the fact that the state should become the chief coordinator of economic affairs . . . because economics . . . state of scarcity . . . he is thinking in terms of a state of plenty . . .

JC: Yeah, but what he ultimately means is the state will vanish entirely.

Student: But during that time the state exists, there is a certain amount of privation . . .

JC: Although it might be—

Student: Although it might be a workers' state.

JC: Workers' state, yes.

Student: And this seems to be a contradiction, because that by implication means that the workers are exploiting themselves.

JC: Well, he would say it's not exploitation under those conditions.

LS: Ya, he mentions that, and he even speaks of that . . .

JC: It's not exploitation; as a matter of fact. Where is it? In the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, I think it is, he shows some mistakes on the part of—what is it—the Lassalean [influence] or something.^{xii} And he says they argue that under certain conditions—you know, the workers' state and so on—that the workers would get the full product, the full output of labor. He said: That's absurd; they can't get the full output of labor; some part has to be taken away for investment, some part for education, public services, and that. And he said, "Well, of course"; so, by the way, we have a modification of this foolish notion. But it's not exploitation, for sound reasons.

Student: He criticizes . . . you accept that definition? Then he . . . even in a workers' system.

JC: Well, the workers' system wouldn't have surplus value because—at least it wouldn't deserve to be called that. Surplus value is a characteristic of capitalist production, or the private ownership of the means of production, let's say.

Student: The thing necessarily is that according to the Marxian theory they don't pay the worker the full value of his product. That this implies even in the workers' state—

JC: The full value of its product, that's out of the question anyhow. But the full value of his labor power . . .

Student: Yeah, labor power.

^{xii} *Marx-Engels Reader*, 529.

JC: Yeah, it's a different thing.

Student: The full value of labor power would require, to me, the value of the product, ultimately.

JC: No, no. No, you see, now, for example, the cotton and the spindles that go in there: that's not labor or labor power.

Student: . . .

JC: Well, you mustn't leave out, in other words, all the capital which is merely reproduced in the product. Marx talks—the contradiction . . .

Student: . . .

JC: But he knows that question. He knows that question very well. And it's in there; not only here, but also elsewhere, Mr. Shetty. No, he knew that very well. But let me see if I can be of any help with respect to some of these difficulties in chapter 17, where he speaks of many things that depend on the difference between productiveness and intensiveness of labor. Suppose that it's true that in a day of eight hours, the working man can produce eighty units [JC writes on the blackboard] of some output, and suppose now that there is an invention. And it doesn't have to be, incidentally, a new form of capital; it could be that instead of some silly way of organizing the process of production—like, for example, they take in all the raw materials at the bottom of a very tall building, and then the successive stages of production are from the ground floor up to about fifteen stories high, and this out in the middle of a broad prairie. They're making automobiles like that, let's say, which means that they have to overcome gravity, carry everything up to the top. And then the finished automobile is made up on the top story, and then they have to lower it down in order to get it down. And then somebody thinks: This is the wrong way to do this; why don't we instead get the raw material up to the top and work the machine down, see, so it gets heavier and heavier as it goes? Fine. So, as a result of this, they now make one hundred sixty per day. Now suppose that to begin with, a man got twenty dollars a day for working. [JC writes on the blackboard] Now Marx's point is the twenty dollars would have first been spread over eighty units, but afterwards it's spread over one hundred sixty units. That's how many. You see?

So now if this bar diagram again represents the whole length of the working day, and let's just keep in here the difference between the necessary and the surplus labor, just . . . [JC writes on the blackboard]. This, which used to be spread over eighty units is now spread over one hundred sixty, but nothing has happened to the relation between the necessary and the surplus labor times. Suppose that ¹⁵the day was divided exactly halfway between the two. That would mean it used to be forty, and forty in the two halves, and now it's simply eighty and eighty, with each unit now getting one half as much of the increment of . . . that it used to get, that's all. Right? So the essential point about the increase in productiveness is: It leads to a decrease in the allocation of labor to

each unit of the output. Less increment ¹⁶of value because less attribution of labor, absorption of labor to each unit. Okay?

Now what about intensiveness? Let's begin in an order which Marx doesn't use. Suppose it were true that in each minute of laboring time, a man put forward x units, measured in physical terms, of labor. And let's—I don't really remember what, let's make believe it's ergs.^{xiii} Does anybody know for sure if ergs is a proper measure of this thing, I don't know what?

Student: . . . a measure of physical work . . .

JC: Work, very good. All right. Let's suppose in one minute there's an output of some number of ergs. And let's suppose now that something happens. There's a campaign or Stakhanovism or something like this, and now everybody simply works more, harder. There's a further intensity of labor. Now that would mean that what would happen to the output for the whole day, starting with A : you should get 160, right? But what's the significant difference between this condition and the other? Where productiveness increased, the amount of labor was cut in half in each unit of the output. Here, with the intensity increase the amount of labor incorporated in each unit of the output is identical; and therefore double the number of units means double the amount of labor, and therefore twice the value in the course of the day. Is that clear? Increased intensiveness means in a given amount of time the working men put forward more labor. They worked harder. You could think of the working day as having a density of labor or energy output, suppose represented by the shading there. [JC writes on the blackboard] And now if the intensity were to be increased, the day would become more dense with labor output. So in other words, the notion of the variation of intensity of labor denies the assumption that the amount of labor output is directly proportionate to the passage of time. On the contrary, the possibility of an increased intensiveness of labor asserts that the expenditure of labor is irrespective or may be irrespective of the passage of time. Increased intensiveness means precisely jamming more labor into the same length of time, and decreased intensiveness ¹⁷would of course mean opening up the day and decreasing the density of the instance with expenditure of human energy. Is that all right? That's why productiveness and intensiveness have those two different effects. Please.

Student: It's also interesting, too, another difference between them is that the one is external to the worker, the other one is internal to the worker. One, you could say, stems from the capitalist, the other stems from the worker himself.

JC: That would be one—you could say something like this. ¹⁸In a way, that's altogether misleading, though, because it could be that increased intensiveness is the result of the man going over to a certain box on the wall and turning a screw, and that immediately causes the transmission belt carrying the work to go twice as fast as it went before. That's called a speed-up, and that's a way of increasing the intensiveness of labor. So it doesn't come necessarily from internally, you know? In fact, that's the least interesting source of it from his point of view.

^{xiii} A unit of energy in the small-metric system.

And now I could give you this very formulaic expression of the difference between increased productiveness and increased intensiveness. Increased productiveness has two different kinds of effects. Per unit and per *day*, and likewise increased intensiveness per unit and per day. Increased productiveness has these effects per unit: less time, less labor, less value per unit. But per day, the same value. Right? So the same value per day, more output, less value per unit. Less time per unit, less labor per unit, and also less value per unit. But now increased intensiveness per unit, less time also. Like increased productiveness. *But* equal labor. Not less labor, equal labor. And therefore equal value per unit, and therefore per day, more value. Right? Now I've used simply less and more, but if you were to use some factor, like two, or half, or something like that, you could make it even simpler. All right? Does everybody have that? I mean, it's worth having in front of you, because it makes that chapter very easy to read, and otherwise it's very hard to read. There are all kinds of difficulties. Well. I beg your pardon.

Student: The intensiveness as you described it comes out to the same thing as the same thing as lengthening the working day.

JC: It has some of the same effects, but so also does increased productiveness. They both have some of the same effects as increasing the length of the working day as, for example, to increase the product.

Same student: So where would increasing the working day differ from intensiveness in what it does per unit? If you make the man do eight hours' work in six, or just keep him around ten hours 'til he does eight hours, isn't that economically the same thing?

JC: The difference between the proportions of the working day, surplus—

Different student: . . .

JC: But ¹⁹that goes into the product and is reproduced anyhow through depreciation. So that doesn't matter—I mean, no matter whether you work at all, except for the fact that there is some gain in lengthening the working day. That's what Marx said earlier, because if you let it lie idle then there's obsolescence for reasons of non-use rather than use. Please.

Student: Increased intensiveness has the effect on a per day basis of producing more value.

JC: Yes. Yeah, you see, because increased intensiveness means [that] over the same twelve-hour period, more work is done, more labor is done. With increased productiveness, the same amount of labor is done. It's just cut over, spread out over more units of the thing. But we'll come to that question, I believe, in a minute, when we go into his arguments with respect to the three or four different cases, you know? Two constant and one variable. Rotating the variable one, in turn, and then the last comes to the variation of more than one. Mr. Brown, did you have a question?

Mr. Brown: I just wanted to underline that increased intensity does not mean more value for. . .

JC: No, it gives equal—no, my formulation was this: if increased intensiveness is per unit less time, equal labor, and equal value per unit, for the day, obviously, more units with equal labor each is more labor for the day and therefore more value. And now we might take up a few of the examples that he gives in chapter 17. He says on page 569: “we have seen that the relative magnitudes of surplus-value and of price of labour-power are determined by three circumstances; (1) the length of the working day, or the extensive magnitude of labour; (2) the normal intensity of labour^{xiv} . . . ; (3) the productiveness of labour, whereby the same quantum of labour yields, in a given time, a greater or less quantum of product,”^{xv} and so on.

Now what he’s going to do is to take these three—I would suppose that the German word was moment, these three moments or factors of production, of the productive process (it doesn’t mean factors of production in the usual sense of economic theory)—and to see how the wage can be expected to vary. The price of labor power and the surplus value can be expected to vary given these changing combinations. The reason for this, for doing this is that he is now making the transition from the theory of profit to the theory of wages. Of course that’s absolutely a misleading way to put it; he doesn’t accept the distinction between profit and wages as it was constructed by political economy; so whereas in an ordinary book of economics of roughly his period, you’d have a section on distribution, which would have a part on wages and a part on profits and a part on interests and so on and so forth, in Marx you have a book on production, this volume 1. And that book on production shows to begin with the theory of value, and then the how the theory of value leads up through the theory of surplus value to the general theory of the distribution of the added value product, socially made. But if you wanted to try to squeeze this into the same framework as the normal books on economics of roughly his time, you would start out with the theory of value—say, theory of production of value—and then go from production to distribution. Now he wants to show how the political economists have not correctly understood the production and distribution, either separately or in their articulation. And for the ordinary formulation, he’s now substituting this, which is a very deeply thought-out thing and very impressive. But as I say, we’re now on our way to part 6, where he deals with wages. That’s why we’re now doing the kind of thing we are. It’s why chapter 17 has the title that it has. The price of labor power obviously is the preparation for wages. That’s next.

Right, so now. Length of the working day and intensity of labor: constant, those two, that’s the bottom of 569. Productiveness of labor: variable. Now on these assumptions, he deduces three, I believe, circumstances. And maybe we’ll try to work our way through some of these.

^{xiv} Cropsey omits these words in original: “its intensive magnitude, whereby a given quantity of labour is expended in a given time.”

^{xv} IP, 519.

“A working day of given length always creates the same amount of value, no matter how the productiveness of labour, and, with it, the mass of the product, and the price of each single commodity produced, may vary.” All right? “If the value created by a working day of^{xvi} [twelve hours be, say, six shillings, then, although the mass of the articles produced varies with the] productiveness of labour [that’s the first rule—JC].”^{xvii}

What happens when all you do is change productiveness? The whole mass of value produced throughout the day is the same. And why can he say that, incidentally? How can he get away with saying it? What’s the premise for that?

Student: Money is the standard.

JC: ²⁰Well, that happens to be also true, but that’s built directly into, that follows right out of his two assumptions at the Roman numeral I. ²¹That remark that he made would not be true—“A working day of given length always creates the same amount of value,” and so on and so forth—if he were not assuming a working day of a certain length, naturally, and also if he were not assuming that the working day of that length always yields the same amount of labor, i.e., the rate of labor output per unit of time is a constant. That is to say, intensity, intensiveness of labor is a constant. So one way to get misled here very easily is to take his general statements as if they were universal. He doesn’t mean them that way. You have to take them the way that he means them. He says, I’m assuming, under Roman numeral I, the things stated in the heading. If those two are held constant and the other one is allowed to vary, *then* all these things which I assert without constantly repeating, I’m assuming so and so, then they all follow, see, but not otherwise. That must be kept in mind.

Now, 2: “Surplus-value and the value of labour-power vary in opposite directions. A variation in the productiveness of labour, its increase or diminution, causes a variation in the opposite direction in the value of labour-power, and in the same direction in surplus-value.”^{xviii} Now this has to be understood a bit in light of its background. Ricardo and many others had made remarks, observations before about what they call wages and profits. And Ricardo’s formulation was very clear: if wages go up, profits have to go down, because the two of them come out of a single fund, and what augments one has to diminish the other—assuming always of course that productivity is as stated at the given time. Now Marx’s reformulation of this avoids the reference to profits and wages in so many words, because he is interested in this more underlying, more fundamental relation: the relation of the value of the labor power and the surplus value that emanates therefrom. If he had started to talk about profits and wages—that is to say, fall into the conventional way of describing these things—he would have given up the fruit of all his argument to this point. I only point this out to you because it might be maybe a long time since you’ve read Ricardo, and you might not have remembered that it was really part of the same development.

^{xvi} The tape was changed at this point. The words in brackets fill in the passage that was being read.

^{xvii} IP, 520.

^{xviii} IP, 520.

Now if you look at chapter 18 in this book, you'll notice the effort to restate the conclusions, to correct the conclusions of classical political economy comes to a point in the manner of expressing the relative bulk of the surplus. And he takes issue with the conventional way of putting it, i.e., the computation which is implicit in the traditional notion of profit. I point this out to you prospectively. The reason for the peculiarity of the expression here is the same as the reason for the insistence that the surplus should be stated in a certain way and not in some other way, in chapter 18. Because you might very well say: Well, who cares whether the amount of the surplus is stated by reference to this denominator or that denominator? And Marx says it makes a great deal of difference for certain reasons, and that's why he has to restate the theory of distribution.

All right. So then that's what he's about here, but now let's look to see a bit more of the details of this formulation and why it's true. Surplus value and the value of labor power vary in opposite directions. Now we could show that very simply [JC writes on the blackboard] by the use of this same diagram that we have here. It amounts to no more than this: if this line of the distinction between necessary and surplus labor, now, could be moved down, the other one, and it shrinks; therefore N shrinks. S therefore has to increase. That all that this thing amounts to. That's the point of this remark: "A variation in the productiveness of labour, its increase or diminution, causes a variation in the opposite direction in the value of labour-power."^{xix} Why does the value of labor power find a place in this formulation? Value of labor power is simply another way of saying the size of that N. N, the amount of the necessary labor time, with the amount of necessary labor, is an indicator of the value of labor, labor power, because this N means that which is necessary to recover the costs of generating a certain amount of energy, output or labor power. So what he has done is to express the same thing there in two different forms.

Now at the bottom of the page he goes on and says further: "the value of labour-power cannot fall, and consequently surplus-value cannot rise, without a rise in the productiveness of labour."^{xx} That's the beginning of the last paragraph on the page. I only remind you that he understands that this is not a general statement; it's only true given the assumptions from Roman numeral I, page 569. All right. See, you have to be careful constantly: if you don't read them as he wrote them, you'll think he was wrong where he wasn't. I mean, I'm not averse to finding something wrong in Marx, but I'd rather have it that it's not something right which one finds to be wrong. There are quite a few things which are right.

Now 571 top, there is a useful addition to the argument: "It follows from this, that an increase in the productiveness of labour causes a fall in the value of labour-power and a consequent rise in surplus-value, while, on the other hand, a decrease in such productiveness causes a rise in the value of labour-power, and a fall in surplus-value."^{xxi} The whole thing comes together there. All right? That's a restatement.

^{xix} IP, 520.

^{xx} IP, 521.

^{xxi} Chap. 17. IP, 521.

Now Ricardo knew this, apparently, or quite a bit of it, and Marx goes on to say [that] Ricardo overlooked one circumstance when he formulated this law, and so on and so forth, and Marx then goes on to show what he overlooked. It begins after the second semi-colon, about the fifth line in that paragraph that has “Ricardo overlooked”: “it by no means follows that they vary in the same proportion [that is to say the value of laborpower and the quantity of the surplus—JC]. They do increase or diminish by the same quantity.”^{xxii} That’s clear. In this thing that we have here [JC writes on the blackboard]: that shaded area is the quantity of the decrease in the necessary, and obviously the increase in the surplus. What Marx is driving at is: the proportion that that absolute change will bear to the surplus and to the necessary will be an identical proportion only under one very special case, namely, where S and N were equal to begin with. But if S and N are unequal to begin with, as for example this [JC writes on the blackboard]; and now we want to take that as the increment and decrement, respectively, then Marx has this obvious conclusion: this is a very large proportion of that, whereas it’s only a very small proportion of this. So you could say that S increased by twenty-five percent [JC writes on board], and maybe you have N decreased by five percent, or something like that. All right? So that’s the point of that observation.

Now number 3, bottom of 571: “Increase or diminution in surplus-value is always consequent on, and never the cause of, the corresponding diminution or increase in the value of labour-power.”^{xxiii} ²²That’s still following from the conclusions from his supposition that it’s productiveness only which is varying, and not either the length of the working day or intensiveness of labor. He goes on to explain more precisely what he means and how he arrives at that in the next paragraph, but we can’t stop because I see that there are some other things.

Now, but on the top of page 573: yes, here is where he raises the question of the difference between changes in the process of production in wage goods industries, as I have called them (I mean, that is, as they’re generally called now but not by Marx) and changes in the other industries. “The value of labour-power is determined by the value of a given quantity of necessaries. It is the value and not the mass of these necessaries that varies with the productiveness of labour.”^{xxiv} And so on. So now then he goes on to consider the effects of changes in the production of necessaries as distinguished from just any old commodities, and I won’t go into that.

Now if you turn over, on page 574, you’ll see in the middle of the paragraph at the top part of the page that here Marx goes on to consider Ricardo’s position. And he objects against Ricardo: “He therefore confounds together the laws of the rate of surplus-value and the laws of the rate of profit.”^{xxv} Marx wants that distinction to be kept clear, and a full explication or fuller explication of that distinction will become manifest in the

^{xxii} IP, 521.

^{xxiii} IP, 522.

^{xxiv} IP, 523.

^{xxv} IP, 524.

comparison of formulas 1 and 2 in chapter 18. It's a question of what you compare the surplus with, whether the whole increase of value or only with the necessary part.

Now in this passage, Roman numeral II: "Working-day constant. Productiveness of labour constant. Intensity of labour variable."^{xxvi} That opens up the possibility that within the day there will be more work done, even though the length of the day remains unchanged. And he says so on the first line, so that gives the clue: "Increased intensity of labour means increased expenditure of labour in a given time." Now I think that might be sufficiently clear so that we don't have to spend much effort on it. I would only point out to you that it's in this—page 575, second, well, first whole paragraph, only whole paragraph on the page, he says now:

"We know that, with transitory exceptions, a change in the productiveness of labour does not cause any change in the value of labour-power, nor consequently in the magnitude of surplus-value, unless the products of the industries affected are articles habitually consumed by the laborers."^{xxvii}

That's the wage goods industries point, and if you follow that out, then you'll come to the conclusions which I think we've already alluded to or pointed towards. In other words, an increase in the productiveness of labor in the workings of a—

Student: . . .

JC: No, I was going to take the example of something in the wage goods industry. An increase in the productiveness of labor in the industries that make work clothes would lead to a reduction in the price of work clothes, and that would presume—you know, because, say, half as much labor came to be included in a pair of denim work trousers as before. Something like that. Well, then instead of having to pay eight dollars for them, the man would only have to pay four dollars. Suppose, to take a simple example. Well, that would be of importance for the value of labor power, but if it were an improvement in the production of Austin-Healey racing cars or something like that, then presumably that wouldn't have a significant effect on the value of the labor-power at least of many working men. Now, so that's there.

Now the third one that he considers is: "Productiveness and Intensity of Labour constant. Length of the Working-Day Variable."^{xxviii} And I think it's not worth our while to follow our way through these things, but you should be able to do that now by yourselves. On the top of 578 there is another one of these remarks which point towards a physical understanding of the economic process. The sentence of course begins at the bottom of the previous page: "The value of a day's labour-power, is, as will be remembered, estimated from its normal average duration, or from the normal duration of life among the labourers, and from corresponding normal transformations of organised bodily matter

^{xxvi} IP, 524.

^{xxvii} IP, 525.

^{xxviii} IP, 526.

into motion, in conformity with the nature of man.”^{xxix} That would raise some difficulties, but I can’t stop.

Well, there are just dozens of things. At the end of this chapter, on page 581, he has an interesting observation about how to promote the decrease in the labor done on the average by all men. It’s a very simple device: let everybody pitch in. The trouble has been that quite a few people have been living without labor for a very long time, as far as anybody could remember. Now Marx would suppose that something could be done to improve the opportunities of the hitherto laboring poor to develop themselves and so on, if those parasites who have been living off their labor would begin to do a little something for themselves. You can imagine; like, for example, Marx and Engels: such parasites. It would have been very helpful, I’m sure, if they had been put to work in a factory somewhere or digging something or other, and I can think of maybe a few more illustrations not so very far away. All of us [laughter]—for example, all of us; that kind of thing. Yeah, now how he could have written *Das Kapital* after seven or eight or nine hours of work every day, it’s a very old question. And whether it wasn’t, whether if it wasn’t quite defensible that he should not have pitched in and done his fair share of the rock-carrying, I think it might be a question which could well be raised. Not to mention even some other people whose views at least weren’t in conflict with their manifest practice and necessities.

Now in chapter 18, various formulae for the rate of surplus-value; I think by now you understand it sufficiently well so that it’s not necessary for us to go over it in detail. But the difference between one and two—formula one and formula two—is the denominator, obviously, that against which Marx wants to express the size of the thing in the numerator. Every ratio is the size of the numerator expressed by reference to the size of the denominator as the basic entity of magnitude. And Marx thinks it’s quite important which one you use as the measuring unit. The very word ratio, I think, suggests the full importance of getting the thing quite straight. If I’m not mistaken, in the Romance languages, what we call a proportion or a ratio is expressed literally by the word reason, *raison*.

LS: *Raison*.

JC: Yeah. So that the *ratio*, or ratio really expresses the reason, so to speak. I believe that that must have something to do with the foundation.

LS: There are two words for it . . .

JC: Well, even more complicated, but surely in his formulation it becomes quite clear that thing against which you compare the numerator makes all the difference for understanding the whole relation. And that he says on 584: “Instead of the real fact, we have the false semblance of an association, in which labourer and capitalist divide the product in proportion to the different elements which they respectively contribute

^{xxix} IP, 527.

towards its formation.”^{xxx} And ²³that’s what he doesn’t want to appear. It isn’t true that they contribute and that this is some sort of an association in which everybody takes something that he put in. And that’s the misleading character of the expression of profit, and the ratio of the rate of profit as distinguished from the rate of surplus value, as he would like to have it expressed.

Now I’ll think we’ll simply have to make some sort of a compromise with respect to part 6 on wages. I think it’s not terribly difficult; the only technicalities which arise which are in any way complicated are on pages 594 to 598 or 9. Well, generally speaking, in other words, the chapter on time-wages, because after that it becomes less technical. So why don’t we settle for something like this: that we’ll say a few things about chapters 20 and 21 next time, but not so much as to throw the schedule off. And then we’ll have the paper on part 7. And that’s—who is that? . . . And then we’ll spend the rest of the time on part 7. And the next time after that, on the Monday, will be our last session. That will be part 8. And let me see now, and then perhaps we’ll have a little time left so that we can make some summaries.

LS: . . . I think there is one question which is of general interest in chapter 6, or 5, and ²⁴you referred already to that: Marx develops a doctrine of his own, and then this doctrine is a radical restatement of what the classical economists had thought. But the classical economists had kept the appearances, or closer to the appearances, and Marx goes to the literal reality of the thing. That’s the claim. Now this I think raises an interesting question much beyond Marx, because all scientific social science raises this claim, that it is not deceived by the appearances as common sense is but brings out the hidden reality. In fairness to Marx one must say that starting that way, Marx sees he is under necessity to explain the appearances, whereas the typical scientific social scientist simply dismisses them without trying to understand how the appearance arises. I would like to develop this next time shortly, if I may. Good.

¹ Deleted “paragraph”

² Deleted “it cannot, it can’t”

³ Deleted “Do you”

⁴ Deleted “that he”

⁵ Deleted “means, it”

⁶ Deleted “Could Marx”

⁷ Deleted “it was”

⁸ Deleted “bring up”

⁹ Deleted “and if”

¹⁰ Deleted “but still”

¹¹ Deleted “is”

¹² Deleted “Whether Marx”

¹³ Deleted “but the Germans took”

¹⁴ Deleted “no the question”

¹⁵ Deleted “it was”

¹⁶ Deleted “of labor”

¹⁷ Deleted “would have meant”

¹⁸ Deleted “he, well, he”

¹⁹ Deleted “that would go”

²⁰ Deleted “No, that’s something”

²¹ Deleted “those”

²² Deleted “that’s the”

²³ Deleted “he’s”

²⁴ Deleted “that is”

Session 15: May 18, 1960
***Capital*, chapters 19-24**

Joseph Cropsey: I suppose that Dr. Strauss had some things from last time, and then we would clean up the chapter 19 on time-wages, and then . . .

LS: There were only two points which are of some general interest . . . entirely without the scope of my knowledge. There is a remark a bit earlier on page 440, note 3. That has very much to do with the question which we discussed in connection with *The German Ideology*. You remember, what comes first in time is not necessarily the cause of what comes later in time. Marx says: “The English, who have a tendency to look upon the earliest form of appearance of a thing as the cause of its existence,” and so on. That has something to do with this, and Marx sees this of course as a defect, obviously. That is of some relevance, I believe, for the question of historical materialism: that food supply and this kind of thing come prior to intellectual development in time does not yet establish the fact that the thought, the myth production as I call it, is caused by the . . .

The other point is this more interesting question, to which I referred at the end of the last class: that is around 592 and in this neighborhood.

“The exchange between capital and labor at first presents itself to the mind in the same guise as the buying and selling of all other commodities. The buyer gives a certain sum of money, the seller an article of a nature different from money. The jurist’s consciousness recognizes in this, at most, a material difference [meaning not a formal difference—LS] expressed in the juridically equivalent formulae: ‘I give so that you give’ [that’s ordinary buying—LS] ‘I give so that you *do*’ [that’s the buying of services, labor—LS] ‘I do so that you give, I do that you do.’”

You see. So in other words, this is the appearance: all labor is paid just as every apple or every pencil is paid. Now the point which he makes [on] page 594, the part at the top:

“in respect to the phenomenal form, ‘value and price of labor,’ or ‘wages,’ as contrasted with the essential relation manifested therein, namely,ⁱ the value and price of labour-power, the same difference holds that holds in respect to all phenomena and their hidden substratum. The former appear directly and spontaneously as current modes of thought [that’s common sense—LS]; the latter must first be discovered by science. Classical political economy nearly touches the true relation of things [i.e., the nonphenomenal—LS] without, however, consciously formulating it.”ⁱⁱ

In other words, we have three spheres. The first is opinion, common sense; the second is science in its bourgeois form, classical economics. And the third is Marx. Now this is the

ⁱ In original: “*viz.*”

ⁱⁱ IP, 542.

great problem we have in the social sciences today, as you know, the famous difficulty: how to reconcile the commonsense understanding of political facts with the scientific understanding. If you take the extreme form, commonsense understanding is folklore. You have read Bentley,ⁱⁱⁱ I suppose. Yes? I mean, people fight for pure food. Well, that's only the sham. That's only the sham; only a fool will believe these people, unless the propagandist in question happens to be a fool himself, then you can believe him. But if he is a serious man he doesn't mean, of course, pure food. Who gives a damn for that? Ya, all right. So we must forget about the surface, about the opinion, about common sense, and give a scientific interpretation. Marx in a way admits that, but Marx does something which it is absolutely necessary to do if you have such an opinion, namely, to explain the appearance and not leave it at very general remarks—well, that is folly, swindle, and this kind of thing. He really tries to show by returning from the discovered substance or the essence of the thing to the surface, and explains how the commonsense opinion could arise. The question of course is this: The perspective of the capitalist, to what extent does Marx's point here, which is of some interest, really show the fundamental inadequacy of commonsense understanding? To what extent does it show it? The common understanding which Marx gives to us is that of the capitalist and laborer as exchangers. Is this really common sense? By which I mean this: given certain conditions, that will appear that way, but is this not common sense very uncritically understood? Common sense is not necessarily visible at the first glance as common sense. What I mean is this: one premise is made here which everyone takes for granted on this basis, which is of course not a commonsensical proposition in itself, namely, that labor is a commodity like any other. Even this juristical formula still recognizes somehow the difference by saying: I give that you give. That's exchange of commodities: buying. "I give that you do, that you do something": that's not simple commodity. Do you see that?

Now this tacit premise of the whole argument, that labor is a commodity like any other, is of course a very dubious premise, to which common sense not necessarily assents. The first man who said that labor is a commodity like any other, as far as I know, is Hobbes in the *Leviathan*, chapter 24,^{iv} but that is a very novel way of looking at it. If labor is a commodity, labor can be owned. Can labor be owned? A laborer can, perhaps, be owned: namely, if he is a slave. Marx refers to that in this connection, very interestingly, on page 593, third paragraph: "We find this individual difference, but are not deceived by it, in the system of slavery, where, frankly and openly, without any circumlocution, labor-power itself is sold."^v But strictly speaking, not the labor power is sold: the slave is sold, of course for the sake of his labor power, but he is sold as slave. In other words, certain commonsensical things, really elementary things—let me begin the sentence again. The fundamental relations among human beings do not come equally clearly to sight in all times. This kind of abomination, if we may call it that way, comes clearly to sight under

ⁱⁱⁱ Arthur F. Bentley (1870-1957), American political scientist and author of *The Process of Government* (1908).

^{iv} "The superfluous commodities to be had within [a commonwealth], become no more superfluous, but supply these wants at home, by importation of that which may be had abroad, either by Exchange, or by just Warre, or by Labour: for a man's Labour also, is a commodity exchangeable for benefit, as well as any other thing." *Leviathan*, chap. 24.

^v IP, 541.

the condition of slavery, and that is of course Marx's contention. Free wage labor is disguised slavery, and ¹that would have to be investigated. For Marx himself treats, of course, the slavery as a clue to free labor. So he starts from a situation which was not historically present to him but of which everyone knew, partly through reports from the sovereign states in this country, which reveals such a situation of labor power sold as such; or more precisely, the laborer himself sold in a direct way and where common sense itself recognizes the situation immediately.

Marx understands capitalist society to some extent in the light of the precapitalist society—to some extent, and that is one form of it. I do not know whether I made clear my point. It is a bit involved and I would be grateful if you would help me in making it clearer. Mr. Cropsey, do you—

JC: Well, there were a few things that occurred to me as you were speaking. Marx doesn't really refer to this other understanding as that of common sense, though, does he?

LS: No, no. No.

JC: It's not the common sense. It's common sense as perverted by science. There's some sort of self-conscious—

LS: That is quite true. Marx cannot strictly speak of common sense because of its historicistic character. There is a different common sense in every different period, naturally. But I was trying to restate what he is doing in terms free from that blemish, or at least in my opinion. But that one must say, apart from all factual and other errors he commits, in this respect I think we can learn something from him: to the extent to which the scientific understanding deviates from common sense, modifies common sense, transcends common sense, it is our duty to understand the commonsense view. Otherwise we do not know whether our scientific substitute for the commonsense understanding is truly a substitute for it. Ya? It may be only an abstraction, and for that matter a poor abstraction, from common sense. That is all I wanted to say.

JC: Well, that's interesting, and at one point I thought that the same was going to happen again that I was in danger of on a number of other occasions, namely, that Dr. Strauss was going to pick that passage on the page that I already had thought of as being the object of some discussion. It was on page 594 and deals with the very same question, but it happens to be the first paragraph in "Time-Wages," rather than the last paragraph in "Value of Labour-Power and Wages."² Yes, where Marx says: "Wages themselves again take many forms, a fact not recognizable in the ordinary economical treatises which, exclusively interested in the material side of the question, neglect every difference of form."^{vi} And so, strangely enough, it appears as if Marx is now calling attention to the need for considering something which is not of the material dimension in order to get a proper understanding. And in fact, he even later on speaks of the transformation, the transformation of form, which is of course a kind of absurdity, I suppose, to speak of the trans—since the word transform already has that in it, the change of the form. And this

^{vi} IP, 543.

implies that the form has a form, and that the transformation of form—so there must be something wrong, and maybe it's just that the translation isn't very sensible.

LS: Ya, but it is intelligible.

JC: ³One can see what he means: the transformation of the thing not the transformation of the form. But a particular emphasis on this need for going down deeper into the roots of things which apparently don't become visible by merely considering their material characteristics, at least so he himself says. Now what he objects to of course is science of a certain kind: economic science as it has been developed by the bourgeois economists. And of course his objection to them all the time is [that] they don't see common sense at all, ⁴or really, sub-common sense. They don't understand what's happening, partially because they are dishonest men: Sycophants, he calls them repeatedly, and apologists. And so their dishonest service of an interest leads them to say certain things which are false, and Marx always assumes that it's more dishonesty than stupidity; but sometimes you get the impression it's more stupidity than dishonesty. Well, that's a nice question in any given case as to which preponderates, but ⁵he thinks it's dishonesty and says so. Well, he contrasts the well-known sycophant and sophist Edmund Burke^{vii} with that clear-minded and honest man Bernard Mandeville.^{viii} You know, that comes up later on. Well, I mean I have no reason to think that Bernard Mandeville was not a clear-minded and honest man, but the reflection on an individual who can publicly prefer the one of these to the other is shocking, anyhow. Well.

So what Marx is apparently objecting to is science, which distorts the understanding of the real phenomenon; and then what he's going to do is to provide the economics that gets to the bottom absolutely. And now one of the things that is difficult about it is brought out very, very clearly by what Dr. Strauss said. Marx indicates that the real character of free labor is shown by reverting to the conditions of slavery. That's when you really see what happens. Now there's a very important difference between a free man and a slave. The difference is indicated by his legal condition, his legal status. Marx is compelled by his understanding of things, his mode of understanding of things, always to depreciate the merely legal or the merely institutional because that's merely historical. That comes into being and passes away, and that for Marx is decisive, that it comes into being and passes away. Merely historical. If you could find some human condition which had more of permanence, but really in some genuine sense permanent, then you would know⁶ you had transcended those things which come into being and perish, and then you would have reality: in the first place, as if there were such a thing among men; and in the second place, as if political life were not given its reality by law and convention, which is a very deep question but which we can't go into now. But it is—in other words, whereas there might be some element of truth in what Marx says about some conventional economists, that they fit their understanding to the situation, that has been sometime objected to intellectuals generally. It's not only a problem of economists, you know. It's

^{vii} See *Capital*, vol. 1, chap. 13, where Marx refers to the “celebrated sophist and sycophant, Edmund Burke.” IP, 323.

^{viii} Marx refers to Mandeville, “an honest, clear-headed man” in volume 1, chapter 15, sec. 1. IP, 615.

not a question of dishonesty, either. It's a question of lack of mental power, that one can't get beyond the immediate and the visible and therefore mistakes it for the permanent and the true. That's not only a question of bourgeois economics, it's a much wider question.

But suppose even that this were true; there is, there still remains the larger problem: whether all political life isn't given its character by the formality. The formality comes from form. The form, the form of the political society is manifested in formality, a formality which looks like something perfectly transitory and accidental, and which in a certain sense is, but in another sense isn't. What you could say is the real misunderstanding of the ground of political life flows from the doctrines of men like Rousseau. The real foundation of a true and generous and unhypocritical human life is in a way a falling away from formality. And the self-expression of the individual in all of his idiosyncrasy—well, idiosyncrasy is the opposite of formality, which means the fitting of the individuals to a more general constraint. Without that, political life strictly speaking is impossible, and on that basis one can see why Marxism is a radicalization of Rousseau and leads to the withering away of the state, i.e., of all formality, and merely a homogeneous mass of humankind: distinctions break down; formality, evanescent, is transcended; and then man finally comes into his own. That, I suppose, you could say is the real basis of Marx's misunderstanding through science. His science has also its defect, which is akin to the defect that he finds in the science of the bourgeois economists. They can't get a proper understanding of the reality element in the transitory and in the permanent. But that's a very wide question, and I think we ought not to try to go further into it. But on the other hand, today, maybe more than any other time, it makes some sense to give a little thought to these very broad questions, with the representatives of the principal Marxist society in an uncommonly aggressive mood and bringing forth fully to everybody's attention the possibility of a certain future for all mankind.^{ix} That has to be thought about a bit.

Now I think, with Mr. Schick's indulgence, I'll take a few minutes to . . . ^x but really just a very few, and then we'll come to the paper for part 7. Now I wanted to call to your attention that early passage in chapter 20, "On Time-Wages," and then to point out to you that down further on the same page, Marx refers to the distinction between nominal and real wages, which is taken from ordinary economic discourse of the time and is still made use of. And then he develops the distinction between the money value of a given quantity of labor as a price and the money value of a given quantity as a wage. We spoke about that last time. Price means hourly and wage means daily or weekly. And then the rest of his discussion has to do with the effect on the price per unit of labor of changes in the working day, the length of the working day, through the ratio of the price and the wage, ⁷meaning by [that] what I've just described it to be.

Generally speaking, let me remind you, he is developing in this part of *Capital*, part 6, the Marxian counterpart of the theory of distribution which was present in Ricardo very manifestly and in the other classical economists, and he is trying to show what it is that

^{ix} On May 1, 1960, an American U-2 spy plane, piloted by Francis Gary Powers, was shot down while flying through Soviet airspace.

^x There appears to be a short gap in the tape here.

affects the distribution of the incremental value between labor and the capitalists. And he tries to show that Ricardo's analysis did not go far enough, that Ricardo understood the effects of differences in productiveness but didn't take up the effects of differences in the intensiveness of labor and also in the length of the working of the working day. Ricardo assumed those things to be constant, and Marx shows how their constancy is only one out of a very large number of cases; and there are other things, in other words, that affect that distribution between the two classes. And I should point out to you, incidentally, that the thread of the argument that links parts 6 and 7 is this very interesting. The same thing, the division of the distribution incremental value as between the classes, the capitalist and the laboring class, how that distribution is affected; and also what social consequences, you might say—or maybe more exactly, what economic consequences the manner of that distribution has. And finally, the ground, and maybe even the moral ground as well as the strictly technical ground, for having such a distribution.

Let me make that a bit clearer. A conventional defense of allocating some part of the incremental value to the employing class is: the employing class *saves*. In virtue of their having rather large income, more than what they need to keep alive, they are able to save. Therefore they perform a social function, and this is a kind of justification for the private ownership of the means of production. I put this very broadly now. And Marx has tried to get once more to the root of this function and to see what really happens when there is capital formation—which is a term he doesn't use, but it's the equivalent of accumulation, as it turns out to be in the later part. And of course his conclusion is that the capitalists do not perform an indispensable function but that they can easily be dispensed with. And he tries to show on moral and technical grounds, if I may make that distinction, that once more the whole burden of the economic process rests on the back of the working class, and every progress comes eventually out of their skins and nowhere else. That's the general line that these last several parts have.

Finally, he's going to take up the question of how it all began, which is really an ancillary question; it's not uninteresting. Subordinate question. He's compelled to answer the question: Did the process of accumulation begin in some acts of labor by the capitalist class? Obviously not the present individuals, but was it a long time ago true that some people worked very hard and were very parsimonious, and they were, in other words, the rational and industrious, and the rationality and industriousness of an early generation of capitalists is responsible for the present distribution of wealth? Or is it not rather true that there was plundering to begin with, and you can't even find that petty justification for the present system as would arise out of some legality, say, or decency in the primary act of accumulation. You can imagine what his answer will be, but ⁸that's the point at which the argument in book 1 of *Capital* comes to a halt.

Well, I didn't mean even to take up this much time, because otherwise we'll have a terrific problem. But book 8 happens to be very short, incidentally, so ⁹I think what we'll do is to do ¹⁰all the chapters in part 7 this time, except for the general law of accumulation, which is the last and longest chapter in part 7. Let's hold over that chapter for next time together with part 8, which is very short, and then we can hear Mr. Schick

now on the all of part 7, and I'll try to discuss all the chapters except that last one, leaving that over for next Monday.^{xi}

JC: Now, especially toward the end there, you raised quite a few interesting questions. Well, we'll come to those, I think, after we dispose of simpler points. But there are a few things that occurred to me, unless Dr. Strauss, you'd rather take off first?

LS: No, no . . .

JC: Well, now, as you rightly say, Marx did encourage the overthrow of the current order, but I believe you gave the impression that Marx's view of the superiority of the succeeding condition depended on a superior opportunity for acquisition or accumulation under those conditions. But was that the drift of it?

Student: I didn't quite understand the part of the principle, the principled change from capitalism to communism, because acquisition still seemed to be the goal, accumulation . . .

JC: One could say that about Marx. And at one point, and it would take me too long to try to find that passage again, but the point of it was: the real advantage of the postcapitalistic order will be a soft development of the individual, this free work and expression of his idiosyncrasy and all his powers, and so on and so forth. Accumulation is strictly speaking out of the question.

Student: . . .

JC: Well, either way, I think, because the common ownership of the means of production simply rules out accumulation in the ordinary sense.

Student: Yeah, accumulation in the capitalist sense, but isn't wealth still not the sovereign goal . . .

JC: Yeah, sure. But there would have to be a sufficient base in adequate private consumption for all this development of the self, it's true. But it isn't clear, either from Marx or from other sources, exactly what level of consumption has to be guaranteed for those purposes. Now when he says "from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs," he's saying that some people will require only rather little, and for them that's all that they should have. And it should be [that] they will regulate this by themselves; this indescribable morality or conscience that will be present in all people, that will prevail. But somehow or other that will operate, and then some people will have little and other people will have much. And I think he probably didn't mean that some people are by nature acquisitive or avaricious, and therefore they will have houses with swimming pools and chauffeur-driven cars, and so on and so forth, and that other people

^{xi} Mr. Schick read his paper, the reading of which was not recorded. The recording resumes with Mr. Cropsey responding to Mr. Schick's paper.

are naturally ascetic, and they'll live in garrets, and this is purely out of choice—you know, that kind of thing; I believe what he meant was [that] everybody will have very modest ambitions along these lines, but what they need for their painting and sculpture, and, you know, spare time activities, little things like this—which could be mountain climbing too. You know, it dissolves into a sort of pre—

Student: I didn't mean to say that this amount of accumulation feels tremendous, leading to . . . but only that it just seemed to me that after they performed the revolution, the idea of natural . . .

JC: . . .

Student: Because the very last sentence in the book starts with . . .

JC: You mean in part 7 or part 8?

Student: . . .

JC: Well, now you're poaching on Mr. Phillips's property. [Laughter]

Student: “the capitalist mode of production and accumulation, and therefore capitalist private property, have for their fundamental condition the annihilation of self-earned private property,”^{xii} and this, in other words . . . of expropriation, there seems to be more than one of expropriation . . .

JC: Yes, it's common sense . . .

Student: Probably still to be . . .

LS: May I suggest that we look at page 639, where he discusses this.

JC: Yes, that's the page to which I have the book open. Yeah, the right-hand side, where he speaks in effect of Locke's principle.

LS: There is a dialectic.

JC: Yes. And that got transformed; that's the trouble. It was overwritten. Whereas before, really—well, he says, “At first the rights of property seemed to us to be based on a man's own labour,” and so on. At least some such thing was necessary.

LS: Everyone has the right to the product of his labor, that is the starting point.

JC: Yeah, then at the bottom of the page and turning over: “Now, however, property turns out to be the right on the part of the capitalist, to appropriate the unpaid labour of

^{xii} This is the last sentence in chapter 33. IP, 774.

others or its product, and to be the impossibility, on the part of the labourer, of appropriating his own product.”^{xiii}

Student: This seems to imply that he should have the right to his own property—

JC: Sure. That’s true socially. Yeah, the whole . . . has the right to the output to all mankind together.

LS: Yes, if I may say, the dialectic is this. It really starts with everyone has the right to the product of his own labor, ya? Locke. And then we discover a certain difficulty. Yes, he can have it only provided he possesses the means of production; and therefore we come into the question: How did he get the means of production in the first place? You know? And this turns out to be some fraud, and that leads us only to the condemnation of capitalist society. But how are we led beyond it? Because we see that [the principle that] everyone has the right to the product of his labor is based on the principle of the division of labor. Therefore no one really does *his own* labor; it is always affected by the labor of others. Therefore society as a whole has the right to the product of its labor, and each one according to his contribution.

JC: Yes, I believe one could say life is properly speaking understood only as the life of the human kind. The life of the individual is not important or interesting. I mean, you know, this sounds as if it means something different from Marx’s notion because it’s been attributed to other very brutal people, militaristic and all that kind of thing, but he didn’t mean it that way. But really the individual, in a certain sense, much as he’s emphasized by Marx, is not the last word simply. And then you have the idea of the life of mankind, the working of mankind; call it society with the understanding that that’s comprehensive. And then you have man opposite nature, as he says repeatedly. They come together; they work. And to parcel out the output as if some people had superior rights to bigger chunks of it than others, that overlooks altogether the fundamental pairing of man on the one side and nature on the other.

So the sociality of the act of production should be matched by the sociality of the act of consumption. That finds its highest expression in “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,” which altogether obscures—well, it transcends the rights of individuals. Marx says this in *The Critique of the Gotha Program*. He said ¹¹this goes beyond the notion of rights and really of this individual justice which is connected with the idea of right. He himself says it transcends right; I don’t think he says it transcends justice. But what he means by right is the rights of this man to this. “From each according to his ability” means some people might produce a great deal, but yet because they’re hale and hearty and so on, don’t require very much; but then others might be invalid, produce nothing, and yet have enormous needs and so on and so forth. So rights in that petty sense, that’s out. He says that’s false equality. It’s really a transcending of equality.

LS: In fairness to Marx, one must say that he is of course concerned with the individual. I mean, there is no mystical collective there. The collective is the totality of individuals.

^{xiii} Chap. 24, sec. 1. IP, 584.

Each has to eat, sleep, and so on, by himself. No, that I think is—that one must emphasize.

JC: Yeah, there is no doubt. I mean, the strength of Marx's emphasis on the individual, that is so emphatic that one can easily mistake that for the whole. It is very important, there's no doubt. And when Marx ridicules these Hegelians or post-Hegelians and others for speaking always about man as man—you know, that solves everything, you talk about man as man. And Marx says: That's nonsense, man as man. They're a lot of individuals; this one, that one. What he does, I believe one could say, is the following. Marx considers the element—the capital, the individual—on the one side; and then he considers the totality, all mankind, on the other. Everything in between is a kind of illusion. The state breaks down—I mean, these artificial distinctions break down. All you have is in a certain sense the most natural things of all: the individual, and all the individuals; the one and the many. But not yet the species. But he's a bit unhappy about that idea and sometimes objects to it, but other times [he] makes use of it because the notion of the species apparently leads to some idea of the permanence rather than the evolution of the species, and he would rather not have that idea gain a foothold. But that's very clear: the individual and the absolute totality of all the individuals, with the dissolution of the things in the middle. Those, if one could happily articulate those two poles, I think one would really have it in Marx. That would give one a very good framework for understanding the whole thing. But I cut you off three or four times in the course of this.

Student: . . .

JC: Yeah, sure, sure.

Student: . . . this sense of Marx's intuition is a more radical, say . . . as such, it's not philosophical . . .

JC: Something along that line I think we would all agree with, that it's some sort of a—but that Marx supposed that mankind would be better off out of poverty than it, that's clear. But so would everyone else say so. And if that's what one means by saying he had something in common with the bourgeois economists, surely one would have to grant that. He didn't like the poverty of millions of people—you know, ground down and all that sort of thing. And he thought that a more sensible system of distribution based on a more sensible mode of production—it goes without saying that has to come first—would abolish the problem of poverty. Sure. Now there have been various formulas for the abolition of poverty, one of them having been a classical economic one. But that has to be understood. Smith said that there would be five hundred poor for every rich one, but the poorest would be much better off than even the wealthy under some radically different economic system.

LS: The savages.

JC: “The absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages,”^{xiv} yes: that the poorest European peasant would enjoy more of the necessities and conveniences of life, by and large. I mean it’s not quite so simple, but something like that. Now, so that would be the abolition of poverty within some limits. The abolition of poverty absolutely; but no possibility for abolishing poverty if poverty means distributional questions or analysis. If poverty is tantamount to inequality, then that’s out of the question, that can’t be abolished. Marx would say that’s not necessarily true. And in fact, he would say the contrary: the real abolition of poverty we now see in any sense whatsoever depends upon the melioration of the distributive order arising out of the mode of production. And then there’s a real, a very important difference. And when you said that he was a revolutionary, I took you to mean exactly that, that there was such a difference between his understanding and that of the predecessor view. That nothing except a cataclysm would bring it about.

Student: . . .

JC: Well, ¹²so that brings us back more or less full circle, and I think we wouldn’t gain by further discussion. But now what do you take, Mr. Schick, to be the difference between simple reproduction and the conversion of surplus value into capital as he deals with it in the twenty-fourth chapter? See, 23, as you know very well, chapter 23 is called “Simple Reproduction,” and chapter 24, the “Conversion of Surplus-Value into Capital.” And what’s the difference between those two subject matters? Do you happen to recall, very broadly?

Mr. Schick: Well, as I recall, the first . . . increase the relation between capitalist and labor . . . and there’s not this factor of the relation of . . . increases at a progressive rate.

JC: Oh yeah, you said something about progressive accumulation being the increase at an increasing rate or something like that, and this was more or less the point that I thought we ought to get straightened out on. Simple reproduction could be described in non-Marxian economic terminology as no net capital formation. And the conversion of surplus value into capital is positive net capital formation, but not at an increasing rate, necessarily. ¹³It could be that ¹⁴if they keep doing it all the time that they would be compounded, because the surplus value of the basis of the previous increment of capital would be larger than before, and therefore, you know, it’s the principle of compound interest, plainly. Yeah, his discussion breaks down into these two parts: with capital formation and without capital formation. If no capital formation—no net capital formation, I’ll discuss this in minute—then the whole thing, surplus value’s simply the consumption of the capitalists. So they live very well, that kind of thing.

Now he would like to know: How does the situation change from that sort of position—if it ever existed, I mean, it’s not historical necessarily—but what’s the meaning of going from simple reproduction to net capital formation? That’s why this thing about abstinence comes up in the next chapter. See, that’s why all those questions get dealt with. What is it that brings it about that the capitalists don’t apply the whole surplus value to their present

^{xiv} Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), book 1, chap. 1, “Of the Division of Labour.”

enjoyment? See? It might be consumption. Well, that's what we should pay a bit of attention to more systematically. But Dr. Strauss, did you have something?

LS: Well, I have one point I would like to make clear, [to] emphasize in connection with a point we discussed before in discussion of his paper. I think it is absolutely necessary, Mr. Schick, to keep in mind that Machiavelli—Marx. [Laughter] That was really an absolute indefensible slip of the tongue, because for Machiavelli the realm of necessity is eternal and for Marx it is not eternal, so I apologize deeply. But Marx's whole notion of communist society presupposes a moral regeneration of mankind, and this implies the disappearance of the profit motive in any manner, shape, and form. Marx is the heir to German philosophy, as he always stated, to that Kant-Hegelian resurgence of the higher and nobler against the low and solid, not to say sordid, previous classical economics. That's what he says. Now the other point which you made very forcefully is this, and I believe we have not stated this hitherto simply and clearly enough: the simple coincidence of analysis and indictment in Marx. Every step of the analysis is a nail driven into the moral coffin, if one may say so, of capitalism.

And now a few points. For example, the surplus analysis, chapter two, beginning: fraud. That's the plain word for political . . . Then another point—first, is fraud. Still you can say: Well, there are solitary frauds, perhaps. No, the capitalist process is a degradation of the many by the degraded few. Yes? Number three: the degraded and the frauded are the majority, and therefore in the long run the stronger. And fourth, there is an alternative. Now, and I think of course one would have to pursue—and I thought in this section today, the crucial point, it seems to me, as far as indictment is concerned is this. Marx still argues until chapter 8 from the premise [that] maybe at the beginning the capitalist is an honest man, meaning that the capital is congealed labor, i.e., his own labor, and nothing is wrong with that, is it? Take it as the premise that everyone has the right to the product of his own labor, and if he really tightens his belt and abstains, that is okay. Now Marx makes here this point, I think, ¹⁵in part 7 which struck me. All capital now, even if it is originally honest labor, is acquired by exploitation because the simple production—that, I think, is the moral meaning of that—the simple production is a transformation of honest wealth into dishonest wealth. You know? And then of course he comes in finally with the eighth part, in which he says there was never a trace of honesty in capitalism because the accumulation was robbery. Ya? Is this not true?

JC: Yes.

LS: ¹⁶So Marx is of course at the opposite pole of any value-free social scientist, that has to be said because, to repeat: every step of the analysis is an indictment, and the relative power ^{xv}Marx must have had is due to the fact that he starts from principles. And that I believe is the point where you were seduced into some error, that he starts from certain moral principles which were universally admitted or quasi-universally admitted; for example, labor is the origin of all value and every laborer has the right to the product of

^{xv} There appears to be a brief gap in the tape here.

his labor. And he says: All right, let us argue from that and then I show you that you have no leg to stand on.^{xvi}

JC: Well, I would remind you that *Capital*, book 1 has as its subtitle, “A Critique of Political Economy.” I mean, I mentioned to you that each one of the three volumes forming the analysis, the analytic part, is called a critique of some part of the capitalistic system, and this is the most important one because it is the critique of capitalist production. Volume 1, the critique of capitalist production. I say this in the light of Dr. Strauss’s observation that it’s both analytic and critical all the way. That was of course what Marx meant even in the title of the book. It’s a critical—

LS: Yes. Here let me ask you: Did you not make a remark at an earlier time about the title of the book? What did that . . .

JC: I did mention the titles as having to do with this critical character of the whole enterprise.

LS: Ya. Well, but could one not say this . . . that this is really—capital is *the* problem of man, the problem of *man*. I mean, it is the latest form of the problem, but it is still the fundamental problem of man, exaggerating a bit but not from Marx’s point of view. Capital is the same fundamental problem which was originally known by the name of God. It is *the* fundamental threat to human happiness. Feuerbach took care by his philosophy, by his critique of religion, of God . . . That Marx always presupposes. He has a famous statement: the critique of religion is the fundamental . . .

Student: The critique is the beginning of the critique of capitalism.

LS: No, no, he was just saying the following terms: the fundamental critique is the critique of religion. Feuerbach had done already that. But what is God, understood: that which makes impossible human fulfillment, human happiness. But God doesn’t exist from the atheistic point of view. You have to discern the reality hidden by God. This reality in its ultimate form, in its most developed form, is capital. And therefore one can say ¹⁷the whole philosophy of man is concentrated. The whole philosophy becomes concentrated in an analysis of capital. But you have to have studied before Feuerbach; that Marx takes somehow for granted that you have . . . economics.

JC: Yes, well, this point sometimes has occurred to me in a form of that formula that philosophy culminates in philosophy of history, and philosophy of history culminates in economics.

LS: Ya, ya. That’s the same thing.

JC: Yes, that the problem of the mode of production is reflected in religion, as he says, and so everything that one finds believed among men, and particularly believed upon that subject, is simply a reflection of man’s miseries. Yes, sure. It follows. Yes, the economic

^{xvi} An exchange between Strauss and Mr. Schick follows, which is drowned out by airplane noise.

aspect of Marx is by no means simply a sideshow that he found he had to go into in order to conduct his journalistic affairs properly, but that has a more solid foundation.

Well, now. So very briefly then, in chapter 23 on simple reproduction, he sets the stage—well, he sets the stage in the preamble to part 7 generally, where he says that he will take as his problem “the conversion of a sum of money into means of production and labour-power.” This takes place in the market, and so on and so forth. In other words, he’s reminding you of the series: money—commodities—money, which was dealt with earlier; and this is in fact the elaboration, the fuller elaboration of that process dealt with in the earlier part.

Now simple reproduction. He begins the discussion, top of page 620: “No society can go on producing, in other words, no society can reproduce, unless it constantly reconverts a part of its products into means of production.”^{xvii} So the last time, if I remember correctly, the question came up whether Marx understood anything about taking something away from the output of labor, you know, in order to keep the machinery of society going; and if anybody has had any doubts, then his reading of part 7 should set them at rest for all time because this is the discussion of that question. Now he carries the argument forward: “If production be capitalistic in form, so, too, will be reproduction.” Page 620, middle. And that means that the process of production and reproduction will have this much in common: they will be affected, not to say they will have as their essence, the circumstance that some part of labor is paid for and another part of labor is not paid for. So the phenomenon of surplus value, that is going to turn out to be the guiding fact in the discussion of reproduction.

Now he gives the basic definition of simple reproduction at the top of page 621:

“If this revenue [which is the surplus value—JC] serve the capitalist only as a fund to provide for his consumption, and be spent as periodically as it is gained, then, other things being equal,^{xviii} simple reproduction will take place.”^{xix}

All right, so that means, in other words, if the surplus value goes to the enjoyment of capitalists as individuals, then there will be nothing but the keeping up of the level of the capital at its original state. Now at this point, I might remind you of some elementary discoveries of more recent economics ¹⁸because it’s pertinent to the present chapter and to the one that follows. You’re probably aware that in so-called National Income Accounting there is a category the Gross National Product. [JC writes on the blackboard] Gross national product is defined as a certain sum of expenditures: the sum of investment and expenditures by government.^{xx} And ¹⁹everybody has heard also of the category called

^{xvii} Chap. 23. IP, 566.

^{xviii} In original: “*caeteris paribus*”

^{xix} IP, 567.

^{xx} GNP is widely defined as the value of all finished goods and services produced in a country in one year, before allowance is made for depreciation or consumption of capital during production. It was used by the United States as the primary measure of economic activity until 1991, when it adopted the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

the Net National Product as well. Incidentally, gross and net are—well, I mean, that’s like a vaudeville thing; you can say: Wherever gross is, net can’t be far behind. I mean, the two things only have any meaning in the light of the other. [Laughter] Now the meaning of Net National Product [JC writes on the blackboard] turns on a certain qualification of the investment element. So in order to make this clearer, let’s replace investment in the gross formula by gross investment, and investment in the net formula by net investment. That—is there anybody who hasn’t at one time or other been herded through this material? I mean, everybody has—well, almost everybody has [laughter] been driven through this material for one reason or another. Now does anybody happen to recall the difference between gross and net, net investment?

Student: Net lacks depreciation.

JC: Yeah, depreciation. That’s the quantity that makes the difference. [JC writes on the blackboard] Now the only reason for taking your time with this is [that] depreciation is very important in the Marxian formulation. Depreciation is, in other words, wearing away of the spindle—you know, in the textile example. It’s part of what goes into the product but is not any part of the value added, which is correct. I mean, I say it’s correct; the correctness of it is vouchsafed by the fact that it’s also asserted by non-Marxian economics. Now this depreciation then can be taken out ²⁰from the form that we have it. We could concentrate on the second column [JC writes on blackboard] and say gross investment minus depreciation equals net investment. And now suppose it should be true that the whole amount of the investment in a given year should be exactly equal to the amount of the depreciation that year, by which I mean the following. Suppose that one could determine that the wearing away of machinery—the grinding down of the brakes on the railroads, and the wearing away of the rails, you know, all that sort of thing. That comes to a value, suppose, of forty billions of dollars in the course of a year, and suppose it should turn out to be true that when you add up all the acts of investment by all the producers, that they add up again to a total of forty billions.

Student: Excuse me, when you say gross investment—^{xxi}

JC: —equipment, which could be machinery, moving parts or not moving parts, domestic construction, housing construction, and then something else called net foreign balance, which is the algebraic sum of the inputs and the exports on the current account. [JC writes on the blackboard] Now this is called domestic investment, and that’s foreign investment, and gross investment is the sum of the two—oh, I beg your pardon, plus inventory . . . it’s very important. Now when you take all of those together and you consider what has been allocated to that in a year as against what has been subtracted from it by the course of industrial production through friction, obsolesce, then you get gross investment minus the depreciation, equaling the net investment.

Now my point is this. Suppose when you add up all that which has been done by the way of investment in the course of the year, it turns out to be forty. And then you find out that the amount of the depreciation is exactly the same. Then you could say [that] what has

^{xxi} The tape was changed at this point.

happened that year was people fed themselves, clothed themselves, so on and so forth, and then in addition they allocated some part of their productive activity to maintaining the capital structure so that it didn't shrink. And that's all they did: they just kept it up at the level it had been at before. But that's what I mean by saying gross investment equal to depreciation. Obviously, then, the difference between the gross investment minus depreciation under those conditions would be equal to zero.

That's the condition which Marx is describing when he talks about simple reproduction. What has happened to the surplus of the society, the whole—I'm not talking about surplus value; forget about that way of conceiving things. What has happened to the whole surplus of the community, the amount that they generated above what they actually needed in order to keep going? Was there any surplus? Well, there was a surplus so far as depreciation had to be taken care of. There was a capital item, but there was no net capital item, you see? S, above consumption, above consumption there was a certain amount. How much was it? The amount of the depreciation. That amount went back into the machine, but nothing more to build up. Now from this you could say [that] these people lived high on the hog. They must have enjoyed themselves. Now if they had tightened their belts a bit, then they could have net investment. But net investment equal to zero is the condition in which gross investment and depreciation are identical in amount. Now I point that out because some of you might know this very well and not have thought of connecting it with Marx's condition of simple reproduction, simple reproduction meaning that: zero net investment.^{xxii} Now the depreciation, what about that? In Marx's system, where does the depreciation go?

Student: . . .

JC: Yeah, it goes into the value of the product. It's not part of the value added; it's part of the value transferred. In, say, in non-Marxian terms, how is that provided for? How does capitalism come to get a sum at the end of the year with which to replace the worn-away capital? It comes from the sale of the product, doesn't it? The product has a value which is composed of two elements: the value transferred from existing labor, congealed; and the value added by living labor. Right? So the value is the sum of already-existing value plus value added. That finds its way into the price. That's a complicated question. Let's make believe it's settled. Marx says he won't go into it here; and it's all right, there's no point going into it. So that if the object is worth one hundred dollars—and the reason for that is that eighty dollars worth of value has been transferred from previous labor, crystallized, and twenty dollars worth has been added—Marx would say, along with the conventional economists, [that] somewhere out of that eighty dollars must come out a fund, out of which the four shillings for the spindles and so on will be accumulated, and which will then, at the end of a certain length of time, when the spindles are totally worthless and all value has been transferred to the yarn, they will be able to be replaced. So that's exactly what's said in this somewhat different form. These are, so to speak, universal facts, at least as far as anybody has been able to understand them, whether Marxists or not Marxists. The process of production leads to a degeneration in the means of production, and there has to be some regeneration out of the act of exchange.

^{xxii} Presumably Cropsey points to the blackboard here.

Otherwise the resources of the community will subside to an unworkable level. And this is what Marx is saying, in non-Marxian terminology, but which could be much more familiar to you—which I know some of you have had. Anyhow.

Now in Marx's language this distinction—the gross investment and net investment, or the quantity of depreciation—finds a reflection in the distinction between variable capital and constant capital. But it's not exactly the same thing. The constant capital is the amount spent on those things which merely go into the product and which have to be recaptured in order simply to keep the level of the machinery and other goods, non-human goods, at their original status. And then above that there is the surplus value, which is provided out of the variable capital, which comes about as a result of the investment of the variable capital because of the phenomenon of the unpaid labor. So out of that cream that rises to the top off the application of the variable capital comes the possibility for net investment. That net investment is what Marx takes up in the next chapter.

Now the other point that he speaks of in the chapter on simple reproduction, which I have to mention to you, is already in a way disposed of by a remark of Dr. Strauss's before: that no matter how legitimate the primary accumulation might have been, carrying out the process of production under capitalist forms obliterates that original legitimacy, if any, because after a period of time—and Marx shows you how you can calculate that period of time—after a period of time all the original capital has been replaced by an aggregate of surplus value which has been piled up down to the present time. So maybe within the first three years of the beginning of the capitalistic system one could say that there was still the fruit of the accumulator's own labor in it. Maybe. But after some period, like ten or fifteen years or some such—which means, in other words, that it's absolutely irrelevant and of no interest whatsoever. So the whole fund of capital as it now exists is the result of the exploitation of the real sources of surplus value, i.e., the proletariat.

Then from this Marx goes on to draw another conclusion which is aimed at orthodox economists. And it's a good thing to have this in mind all the time. Almost all his conclusions provide the basis for a further criticism of some point in classical economics. Who is it who really gives the working men their subsistence? And as you look at Ricardo or Smith and other classical economists, it appears as if this is advanced to them, to the workers, by the capitalists out of some fund or wealth or something that really belongs to the employer. Marx says no: if you think of the source of capital—say, variable capital, which is equal to the wages paid—that's simply the surplus value from a previous generation. Not a previous human generation but a previous economic generation, because he speaks of the necessity for this process continuing repetitively, stage by stage by stage. And at any given point, the mass in existence is simply ²¹the result of the previous few stages. What is it at any given time? What is being advanced to the working man? Answer: the surplus value of their own recent activity and of their elders in the race of working men. So that to try to provide a moral ground for capitalism on the proposition that the capitalists advance something to the working men—I leave out altogether the time question, which Marx dealt with also, whether it's an advance or not an *a posteriori* ²²payment out of work already done, but leave that alone. So there isn't any advancing. It's not that the working men are being given something which belongs

rightly to somebody else for them to live on for the time being, but, on the contrary, what they're being advanced has only been stolen from them to begin with and now it's being given back to them under the guise of some pseudo-humanitarianism. Though it's a very strong statement, as you can tell by listening to it, and it's part of Marx's very strong argument. Now that of course has something to do with the abstinence thing, which turns up in the next chapter.^{xxiii}

LS: I'm sorry. It's a wholly impertinent question, but I can't suppress it. How is what Marx calls literal reproduction, how is it called by present-day non-Marxists? . . .

JC: Well, or in other words: By what right is it now understood that it's . . . Well, Frank Knight wrote a famous book called *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit*,^{xxiv} in which the general thesis is that the organization of the process of production involves a foreseeing, an arrangement with an eye to certain things that can't be properly known, they can only be estimated or guessed at; and therefore the people who do it have to be compensated on a kind of actuarial principle. That there must be enough in it, socially—I mean, not for this individual, maybe, because you look at any individual, he could easily lose everything—but for the whole class of operators of that activity. There must be a compensation to make it worth their while, otherwise they would all become employees. But that's in a way nonsense, because of whom would they become the employees if this thing were socially unprofitable? That is to say, unprofitable in the aggregate. So that was one of the ideas.

Then there's also abstinence. But generally speaking, people don't make much of that anymore. Knight's thesis is quite—well, you know [laughter] because that sounds as if it's a value judgment, among other things, that it's good to abstain, and who would ever be found in public saying such a thing. Well, it is in a way contradictory, as Marx points out, that abstinence should be the basis of the high standard of living. Well, I think generally speaking what people have tended to do when they think about the question at all, which is rarely, is to say that it has to be done. Somebody has to do it. Under a situation of private property, it has to be worthwhile. Or in simple language, somebody, men who do it have to be able to live on it. They also take this rather social point of view: all things which have to be done have to be done by living men, and that means that from production they must get enough to live by. Now then the question is: Exactly how much is necessary in order to get each kind of individual to do the work that he's called on to do? And then that problem breaks down; the solution breaks down. It doesn't break down formally because of the device which has been adopted, namely, the transfer of the notion of rent from the rent of land to all other distributive shares.

And this is the famous stock example: Is it true that some motion picture actor or actress would not continue to do his work if he were not paid two hundred thousand dollars a year? Suppose the answer is: No, he would not stop doing his work; he would continue.

^{xxiii} Chap. 24, sec. 3.

^{xxiv} Frank H. Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit* (1921). Knight (1885-1972), an influential economist and a prolific author, was professor of social thought and philosophy at the University of Chicago.

Then how far down could you go before you'd get to the point at which he'd say: I'd rather become a bus driver or something, or something like this. It might be that you have to go down to about ten thousand dollars before he would actually change his occupation, because he likes being famous and so and so forth. So then they say: Well, the one hundred ninety thousand dollars of his income is rent, and the other is his wages for labor service, with the understanding that the justification for rent has nothing to do with the provision of any labor service. Of course rent comes from the idea that land, the payment for what Ricardo called the original and indestructible properties of the soil, or something like that. Then, in other words, it becomes simply a question of supply and demand, and not the sacrifice on the part of the individual which requires a certain compensation. So that's what I mean by saying that the explanation of distribution in a way breaks down. But economists are not happy with the theory of distribution. That's where they're most visibly confronted with the moral question, so to speak—I mean, how can we talk about distribution without saying something about rights and wrongs? And so it sort of gets—to the extent to which it can be done, it's transformed into another part of marginal utility theory. But it doesn't altogether work.

Now I thought that we were going to leave open only one more, one chapter, “The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation,” but I believe we're going to have to leave open also the question of the “Conversion of Surplus-Value into Capital”; that is to say, net capital formation greater than zero, and what that means. But that's not difficult. I will only point out to you by way of anticipation [that] on page 642 you can be treated to one of the rare uses in a technical economic treatise of the term the just price. I mean not in a historical sense, but he's talking about the just price, meaning it seriously. On the right-hand side of the page, 642, exactly the middle of the page: “If laborer B is employed with surplus-value produced by laborer A, then, in the first place, A supplied this surplus-value without having the just price of his commodity reduced by one farthing,”^{xxv} and so on and so forth. You know, that's a term with a long prehistory. People have sometimes said that there's something about Marx which is reminiscent of much earlier times, and some people even have said Thomas Aquinas. I think most people who do that mean to disparage Marx by saying so and to imply there is what is called scholasticism about it, which is in some people minds only the same thing as strict deduction; but of course it doesn't necessarily only mean that.

Now ²³in part 7 and part 8 particularly, Marx's concern with the morality of the distributive order, or of the justness of it, becomes very manifest. And you might notice this and also try to understand on what ground he can speak so indignantly about cheating, which he does—about injustice, if he doesn't provide a sound basis for understanding man's morality, maybe by some reference to what human beings are. You know, the old question: human nature. Otherwise somebody will come and say to Marx: Well, your understanding of cheating and so on, that's purely provisional; that doesn't depend on human nature or the ground of human behavior, but that's just your preferences, Marx. [This] raises difficulty.

^{xxv} Chap. 24. IP, 586.

Student: If Locke's contribution was to make the spirit of the government simply there, providing rules for correcting basic individual actions on fundamental things like only just . . . and such things, could it be said that Marx tries to return to the political spirit of distributive justice?

JC: Yeah, well, one could maybe say something like that, but always disturbed by the recollection that Marx's formulation ends in the withering away of the state or the political life, so that it would be misleading, I think, to say that Marx was attempting to restore the political. He was, I suppose you might say, trying to find a basis for justice without reference to the political, although—

LS: Well, you can say [that] in Marx's final formula of justice the destruction of the political is implied, because political justice *par excellence* is distributive justice: from everyone to his capacities, to everyone according to his deserts. And Marx says: To everyone according to his needs. That's the Stoicist view of justice. But one point became clear to me now in the last discussion, and I think in order to understand Marx's argument regarding justice, one must distinguish two levels. And that is perfectly—I mean, I don't say this critically of Marx, I say this only as the best defense of him. First of all, he has a kind of commonsensical notion of justice to which ²⁴the rule belongs—how do you say?—everyone has the right to the fruit of his own labor. Ya? That's justice. But this is not the highest standard, as appears from the fact that in the final society everyone has the right to what he *needs*. Ya? ²⁵And in other words, this is still mercenary, still mercenary, and that is however the highest standard of justice you can expect hitherto in human history. And capitalism is morally bad because it does not live up even to this average standard. But then when capitalism will be superseded by communism we will get a perfectly nonmercenary justice, if we can still call that justice, and that is from everyone to his capacity and to everyone according to his needs. But he is of course perfectly justified in applying the commonsense standard of justice to a given institution. There is nothing—after all, in all moral thinking we have somehow a distinction of two notions we call justice: something which is generally speaking practical, and then that which is simply perfect. That you would find everywhere, and I think . . . Marx tries to destroy the political, and the simple formula is the denial of distributive justice.

JC: That makes sense.

LS: Yes, yes. I mean, distributive justice is, to repeat, from everyone according to his capacity and to everyone according to his merits. If I may take a slightly improper example, Khrushchev must help the socialist society according to his foxy capacities and he must of course get also the reward for it, meaning very great authority and also lots of gravy, which goes as a matter of course, you know? I mean, they don't pick a young Russian working man's daughter by lot for accompanying Mr. Khrushchev to Washington;^{xxvi} they take Mr. Khrushchev's daughter, as they would do in every other society. You know that? But that is however the political standard which Marx rejects as below the true dignity of man. Now this—of course I mean the notion of something transpolitical has always existed, and even always in a way as a standard, an ultimate

^{xxvi} Khrushchev visited the United States in 1959, arriving in Washington on September 15.

standard for the political, but it was always understood that the political is coeval with man, and Marx however thinks the political can be abolished.^{xxvii}

¹ Deleted “that of course”

² Deleted: “**Student:** 504? **JC:** No, 594. **Student:** Oh, I see, yes.”

³ Deleted “You”

⁴ Deleted “they don’t”

⁵ Deleted “he often”

⁶ Deleted “one had”

⁷ Deleted “that’s”

⁸ Deleted “that was the”

⁹ Deleted “I think what—I can already see what’s going to be happening”

¹⁰ Deleted “all the chapters—I beg your pardon, Part 8”

¹¹ Deleted “this really”

¹² Deleted “so that”

¹³ Deleted “it might turn out”

¹⁴ Deleted “if you”

¹⁵ Deleted “in chapter”

¹⁶ Deleted “and I think one”

¹⁷ Deleted “that is really”

¹⁸ Deleted “some of you”

¹⁹ Deleted “you”

²⁰ Deleted “in the”

²¹ Deleted “the process”

²² Deleted “you know”

²³ Deleted “Marx did have a”

²⁴ Deleted “it belongs”

²⁵ Deleted “You know?”

^{xxvii} The tape ends here.

Session 16: May 23, 1960
***Capital*, chapters 25-32**

Joseph Cropsey: [In progress] —the matter which Marx takes up under the heading of the General Law of Capitalist Accumulation. You'll be aware, what he does is really ¹to give his own version of the theory of population as it arises or did arise in classical political economy. Now what Marx does is to start with the problem of the composition of capital once more, which is a question that he had raised and for previous purposes disposed of much earlier in the book: the distinction between constant capital and variable capital. And then what he does in the present chapter is to consider the dynamic, so to speak, of the proportion between constant and variable capital; and then what he does in the present chapter is to consider the dynamic, so to speak, between constant and variable capital. He had, to begin with, to consider that relation in order to amplify the labor theory of value and to lay the basis for the proposition that the incremental value comes only from a certain kind of investment, namely, the investment in variable capital, or the sum of the wages paid, as he sometimes puts it.

Now here his purpose is not to that, say, analytical purpose or instantaneous purpose, but his purpose is to try to say something of the change in the ratio of constant and variable capital, as that change must necessarily take place by reason of the inner laws of the working of capitalism. Something must happen to the proportion of constant and variable capital as capitalism itself develops over time. Now that ratio is what Marx calls the organic composition of capital, and that organic composition of capital turns out to have a very important function in a context that doesn't arise in book 1 of *Capital* at all, and so we can dismiss it for present purposes. This organic composition of capital, I remind you, has two aspects or sides. One of them is what Marx calls the value side, and the other is the material side. What he means there is: the ratio between the values of the constant and the variable capital; and the ratio on the other hand between the mass, whatever that might mean, of the constant and the variable capital. It isn't so easy to understand what he could mean by the real bulk of the constant and variable capital. For example, if it were to be a question of bushels of corn and bushels of oats and various means of subsistence on the one side, versus a number of hand looms on the other, it would be perfectly simple. But the fact of the matter is that the problem arises for Marx because of the qualitative differences in the constant capital as technology advances, and how one is supposed to compare the mass of one set of machines with the mass of another set of machines is altogether impossible to understand. One would have to reduce it to the weight or the volume, or something like that. In other words, there is no sensible comparison except what is reducible to the value composition.

But apart from all that, Marx goes on to speak about the ways in which this capital is augmented, increased, taking up the argument from the² previous part. Now the general principle has been established: the augmentation of capital is the result of the accumulation of surplus values. ³Transcending the simple reproduction now and speaking of the progressive augmentation of capital, what occurs is [that] the surplus value is

accumulated by the expropriators who add it in some part in various forms. This is Marx's problem. The surplus value is taken up, and then ⁴some decision has to be made by the capitalist as to whether he's going to split that surplus into constant capital and variable capital in one proportion or another. And Marx wants to come out to the conclusion that the increment, the capital, must inevitably be divided more and more and more in one direction rather than the other, with a growing emphasis on the constant capital part of the organic composition ratio.

Why does he do that? Did it occur to anybody? Why does—what is the great benefit to his final conclusion from the fact that the surplus value tends to always be shunted more and more onto the side of constant capital?

Student: For me, it's about the exploitation of labor, because labor's wages constantly . . .

JC: Well, you could say it leads to more exploitation; but on the other hand, doesn't it appear also as if it would also necessarily lead to less exploitation? Because what is the ground for the employment of the proletariat?

Student: What is the ground?

JC: Yeah, on what does it depend, the possibility of employing the wage earner?

Student: Well, manufacturing plant or—

JC: Yeah, ⁵in one sense, but: variable capital. See, the variable capital is that on the basis of which the employment of the proletariat is possible. It's their wages. Suppose that shrinks relatively, not to say absolutely, that variable capital. Then what about the possibility of employing the proletariat? I mean, I now speak very crudely, it's true.

Student: Well, that gets smaller.

JC: Yeah, you would think that this cuts the ground out from underneath the expropriation of the next generation of surplus value. What does Marx say to this? Does it really do that? Well, that was the point of your first conjecture, that it leads to greater expropriation and exploitation. Marx wants to come to this conclusion: that as capitalism advances there is a pressure on the capitalist always to apply more and more of the resources of the society to the constant capital side, leaving all the less, at least relatively, for the employment of labor. Now this fund, the variable capital which is available for the employment of labor, is the source of the living of these men and women. If it shrinks, then, and you want to keep employed more or less the same number of people, it's perfectly obvious: the dividend shrinking, the quotient is going to have to become less and less, what's left over for each one.

So Marx then has laid the basis for an argument to the effect that real wages have to fall all the time, must fall all the time; and yet, you know what I mean by this: the dividend

shrinking, but the number of people, let's say, remaining the same for the time being [JC writes on the blackboard], although as a matter of fact they've been shown to increase. Then the quotient for each one must become smaller and smaller, which is the real wage. This is Marx's point: that as capitalism advances, surplus value is taken away in larger and larger absolute amounts. He has shown how, in the previous parts, that mass of surplus value (remember?) which he then shows in the development by a certain formula: the rate of expropriation multiplied by the amount of the variable capital. You remember I told you at the time when we worked on this that that was an extremely important proposition, as tautological and simplified as it might appear. This, that $S = S \text{ over } V$ times V . And then you remember what he did there: he showed that if the variable capital increases and the rate of exploitation decreases, certain things will happen, but if the rate increases sufficiently to overmatch the decrease in the variable capital, then the mass of surplus value will still increase. And that's really what he meant to show will finally take place: that the bulk of this S , out of which [JC writes on the blackboard] the constant and the variable capital have to come in the next generation; that will increase, but with C getting larger and V getting smaller.

Student: The surplus . . . well, surplus capital exists in the first place because labor power is paid for according to a theory of production, a theory of what wage labor is worth. And now we find that labor is getting paid out of a wage fund theory of how much money there is to pay. So you have two theories explaining the amount of wages, and if the second one replaces the first, then you no longer have any reason to have what you call a surplus value theory.

JC: Not precisely, Mr. Benjamin. You see, he provided against that when he said that the cost of labor power is not just how much it takes to stoke up the engine, but that there's conventional aspect of it, and that there is—in other words, there's a kind of swing or margin within which it's possible to adjust the wage.

Student: Well, that conventional aspect I would have assumed would be determined by sociological rather than directly economic factors; that is, not the amount of money around but the customs, the style of life handed down by generations.

JC: That's true; that's what he meant.

Student: So that, in other words, simply because there was less money wouldn't change the customs.

JC: No, I don't think that the quantity of money would by itself be sufficient—

Student: The quantity of money for wages.

JC: Well, even that wouldn't quite do it. ⁶Let's take him to mean here real capital rather than the money itself; and I think that what he would say would be the amount of the means of subsistence available for payment through the variable capital can increase, all right, but it doesn't increase as fast as the mass of the workforce. Now this is too bad, to

begin with, from his point of view because it makes him look like a Malthusian, see, and then he appears to be saying that the human population has a tendency to outrun the means of subsistence—without any business about arithmetic and geometric, but never mind.

Now he positively does not want to fall under the influence of any Malthusian theory of population. The reason for that is the Malthusian theory of population is asserted irrespectively of all social conditions. It's asserted like a natural law, and Marx doesn't want to be caught in any assertion of any allegedly natural laws which govern this or that state of society. And he wants to show the historicity of all of these allegedly natural laws, so what he has to do is to show that what looks like the Malthusian theory of population, which shows the population⁷ outrunning the means of subsistence, is really nothing but a temporal and local circumstance of capitalism. That's why he prepares his theory of population with some observations on the ratio of constant and variable capital, you see, and how the inner working of capitalism, through the search for more and more surplus value, and the addition on top of this of technology and machine industry, leads to the need for more and more investment in machinery; while at the same time more and more machinery has to be worked by more and more men, although not in the same proportion. If we go back to his rule that the machinery must be net labor displacing: the increase in machinery must be net labor saving. That's the source of the whole problem. The net labor saving means the redundancy of the population, see. Well, so that's what I meant to begin with by saying that these observations of Marx's with respect to the organic composition of capital are meant to lead up to a certain theory of population, which in turn is meant to replace the Malthusian formulation and to show that what was asserted as a natural law is really another one of the abominations resulting from the internal contradictions in capitalism.

Now what really does that amount to? Marx asserts [that] it is not true that the whole amount of the population goes up and down in response to the variation in the availability of the means of subsistence. To begin with, Marx replaces the term "means of subsistence" with the term "variable capital," which is what arises out of his distinction between necessary and surplus labor. And now if it is not true that the population varies in response to the availability of the means of subsistence, what is it that varies? Marx says it isn't the size of the population; it's the number of the employed that varies. So now in order to operate a satisfactory capitalistic economy, what is absolutely necessary is the redundancy of the population: a great pool of available labor which can absorb the variations of employment generated by the business cycle, with the understanding that the variations in economic activity generated by the business cycle don't have anything like the same the period as a human generation. See? If it were true that the business cycle lasted twenty years, or twenty-five years or something like this, and you could fix it so that all the bursts came at the right time, namely, at the—well, I don't know, I suppose at the peak of the one cycle to be ready for the peak of the next cycle, you know—then somehow or other maybe it would work out that the burst in demand for goods would coincide with the maturing of a new generation to be added to the workforce. But Marx says it's utterly absurd: in the first place, the cycle is of a decennial period—which is not true, but suppose it were; I mean, there is no such thing as the period of the business

cycle, as people now know very well. But suppose even that that were true—it's true enough, then of course the variation in the whole population becomes irrelevant. What is it that does vary? The size of the population, supposed like this [JC writes on the blackboard], can be shown to be distributed between the employed and the unemployed at any given time. All that happens is that this boundary between the employed and the unemployed goes up and down, that's all. And there has to be a sufficient number of people around to be drawn back into employment when capital needs them, and there also has to be some place where they can be thrown out into when capital doesn't need them for employment. And he said that's what this law of population reduces itself to. It's really a law of employment, not of the numbers of the human beings, substantially. Is that reasonably clear? I mean, that is the drift of this chapter. He tries to show that what looks again like an eternal law of the relation between men and goods is something which really can be reduced to one of the minor inconveniences, analytically speaking, although humanly speaking a very important thing, of the operation of the capitalist order. That takes the place of Malthus.

Now you know his constant sniping against Malthus. He objects to him on various grounds, but probably the most important is that he has tried to say something about the relation between the number of men and the increase in the bulk of subsistence which transcends all social orders. That is his great offense: Malthus was not historical. Now I can't go into the questions of the details here; I will only point out to you this. He knows about the theories of demand and supply of labor, and ⁸he does not often lend himself to the conventional discussions, even so far as to use the conventional language. But on page 699, you'll see he does take cognizance of the traditional or more traditional account of the law of wages and the expansion and contraction of the supply of labor. What he does is to distort the traditional teaching, however, and make the conventional economists say something which they could hardly have said without having been destitute of all common sense. They didn't say that the whole population rose and fell in response to the demand for labor, because they understood as well as Marx does or did that this takes place or can take place in very short periods of time. And Smith was at great pains to speak of—Adam Smith—to speak of the long period tendency of these things to happen.

Now Marx has not, I think, effectually disposed of that contention. He has not shown that over a long period of time a decrease in the availability of subsistence will not lead to the effect that the classical economists suppose, and that increases in the availability of subsistence don't generally speaking promote an increase in the population. Now other people have understood as well as Marx that this doesn't follow as the night the day, and that there in fact has been already understood and superimposed on the laws of Malthus that in a very prosperous population there will be perhaps for some time a tendency for the rate of subsistence far to outrun the increase of the human population, as, for example, in some of the Western countries now; and to some extent, therefore, Malthus was wrong in asserting that as a simple proposition. But that is not the point that Marx is making. That wasn't the point at which Marx's criticism arose. Marx wanted to connect the law of population with the law of surplus value, and that was what the classical

economists failed to do; and ⁹to do that was his intention in the way in which I've tried to sketch it for you very, very briefly.

Now it goes without saying that the final fruit of that theory or of that explanation of Marx is an enormous increase in human misery. That's why it's true that the largest part of this chapter is given over to another account of horrors of modern industrial life, because the existence of that industrial reserve army of the unemployed, with its various categorizations of floating and latent and so on, that all adds up to one more increment of degradation, misery, slavery, the piling up of people into absolutely unbearable slums, being driven around over the countryside in gangs of laborers, you know, various shifts that they're driven to in order to try to eke out their lives in the periods when their work is not needed and they are not given any way of earning a living. Now all that one can say is [that] what he asserted is absolutely correct, that under the circumstances that he saw and many other people saw before him too, as he proves by quoting them, the conditions were absolutely abominable. The conclusion from that, however, is something very different from what he understood to be necessary. I think that he would have been inclined to say such a thing as unemployment insurance—you know, with some provision being made out of the common stock of social wealth for those people who have been put out of employment for reasons unconnected with any shortcoming of their own—is simply impossible. It's unimaginable. Unemployment insurance is unimaginable in a bourgeois society. The reason for that is it would cost the employers something, and they won't submit to it. Now he didn't say it in so many words, but I take it that his argument depends on the impossibility of that measure and similar ones. I wouldn't want to say that the future of Western civilization stands or falls on the basis of unemployment insurance benefits, but it's got something to do with it. The possibility doesn't arise. In other words, the amelioration of the difficulties by what we could loosely call political measures, that is not acknowledged by Marx, and we will have to consider this after a while.

Now on page 706, I would point out to you something which is merely interesting. It's a little curious thing. There is the paragraph that begins on that page: "The lowest sediment." Now he says: "Exclusive of vagabonds, criminals, prostitutes, in a word, the 'dangerous' classes, this layer of society consists of three categories" and so on.ⁱ Now I don't know whether the quotation marks are in the original—it's impossible to determine—but I wouldn't be surprised if they were. Yeah. I fail to understand the need for the quotation marks at that point. But you might wonder about this to see where Marx is lining himself up, or what view of human things and eventually of social science seems to be congenial to that use of the quotation marks. I would point out, if I can only find it now, there is another passage, much—yes, on page 835 to 836. "The expropriation"—bottom of the page, the last sentence: "The expropriation of the immediate producers was accomplished with merciless Vandalism, and under the stimulus of passions the most infamous, the most sordid, the pettiest, the most meanly odious." I don't see any quotation marks.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Chap. 35, sec. 4. IP, 643. When Cropsey reads "dangerous," he says: "quote dangerous unquote."

ⁱⁱ Chap. 32. IP, 762.

LS: . . .

JC: Yes, I suspected that something of this nature was probably in the vicinity. But nobody should think that it was simply a question of value-free social science. ¹⁰I call your attention to that second passage in which he was quite free to make all sorts of distinctions. And then on page 707 he gives in the middle of the page what he calls the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation. Although it is absolute, it is modified in its working by many circumstances, and so on and so forth. But we don't have to go into that. "The greater the social wealth, the functioning capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and, therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour, the greater is the industrial reserve army."ⁱⁱⁱ And then he tries to show how the more—in other words, in the expression of this law, the more successful that capitalism is in its objective, which is the multiplication of surplus value and the increase of capital, the more it has to produce the seed of its own destruction by human misery, expropriation, and immediately by the increase in the size of the industrial reserve army of the unemployed. In other words, in simple language: the more it succeeds, the more it fails. That is very important for Marx's teaching.

Now again there is an important and interesting passage from the middle of 708 to the top of 709, but I can't go into it here. It's another statement of Marx's understanding of the abomination of capitalist society, all the things that it does to the working people: "they mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour-process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power," and so on and so forth.^{iv} It's a very good statement in brief of Marx's objections.

Now the rest of the chapter consists of the bill of particulars with respect to the various localities and the conditions, in other words, of more or less chronic unemployment among a large number of people, a growing number of people, and the terrible shifts to which such people are put in order to try to keep their bodies and souls together. Now he ends with some statements about Ireland. That's the last part of this chapter. And well, all I can say is that his statistics are, you know, rather rough and ready, and it would be very hard to know whether he has really made out his case on the basis merely of the empirical things that he adduces. I surely don't know how good the statistics of income at that time were. As you know, that's a very difficult question, and a lot depends on really empirical things. To a certain extent, I believe what he's trying to say is that there was very great inequality in the distribution of income; and now, that one would probably have to grant. Then, however, he goes on ¹¹to draw some conclusions about the relations between the number of people in Ireland and the incomes of some and ultimately the incomes of all—without ever using the word income, incidentally—and there it isn't by any means clear how he is making his argument. It's a collection of more or less empirical observations with a number of restatements of his prejudices already expressed, plus the fruits of his analysis down to the present time in the argument. And for example, when he speaks

ⁱⁱⁱ Chap. 35, sec. 4. IP, 644.

^{iv} IP, 645.

about the fact that income has risen or certain kinds of income have risen— notwithstanding the shrinkage, the enormous shrinkage of the population of Ireland—but that other classes of income have shrunk, he doesn't pay any attention to the fact that removing a large part of the population removes also some part of the demand for goods.

Now Marx does this all the time. He does not like to regard the population as part of the source of demand for goods. It is his general purpose to play down the quality of the population as a place where the goods finally come to reside. This isn't very good. Modern economics might have thousands of shortcomings, and I'm sure in many ways it doesn't penetrate anywhere nearly as deep[ly] as Marx does into some fundamental things, but at least they pay attention to some details, and they do approach their work without the same doctrinarism that Marx is always guilty of, which is part of what increases the interest in his work but at other times it depreciates his work. Now you can't speak of the movements of population without speaking of the effect that the consumption on the part of the increment or decrement has on the whole evolution of income in the population. He obviously doesn't like to draw attention to the fact that when you remove some people you might remove so much consumption that the rate of activity left among the others is adversely affected, and maybe even very much adversely affected for a certain reason. Because if somebody thought about this a little bit, they would see that maybe the increase in the population can have the same effect in the other direction: more people might lead to a multiplied generation of income for the whole community and therefore also among them.

Now how much this is true and what laws of economics govern this would be a very long thing for us to go into; and really, as a matter of fact, it's not well understood even to this day, although there's a lot of analysis of something called the multiplier.^v But if one doesn't somehow pay attention to this phenomenon, then certain facts that are massive can't be accounted for, like, for example, that in spite of Marx's assertions that all these things must take place, they haven't. In the time since he wrote, there has been an enormous increase in the investment in constant capital, to use his terminology, but there has not been the technological unemployment that he predicted in the form of an increase in the industrial reserve army until eventually the weight of it would be unbearable. Something obviously must have happened to the distribution of income in the meantime, and some effect must have been produced by the mere increase in the number of human beings. Not to mention one other thing that he never gives any attention to, and there is a certain passage which I could find for you in a minute (well, it's not worth it), where he speaks about the increase in the mass of the constant capital and the displacement of the working man whose labor is made redundant now, but never pays any attention whatever to how that new mass of constant capital came into being. I mean, it must have— somebody must have made it. It's a very simple idea: somebody must have been put to work making that enormous machine. He knows that the machinery was very large, and in the middle of the nineteenth century they already had big mills and a capital item absorbed the work of many men—not only the ones immediately connected to it but, you

^v The "multiplier effect" means the change in income due to increase in final income due to new injections, such as government investment, money from exports, and investments made by firms.

know, all the way back in the chain of production. No mention of it. That has something to do with the empirical claim.

Student: It seems to me that Marx does take account of the consumer, but in a way which is more compatible with the Marxist approach . . . That is, he is concerned only with surplus consumption or consumption which might have something to do with surplus labor. Obviously those who live, consume; but obviously also they consume only just what they need to live, and this amount would always remain relatively constant, without being consumed this way. And he goes into the production cycles or overproduction cycles where you have a problem of absorbing the surplus, and these become quite significant. It does seem to me that normal consumption . . .

JC: Yeah, but you see, this normal consumption, this is a difficulty with him exactly for the reason that came up a minute ago, Mr. Benjamin, when you raised your other question. How much goes into the consumption of the working class is partially fixed by convention, or let's say by practice. Now that means that under some conditions the standard of living could rise enormously. There is nothing about Marxism that shows demonstratively why it can't happen, as long as he's talking about the conventionality of the standard of living—I mean, there's no limit to it, up or down. Well, down there is obviously a limit, you know, after a while, but up there is no limit. Now as this little empirical circumstance accounts for a very great deal of what has actually happened; so much, in fact, that it imperils the more rigorous part of Marx's doctrine. How else would one describe the condition of the working class now in comparison with the condition of the working class, say, in the first third of the nineteenth century as described by Marx, except that the notion of what is proper by way of a distribution of income has changed very much? And to a certain extent, what has achieved it is what he would never admit, namely, a merely political operation: the government, the rate of taxes. He speaks about that, but he speaks of taxes always as mostly either paying the interest on the national debt or else the poor rates. Well, as it happens, that's very inadequate. And so public finances had a very large effect on the redistribution of the national income. That's a commonplace. You know, as one could say: after certain men, Newton and others, developed the calculus, schoolboys could do all kinds of problems which Archimedes couldn't do. And now one could say: every freshman who's had a course in economics can manage certain problems which, or understand certain things which Marx either didn't understand or willfully wouldn't understand, or couldn't take into account as possibilities, namely, the wholesale or massive redistribution of income through public measures. But, and now you might say: That's purely empirical. It is.

Student: Was Marx's complication of the inevitability of revolution in the United States and Britain in the latter part of his life based upon recognition that the redistribution of income didn't occur?

JC: It could be, although I don't think he had a great deal of ground for confidence by the 1870s, because the chief instrument of income redistribution was the graduated income tax. Now Britain's income tax by that time—well, the British income tax, as you

know, is very old, but I think it didn't amount to anything until probably sometime after the First World War. We didn't have one.

Student: . . . labor unions . . .

JC: Yeah, but now if he was willing to say that the collective bargaining would make a crucial difference, then it's hard to see how he could stick to *The Communist Manifesto* in principle, see, because then there is no end to what can be done by social democracy . . . that's in fact what has more or less taken place.

Well, there's no point in continuing this skirmish with Marx over fine points. You know he saw many things and he saw them very clearly, but for a certain reason he couldn't see some things, and that goes back to points that came up when we were still talking about *The German Ideology*: ¹²What it is that is the root cause of man's consciousness and his mode of organizing his life? Well, all right; now there is a very interesting remark at the very end, the very last words, in this chapter on the general law—not the very last ones, which are in Latin, but the paragraph there: “Like all good things in this bad world, this profitable method has its drawbacks. [That is to say, getting rid of the people by immigration—JC] With the accumulation of rents in Ireland, the accumulation of the Irish in America keeps pace. The Irishman, banished by sheep and ox, re-appears on the other side of the ocean as a Fenian, and face to face with the old queen of the sea rises, threatening and more threatening, the young giant Republic.”^{vi}

So what he was saying, in effect, was that the massive, wholesale transplantation of the Irish to the United States will lead to an Anglophobia in the United States which will eventually be more damaging to England than the Anglophobia of the Irish in their native habitat, because here their Anglophobia will influence the policies of a great and independent country. You must admit he was a man with a very far-seeing eye. He saw a great deal; he was very shrewd and very sensitive to political things. That's not nonsense, is it?

LS: In this connection, we should also look at the preface to the first edition on page 15, bottom, where he also refers to the United States. “At the same time, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean”—do you have that? I think that we should read that.

JC: Ah ha. “At the same time, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Mr. Wade, vice-president of the United States, declared in public meetings that, after the abolition of slavery, a radical change of the relations of capital and of property in land is next upon the order of the day.” Yes, “These are signs of the time, not to be hidden by purple—”^{vii} Well, I see—

LS: Then later on here, let me see: “within the ruling classes themselves, a foreboding is dawning [yes, the top of page 16—LS] that the present society is no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change [the present society is capable of change—LS] and is

^{vi} Chap. 25. IP, 712.

^{vii} Preface to first edition. IP, 10.

constantly changing.”^{viii} He does not say here what he says on page 824: that force is the only way in which—“Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one.” You see? Surely, I mean the whole revisionist movement within the Socialist Party was of course based on these notions . . .

JC: Well, incidentally, with respect to this keen observation of Marx, it must be said that at least what he asserts with respect to the Irish here is not simply a question of his great shrewdness, but I think that quite a few people who observed the relations between Democratic and the Whig Parties in the United States before the Civil War, during the slavery agitation, and the emergence of the Republican Party also knew that the presence in this country of a large immigrant population, and to a large extent an Irish population, had an effect on domestic policies. And in fact, I believe the Lincoln and Douglas debates are given part of their character by the position that the Democratic Party took with respect to the farm immigration of free white labor, and also the impact that that had on our attitude as a nation towards England. So this is not simply spun out of Marx’s creative ingenuity, but the expression of it is very clear and very forceful. Well, I think we ought to hear Mr. Phillips on the so-called primitive accumulation in part 8.^{ix}

JC: Well, the part of the book that you had to deal with was in a way the most interesting, because there Marx in a way rewrote—well, wrote from his point of view the history of the Western world from the fifteenth century down, and his rewriting of the history of the Western world should have given support to his abstract remarks with respect to history that we found in *The German Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto*, and indeed in the early part of the present book. And I was wondering what your general reflection was on this question: Do you think that when he himself wrote history that he made out the case very strongly for the position that everything depends on the mode of production, that the mode of production is really the beginning? He doesn’t go into the question of man’s consciousness particularly here, so it’s relatively simple. But does he make out the case even for the argument that social forms can be traced so exactly to the changes in the mode of production? Did you think about that at all?

Student: I think in his discussion of why feudal society had to undergo these changes, he didn’t go into this in detail, but he made a few statements about the inability of feudal society, even though it may have had production at a certain level, to ever get beyond this primitive stage, or to expand strictly on an economic level beyond what he would call a primitive level. So I think in that sense he was describing some of the reasons why all these changes would follow. This had to occur. So I think in this very vague way he was trying to—well, I think in this very vague way he was in accordance with his earlier statements that the economic mode determines the social forms of production inasmuch as they trigger the kind of changes he’s talking about.

JC: Yeah, but is there any support for the idea that because some sort of progress is desirable, therefore it must inevitably come about? So let’s grant for the time being—which is something he doesn’t make a great point of—that the feudal economic order was

^{viii} Preface to the first German edition. IP, 10.

^{ix} Mr. Phillips now reads his paper. The reading was not recorded.

not capable of bringing about this big explosion of production, ¹³that's certainly expressed in *The Communist Manifesto*. It had to happen, from one point of view, but can you see how he traces this change as it actually took place to the changes in the mode of production? Is that made very clear? Well, he mentions quite a few things that are responsible for changes in the whole social and economic order. But then if you look to see what kinds of things he enumerates: he says the voyages of discovery and the importation of gold into the Old World from the New World—well, that looks as if it could have some relation to this—but then he speaks about the rebellion of the Dutch against the Spanish, and the decay of the old feudal order, the old feudal nobility and its replacement by a new feudal nobility. In the conventional histories, what is usually given as the ground for the decay of the old feudal nobility? What set of events led to the eradication of the old nobility and the replacement of a new nobility? Do you happen to remember?

Mr. Phillips: . . .

JC: Yeah, but—that's the interesting thing: he doesn't so much step aside. If I remember correctly, the conventional historians assert that it was the Crusades that had a great deal to do with the destruction of that old nobility who mortgaged themselves, and then they also went and they traveled and they got killed, and all kinds of things happened, and after that ¹⁴a new kind of noble order arose in Western Europe. He makes a point of the destruction of the old feudal nobility because that tended to loosen the bond between the upper class and the peasantry, and as a result of that loosening of the bond the grip was tightened, and it was . . . you know, heartlessness, mere profit motive among the relations among the men. But now, who has ever said that the Crusades represent a change in the mode of production, or that the revolution of the Dutch against the Spanish, to take something much more recent, that this had an origin in the mode of production? You know what I mean? When he himself has to start writing history, it turns out he makes a great reliance on all kinds of things to which the mode of production seems quite irrelevant, and very often they come back to some things even as what some men thought was true or important about, you know, the way of worship and the importance of some place in a part of the world which they called the Holy Land, that kind of thing. And that's got very little to do with the—now he might say, "Sure, but then you have to go back into the mode of production in order to see why anybody is so vain as to call some spot the Holy Land and why somebody should rather be Protestant than a Roman Catholic" or something like this. Well, by that time, you get the impression that you can prove anything that way, you know, if you're willing to be ingenious and persistent enough. But the fact of the matter is when he talks about the immediate effective causes of the changes in social life, he has trouble in many cases referring them to the changes in the mode of production. Dr. Strauss, please.

LS: I hate this situation in which I am forced to defend Marx.

JC: Defend Marx? Sure.

LS: Well, I would raise this question. Was Marx's intention here to write history, economic history, a relation of economic history and others? I would say no. I think this is the last step of the whole argument as we have had it hitherto. You remember from the beginning: capitalist production, first simple stage; the depredation of the worker of his fair share, the surplus. Yes? That was the first stage,¹⁵ and all the further steps. You remember also the other step, which I think is very crucial for his argument, that once a capitalist starts, ten years from now the capital will be the sweat of the poor and no longer his capital. You know that. But still, then you could say: Very well, that may all be true, but he who has after him will be given, and the fact is that you have always rich people, and that these rich people have amazing possibilities which the poor lack is an object of envy for the poor and so on, but that is it. There is nothing wrong with being rich. People who are lucky, for example, say, in former times they lost two wives in childbirth and—well, take very simple situations in countryside: they marry again and then it means new dowries. And if such a chain of good luck takes place for two generations, a man is three times as rich as his neighbor. So what's wrong with that? In other words,¹⁶ what Marx discusses in book 8 is this: Did the rich come by their wealth to begin with honestly? That's the question. That question he took for granted up to now. The rich—he didn't question that. The rich are people who are legally, legitimately rich, and in the eighth book he shows—well, not regarding all rich people, but regarding the capitalist rich—that they stole their money to begin with. So the whole thing is a fraud, not only now but from the very beginning. Only in the beginning it is much more obvious, because it was in the beginning even clear illegality: the encroachers of commons and no compensation for the poor . . . I believe that that is really what is trying to do. He is not trying to prove the Marxist philosophy of history. He is trying to complete his analysis—equal-indictment of the capitalist system. Yes, sure.

JC: Yes, sure. I would say so, but I think that he's under some obligation to complete that in a way which is not grossly inconsistent with some of his fundamental principles.

LS: Yes, sure; that I grant you. But on the other hand, one could say for the immediate purpose of the *Kapital* that was the most urgent thing. Now of course I think one must also not forget something which Marx suppresses here completely but which he recognizes in *The Communist Manifesto*, for example, and that is this. Now if someone would be so impudent as to defend these malpractices of the sixteenth, seventeenth century by this consideration: Well, that is a bad ancestry for the capitalist, but what did the precapitalist societies do? Did the feudal lords originally come by their wealth in a perfectly moral way? You know, Marx does not do what Rousseau does, by a strict *a priori* construction to show that all wealth is somehow theft, in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. Marx tries to prove it empirically by historical evidence. Marx will of course grant that, but he would say, in the first place, the particularly loathsome thing in capitalism is that it was not throughout straightforward violence. You conquer the country, make the inhabitants serfs or whatever, that's one thing. In capitalism that is somehow disguised.

But the main point at which I'm driving is this: Marx would ultimately of course say that ultimately the moral judgment is irrelevant, namely, this: Why did people do all these

things, these beastly things: conquering countries, enslaving the inhabitants, and enclosures and what not? Answer: Scarcity; fundamental scarcity. Fundamental scarcity combined with dissatisfaction with scarcity. As long as men were satisfied with scarcity, they were simply primitive and there would not have been any development of human productivity, material and intellectual. This development requires the development of that rapacity and avarice and all these other beastly things. In other words, he would only repeat in a different way what Plato indicates in his brief remarks in the second book of the *Republic*. You remember the transition from the city of pigs to the real city, when people become dissatisfied with the simple life out of very bad reasons: because they want to have luxuries. But that is a necessary condition for the development of the good city. Good. Now from this point of view capitalism appears in a somewhat different light. Capitalism is that social system which prepares the abolition of scarcity, which in effect achieves already the abolition of scarcity without however drawing the proper conclusions from that. You know this high praise of the capitalist system in the *Communist Manifesto*, when he says: Look at these things, these are infinitely superior to the pyramids and the Capitol and whatever—these buildings, famous post offices and other—or factories, rather, of the late nineteenth century. Therefore the moral condemnation of capitalism is of course meant seriously by Marx, but it is dialectically integrated into a transmoral whole, if I may say so. Ya? You know?

JC: Yes.

LS: And I think that is really the most interesting problem, and if I may—can you give me another five minutes?

JC: Please. By all means.

LS: There is one passage which I thought was particularly revealing regarding our whole problem, on page 835 following, where he speaks—ya, that's a fairly long passage. I will try to find the most important passages.

“The private property of the labourer in his means of production is the foundation of petty industry” and so on, and petty industry is the “essential condition for the development of the free individuality of the laborer himself.” Petty industry, i.e., private property. Ya? “This mode of production pre-supposes parcelling of the soil,” etc. “As it excludes the concentration of these means of production, so also it excludes co-operation, division of labor within each separate process of production, the control over, and the productive application of the forces of Nature by society, and the free development of the social productive powers.” You have the free development of the individuality of the laborer himself, say, in the feudal system, but you do not have a free development of the social productive forces.

Now on the next page at the second paragraph—well, what does he say: “the transformation of the instruments of labor into instruments of labor only usable in common.”^x That is what the capitalist process starts and what is preserved in the

^x Chap. 32. IP, 762, 763.

communist system. In other words, there is a very interesting half-admission here that the development of the free individuality of the laborer himself is in a certain tension, to put it mildly, to the free development of the social productive parts. Ya? That I thought is interesting, that this primary goal, the free development of the individuality, is really compatible with the socialization of the worker.

Now I will conclude what I have to say on this subject, on the overall subject as follows, in this simple proposition. What Marx seems to teach as a whole—I'm not speaking now of his economic teaching in particular, of course—is this: the truly human, the final communist society emerges out of the subhuman by nonteleological necessity. Ya? And of course, the development of the capitalist system out of the feudal system is also not teleological. Certain things took place; and one thing leading to the other, you had then the capitalist system, the nonteleological necessity. Now this means, however, since the truly human society consists in the control of nature and the whole process is itself a natural process, [that] nature produces its own overcoming. I think that is no exaggeration to say, because the truly human society as a free society rules nature, is in control of nature. Nature produces its own [overcoming].^{xi}—that is, of course, very well known in present-day bourgeois social science as the problem of values. But to come back to Marx. The second difficulty: this conquest is the work of nature because there is no fundamental distinction into nature and spirit, however you might call it. This conquest is the work of nature. Nature persists. Human nature persists. Think of the need for food. Then for this reason there cannot be an escape from necessity, from the realm of necessity, and we have seen this in more specific economic considerations of the lessons of the plans and all these nice things. No overcoming of nature. That, I believe, is the simplest way in which I can make clear to myself the basic difficulty in which Marx gets entangled.

JC: Well, with respect to the point that Dr. Strauss raised about what Marx was trying to do in this eighth book, I would put it a little bit differently. It occurred to me that what Marx felt was that he was under some necessity to give an account of the beginnings, of the absolute beginning. Now that is not to say the beginning of man, but the coming into being of this system. And he was under a peculiar necessity to do that because of some details of his economic analysis. He was able to show that when the working man is separated from the means of production, then surplus value is possible. That is to say, there must be an employer-employee thing otherwise. Now that presupposes the need for capital; there can't be this relation without capital in order to set it in motion. But of course, before this arrangement has actually existed, where is the capital? So if one can say capital comes from surplus value and surplus value comes from capital, that's all right once it has started, but it's no good unless you know where the beginning is. So he had to show how there could be capital without surplus value in the first generation, so to speak: in other words, to go back to the beginning. Now what he had to do, in other words, was to show that the beginning was really quite exceptional, as beginnings are. That's what's meant by the beginning; it's not like the rest of the process. And therefore it was peculiarly violent.

^{xi} The tape was changed at this point. "Overcoming" is not audible on the tape but appears in the original transcript.

Now but still, although it had to be different from the rest of the process in some respects, it had to be similar to the rest of the process or consistent with the rest of the process in the most important respect: it had to respond to the same rules of historical change that prevail at all times. Now there had been an account, given long before Marx, which tried to explain the coming to be of the difference between rich people and poor people, and therewith the difference between capitalist and the others. And that was that there are some human beings who are rational and industrious, and there are others, mostly more and more others, who are not rational and not industrious, or one or the other.^{xii} And that means that some will have wealth and others won't, and as a result of this, some will own the means of production and others won't own the means of production—land, to begin with. But that's unimportant, according to the traditional account, that the means of production were land at one time and something else at another time,¹⁷ that wouldn't have interested Locke particularly, I believe.

Now it was of some importance for Marx to show that this explanation of the difference between capitalists and others didn't make sense, because this presupposed some real natural inequality among the human beings, differences in their character as men. And you can say: Well, what Locke meant to do and others like him was to point to the fact that those who are rich deserve to be so because they were industrious and rational, and the ones who are poor deserve what they have, too, because [they are] lazy and ignorant.

Now it's absolutely of the essence of Marx's explanation that some other account be given and that it be possible for him to recur to his formulation of all of mankind, with all differences internally becoming unimportant or uninteresting vis-à-vis all of nature on the other side. In order to give his account, he really had to give a kind of history of mankind in the West in order to show how this act of abrupt transformation could take place. Now but his historical principle is [that the] mode of production is fundamentally what affects the social condition. And although I wouldn't in any way deny what Dr. Strauss asserted before, I would say to the extent to which Marx tries to give an account of the beginning, he is let's say incidentally drawn into the need for giving an account of the whole massive course of history. That's what he must do,¹⁸ and indeed it's what he tries to do, although you can get evidence of a certain kind of running down towards the end of the book. The treatment is very much more cursory, the broad subjects are treated very briefly. I think if you compare part 8, say, with part 3 or part 4, that you get the notion that what happened in this book is like what has happened in quite a few other books, I believe: that the author gets a bit worn out after a while, and the subjects of equal scope are not treated with equal intensity here. Well, I mean, this is purely ad hominem; I don't mean to depreciate anything, but I think it's simply a fact. So, and moreover, he lets himself go in part 8 in ways which he didn't do so much in others. For example, he becomes positively frantic, and one can see the color of his face changing when he writes the footnote about Edmund Burke.^{xiii} The abuse, the real passion and exasperation come out without any restraint whatsoever. He's really vituperative and plain frantic with anger about that well-known sycophant and sophist who wrote that the laws of economics were

^{xii} Locke, *Second Treatise*, chap. 6.

^{xiii} Chap. 13. IP 323.

the laws of nature. And that of course is the highest and most corrupt form of apologia that Marx can recognize in any human being.

Well, now. So then we would have to go into a lot of details, which in the first place I'm not equipped to do, about the history of that time; and moreover, as to the ones which I think could say something about, we don't have the time to do it anyhow. But I only point out to you that Marx refers repeatedly to such things as cannot be traced to the changes in the mode of production in order to give an account of why the social order changed. And I don't mean to say that he was wrong in that respect, but I also mean to say that he fell into the same difficulty anybody would, I think, who tried to give an account of the history of Western Europe over many hundreds of years by referring everything to the changes in the mode of production. The simple truth of it is the mode of production didn't change by anywhere near as much as the massive social institutions changed over that period of time. So something else obviously had to be taken into account, and ¹⁹when Tocqueville wrote [that] about seven or eight hundred years before—he spoke of the great watershed ²⁰in the history of Western man as being ²¹seven or eight hundred years before the time he wrote.^{xiv} I think seven hundred years, which brings it back to sometime around—²²the book was 1830s—to 1130, and people are still trying to figure out, I think, more exactly what it was he could have meant; and I think most people trace it back to the Crusades or something connected with that set of events. Well, lots of people, in other words, have seen that some massive changes took place in European life as a result of the Crusades. I say nothing whatever about the coming to be of a number of men whose thought constituted a radical change in the character of life of men in Western Europe, that's sometime later, not the twelfth century. But these things Marx has to take cognizance of only so to speak left-handedly, and it detracts and gives his whole doctrine the character of a construct with some measure of artificiality.

Student: . . .

JC: 789.

Student: . . . what was the good old nobility?

JC: Yes, that's the passage I had in mind a few minutes ago.

Student: . . . necessary to have a bad, new nobility before they could do these things like enclosures.

JC: Very good, yes.

Student: Which is really a moral change within the feudal class, which had nothing to do with the mode of production . . .

^{xiv} In his introduction to *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville attributes the great changes that have taken place in France in the past seven hundred years firstly to the increase in the power of the clergy, which opened its ranks to all classes.

JC: Well, yeah . . . Feudal lords, and by, I think, the Crusades. But yeah, that point, the bottom of 789. ²³Dr. Strauss?

LS: 780?

JC: 789 and the top of 790. Yeah, that was the passage that I had in mind a few minutes ago when I spoke about the passing away of the old feudal nobility and the coming into being of the new one, probably it had mostly to do with the Crusades; but you're right, the intervention also the War of the Roses, although I don't know which period he has—

Student: There's a moral change going on, because the old . . . the old decent group . . . kept the time honored traditions, and the new one, they take over the money and . . .

JC: Yeah, the dislocation of the whole social order. Well, let me take cognizance of that observation and also make a more general remark in which I'll try to say something of what I understand all of this to mean. Why does Marx begin by showing us that the origin of value is in some laboring of men, and what is the real bearing of this fact? When he looks at capitalist economy he finds it altogether unreasonable because men are governed by a kind of illusion in their activities, and then you have these people who own the means of production and those very much larger number who don't own the means of production; and the many are kept in subjection to the few through an economic arrangement. But the economic arrangement looks to all these people like a natural and inevitable affair, something which is not historical but which is in the nature of things, that there must be some who own and many who don't own. So a vast illusion. Now at the bottom of this illusion, what do we find? Expropriation, the phenomenon of surplus value, through an elaboration and as an immediate consequence of the labor theory of value. So a kind of act of cheating.

Now this leads him to say something about the whole character of the capitalistic economic order. What do people really do? What they really do is to provide the means of life and comfort for all of mankind through their operation. That's the real meaning of economic activity and production and so on and so forth: it's to arrange the articulation of man and nature for the sake of providing for human life with some measure of convenience. Now that's what real, but how is it made to appear? It's all made to appear as a search for profit, a search for surplus value. That's what men immediately do, although the end result is the survival and the comfort of the human kind. Now Marx asserts, in effect, [that] this is the unreasonable thing about it: we interpose between ourselves and our real object, i.e., our comfort and convenience, our living—we interpose between ourselves and that, i.e., between ourselves and nature, a social arrangement, and that arrangement is driven forward by a most unpalatable passion, the passion for gain. That's what really makes it work. To begin with, an act of cheating; that act of cheating is perpetuated in the continuing search for gain by the expropriation of the many of the products of their work.

What would be the sensible arrangement? To avoid that mediation between man and nature and to have the simplest of all social conditions, man operating directly on the means of production without the artificiality of social devices, and particularly without the need to have the social machinery driven forward by the appetite for gain. There is a footnote in part 8 in which Marx says in effect how strange it is when we think of the whole nature of things, how often the mediator takes the real gain and benefit from all sorts of processes—not only economic, which go on around us all the time. It might even be that we can find this, because it’s—he gives some outrageous examples among others. But it’s a long footnote.²⁴ It really illuminates a number of things. Yeah, here it is: page 816, in the middle of that footnote number two. It’s after the quotation in French. “Already it is evident here how in all spheres of social life the lion’s share falls to the middleman. In the economic domain, for example,^{xv} financiers, stock-exchange speculators, merchants, shopkeepers” and so on and so forth; “in civil matters, the lawyer fleeces his clients; in politics the representative is of more importance than the voters, the minister than the sovereign”^{xvi} and so on and so forth. Now he had, let’s say—and I don’t mean to psychologize this point—he had an objection to the mediation between the one thing and the other, and he thought that the mediation was somehow or other an artificial and altogether unnecessary hindrance. Between man and nature there need not be any mediation, let’s say, of a social system driven by the desire for gain; but plant man on nature directly, immediately, that’s the sensible thing. That avoids the illusions, the fetishism—the fetishism of commodities is one example—but it avoids all kinds of other illusions as well, which he was not bashful to speak about in so many words. Man and nature, that’s the whole. Put the one together with the other. Political life, religion, these other mediations: these are all part of the unnecessary claptrap of apparatus that has been built up in the course of centuries.

Now one gets the impression at some points that Marx by 1867—or maybe even, to be generous, 1844—has discovered the fact that self-interest is the mainspring of economic activity; and now he needn’t have been at so many pains to discover this all over again. I think if he had read some of the preceding books with a certain interest, he would have been able to find this not only not concealed, not expressed implicitly, but this was said to be the main point and benefit of the modern industrial order. He need not have discovered it; he need only have read certain passages in the *Wealth of Nations* where it was not only conceded but it was insisted that this was the point: that the reason that the economic arrangement (a) worked at all, and (b) worked well was that it depended upon a certain passion or appetite which nobody thought was admirable in itself. As far as I know, nobody has ever said that the desire for gain and profit is in itself attractive, pleasant, or charming, or anything. But many people have thought that it somehow or other provides an effective and tolerable mediation between one man and another and between man and nature.

Now I’ll put this thing a bit differently.²⁵ It has been, I think, asserted in various ways that the government of men or the arrangement of social life depends upon a certain kind of mediation, the making use of certain things for the sake of other things. Why have men

^{xv} In original: “e.g.”

^{xvi} Chap. 29. IP, 744.

hit upon the passions as an instrument by which to achieve the social purposes? Well, you know that when this was first proposed in modern times, it was proposed with eyes wide open. There was an alternative which was well enough known. You don't have to take advantage of the appetite for gain; you could perhaps take advantage of the appetite for glory, or honor, or you could take advantage of the possibility of human nature that leads to morality through law. Various things are possible. Each one of these is connected with some measure of freedom, of human excellence conceived in one way or another, and one has to make a reasonable adjustment of what one gets and what one gives up. Now the men who asserted that human life could be placed upon this ungenerous and altogether unattractive basis of a desire for gain did so with a certain interest in mind. They thought that if you turn men loose under the influence of their passions that maybe it will be possible to release them from certain other constraints. That is to say, motives developed from inside make superfluous certain constraints generated from outside. Now that's a very long story and it wouldn't be possible or appropriate to go into it here, but the fact is it was thought that to allow men to operate on the basis of some passions made unnecessary some other kinds of social regulation.

Marx apparently for the first time believed that it was not necessary to pay this price at all: that the mediation of the passions was altogether superfluous, for the first time: that in order to get the benefit of social life it was not necessary to pay the price in terms of truckling to some low and contemptible selfishness, and on the other hand to accept as the necessary alternate a measure of heavy restraint from outside that would lead to men being formed and controlled in their behavior and so on and so forth. It comes back once more, I believe, to this belief of his in the power of man to become an altogether different kind of being from any that has been known before. Without that none of this would be intelligible. Why should it be necessary to have this mediation of political and social institutions between men and nature; in other words, to make all these detestable concessions to human avarice and so on? Well, only because men have those passions in them. Spinoza and other men said how you rail against these passions, you're railing against human nature. And Marx so far agreed as to say: Indeed, that's the point. They're railing against human nature and you, now—Spinoza, and Adam Smith and similar men, you say: Well, all right now, we have a more enlightened view of human nature, and so instead of railing against the passions we'll turn them to our own ends—but except we'll understand it's not nice and it involves all kinds of indecencies and so on, but after all, human nature is human nature. And at that point Marx's qualification is: That's your big mistake. Human nature has been human nature down to this time but from henceforth, given certain changes which we think will effect the decisive alterations, no concessions will have to be made. The passions will be subverted, eradicated. I don't know what will happen to them; they'll go underground, or they won't work or something. But that source of the need for political life, the passions and generally speaking human imperfection: that will be banished once and for all, and that coming about through certain alterations in what he calls the mode of production.

But I must say that as for me, I'm unconvinced that the mode of production can change sufficiently to bring anything like that about. For example, so far as the mode of production of the socialist society will resemble the mode of production of the capitalist

society, these things cannot occur that he predicts and hopes for. So far as you still have men working at machines, they won't be artisans. You can't help it any more; they won't be. That's gone forever. That kind of man will never reappear on earth except if there should be an amnesia of science, if by some cataclysm human beings should forget the science and technology that they have and return to an earlier age. I'm sure everybody's mind is now on the same eventuality: that could happen, but it's not what Marx had in mind, and he didn't have that mode of bringing it about in mind either. That was not what he would call a change in the mode of production; that's a change in the mode of destruction and nothing short of that could bring that about, I believe.

So well, my final observation would be that in the first place, as I've told you repeatedly, I believe so much of what he says is affected in its cogency by merely empirical things that there is a difficulty accepting his entire construction. Merely empirical things. His forecasts break down at so many points, have broken down at so many points that we have absolutely no ground for being confident that the main point still persists. And I would say that the reason for the breaking down of his forecasts has so much to do with him himself, with his own effectiveness in bringing about political changes, that by his own work we see the weakness of his own theory. It's because Marx himself said certain things—I mean, Marx, among other people—that men's minds were changed sufficiently so that absolutely fundamental changes took place in the structure of society which defeated his own larger forecast. That's number one.

But in the second place, I would say that without this transformation of human nature the most important consequences of the labor theory of value and what it leads up to in the historical sense become absolutely unintelligible; and until the case is made out for the possibility of those, I must say I am altogether unconvinced. Please.

LS: It may be of some importance as an addition to what you said. That was a very clear presentation, the mediation business; but the term reminds me of course of Hegel, and Karl Marx makes therefore the following addition. The mediation is, as in Hegel, *absolutely necessary*—absolutely necessary—and is eventually overcome. In the final state, there is no longer mediation. For example, [something] immediate: brown.^{xvii} That is immediate, but that's all there is which is immediate. No understanding is possible except by mediation, what we call reasoning in the widest sense of the term. But at the end we have again a perfect unity, and in a way a return to immediacy on the highest level; and that of course is what Marx had in mind. The mediation is not for Marx as it would be for a simplistic anarchist, a mere folly of which we should get rid. The mediation is and was absolutely necessary to bring us out from primitivism and bring us to that point—you know this, of course, but I thought one should add that.

And then there is a remark which I cannot suppress, although it has only indirectly to do with Marx, and that concerns Marx's remark on Burke, of which you reminded us.
²⁶Burke, as well as any other interesting man, is of course controversial, and one controversy regarding Burke which I regard as particularly useful and important for the understanding of Burke is this. People have rediscovered in the last ten, fifteen years how

^{xvii} Presumably Strauss refers to the table.

much premodern, classical and medieval thought there is in Burke, and so much so that today there is a tendency simply to say there is no difference to speak of between Burke's teaching and the Thomistic teaching. This quotation, what Marx quotes is the simplest refutation of this simple interpretation of Burke. I mean, if it is true that *laissez-faire* is not an integral element of Thomism, to put it mildly, then Burke cannot be an unqualified Thomist. That only in passing. ^{xviii}

JC: I think that the students have in a way been slighted, by me, anyhow, and—

LS: By me, too. So let's have another ten, fifteen minutes.

JC: Was there a question?

Mr. Reinken: Is there any possibility that when Bismarck started battenning down in 1873, beginning with social security and things like that, could he have picked up . . . things from Marx?

JC: Yeah, that's a historical question; that I couldn't say in detail. I mean, as to whether between 1867 and 1873—but I don't think it has to be Marx so very much himself.

LS: . . .

JC: Yeah, and plenty of others. You know how many people Marx refers to with approbation. This point from this one, that point; there was a big current of socialist—

LS: . . .

Student: He was the . . . Bismarck.

LS: There were many conversations, and . . . learn something from him . . .

JC: Well, every sale involves . . . learned something from Bismarck. ^{xix}

Well, and the fact of the matter is that even apart from what happened in Germany, the social security kind of thing there, the trades unions, the legalization of the trades unions in Britain, which was of course was before Marx ever came on the scene. Apparently one could say these things were coming, and it was a question of time; and Marx undoubtedly helped to speed things up because he was so immensely superior. You can't read this book without being struck by the superiority of that man. Many things that he said have been said by others, as he is perfectly willing to admit. He never denies that. The

^{xviii} The original transcriber notes: "Earlier Mr. Cropsey had said that Marx lets himself go in part 8 in ways which he had not earlier. For example, Marx becomes frantic when he refers in a footnote of Burke. The footnote in question is on pp. 833-34 of the Modern Library Edition of *Capital*, volume I, where Marx referred to Burke as a sycophant who wrote that 'the laws of commerce are the laws of Nature.'"

^{xix} An inaudible exchange takes place here between Strauss and Mr. Reinken.

footnotes are full of attributions to other men; he was not ungenerous that way. But I don't think that anybody ever put it together with such a tremendous wealth of learning and such a great mental power. Such a power of systematization, an enormous ability to construct. So that's very impressive, and it simply cannot fail to have an effect. A man like that cannot fail to have an effect, which is in a way the most devastating thing one could say about him because, you know, it's men like him [who] make the consciousness.²⁷ Who stands in front of what tools; that of course has a great deal to do with man's characters and so on and so forth, but what they *believe* as distinct from their roundedness as human beings in his sense, that has more to do with men like him than it has to do with any tools they stand in front of, you see.

Student: On this very point, which you raised before: so Marx's ideas have this kind of effect in and of themselves. Couldn't Marx easily say that because of the historical stage the world was in that they were ripe for his ideas, and therefore it wasn't really his ideas, because he was, say, a superior thinker, or that other superior thinkers before him were not taken up, but his ideas might could fall on fertile soil, he might maintain . . . set out by the very historical process.

JC: Yeah, and well, it seems to me that's an argument that he couldn't possibly win, because if the time was ripe and so on and so forth, he was superfluous and his book was a work of supererogation, and that he surely wouldn't assert. But if he was not superfluous, then what would the course of development have been without him? I'm sure that he made some difference, he had some effect; and I'm also sure that the currents of reform were in existence before he came on the scene. Now undoubtedly there would not have been something called Marxism if Marx—I mean, and I'm not pointing to the petty quibble that it would have been called Jonesism or something like that because some man Jones would come along and do the same thing. I mean to say that the particular form that the reformation of modern society has taken has been very much affected by the singular fact that he, Marx, with his powers and his learning and his construction, formulated the needs as he did and as he understood them. Now how he could derive his works so directly from the material circumstances surrounding him is very hard to see. And moreover, I think he never makes any claim that is true so far as he himself is concerned, see. That's all that I would assert with respect to him.²⁸

¹ Deleted "is"

² Deleted "previous work"

³ Deleted "the addition of"

⁴ Deleted "some decision"

⁵ Deleted "but well"

⁶ Deleted "He, he"

⁷ Deleted "running"

⁸ Deleted "you know"

⁹ Deleted "that was"

¹⁰ Deleted "I point to your attention"

¹¹ Deleted "to make some"

¹² Deleted "you know"

-
- ¹³ Deleted “which is”
¹⁴ Deleted “they”
¹⁵ Deleted “but now you could of course say”
¹⁶ Deleted “the question is”
¹⁷ Deleted “that’s too, that doesn’t”
¹⁸ Deleted “and ultimately it’s”
¹⁹ Deleted “he did it, you know”
²⁰ Deleted “in European”
²¹ Deleted “800 years”
²² Deleted “the you know”
²³ Deleted “yes, the bottom of 789”
²⁴ Deleted “yes—no, I thought I found it. It’s too bad because”
²⁵ Deleted “It might be”
²⁶ Deleted “There is a certain—“
²⁷ Deleted “it isn’t something”
²⁸ Deleted “I don’t know if this is altogether . . . well, in that case”