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The Meaning of Human Requirements

We have seen what significance, given socialism, the *wealth* of human needs has, and what significance, therefore, both a new *mode of production* and a new *object of production* have: a new manifestation of the forces of *human nature* and a new enrichment of *human nature*.³ Under private property their significance is reversed: every person speculates on creating a new need in another, so as to drive him to a fresh sacrifice, to place him in a new dependence and to seduce him into a new mode of *gratification* and therefore economic ruin. Each tries to establish over the other an *alien power*, so as thereby to find satisfaction of his own selfish need. The increase in the quantity of objects is accompanied by an extension of the realm of the alien powers to which man is subjected, and every new product represents a new *potency* of mutual swindling and mutual plundering. (Man becomes ever poorer as man; his need for money becomes ever greater if he wants to overpower hostile being; and the power of his money declines exactly in inverse proportion to the increase in the volume of production: that is, his neediness grows as the power of money increases.)

The need for money is therefore the true need produced by the modern economic system, and it is the only need which the latter produces. The quantity of money becomes to an ever greater degree its sole effective attribute: just as it reduces everything to its abstract form, so it reduces itself in the course of its own movement to something merely quantitative. Excess and intemperance come to be its true norm. Subjectively, this is even partly manifested in that the extension of products and needs falls into contriving and ever-calculating subservience to inhuman, refined, unnatural and *imaginary appetites*. Private property does not know how to change crude

3. Forces of human nature: *menshlichen Wesenheit*; human nature: *menshlichen*

need into human need. Its idealism is fantasy, caprice and whim; and no cunuch flatters his despot more basely or uses more despicable means to stimulate his dulled capacity for pleasure in order to sneak a favour for himself than does the industrial cunuch—the producer—in order to sneak for himself a few pennies—in order to charm the golden birds out of the pockets of his Christianly beloved neighbours. He puts himself at the service of the other's most deprived fancies, plays the pimp between him and his need, excites in him morbid appetites, lies in wait for each of his weaknesses—all so that he can then demand the cash for this service of love. Every product is a bait with which to seduce away the other's very being, his money; every real and possible need is a weakness which will lead the fly to the gluepot. General exploitation of communal human nature, just as every imperfection in man, is a bond with heaven—an avenue giving the priest access to his heart; every need is an opportunity to approach one's neighbour under the guise of the utmost amiability and to say to him: Dear friend, I give you what you need, but you know the *conditio sine qua non*; you know the link in which you have to sign yourself over to me; in providing for your pleasure, I fleece you.)

And partly, this estrangement manifests itself in that it produces refinement of needs and of their means on the one hand, and a brutal barbarization, a complete, unrefined, abstract simplicity of need, on the other; for rather in that it merely resurrects itself in its opposite. Even the need for fresh air ceases for the worker. Man returns to living in a cave, which is now, however, contaminated with the mephitic breath of plague given off by civilization, and which he continues to occupy only precariously, it being for him an alien habitation which can be withdrawn from him any day—a place from which, if he does not pay, he can be thrown out any day. For this mortuary he has to pay! A dwelling in the night, which Prometheus in Aeschylus designated as one of the greatest boons, by means of which he made the savage into a human being, ceases to exist for the worker. Light, air, etc.—the simplest animal cleanliness—ceases to be a need for man. Dirt—this stagnation and putrefaction of man—the sewage of civilization (speaking quite literally)—comes to be the element of life for him. Utter, unnatural neglect, putrefied nature, comes to be his life-element. None of his senses exist any longer, and not only in his human fashion, but in an inhuman fashion, and therefore not even in an animal fashion. The crudest modes (and instruments) of human labour are coming back: the tread mill of the Roman slaves, for instance, is the means of production, the means of existence, of many English workers. It is not only that man has no human needs—even his animal needs are ceasing to exist. The Irishman no longer knows any need now but

the need to eat, and indeed only the need to eat potatoes—and scabby potatoes at that, the worst kind of potatoes. But in each of their industrial towns England and France have already a little Ireland. The savage and the animal have at least the need to hunt, to rosin, etc.—the need of companionship. Machine labour is simplified in order to make a worker out of the human being still in the making, the completely immature human being, the child—whilst the worker has become a neglected child. The machine accommodates itself to the weakness of the human being in order to make the weak human being into a machine.

How the multiplication of needs and of the means of their satisfaction breeds the absence of needs and of means is demonstrated by the political economist (and the capitalist: it should be noted that it is always empirical business men we are talking about when we refer to political economists—their scientific confession and mode of being). This he shows:

(1) By reducing the worker's need to the barest and most miserable level of physical subsistence, and by reducing his activity to the most abstract mechanical movement. Hence, he says: Man has no other need either of activity or of enjoyment. For he calls even this life human life and existence.

(2) By counting the lowest possible level of life (existence) as the standard, indeed as the general standard—general because it is applicable to the mass of men. He changes the worker into an insensible being lacking all needs, just as he changes his activity into a pure abstraction from all activity. To him, therefore, every luxury of the worker seems to be reprehensible, and everything that goes beyond the most abstract need—be it in the realm of passive enjoyment, or a manifestation of activity—seems to him a luxury. Political economy, this science of wealth, is therefore simultaneously the science of denial, of want, of thrift, of saving—and it actually reaches the point where it spares man the need of either fresh air or physical exercise. This science of marvellous industry is simultaneously the science of asceticism, and its true ideal is the ascetic but extortionate miser and the ascetic but productive slave. Its moral ideal is the worker who takes part of his wages to the savings-bank, and it has even found ready-made an abject art in which to clothe this its pet idea: they have presented it, bathed in sentimentality, on the stage. Thus political economy—despite its worldly and wanton appearance—is a true moral science, the most moral of all the sciences. Self-denial, the denial of life and of all human needs, is its cardinal doctrine. The less you eat, drink and read books; the less you go to the theatre, the dance hall, the public-house; the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you save—the greater becomes your treasure which neither

moths nor dust will devour—your capital! The less you are, the more you have; the less you express your own life, the greater is your alienated life—the greater is the store of your estranged being. [Everything which the political economist takes from you in life and in humanity—he replaces for you in money and in wealth; and all the things which you cannot do, your money can do. It can eat and drink, go to the dance hall and the theatre; it can travel, it can appropriate art, learning, the treasures of the past, political power—all this it can appropriate for you—it can buy all this for you: it is the true endowment. Yet being all this, it is inclined to do nothing but create itself, buy itself, for everything else is after all its servant. And when I have the master I have, the servant and do not need his servant. All passions and all activity must therefore be submerged in idleness. The worker may only have enough for him to want to live, and may only want to live in order to have [enough].

Of course a controversy now arises in the field of political economy. The one side (Lauderdale, Malthus, etc.) recommends luxury and execrates thrift. The other (Say, Ricardo, etc.) recommends thrift and execrates luxury. But the former admits that it wants luxury in order to produce labour (i.e., absolute thrift); and the latter admits that it recommends thrift in order to produce wealth (i.e., luxury). The Lauderdale-Malthus school has the romantic notion that avarice alone ought not to determine the consumption of the rich, and it contradicts its own laws in advancing extravagance as a direct means of enrichment. Against it, therefore, the other side very earnestly and circumstantially proves that I do not increase but reduce my possessions by being extravagant. The Say-Ricardo school, however, is hypocritical in not admitting that it is precisely whim and caprice which determine production. It forgets the “refined needs”; it forgets that there would be no production without consumption; it forgets that as a result of competition production can only become more extensive and luxurious. It forgets that it is use that determines a thing's value, and that fashion determines use. It wishes to see only “useful things” produced, but it forgets that production of too many useful things produces too large a useless population. Both sides forget that extravagance and thrift, luxury and privation, wealth and poverty are equal!

And you must not only stint the immediate gratification of your senses, as by stinting yourself of food, etc.: You must also spare yourself all sharing of general interest, all sympathy, all trust, etc.; if you want to be economical, if you do not want to be ruined by illusions.

You must make everything that is yours saleable, i.e., useful. If I ask the political economist: Do I obey economic laws if I extract money by offering my body for sale, by surrendering it to another's

lust? (The factory workers in France call the prostitution of their wives and daughters the xth working hour, which is literally correct.)—Or am I not acting in keeping with political economy if I sell my friend to the Moroccans? (And the direct sale of men in the form of a trade in conscripts, etc., takes place in all civilized countries.)—Then the political economist replies to me: You do not transgress my laws; but see what Cousin Ethics and Cousin Religion have to say about it. My political economic ethics and religion have nothing to reproach you with, but—But whom am I now to believe, political economy or ethics? The ethics of political economy is acquisition, work, thrift, sobriety—but political economy promises to satisfy my needs. The political economy of ethics is the opulence of a good conscience, of virtue, etc.; but how can I live virtuously if I do not live? And how can I have a good conscience if I am not conscious of anything? It stems from the very nature of estrangement that each sphere applies to me a different and opposite yardstick—ethics one and political economy another; for each is a specific estrangement of man and focuses attention on a particular round of estranged essential activity, and each stands in an estranged relation to the other. Thus M. Michel Chevalier reproaches Ricardo with having abstracted from ethics. But Ricardo is allowing political economy to speak its own language, and if it does not speak ethically, this is not Ricardo's fault. M. Chevalier abstracts from political economy in so far as he moralizes, but he really and necessarily abstracts from ethics in so far as he practises political economy. The reference of political economy to ethics, if it is other than an arbitrary, contingent and therefore unfounded and unscientific reference, if it is not being put up as a sham but is meant to be essential, can only be the reference of the laws of political economy to ethics. If there is no such connection, or if the contrary is rather the case, can Ricardo help it? Besides, the opposition between political economy and ethics is only a sham opposition and just as much no opposition as it is an opposition. All that happens is that political economy expresses moral laws in its own way.

Needlessness as the principle of political economy is most brilliantly shown in its theory of population. There are too many people. Even the existence of men is a pure luxury; and if the worker is “ethical,” he will be sparing in procreation. (Mill suggests public acclaim for those who prove themselves continent in their sexual relations, and public rebuke for those who sin against such barrenness of marriage. . . . Is not this the ethics, the teaching of asceticism?) The production of people appears in the form of public misery.

The meaning which production has in relation to the rich is seen reversed in the meaning which it has for the poor. At the top the

manifestation is always refined, veiled, ambiguous—a sham; lower, it is rough, straightforward, frank—the real thing. The worker's crude need is a far greater source of gain than the refined need of the rich. The cellar-dwellings in London bring more to those who let them than do the palaces; that is to say, with reference to the landlord they constitute greater wealth, and thus (to speak the language of political economy) greater social wealth.

Industry speculates on the refinement of needs, but it speculates just as much on their crudeness, but on their artificially produced crudeness, whose true enjoyment, therefore, is self-stupefaction—this seeming satisfaction of need—this civilization contained within the crude barbarism of need. The English gin-shops are therefore the symbolic embodiments of private property. Their luxury reveals the true relation of industrial luxury and wealth to man. They are therefore rightly the only Sunday pleasures of the people, dealt with at least mildly by the English police.

We have already seen how the political economist establishes the unity of labour and capital in a variety of ways:—(1) Capital is accumulated labour. (2) The purpose of capital within production—partly, reproduction of capital with profit, partly, capital as raw material (material of labour), and partly, as itself a working instrument (the machine is capital directly equated with labour)—is productive labour. (3) The worker is a capital. (4) Wages belong to costs of capital. (5) In relation to the worker, labour is the reproduction of his life-capital. (6) In relation to the capitalist, labour is an aspect of his capital's activity.

Finally, (7) the political economist postulates the original unity of capital and labour in the form of the unity of the capitalist and the worker; this is the original state of paradise. The way in which these two aspects in the form of two persons leap at each other's throats is for the political economist a contingent event, and hence only to be explained by reference to external factors. (See Mill.)⁴

The nations which are still dazzled by the sensuous splendour of precious metals, and are therefore still fetish-worshippers of metal money, are not yet fully developed money-nations. Contrast of France and England. The extent to which the solution of theoretical riddles is the task of practice and effected through practice, just as true practice is the condition of a real and positive theory, is shown, for example, in fetishism. The sensuous consciousness of the fetish-worshipper is different from that of the Greek, because his sensuous existence is still different. The abstract enmity between sense and spirit is necessary so long as the human feeling for nature,

4. James Mill, *Elements of Political Economy*.

the human sense of nature, and therefore also the natural sense of man, are not yet produced by man's own labour.

Equality is nothing but a translation of the German "Ich=Ich" into the French, i.e., political form. Equality as the groundwork of communism is its political justification, and it is the same as when the German justifies it by conceiving man as universal self-consciousness. Naturally, the transcendence of the estrangement always proceeds from that form of the estrangement which is the dominant power: in Germany, self-consciousness; in France, equality, because politics; in England, real, material, practical need taking only itself as its standard. It is from this standpoint that Proudhon is to be criticized and appreciated.

If we characterize communism itself because of its character as negation of the negation, as the appropriation of the human essence which mediates itself with itself through the negation of private property—as being not yet the true, self-originating position but rather a position originating from private property, [..]e

Since in that case the real estrangement of the life of man remains, and remains all the more, the more one is conscious of it as such, it may be accomplished solely by putting communism into operation.

In order to abolish the idea of private property, the idea of communism is completely sufficient. It takes actual communist action to abolish actual private property. History will come to it; and this movement, which in theory we already know to be a self-transcending movement, will constitute in actual fact a very severe and protracted process. But we must regard it as a real advance to have gained beforehand a consciousness of the limited character as well as of the goal of this historical movement—and a consciousness which reaches out beyond it.

When communist workmen associate with one another, theory, propaganda, etc., is their first end. But at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need—the need for society—and what appears as a means becomes an end. You can observe this practical process in its most splendid results whenever you see French socialist workers together. Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer means of contact or means that bring together. Company, association, and conversation, which again has society as its end, are enough for them; the brotherhood of man is

5. In the manuscript the lower left corner of the page is torn off. Just the right-hand endings of the last six lines remain, making restorations of the text impossible. It is possible to surmise, however, that Marx here criticizes Hegel's idealistic "transcending" of es-

trangement (the words that have survived are cited in the next footnote). 6. In "transcending" estrangement "in the old German manner—the manner of the Hegelian phenomenology," i.e., in transcending it exclusively in the "consciousness" of the subject.

no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies.

When political economy claims that demand and supply always balance each other, it immediately forgets that according to its own claim (theory of population) the supply of people always exceeds the demand, and that, therefore, in the essential result of the whole production process—the existence of man—the disparity between demand and supply gets its most striking expression.

The extent to which money, which appears as a means, constitutes true power and the sole end—the extent to which in general that means which gives me substance, which gives me possession of the objective substance of others, is an end in itself—can be clearly seen from the facts that landed property wherever land is the source of life, and horse and sword wherever these are the true means of life, are also acknowledged as the true political powers in life. In the middle ages a social class is emancipated as soon as it is allowed to carry the sword. Amongst nomadic peoples it is the horse which makes me a free man and a participant in the life of the community.

We have said above that man is regressing to the cave dwelling etc.—but that he is regressing to it in an estranged, malignant form. The savage in his cave—a natural element which freely offers itself for his use and protection—feels himself no more a stranger, or rather feels himself to be just as much at home as a fish in water. But the cellar-dwelling of the poor man is a hostile dwelling, "an alien, restraining power which only gives itself up to him in so far as he gives up to it his blood and sweat"—a dwelling which he cannot look upon as his own home where he might at last exclaim, "Here I am at home," but where instead he finds himself in someone else's house, in the house of a stranger who daily lies in wait for him and throws him out if he does not pay his rent. Similarly, he is also aware of the contrast in quality between his dwelling and a human dwelling—a residence in that other world, the heaven of wealth.

Estrangement is manifested not only in the fact that my means of life belong to someone else, that my desire is the inaccessible possession of another, but also in the fact that everything is in itself something different from itself—that my activity is something else and that, finally (and this applies also to the capitalist), all is under the sway of inhuman power. There is a form of inactive, extravagant wealth given over wholly to pleasure, the enjoyer of which on the one hand behaves as a mere ephemeral individual frantically spending himself to no purpose knows the slave-labour of others (human sweat and blood) as the prey of his cupidity, and therefore knows man himself, and hence also his own self, as a sacrificed and empty being. With such wealth the contempt of man makes its appearance, partly as arrogance and as the throwing-away of what

can give sustenance to a hundred human lives, and partly as the infamous illusion that his own unbridled extravagance and ceaseless, unproductive consumption is the condition of the other's labour and therefore of his subsistence. He knows the realization of the essential powers of man only as the realization of his own excesses, his whims and capricious, bizarre notions. This wealth which, on the other hand, again knows wealth as a mere means, as something that is good for nothing but to be annihilated and which is therefore at once slave and master, at once generous and mean, capricious, presumptuous, concealed, refined, cultured and witty—this wealth has not yet experienced wealth as an utterly alien power over itself: it sees in it, rather, only its own power, and not wealth but gratification [is its] final aim and end.

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Society, as it appears to the political economist, is civil society, in which every individual is a totality of needs and only exists for the other person, as the other exists for him, in so far as each becomes a means for the other. The political economist reduces everything (just as does politics in its Rights of Man) to man, i.e., to the individual whom he strips of all determinateness so as to class him as capitalist or worker.

The division of labour is the expression in political economy of the social character of labour within the estrangement. Or, since labour is only an expression of human activity within alienation, of the living of life as the alienating of life, the division of labour, too, is therefore nothing else but the estranged, alienated positing of human activity as a real activity of the species or as activity of man as a species being.

As for the essence of the division of labour—and of course the division of labour had to be conceived as a major driving force in the production of wealth as soon as labour was recognized as the essence of private property—i.e., about the estranged and alienated form of human activity as an activity of the species—the political economists are very unclear and self-contradictory about it.