

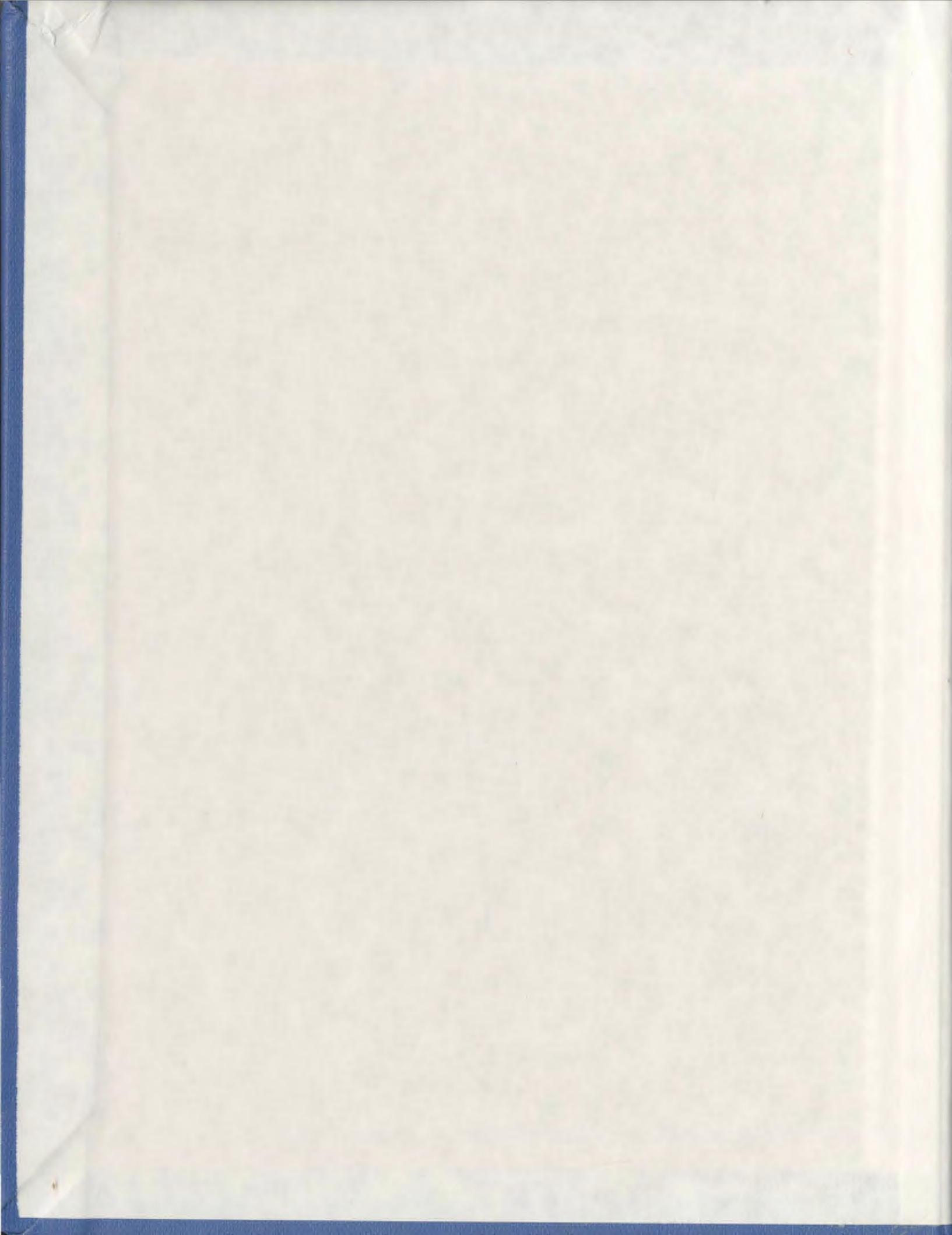
FREEDOM IN KARL MARX'S DAS KAPITAL

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ABSTRACT

FREEDOM IN KARL MARX'S DAS KAPITAL

by



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## ABSTRACT

A concise statement of the nature of freedom, which contains aspects of individual freedom and social freedom, can be extracted from the economic discussions that form the substance of Karl Marx's Das Kapital (Capital, 'Volume 1'). The account of individual freedom involves the concern of individuals who want to be free of the interference of capital. It is an expanded consideration of non-interference associated traditionally with the ideal liberal notion of negative freedom, and it has its basis in the universal condition of existence where individuals labour in order to survive.

Social freedom is concerned with how individuals labour in each changing social form, and in capitalist society it is primarily concerned with the lack of freedom of those who sell their labour-power in acquiring a fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of society. Marx argues that it is because of the sale of labour-power that capitalism comes into existence, and once the intense accumulation of nineteenth century European capitalism is completed then a new social form will have to replace capitalism. In Das Kapital Marx depends neither on the eventual collapse of capitalism in order for individuals to acquire greater freedom in society, nor does he propose a positive programme, explainable by dialectics, to overthrow capitalism. Instead, he argues

that greater freedom develops in society by both reform and revolution.

The argument proceeds as follows: Chapter One presents the discussion of freedom in relation to the distinction of negative and positive freedom in Isaiah Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty". Chapter Two considers recent criticism of Berlin's notion of negative freedom, and I maintain that Marx allows for an expanded consideration of negative freedom where individuals are motivated to be free of the interference of capital. Chapter Three argues that both reform and revolution are vehicles for social change in Das Kapital, and Marx doesn't outline a positive programme for the future. The final chapter (Chapter Four) presents Marx's account of freedom which is based on the notions of individual freedom and social freedom.

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1

The specific concern of this thesis is to present a concise statement of the nature of freedom in Karl Marx's Das Kapital (Capital, 'Volume 1').

The claim that Marx's writings contain a detailed consideration of freedom isn't new, for attempts have been made, especially in recent times, to assert the overriding importance of freedom in his thought. At least two different approaches have been offered, one by Peter Singer and another by Loyd D. Easton.

Singer's brief and informative work Karl Marx presents the theme of freedom as Marx's "central concern [for] Marx was devoted to the cause of human freedom" both in his actions and in his thought.<sup>1</sup> Singer says that Marx's vision of freedom can be traced from his doctoral dissertation, through his revolutionary activities in Germany and France, his many writings on politics and economics, and his organizational efforts on behalf of various workers' movements. In his summary

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Singer, Karl Marx (Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 68-72.

Singer proposes that the precise nature of Marx's consideration of freedom rests on Marx's discussion of the future stage of communism which, according to Singer, "would bring with it the end of any threat of a conflict between the freedom of the community to control its own economic and social life, and the freedom of the individual to do as he or she pleases."<sup>2</sup> Singer, however, offers little elaboration of the vision of freedom that he attributes to Marx.

Easton's essay "Marx and Individual Freedom" emphasizes Marx's early texts and argues that because of the influence of German idealist philosophy, especially that of G.W.F. Hegel, Marx defends individual freedom "as a matter of philosophical principle and specific social policy."<sup>3</sup> In his response to the question of freedom in Marx's writings, Easton argues that there are "unresolved problems and gaps" in Marx's account of individual freedom.<sup>4</sup> Easton's position is that Marx adheres "to dialectics as the fundamental principle of 'development' in society and history, and this was the permanent ground of his defense of individual freedom."<sup>5</sup> Easton

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<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 72.

<sup>3</sup>Loyd D. Easton, "Marx and Individual Freedom", The Philosophical Forum, Volume XI, Number 3 (Boston: Boston University, 1981), p. 193.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., p. 210.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p. 193.



contends that Marx "never freed himself from the purely rational aspect of Hegel's method [for] Marx's use of dialectics ... entails a thoroughgoing monism, effectively cancelling all individuality ... and consequently any real pluralism and change."<sup>6</sup>

Easton's position can only be attributed to Marx if one assumes that Marx's use of dialectics entails that all change and development in society and history is inevitable along dialectical lines. Then, such an interpretation of Marx's philosophy lends itself to the monist position that Easton accords to Marx's philosophy but it comes about only by a strict adherence to limited aspects of Marx's analysis of social and historical change. It is a position that doesn't give sufficient weight to Marx's discussions in Das Kapital on the nature of social change or the role of individual motivation in effecting change.

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The approaches which Singer and Easton offer are inadequate considerations of Marx's account of freedom

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<sup>6</sup> ibid., p. 210.



primarily because their brief analyses don't give a detailed discussion of freedom in Das Kapital. I shall go beyond their examinations, first, by concentrating the discussion of Marx's philosophy of freedom to Das Kapital and, second, by concentrating the discussion of freedom to that perspective of political freedom offered by the distinguished Oxford scholar Isaiah Berlin in his essay "Two Concepts of Liberty".

There are aspects of Marx's philosophy in both his earlier and later works which have a bearing on his account of freedom but, with respect to the first consideration of my approach, the central importance of Das Kapital in the corpus of Marx's writings, as well as the refinement of his thought found in it, allow for an account of freedom to be extracted from this specific and detailed economic study. Although reference will be made occasionally to some of Marx's other writings, such reference is intended to clarify my interpretation of Marx's view of freedom in Das Kapital.

Marx doesn't state explicitly what he means by freedom in Das Kapital but he does present enough direction in economic discussions to support the standpoint of this thesis, namely, that a concise statement of Marx's account of freedom can be extracted from Das Kapital. The text remains Marx's central work, the labour of almost twenty-five years, and culminates a lifetime of thought and

action.<sup>7</sup> Any consideration, therefore, of Marx's philosophy should be supported by extensive reference to it.

Das Kapital discloses the importance of capital in society, and how and why capital has attained such importance. Only in brief, though often ambiguous, passages does Marx attempt to relate the movement of capital to the question of freedom. Such an approach doesn't lessen the importance of freedom in Das Kapital; it only makes it harder to present a clear and concise statement of what Marx means by freedom. Even when Marx provides historical support for his economic position in the eighth and concluding part, there are difficulties in extracting his underlying position on the nature of freedom. In particular, he refers to the historical support as a 'supposition',<sup>8</sup> and he proposes that the resolution in a future social form of the accumulation of capital is only a 'tendency'.<sup>9</sup> I maintain, however, that both his supposition and the tendency of capital accumulation are of considerable importance to his account of freedom, for Marx doesn't

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<sup>7</sup>Singer, Marx, pp. 23, 28.

<sup>8</sup>Karl Marx, Capital 'Volume 1', trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, edited by Frederick Engels (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), p. 667. Hereafter DK.

<sup>9</sup>ibid., p. 713.



confine his discussion to a strictly scientific explanation of individual actions and social events. Instead, he presents a truly profound expression of man as he lives in society.

With respect to the second consideration of my approach, the difficulty in explaining the nature of freedom is by no means confined to the approaches offered by Singer and Easton but it is embedded in any attempt to discuss the nature of freedom - a difficulty which Berlin declares is true of almost every writer who discusses freedom. In "Two Concepts of Liberty" Berlin states: "Like happiness and goodness, like Nature and reality, the meaning of the term is so porous that there is little interpretation that it seems able to resist."<sup>10</sup> There are, Berlin says, "more than two hundred senses of this protean word recorded by historians of ideas", and in order to overcome such an inherent difficulty in discussions of freedom Berlin limits his consideration of freedom to two senses in which the problems of freedom are generally discussed in political philosophy, and which he claims are "central" to the discussion of freedom.<sup>11</sup> He

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<sup>10</sup> Isaiah Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 121. Hereafter FEL.

<sup>11</sup> ibid., p. 121.



comments: "The first of these political senses of freedom or liberty (I shall use both words to mean the same), ... (following much precedent) I shall call the 'negative' sense .... The second ... I shall call the positive sense."<sup>12</sup> The negative notion of freedom is freedom from interference in the sense of the individual being able to do this or that without being interfered with by others, while the positive notion of freedom is freedom to in the sense "to lead one prescribed form of life."<sup>13</sup>

Berlin is critical of the positive theory of freedom which he sees as put forward by Hegel, Marx, and others. The main focus of his criticism is the gross distortion of freedom that is perpetrated in the name of positive freedom.<sup>14</sup> Berlin says that some writers have "obscured" the understanding of freedom which Marx and others have proposed "and at times transformed it into its opposite."<sup>15</sup> The thrust of Berlin's argument is that freedom in the positive sense is inadequate. He chastizes those who promote such a viewpoint for speculating on a utopian "condition of perfect social harmony [which] is the play of idle fancy."<sup>16</sup> Berlin discounts positive

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<sup>12</sup> ibid., pp. 121/2.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., pp. 130/1.

<sup>14</sup> ibid., p. lxi.

<sup>15</sup> ibid., p. lxi.

<sup>16</sup> ibid., p. 118.

political ideas and ideologies because they deny what he sees as the most important consideration of political liberty, namely the furtherance of negative freedom, or the freedom of individuals from interference so that they can do what they want, within certain boundaries, without being coerced by those who promote a particular ideology or form of government to which they must conform.<sup>17</sup>

Berlin claims that the freedom of individuals to choose between a pluralism of values "with the measure of 'negative' liberty that it entails, seems ... a truer and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great, disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of 'positive' self-mastery by classes, or peoples, or the whole of mankind."<sup>18</sup> To this end, Berlin is critical of Marx's philosophy because it lends itself to a 'monism' that begins as a doctrine of freedom but is "turned into a doctrine of authority and, at times, of oppression, and became the favoured weapon of despotism, a phenomenon all too familiar in our own day."<sup>19</sup>

Berlin's argument has been only briefly presented, for his position is a detailed and involved consideration of freedom. In the following chapter his argument will

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<sup>17</sup> ibid., p. 118.

<sup>18</sup> ibid., p. 171.

<sup>19</sup> ibid., p. xliv.



be presented in more depth and it will be used as a basis upon which to discuss the relation of Marx's philosophy to it in subsequent chapters. Although it will be proposed that individual freedom and social freedom are more adequate formulations of freedom in Marx's philosophy, it shouldn't be assumed that my discussion will parallel the notions of individual and negative freedom, and social and positive freedom. Individual and social freedom differ substantially from Berlin's account of negative and positive freedom, and the initial task will be to present the relation of Marx's philosophy to Berlin's position before I endeavour to state Marx's account of freedom.

Das Kap To this end, I shall argue that Berlin's consideration of Marx's account of freedom is inadequate. Marx allows for a degree of individual discretion upon which individuals can decide whether they will remain confined to a particular social form, especially the one dominated by capital, and Berlin doesn't account for such discussion. There is the further aspect of my interpretation of Marx's philosophy which won't ignore Easton's emphasis on dialectics and Hegel's influence, but the major emphasis will be to explore the economic perspective which Marx maintains in Das Kapital, and I shall view social and historical change, and the effects of such change on the individual, within that perspective. In effect, I shall



argue for a 'pluralism' in Marx's philosophy that overrides the arguments of Easton and Berlin, but which is based on Marx's treatment of the individual, and social change in Das Kapital. Despite my disagreement, especially with Berlin's position, his concentration of discussions of freedom to political freedom, as well as recent criticisms of his position, will allow me to develop my interpretation of Marx's account of freedom.

One further note has to be made on the approach of this thesis. My discussion of Marx's account of freedom in Das Kapital will not offer an interpretation of what Marx means by the traditional issue of free will.

Das Kapital is a discussion of capital and his account of freedom that can be extracted from it will be based on how the individual acts or has the ability to act in capitalist society. Marx doesn't discuss directly the nature of an individual's will independently of the individual's existence in society. I can only agree with Berlin's remark that "much more needs to be done, especially on the issue of free will"<sup>20</sup>; and, that in what follows the issue of free will will not be explicitly discussed.

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<sup>20</sup>ibid., p. lxiii.

The basis of my interpretation of the nature of freedom in Das Kapital will rest on the distinction between labour and labour-power, and the consequence of this distinction on Marx's account of individual freedom and social freedom.

An analysis of the distinction of labour and labour-power is offered by Robert Heilbroner in his work Marxism: For and Against. Heilbroner says: "Labor power is the capacity for work that an employer buys when he hires a worker for a day or a week. Labor, on the other hand, is the actual expenditure of human energy and intelligence that becomes embodied in the commodities that laborers create."<sup>21</sup> According to Heilbroner, the importance of the difference between labour and labour-power for Marx's economic theory is underlined by the fact that "one must always be able to buy the capacity for work for less than the value that will be created when that capacity is put to use and commodities are produced."<sup>22</sup> Heilbroner explains that it is because "this difference exists that capital itself can be brought into being."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Robert L. Heilbroner, Marxism: For and Against (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1980), p. 107. (His emphasis.)

<sup>22</sup>ibid., p. 107.

<sup>23</sup>ibid., p. 107.



Although I agree with Heilbroner's assessment that there is an important difference between labour and labour-power, I make one qualification to his distinction. Labour has existed before capital and even before the production of commodities. Marx explains that a "thing can be useful, and the product of human labour, without being a commodity."<sup>24</sup>

Marx advocates individual freedom to be the freedom of each and every individual to appropriate, through his or her labour, the things of Nature so as to satisfy his or her existence. It is because of the universal condition to labour that, one, individuals become dissatisfied with interference in how they labour and, two, individuals can discriminate that it isn't others but conditions such as the domination of capital that is the cause of that interference in capitalist society.

Marx's account of social freedom accepts the premise that capitalism isn't the everlasting form of society. Society has changed its social form from tribalism to feudalism to capitalism, and Marx argues that it will continue to change its form. The

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<sup>24</sup>DK., p. 48.



underlying feature of capitalism is that individuals sell their labour-power to the few owners of capital. Marx argues that greater freedom for more people in society would be evident if labour-power is used for the benefit of society and not simply for the sake of the accumulation of capital. Greater alteration for more and more non-interference from capital, and hence more freedom, is obtainable if individuals join together with as many or all members of society to alter conditions such that the interference which capital creates is reduced or eliminated. Marx suggests that by reform and revolution individuals are striving for greater freedom than exists in society under the domination of capital.

It will be argued that Das Kapital contains an account of freedom which has aspects of both individual freedom and social freedom. Individual freedom consists of the immediate concern of individuals who are motivated by their labour to be free of the interference which capital creates. The universal condition to labour provides the basis for individual freedom. Individuals, however, can only realize their individual freedom

in how they have to live and work in society, and this involves social freedom which, in respect to capitalist society, involved a consideration of how the benefits and burdens are shared. The distinctive feature of capitalism is that individuals create capitalism by the sale of their labour-power, and with the progressive development of society the changes in the use of labour-power will also change society and the freedoms contained in it. There is the added consideration of social freedom that once society attains a new form, there will be further freedoms that some unforeseen future form of society will indicate and individuals will have to judge their actions according to the kind of freedom that they will want in that future society.

## 1V

The approach of the argument is as follows: Chapter One outlines Berlin's discussion of political liberty and the two notions of negative and positive freedom. Chapter Two, first, presents recent criticism of Berlin's distinction; second, it is argued that Marx considers negative freedom in an expanded context



to be part of his philosophy; and, third, it is explained that individuals are motivated to realize greater freedom in society. Chapter Three presents an examination of Marx's use of dialectics and his discussion of reform and revolution. It is argued that Marx's account of freedom shouldn't be viewed as a positive doctrine for the realization of greater freedom. Chapter Four, the conclusion, presents Marx's account of freedom as resting on the two aspects of individual and social freedom.

Berlin gives a brief summary of the notion of negative freedom and the importance of non-interference when he explains "I am entitled to be free in the degree to which no man or men interfere with my activity."<sup>2</sup> Individuals shouldn't be interfered with, coerced, or obstructed in their relations with others. "Coercion," Berlin says, "implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I should otherwise act."<sup>3</sup> He explains that

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

## CHAPTER ONE

### BERLIN AND POLITICAL LIBERTY

#### A. The Notion of Negative Freedom

Berlin investigates the nature of political liberty and to this end he distinguishes two notions of freedom, namely negative freedom and positive freedom. This section will deal with the notion of negative freedom or, as Berlin explains, political liberty in the sense that there is an "area within which a man can act unobstructed by others."<sup>1</sup>

Berlin gives a brief summary of the notion of negative freedom and the importance of non-interference when he explains "I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity."<sup>2</sup> Individuals shouldn't be interfered with, coerced, or obstructed in their relations with others. "Coercion," Berlin says, "implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I could otherwise act."<sup>3</sup> He explains that

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<sup>1</sup>FEL., p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 122.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., p. 122.



coercion is deliberate interference whether it be physical, economic, or political. "The criterion of oppression," Berlin explains, "is the part that I believe to be played by other human beings, directly or indirectly, ... in frustrating my wishes. By being free in this sense I mean not being interfered with by others."<sup>4</sup> The criterion for greater freedom is as follows: "The wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom."<sup>5</sup>

In order to clarify his view Berlin undertakes an examination of discussions in various political philosophies on the issue of non-interference. His initial remarks deal with the disagreement amongst political philosophers on the determination of the area of non-interference.<sup>6</sup> Because of the impossibility of having a totally unlimited area of non-interference for everyone, the result has been the position that a minimum area has to be set, and upheld by law.<sup>7</sup> He cites Locke, Mill, Constant, and Tocqueville as believing that "there ought to exist a certain minimum area of personal freedom which must on no account be violated."<sup>8</sup> The problem,

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<sup>4</sup>ibid., p. 123.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p. 123.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., p. 123.

<sup>7</sup>ibid., pp. 123/4.

<sup>8</sup>ibid., p. 124.

however, that has arisen repeatedly in these discussions, is where to draw the boundaries to this area. Berlin asserts that wherever one draws the boundary it would have to guarantee a realm of freedom that is identical with the freedom of all other people.

Berlin underscores the difficulty in providing all of mankind with the same minimum area of non-interference through an example of people in different societies having different material and social needs. "The Egyptian peasant," he illustrates, "needs clothes or medicine before, and more than personal liberty, but the minimum freedom that he needs today, and the greater degree of freedom that he may need tomorrow is not some species of freedom peculiar to him, but identical with that of professors, artists, and millionaires."<sup>9</sup> Berlin's illustration highlights a major problem in discussions of freedom in political theory for freedom is often confused with other social or political goals that are seen by mankind as being of equal social value, for example, justice or equality.<sup>10</sup> Berlin wishes to avoid such confusion in discussions of freedom. Although neither freedom, justice, nor equality is the only goal of mankind

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<sup>9</sup> ibid., pp. 124/5.

<sup>10</sup> ibid., p. 125.



he goes on to say that if liberties are sacrificed for equality or justice, and such sacrifices "do not materially increase the individual liberty of others, an absolute loss of liberty occurs."<sup>11</sup>

Berlin's perspective remains with the obstacle that in the interests of such values as justice or equality a decision often has to be made such that "the freedom of some must at times be curtailed to secure the freedom of others."<sup>12</sup> The problem in providing a basis for such a decision has been the difficulty in political theory of reconciling various views of human nature and human interests with the area of non-interference of each and every individual. Berlin says that writers as diverse in theory as Locke, Smith, Mill, Hobbes, Jefferson, Burke, Paine, and Lassalle have sought to answer this difficulty.<sup>13</sup> They have attempted to define clearly in one form or another the minimum area of individual freedom. Therefore, there is a common underlying feature of those who search for compatibility of their view of man with their conviction of some area of non-interference, and that common feature according to Berlin is that they refer to liberty in

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<sup>11</sup>ibid., p. 125.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., p. 126.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., p. 126.

the sense of "liberty from; absence of interference beyond the shifting, but always recognizable, frontier."<sup>14</sup>

In the "Introduction" to Four Essays on Liberty where Berlin expands upon his original essay "Two Concepts of Liberty" he provides further elaboration of the difficulties with interpretations of the notion of negative freedom. One difficulty is that negative freedom has to mean more than actual freedom from coercion. Berlin asserts: "The extent of my social or political freedom consists in the absence of obstacles not merely to my actual, but to my potential choices - to my acting in this or that way if I choose to do so."<sup>15</sup> Oppression comes about with the deliberate intention by persons or groups to foster obstacles to either my actual or potential choices.<sup>16</sup> Berlin, therefore, doesn't wish to equate freedom or the obstruction to freedom solely with the actual activity of individuals. Freedom, he says, rests with "the right and freedom to act" and not merely acting as such.<sup>17</sup> It is the importance of having both the right and freedom to act which comprises that part of the

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<sup>14</sup>ibid., p. 127.

<sup>15</sup>ibid., p. xl.

<sup>16</sup>ibid., p. xl.

<sup>17</sup>ibid., p. xliii.



human condition which needs to make choices. Berlin explains "that there are many possible courses of action and forms of life worth living, and therefore to choose between them is part of being rational or capable of moral judgment."<sup>18</sup> Man, then, has to have a minimum area of non-interference in which to make such choices, especially where values clash.<sup>19</sup>

A second difficulty which is mentioned in the original essay but which is expanded upon in the "Introduction" is that freedom shouldn't be confused with the conditions for freedom.<sup>20</sup> The example Berlin uses on this point is the need for a universal or uniform system of education as a necessary component for the eventual furtherance "of opportunities for free choice, which equality in education is likely to increase."<sup>21</sup> The principle, he explains, for such an ideal may be social equality, but it may infringe upon the freedom for a minority of people to promote their own system of education, for example, an elitist form of education that would be tailored to, for, and by the rich.<sup>22</sup> In the end choices have to be made between freedom and its

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<sup>18</sup> ibid., p. li.

<sup>19</sup> ibid., p. liv.

<sup>20</sup> ibid., p. liii.

<sup>21</sup> ibid., p. liv.

<sup>22</sup> ibid., p. liv.

conditions, and again Berlin refers to the situation of conflicting social values. There are no ultimate values on which to depend when freedom conflicts with other values, but neither is there the need to downgrade freedom. The resolution of any clash shouldn't lead to a distortion of freedom such that there is a decrease in freedom for individuals.<sup>23</sup>

Berlin explains his position by contrasting it with the opposite view that values ultimately are reconciled under one overriding principle:

The notion that there must exist objective answers to normative questions, truths that can be demonstrated or directly intuited, that it is in principle possible to discover a harmonious pattern in which all values are reconciled, and that it is towards this unique goal that we must make; that we can uncover some single central principle that shapes this vision, a principle which, once found, will govern our lives - this ancient and almost universal belief, on which so much traditional thought and action and philosophical doctrine rests, seems to me invalid, and at times to have led (and still to lead) to absurdities in theory and barbarous consequences in practice.<sup>24</sup>

In order to counteract the possible 'barbarous' tendencies that may be experienced with the objectification of some particular standard of man, Berlin proposes an inherent rationality in each and every individual "to follow the the course of conduct which least obstructs the general

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<sup>23</sup> ibid., pp. liv/lv.

<sup>24</sup> ibid., pp. lv/lvi.



pattern of life in which we believe."<sup>25</sup> There are no clear and precise rules or principles to follow for "conditions are often unclear, and principles incapable of being fully analyzed or articulated. We seek to adjust the unadjustable, we do the best we can."<sup>26</sup>

Berlin reiterates that people shouldn't "be blinded to the possible danger of the total triumph of any one principle."<sup>27</sup> Nor, should freedom be confused with its conditions:

Those who are obsessed by the truth that **negative** freedom is worth little without sufficient conditions for [its] active exercise, or without the satisfaction of other human aspirations, are liable to minimize its importance, to deny it the very title of freedom, to transfer it to something that they regard as more precious, and finally to to forget that without it human life, both social and individual, withers away.<sup>28</sup>

One of Berlin's major concerns is to protect the individual against paternalism, in whatever shape or form, whereby it is someone else, or some group or government, which dictates what is rational for the individual.<sup>29</sup> The rationale for this position is the belief that there are neither absolute definitions of man's nature, nor on the matter of freedom can there be any absolute determinations of what freedom means for man. Berlin

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<sup>25</sup> ibid., p. lv.

<sup>26</sup> ibid., p. lv.

<sup>27</sup> ibid., p. lviii.

<sup>28</sup> ibid., pp. lviii/lix.

<sup>29</sup> ibid., p. lxii.

doesn't form his own complete view of man, possibly because of his reservation that once a definite view is ascertained, then theories and objective standards could emerge from that view. There are those in the past that have used either theories of man or standards to which mankind should strive for 'barbarous consequences', but Berlin also sees examples of this in those discussions of freedom where some have attempted to impose one interpretation of freedom upon everyone else; that is, the attempt has been made to make a standard upon which to direct the behaviour of all men. In particular, Berlin makes reference to the "disastrous implications" of totalitarian governments over the past one hundred years,<sup>30</sup> and the "social doctrine" of many governments.<sup>31</sup>

Berlin places a high priority, if not the highest, on liberty, although it has to be kept in mind that he doesn't want to make negative freedom an absolute principle any more than any other.<sup>32</sup> A doctrine purporting to be a doctrine of freedom has to guard against distortions of individual freedom.<sup>33</sup> The individual still has to be left with the free determination provided by a minimum

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<sup>30</sup> ibid., p. xlvii.

<sup>31</sup> ibid., p. lvii.

<sup>32</sup> ibid., p. lx.

<sup>33</sup> ibid., p. lxi.



area of non-interference and the freedom to choose between conflicting values and not to have those values imposed on the individual by others.<sup>34</sup>

In a discussion of J.S. Mill's concern for the individual, Berlin attempts to clarify the relationship of the individual and negative freedom. The defence of liberty "consists in the 'negative' goal of warding off interference."<sup>35</sup> Berlin states that it is important for both his and Mill's view of man, indeed for any modern interpretation of man, for this negative goal to be maintained. "To threaten a man," Berlin elaborates, "with persecution unless he submits to a life in which he exercises no choices of his goals; to block before him every door but one, no matter how noble the prospect upon which it opens, or how benevolent the motives of those who arrange this, is to sin against the truth that he is a man, a being with a life of his own to live."<sup>36</sup> Although Berlin grants that his view of the individual is often disputed, it remains for him the most basic conception of man upon which any discussion of individual liberty must be based.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> ibid., p. lxii.

<sup>35</sup> ibid., p. 127.

<sup>36</sup> ibid., p. 127.

<sup>37</sup> ibid., p. 128.

## B. The Notion of Positive Freedom

Berlin gives an extended explanation of what underlies, in his opinion, the notion of positive freedom.

"The 'positive' sense of the word 'liberty', he says

derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's, acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reason, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside. I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer - deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role; that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realising them. That is, at least part of what I mean when I say that I am rational, and that it is my reason that distinguishes me as a human being from the rest of the world. I wish, above all, to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, becoming responsible for my choices and able to explain them by reference to my own ideas and purposes. I feel free to the degree that I believe this to be true, and enslaved to the degree that I am made to realise that it is not.<sup>38</sup>

Berlin explains that the freedom of self-mastery contained in the notion of positive freedom might not appear all that different from the freedom of non-interference contained in the notion of negative freedom, but the two have "historically developed in divergent directions."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>ibid., p. 131.

<sup>39</sup>ibid., p. 132.



The former forms the basis of those who support the notion of positive freedom, and the latter forms the basis of those who support the notion of negative freedom.

Berlin has a particular reservation about the nature of positive freedom because it rests on the philosophical position of the divided self; that is, there are two selves in the one individual - the dominant rational self which dictates to a lower animal or natural self.<sup>40</sup> He says that "the positive conception of freedom as self-mastery, with its suggestion of a man divided against himself, has, in fact ... lent itself more easily to this splitting of personality into two: the transcendent, dominant controller, and the empirical bundle of desires and passions to be disciplined and brought to heel."<sup>41</sup> The major criticism which Berlin makes of such a position is that the positive conception of freedom, based on interpretations of man's rational self, is ruthlessly dictated to others. These interpretations can be made by individuals, but they are made most often by groups of individuals and these groups eventually dictate a rational norm to which all individuals must conform. Freedom, generally, in this sense becomes nothing more than a manipulative term to be used at the discretion of the

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<sup>40</sup> ibid., p. 132.

<sup>41</sup> ibid., p. 134.

manipulator. "Enough manipulation," Berlin explains, "with the definition of man, and freedom can be made to mean whatever the manipulator wishes."<sup>42</sup>

Berlin illustrates how individuals can be manipulated by either self-abnegation or self-realization. First, he deals with the concept of self-abnegation, or the retreat of the individual into his inner rational self.<sup>43</sup> It is the position that man is helpless in the face of the trials and difficulties of life. "In a world," Berlin says, "where a man seeking happiness or justice or freedom ... can do little, because he finds too many avenues of action blocked to him, the temptation to withdraw into himself may become irresistible."<sup>44</sup> He explains that this is "the traditional self-emancipation of ascetics and quietists, of stoics or Buddhist sages ... who have fled the world."<sup>45</sup> Such people maintain "that what I cannot have I must teach myself not to desire; that a desire eliminated, or successfully resisted, is as good as a desire satisfied."<sup>46</sup>

Berlin doesn't agree with self-abnegation or with

<sup>42</sup> ibid., p. 134.

<sup>43</sup> ibid., pp. 134, 139.

<sup>44</sup> ibid., p. 139.

<sup>45</sup> ibid., p. 135.

<sup>46</sup> ibid., p. 139.



the definition of negative freedom offered by Mill "as the ability to do what one wishes."<sup>47</sup> Wishes can often be manipulated either by the individual or a ruler to satisfy some end or purpose that isn't the individual's own. The individual can be made to 'feel free' even under tyranny by the suppression or conditioning of desires, but the so-called freedom that results isn't political freedom.<sup>48</sup> The individual may 'feel free' but in terms of his political life he doesn't enhance his freedom by self-abnegation. Berlin explains: "to know one's chains is often the first step to freedom, which may never come about if one either ignores or loves them."<sup>49</sup> He is adamant that self-abnegation cannot be freedom: "The sense of freedom ... entails not simply the absence of frustration ... but the absence of obstacles to possible choices and activities."<sup>50</sup> Berlin, however, offers little elaboration on an alternative to self-abnegation other than the proposal that the individual, by his own actions, can overcome obstacles by removing them, even if force or persuasion is used. "Such acts," Berlin says, "may be unjust, they may involve violence, cruelty, the enslavement

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<sup>47</sup> ibid., p. 139.

<sup>48</sup> ibid., pp. 139/40.

<sup>49</sup> ibid., p. xxxixn.

<sup>50</sup> ibid., p. xxxix.

of others, but it can scarcely be denied that thereby the agent is able in the most literal sense to increase his own freedom."<sup>51</sup>

The second illustration which Berlin offers as to how individuals can be manipulated takes the form of the concept of self-realization; that is, individuals can be led to believe that "to understand the world is to be freed."<sup>52</sup> "Knowledge liberates ... by automatically eliminating irrational fears and desires."<sup>53</sup> Berlin uses the particular reference of a position which he sees is maintained by Marx whom he interprets as saying that people have to become aware of the economic, historical, and social influences in their lives, and furthermore they have to be aware of their position as creators of these forces. Such awareness has to happen before change can occur. Consequently, Berlin suggests that "for Marx, understanding is appropriate action."<sup>54</sup> Berlin claims that if the individual understands, or is made to understand, how certain things come to be, then the individual assimilates that understanding into his very being! As the individual is rational, he accepts a rational understanding of how things come to be. The

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<sup>51</sup>ibid., p. 140.

<sup>52</sup>ibid., p. 142.

<sup>53</sup>ibid., p. 142.

<sup>54</sup>ibid., p. 143.



individual then applies himself to the understanding he has accepted.<sup>55</sup>

It is the manipulation of self-realization which Berlin examines in the light of contemporary social and political developments, and he sees it "at the heart of many of the nationalist, communist, authoritarian, and totalitarian creeds of our day."<sup>56</sup> According to Berlin, such advocates of positive freedom maintain that "the problem of political liberty was soluble by establishing a just order that would give to each man all the freedom to which a rational being was entitled."<sup>57</sup> The just order would be of such a nature that all "Rational men will respect the principle of reason in each other, and lack all desire to fight or dominate one another."<sup>58</sup> The test of such a principle is formulated as follows: "The existence of, or craving for, oppression will be the first symptom that the true solution to the problem of social life has not been reached."<sup>59</sup> He clearly indicates that such a solution hasn't been reached in twentieth century society.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> ibid., p. 144.

<sup>56</sup> ibid., p. 144.

<sup>57</sup> ibid., p. 145.

<sup>58</sup> ibid., p. 146.

<sup>59</sup> ibid., p. 146.

<sup>60</sup> ibid., p. lviii.

Berlin places Marx amongst those writers who promote either the doctrine of self-realization or who writings ultimately lead to a positive doctrine of freedom.<sup>61</sup> Subsequently, Berlin suggests that there are numerous historical examples to show that the view of freedom that can be extracted from Marx's writings develops into a tool of despots.<sup>62</sup> One consideration of this which Berlin offers that is relevant to Marx's writings is the confusion of individual liberty with that of liberty for the 'social whole'.<sup>63</sup> Berlin sees this as a confusion of terms, based on the notion of the divided self, where individuals either recognize themselves as part of a greater body of men, or associate liberty with some goal whether it be equality, fraternity, or justice. He feels that such confusion blinds some thinkers to talk of liberty in terms that don't concern freedom but refer to other ideals such as social equality. Although such ideals are just, they don't necessarily advance the cause of liberty.<sup>64</sup>

The confusion of ideals is illustrated further

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<sup>61</sup> ibid., pp. 142-44.

<sup>62</sup> ibid., pp. 143/4.

<sup>63</sup> ibid., p. 158.

<sup>64</sup> ibid., p. 162.



in Berlin's discussion of one specific confusion, that of liberty with democracy. He is of the opinion that democracy doesn't necessarily lead to greater liberty, but that it can quite often, following the example of the French Revolution, lead to tyranny.<sup>65</sup> For Berlin, the power of any sovereign, whether democratic or tyrannical, has to be held in check. He takes the opposite view of those who wish to posit the democratic ideal as ensuring greater freedom. Democracy, Berlin says, doesn't necessarily ensure individual liberty.<sup>66</sup> He reverts to his stand on negative freedom as a safeguard against tyranny whether by the ruthless democrat or the benevolent dictator. His claim is that whatever the type of society that is established it has to have an absolute stand with respect to freedom, namely "a society in which there must be some frontiers of freedom which nobody should be permitted to cross."<sup>67</sup>

Berlin bases the position of an area of non-interference on two principles which have to be maintained in order to safeguard the freedom of individuals in a truly free society. These principles are:

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<sup>65</sup> ibid., pp. 162/3.

<sup>66</sup> ibid., p. 130.

<sup>67</sup> ibid., p. 164.

first, that no power, but only rights, can be regarded as absolute, so that all men, whatever power governs them, have an absolute right to refuse to behave inhumanely; and, second, that there are frontiers, not artificially drawn, within which men should be inviolable, these frontiers being defined in terms of rules so long and widely accepted that their observance has entered into the very conception of what it is to be a normal human being, and, therefore, also of what it is to act inhumanely and insanely.<sup>68</sup>

The normal human being, for Berlin, shares two characteristics with other individuals. One, he has an inherent rationality such that he couldn't break these rules "without a qualm of revulsion"; and, two, he has as his basic rationale to live within boundaries that won't cause him to impose his will on another.<sup>69</sup> Here, Berlin says, is the sharp contrast between proponents of negative freedom and proponents of positive freedom: "The former want to curb authority as such. The latter want it placed in their own hands."<sup>70</sup>

Berlin highlights his disagreement with positive freedom in his concluding discussion on the monist and pluralist determination of values. The monist position, according to Berlin, favours the doctrine of positive freedom for it "rests on the conviction that all the positive values in which men have believed must, in the

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<sup>68</sup> ibid., p. 165.

<sup>69</sup> ibid., p. 166.

<sup>70</sup> ibid., p. 166.



end, be compatible, and perhaps even entail one another."<sup>71</sup> Monists believe that there are "final solutions", "a single criterion", or "simple, all-embracing systems, guaranteed to be eternal"; and, that such a single principle or ideal underlies man's existence.<sup>72</sup> Berlin views both Marx and his followers as monists.<sup>73</sup>

Berlin clearly doesn't agree with the monist position. He suggests the alternate pluralist position as more in line with his interpretation of freedom. "The ends of men are many," Berlin says in support of pluralism.<sup>74</sup> He supports his view with the following comment: "In the end men choose between ultimate values; they choose as they do, because their life and thoughts are determined by fundamental moral categories that are, at any rate over large stretches of time and space, a part of their being and thought and sense of their own identity; part of what makes them human."<sup>75</sup>

Values, Berlin implies, are relative for it is unrealistic, even immature, for individuals to search for guarantees.<sup>76</sup> "Principles," Berlin says, "are not

<sup>71</sup>ibid., p. 167.

<sup>72</sup>ibid., p. 170.

<sup>73</sup>ibid., p. 168.

<sup>74</sup>ibid., p. 169.

<sup>75</sup>ibid., pp. 171/2.

<sup>76</sup>ibid., p. 172.

less sacred because their duration cannot be guaranteed [for] to demand more than this is perhaps a deep and incurable metaphysical need."<sup>77</sup> Hence, proponents of positive freedom and their conviction that there must be an absolute principle can't satisfy the aspirations of men or society.

Berlin concludes his essay with a brief comment on the relation of negative freedom and capitalism. The historical origin, he says, of negative freedom and the pluralism of values concomitant with it are "only the late fruit of our declining capitalist civilization."<sup>78</sup> It isn't to be understood that Berlin offers a complete endorsement of capitalism for in the "Introduction" he is critical of its excesses.<sup>79</sup> Although both negative and positive freedom are "liable to perversion into the very vice which it was created to resist", Berlin is of the opinion that there is less chance today to pervert negative freedom.<sup>80</sup> He says that "liberal ultra-liberalism", which underlies capitalism's early development and excesses "could scarcely be said to be a rising force at present."<sup>81</sup> Distortions, however, of positive freedom are all too common!

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<sup>77</sup>ibid., p. 172.

<sup>78</sup>ibid., p. 172.

<sup>79</sup>ibid., pp. xlv/i.

<sup>80</sup>ibid., pp. xlvi/ii.

<sup>81</sup>ibid., p. xlvi.



## CHAPTER TWO

### MARX AND NEGATIVE FREEDOM

#### A. The Notion of Negative Freedom Expanded

The nature of freedom in Das Kapital is based on an expanded consideration of negative freedom and not a positive notion of freedom as Berlin outlines. This chapter will discuss the relation of Marx's view of freedom to the notion of negative freedom.

Charles Taylor investigates the notions of negative and positive freedom in his essay "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty". The point which Taylor raises is the shortcoming of applying an extreme view of negative freedom as the sole criterion of an account of freedom. He doesn't agree that the distinction can be as sharp as some writers believe, especially when they discount positive freedom merely by the totalitarian excesses of this century. Taylor finds Berlin's position sympathetic, at times, to the sharp distinction that extreme proponents of negative freedom draw between the notions of negative and positive freedom.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty", The Idea of Freedom, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford University Press, 1979). p. 177.

Taylor feels that the distinction has be to examined in more depth than is brought out in the deliberations of extreme proponents of negative liberty.<sup>2</sup>

According to Taylor, Berlin's position on the notion of negative freedom is for an area of non-interference for each and every individual while the notion of positive freedom is characterized by self-direction or self-governing.<sup>3</sup> Taylor, however, claims that non-interference or "being able to do what one wants can no longer be accepted as a sufficient condition of being free" because such a position of negative freedom has to build into the conception of non-interference some aspect "for discriminating authentic and inauthentic desires."<sup>4</sup> Taylor asks who can determine whether any wish or desire for non-interference coincides with the minimum area of non-interference? He puts forward the conclusion that "the subject himself can't be the final authority on the question whether he is free; for he cannot be the final authority on the question whether his desires are authentic, whether they do or do not frustrate his purposes."<sup>5</sup>

Taylor outlines the prevailing view of proponents

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<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 193.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., p. 177.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., p. 180.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p. 180.



of negative freedom within the ideal liberal position, and one which would apply to Berlin. It is the view that values "self-realization, and accepts that it can fail for internal reasons, but which believes that no valid guidance can be provided in principle by social authority, because of human diversity and originality, and holds that the attempt to impose such guidance will destroy other necessary conditions of freedom."<sup>6</sup> Taylor argues that if scrutinized closely the distinction between negative and positive freedom isn't as cut and dried as it is made out to be. Taylor summarizes the two steps of his position as follows:

the first moves us from a notion of freedom as doing what one wants to a notion which discriminates motivations and equates freedom with doing what we really want, or obeying our real will, or truly directing our lives. The second step introduces some doctrine purporting to show that we cannot do what we really want, or follow our real will, outside of a society of a certain canonical form, incorporating true self-government.<sup>7</sup>

It follows from Taylor's analysis that non-interference or the absence of external obstacles solely by itself is an inadequate conception of freedom. He maintains that there has to be some aspect in such a conceptualization that discriminates against the arbitrary will of every individual being the final

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<sup>6</sup>ibid., p. 181

<sup>7</sup>ibid., p. 181

authority on the area of non-interference and allowing "no second-guessing of the subject by any one else."<sup>8</sup> There has to be some way to discern the various internal as well as external obstacles to one's freedom for the question 'who is to assess whether the individual is mistaken?' would require some answer. "Hence," Taylor say, "we cannot maintain the incorrigibility of the subject's judgements about his freedom, or rule out second-guessing."<sup>9</sup> If this point is conceded, then, Taylor adds that the first step of negative freedom actually involves both the self-understanding of one's purposes and the motives behind them as well as non-interference or the absence of external obstacles. In other words the first step requires both negative and positive aspects of freedom.<sup>10</sup> The distinction of negative and positive freedom and Taylor's analysis of it will be pursued further as a preliminary examination to the perspective which this thesis will take of Marx's account of freedom. It is advocated by Taylor that the distinction of negative and positive freedom made by extreme proponents of negative freedom is too sharp. He further explains that within the realm of negative freedom there is a positive aspect of self-realization which isn't accounted

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<sup>8</sup> ibid., p. 181.

<sup>9</sup> ibid., p. 193.

<sup>10</sup> ibid., p. 193.



for in their arguments. Taylor doesn't say that Marx's philosophy possesses such an expanded version of negative freedom that encompasses a positive aspect. On the contrary he suggests that Marx's account of freedom is confined solely to the second step of his analysis, namely the position of positive freedom.<sup>11</sup>

This thesis will argue that Marx's account of freedom shouldn't be limited to the positive aspect of freedom that both Taylor and Berlin suggest is Marx's position on freedom. To this end, it will be shown that Marx does take account of the non-interference associated with negative freedom but in a broader context than is allowed by Berlin, and a different context than Taylor's extended analysis demands. Marx's discussions in Das Kapital primarily deal with the influence of capital on the activities of individuals, and the implication that individuals are motivated by the need for non-interference from the confines of capital and capital-dominated society. Therefore, in the following sections of this chapter the relation of Marx's philosophy in Das Kapital to the notion of negative freedom will be investigated.

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<sup>11</sup>ibid., p. 181.

### B. Marx and the Basis for Non-Interference

Marx's account of non-interference requires a consideration of the distinction he draws between labour and labour-power.

Marx's position with respect to labour is that individuals have to be able to use their labour to satisfy their own wants. Marx explains that labour "is exercised with a definite aim, an activity that appropriates particular nature-given materials to particular human wants."<sup>12</sup> Marx elaborates on what he means by labour when he says that "man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature" and, he continues, "By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature."<sup>13</sup> Marx also implies that labour allows for the mature development of the individual, and that this development occurs in society.<sup>14</sup>

Marx, however, doesn't hold that there is one specific social form that is necessary for labour to be undertaken, and he doesn't hold that individuals have

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<sup>12</sup>DK., p. 50.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., p. 173.

<sup>14</sup>ibid., p. 83.



to realize themselves in a particular social form. Although social conditions where man will use his labour will change with different social environments, and attributes of man's nature will change to meet those conditions, the basis of such labour remains constant, that is, man will always have to labour if he is to survive. It is this point which describes the innermost nature of man, the part that "is the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather is common to every such phase."<sup>15</sup>

Marx isn't the first writer to place such importance on labour; rather, he refines previous political and economic theory that builds on the importance of labour. The seventeenth century political philosopher John Locke discusses the necessity and importance of labour in his Two Treatises of Government where he refers to labour as 'Adam's curse', that because of the fall from the grace of God, man has "to work for his living ... to subdue the Earth."<sup>16</sup> Locke continues his description of man's basic nature

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<sup>15</sup> ibid., p. 179.

<sup>16</sup> John Locke, Two Treatises of Government (New York: Cambridge University Press, 'Mentor Book', 1963), Book 1, Section 45, p. 208.

to labour with the comment "as long as [man] livest, shall thou live by thy Labour."<sup>17</sup> Marx credits Locke with being one of the first modern writers on political economy and upon whose views much has been absorbed by subsequent writers on politics and economics.<sup>18</sup> However, it isn't directly because of these passages from Two Treatises of Government that Marx cites Locke in Das Kapital. Mainly, it is because of Locke's economic position in Some Considerations on the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money that Marx discusses Locke's views in Das Kapital.

In his discussion of the importance of labour, Marx also refers to the eighteenth century economist Adam Smith, although Marx has a different emphasis than Smith on labour. In The Wealth of Nations Smith says that when man labours he "must always lay down the same portion of his ease, his liberty, and his happiness."<sup>19</sup> Marx says in a footnote reference that Smith treats labour "as the mere sacrifice of rest, freedom, and happiness, not as at the same time the normal activity of living beings."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> ibid., p. 208.

<sup>18</sup> DK., p. 368n.

<sup>19</sup> Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, ed. Andrew Skinner (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 136

<sup>20</sup> DK., p. 77.



Marx says that Smith's classification of labour as a 'sacrifice' is understandable because "he has the modern wage-labourer in his eye" and that Smith is actually referring to labour-power as a sacrifice.<sup>21</sup> In capitalist society Marx says that labour "so far as it manifests itself in the value of commodities, consists only as expenditure of labour-power."<sup>22</sup> The use of labour-power in capitalist society can be viewed as the sacrifice of rest, freedom, and happiness but Marx argues that labour as the 'normal activity' of individuals, as opposed to an imposed condition, remains a permanent condition of man's existence.

In Das Kapital Marx advances the theme that man originally uses his labour to produce goods for consumption, but subsequently he produces commodities for limited exchange to acquire goods he couldn't produce. Once such goods become commodities, exchanged for the commodities of other commodity producers, man becomes alienated from the production of his own labour "because the relation of producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour."<sup>23</sup> Such is the case with production in

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<sup>21</sup> ibid., p. 53n.

<sup>22</sup> ibid., p. 53n.

<sup>23</sup> ibid., p. 77.

capitalist society.

The underlying feature of capitalist is that man sells his labour-power to the owner of capital for a particular time-period, whether for an hour, day, or week. Part of the individual's total expenditure of 'human energy and intelligence' becomes labour-power which is employed by the capitalist.<sup>24</sup> The capitalist system has as its basis this purchase of labour-power. "The capitalist epoch," Marx says, "is therefore characterised by this, that labour-power takes in the eyes of the labourer himself the form of a commodity which is his property."<sup>25</sup> Marx explains that labour-power consequently becomes wage-labour.<sup>26</sup> Initially, there is a primitive stage of independent and isolated producers, but the changes brought about by capitalism radically reduce man's social independence and isolation in production.<sup>27</sup> In the social transformation to capitalism, the vast majority of people are made dependent by the sale of part of their labour to a social system of production where they do no control the goods they produce, that is they become wage-labourers.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> ibid., p. 224.

<sup>25</sup> ibid., p. 167n.

<sup>26</sup> ibid., p. 167n.

<sup>27</sup> ibid., p. 669.

<sup>28</sup> ibid., p. 536.



By the sale of labour-power in the process of capitalist production, part of the individual's labour "has already been alienated from himself ... has been appropriated by the capitalist and incorporated with capital, [and] it must during the process, be realised in a product that does not belong to him."<sup>29</sup> The same "process of production is also the process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power, the product of the labourer is incessantly converted, not only into commodities, but into capital, ... into means of subsistence that buy the person of the labourer, into means of production that command the producers [i.e., the labourers]."<sup>30</sup> The wage-labourer, Marx says, "constantly produces material ... wealth but in the form of capital, of an alien power that dominates and exploits him."<sup>31</sup>

Marx says that man has to labour in order to survive and that he has to labour regardless of the form which society takes. The individual's use of his own energy and intelligence, i.e. his labour, is restricted by the domination of capital to which the individual must sell his labour-power in order to acquire his means of

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<sup>29</sup> ibid., p. 535.

<sup>30</sup> ibid., p. 535.

<sup>31</sup> ibid., p. 535.

subsistence. There are two aspects of labour-power that become embodied in commodities: one, that aspect of labour-power in which the individual realizes the means of subsistence, i.e. "necessary labour-time", and that aspect of labour-power in which a surplus is created for the buyer of labour-power, i.e. "surplus labour-time".<sup>32</sup> With reference to the individual's situation in capitalist society Marx advocates that the main function of the expenditure of an individual's labour-power should be the 'necessary labour-time' to acquire the individual's means of subsistence and that the surplus which is created by labour-power should be used for the benefit of society.<sup>33</sup>

One of the major problems with capitalism is that the owners of capital reap the benefits from the surplus which labour-power creates although they don't have to sell their own labour-power. The group of capitalists, Marx says, "shift the natural burden of labour from its own shoulders to those of another layer of society", i.e. to the wage-labourers.<sup>34</sup> If such a condition is altered so that the wage-labourers don't spend as much time labouring for the accumulation of capital and the

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<sup>32</sup> ibid., p. 222.

<sup>33</sup> ibid., p. 496.

<sup>34</sup> ibid., p. 496.



capitalists also work, then the total work of society would be more evenly divided amongst all members of society.<sup>35</sup> One of the consequences of such a position is that individuals would acquire their means of subsistence by expending less labour-power, and surplus-labour would be used to benefit all of society. I shall give further examples of the problems of capitalist society and Marx's position with respect to overcoming these problems later in this chapter, but before doing so I shall outline how Marx allows for individuals to be motivated to correct the inequities of capital-dominated society.

### C. Marx and Individual Motivation

In my comments on Marx's view of labour, it has been argued that individuals have capabilities and capacities that are distinctly theirs, despite the powerful influence of society; that is, individuals have lives of their own to lead. This position is the opposite of that which proposes that in Marx's writings man's nature is completely determined either by his social relations, history, or economics for it proposes that the motivations of the individual aren't completely determined, and that Marx does enter into discussion of individual motivation

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<sup>35</sup> ibid., p. 496.

in his analysis of capital. Although an argument of the next chapter will present my position with respect to the received view in Marxist circles of the inexorability of dialectical laws as the sole explanation of Marx's philosophy, my concern in this section is to present the position that Marx allows for individuals to be motivated to be free of the interference of capital.

The position of the individual directing his own life and thought is in opposition to the prominent view in Russian Marxist circles earlier this century. Joesph Stalin's Dialectical and Historical Materialism interprets Marx as follows: "the rise of new productive forces and of the relations of production corresponding to them ... takes place not as a result of the deliberate and conscious activity of man, but spontaneously, unconsciously, independently of the will of man."<sup>36</sup> In support of his position Stalin refers almost exclusively to the "Preface" of A Critique of Political Economy where Marx does say much the same thing, although Stalin omits to elaborate on one careful qualification which Marx makes, that the mode of production conditions the

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<sup>36</sup> Joseph Stalin, Dialectical and Historical Materialism (New York: International Publishers, 1977), pp. 40/1.



individual only in the most general sense.<sup>37</sup> Production is the major factor in how man's life is shaped but it isn't the only all-encompassing factor. Part of the difficulty in Stalin's position is that the "Preface" of A Critique of Political Economy, according to David McLellan, has become "often too exclusively" the major exposition of Marx's view of production and its influence.<sup>38</sup> There are other factors that have to be considered for Marx's position is definitely not as simplistic or as deterministic as Stalin makes it out to be.

A major point in any consideration of Marx's writings has to be the ambiguous nature of some of his comments which have led to much discussion on determinism and the confusion that surrounds it. There are many examples in Das Kapital of this including Marx's reiteration of his comments in the "Preface" of A Critique of Political Economy and the careful qualification of 'generally' in how the mode of production determines individual actions.<sup>39</sup> There is one particular statement in the "Preface" to the first edition of Das Kapital which should adequately bring out this point

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<sup>37</sup>David McLellan, Karl Marx: Selected Writings (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 389.

<sup>38</sup>ibid., p. 388.

<sup>39</sup>DK., p. 86n.

about ambiguity more clearly, and the consequence of such ambiguity on his philosophy. Marx says that the individual isn't responsible for social relations "whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them."<sup>40</sup> Despite the impression of a strict determinism that this passage offers, there is a problem with it. John McMurtry outlines in his recent essay "Is There a Marxist Personal Morality?" the reservation he has to this statement:

It is important that Marx in the very passage that he denies the individual's responsibility for capitalist relations, affirms the subjective freedom of the same individual to 'raise himself above' them. This qualification is rarely, if ever, noted, but it has a crucial consequence. If the individual is subjectively free, he may form any moral intention whatever though only some such intentions will be practically realizable within the economic relations to which he is subject. Herein lies the 'elective space' required by personal morality, and accorded to the individual by Marx himself in his most deterministic utterance.<sup>41</sup>

McMurtry's view and the reservation about the often-quoted passage in the "Preface" of A Critique of Political Economy have been presented so as to explain that economic determinism isn't all-encompassing for Marx. I have argued that Marx doesn't propose that the individual is determined completely by economic relations, although it has

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<sup>40</sup> ibid., p. 21

<sup>41</sup> John McMurtry, "Is There a Marxist Personal Morality?", Marx and Morality (Guelph, Ontario: Canadian Association for Publishing in Philosophy, 1981), p. 179n.



to be kept in mind that the sale of the individual's labour-power plays the major role in man's life and development in capitalist society. Marx does allow for an aspect of individual discretion to decide on how the individual lives and develops. With reference to McMurtry's position, the extent of that discretion is open to interpretation but it does present a realm of motivation in individual thought and action in Marx's Das Kapital although Marx doesn't outline the extent of that realm. The motivations, however, of any individual have to support the position that, despite the specific importance of the sale of the individual's labour-power, individuals are able to decide on a definite area of non-interference or freedom from the inequities that capital creates. In what follows I shall argue that capital itself provides the rationale for individuals to be motivated to be free of its interference.

Capital, simply put, is a surplus which arises in production out of the dealings of workers or labourers and the owners of capital, who in some earlier stage of production accumulated capital independent of their

dealings with workers.<sup>42</sup> Capital is that something extra which is gained on each transaction as the owner of capital emerges with more money from his dealings with labourers than he has paid out, primarily because he hasn't paid the labourers full value for their labour in production.<sup>43</sup>

This surplus is used over and over to make more money which turned into capital repeatedly re-enters production.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the basis of the money that eventually is turned into capital is the labour which creates it.<sup>45</sup> The basis, therefore, of the continued creation of capital is labour-power.

Most of Das Kapital deals with the vast majority of people who comprise society as labourers but whose labouring condition is dictated to them by the overriding consideration of the accumulation of capital. Marx admits that the "limits of this book compel us to concern ourselves with the worst paid part" of the labouring population, and his analyses refer specifically

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<sup>42</sup>DK., p. 534.

<sup>43</sup>ibid., pp. 166ff., 476ff.

<sup>44</sup>ibid., p. 150.

<sup>45</sup>ibid., p. 97.



to the horrendous squandering of labour and the servitude of labour to capital in nineteenth century Europe, especially England, where such squandering and servitude take their "classic form".<sup>46</sup> He is especially critical of the situation where men, women, and children have to work together in the worst of conditions for fourteen, sixteen, or eighteen hours a day, every day, for only a bare subsistence income during the unfettered advance of capitalism up to the mid-nineteenth century;<sup>47</sup> and, where the mass of agricultural workers are torn from the land.<sup>48</sup> The consequence of the misery and exploitation of the industrial and agricultural workers on all of society is accomplished solely for the sake of the accumulation of capital, a power which rules their lives although they are the creators of that power.

It shouldn't be inferred that it is only the workers who are subservient to capital. The capitalist or owner of capital fares no better only the degree of subservience is different. Marx says that the capitalist "is but one of the wheels" of the social mechanism of capitalist production.<sup>49</sup> Accumulation of capital and

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<sup>46</sup> ibid., pp. 611, 670.

<sup>47</sup> ibid., pp. 223ff.

<sup>48</sup> ibid., pp. 630ff.

<sup>49</sup> ibid., p. 555.

the corresponding competition amongst capitalists that must accompany such accumulation make "the immanent laws of capitalist production to be felt by each individual capitalist, as external coercive laws."<sup>50</sup> "To accumulate," Marx says, "is to conquer the world of social wealth, to increase the mass of human beings exploited by him ...."<sup>51</sup> In the process the capitalist remains under the sway of capital and he can only perpetrate the vicious cycle of misery and exploitation.<sup>52</sup>

Marx often contrasts his political economic theory with the views of other writers on the nature of capital. Throughout Das Kapital he is critical of those theories that are based on the belief that capital-dominated society "is in fact the very Eden of the innate rights of man ... [that] both buyer and seller of a commodity ... are constrained only by their own free will."<sup>53</sup> Marx attacks the view that people are brought together in capitalist society because of "selfishness, the gain and private interests of each."<sup>54</sup> Marx doesn't believe in the eventual outcome of such a position where capitalism is said to operate "in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an

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<sup>50</sup> ibid., p. 555.

<sup>51</sup> ibid., p. 555.

<sup>52</sup> ibid., p. 555.

<sup>53</sup> ibid., p. 172.

<sup>54</sup> ibid., p. 172.



all-shrewd providence", and that people "work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all."<sup>55</sup> In Marx's opinion part of the position of proclaiming a 'pre-established harmony' is the view that there is a permanent status of two groups of people: "one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their subsistence, and more, in riotous living."<sup>56</sup>

Marx describes such views to be based on the belief that society is composed from its inception of two groups: those who accumulate wealth and those who have nothing to sell but their labour-power.<sup>57</sup>

Marx says of the relation of workers to owners of capital that "Nature does not produce on the one side owners of money or commodities, and on the other men possessing nothing but their own labour-power."<sup>58</sup> He explains that such a relation "is clearly the result of a past historical development, the product of many economic revolutions, of the extinction of a whole series of older forms of social production."<sup>59</sup> Capital simply provides a "new epoch" in production which has as its

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<sup>55</sup> ibid., p. 172.

<sup>56</sup> ibid., p. 667.

<sup>57</sup> ibid., p. 667.

<sup>58</sup> ibid., p. 166.

<sup>59</sup> ibid., p. 166.

basis the distinction of the workers as wage-labourers and the owners of the means of production and subsistence who buy that labour-power.<sup>60</sup> Marx attacks any suggestion that the rich and the poor are in a static social situation, that there is a social hierarchy that the rich will remain rich and the poor will be poor forever. Such ideology doesn't represent the reality of capitalism, a situation of exploitation and subservience.

Marx implies in his discussion of capital and its interference that capital has to be controlled by the individuals who create it for they shouldn't be controlled by it.<sup>61</sup> That is, underlying his investigation of capital is the specific and immediate demand that individuals be free of, or not be interfered by, capital. Capital requires two particular classes or groups of people: those who work only for the means of subsistence - the workers or labourers, and those who accumulate capital by exploiting those who work - the capitalists.<sup>62</sup> The specific area of non-interference is the non-interference of individuals from "the capitalist mode of production and the final abolition" of any class or social distinction

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<sup>60</sup> ibid., p. 167.

<sup>61</sup> ibid., p. 172.

<sup>62</sup> ibid., p. 542.



by overthrowing the power of capital, and the class distinction resting on it; and, creating only one class of people - those who work and share the benefits and burdens of their work.<sup>63</sup> The crux of Marx's position is that both classes as they are constituted under capitalism have to be done away in order for the domination of capital to cease and for individuals to be free of capital, for neither the capitalist nor the labourer is free of the interference of capital. Capital makes both subservient to its sway.<sup>64</sup>

Capitalists, as a whole, apparently are in a more disadvantageous position to realize the ill effects of capital domination, although capitalists could argue that they are free in capitalism and the more capital they accumulate the more free they become. According to Marx the opposite situation develops for they aren't free of the power of capital and they become less free the more capital they accumulate.<sup>65</sup> Marx, therefore, claims that the major impetus for change from the interference of capital has to come from those who sell their labour-power because in their daily lives they realize more than the capitalist that "the one evil of

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<sup>63</sup> ibid., p. 26

<sup>64</sup> ibid., pp. 151, 174.

<sup>65</sup> ibid., p. 555.

capitalist production is capital itself."<sup>66</sup> It is the authority of capital that has to be curbed immediately and it isn't only capital but all of production has to be placed in the hands of those who work.<sup>67</sup>

#### D. Non-Interference from Capital

I shall conclude this chapter by contrasting the positions of Berlin and Marx with respect to non-interference, and by presenting various examples which explain how individuals in capitalist society are motivated to be free of the interference of capital.

It is part of Berlin's conception of an individual that he has to have boundaries of non-interference and that society has to protect that area. He doesn't set those boundaries although he says that every individual has the need of an area of non-interference.<sup>68</sup> The limits of non-interference, Berlin claims, "are accepted so widely, and are grounded so deeply in the actual nature of men as they have developed through history, as to be, by now, an essential part of what we mean by being a normal human being."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> ibid., p. 528.

<sup>67</sup> ibid., p. 496.

<sup>68</sup> FEL., p. lxii.

<sup>70</sup> ibid., p. 165.



Marx's position in Das Kapital doesn't limit freedom in the negative sense to Berlin's interpretation of non-interference. He doesn't dispute explicitly that one should have an area of non-interference but Marx tries to find the root causes of where one would want to interfere with another and thereupon to formulate an all-encompassing boundary of non-interference so as to curb that root defect. Marx's position implies that individuals are in need of a more definite and immediate, clearly defined, area of non-interference or freedom from one specific, but socially all-embracing confinement, and that confinement is capital; and, he allows for an expanded consideration of negative freedom where individuals are motivated towards the removal of the confines of capital.

Marx offers specific examples where individuals are effecting change in society and these actions are motivated by the consequences of the confines of capital, and further motivation to be free of those confines. His examples fall into two broad categories. First, he says that workers provide a greater awareness amongst themselves by their strength in numbers and this allows them to work within the system of capital domination to seek immediate changes from such domination. Second, the disastrous effects of the motion of capital are felt initially by the mass of working people, but

through the ability of some individuals who are able to conceptualize the misery and exploitation of capitalism, there develops a critique of capitalist practice and theory that helps to bring about a more universal understanding amongst all individuals that they have to be free of the confines of capital. The following examples will explain that the underlying rationale in Marx's discussion of capital is that individuals have to be free of its interference; that the movement of capital in society is such that individuals in their daily lives encounter the obstacles that capital poses to their existence, and, as well, motivates them to be rid of that interference on their existence. In effect I maintain that Marx suggests that there are individual approaches which individuals adopt in order to lessen the devastating influence of capital on their lives.

## 1

One particular expression that lends support for the capacities of individuals to want to be free of the confines of capital involves a consideration of the well-known expression of the Communist Manifesto

"working men of all countries, unite" within the context



of Das Kapital.<sup>70</sup> (A similar wording of this expression is inscribed in red on the inside page of Das Kapital published by Progress Publishers and from which references for this thesis are made.) It is through such action that workers appreciate the strength they have to change society dominated by capital, and the similar position of exploitation and subservience that workers share under the domination of capital.

Marx explains that workers protect themselves against the gross inequities of the capitalist system by grouping together and forming themselves into a unified class or group of workers, and thereby working within the capitalist system to correct it.<sup>71</sup> Workers, Marx explains, must put their heads together, and, as a class, compel the passing of a law, an all-powerful social barrier that shall prevent the very workers from selling, by voluntary contract with capital, themselves and their families into slavery and death."<sup>72</sup> Marx illustrates one achievement of such collective action in his day where "the gradually surging revolt of the working-class compelled Parliament to shorten compulsorily

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<sup>70</sup>McLellan, Marx, p. 246.

<sup>71</sup>DK., pp. 285/6.

<sup>72</sup>ibid., p. 285.

the hours of labour."<sup>73</sup> The drive to set in motion such acts of Parliament is only part of the long struggle which workers undertake in order to correct the gross injustices of capitalism, and in the struggle they use whatever tools are at their disposal, including an expansion of their immediate legal rights under capitalism for "the removal of all legally removable hinderances"<sup>74</sup> in order to ensure their survival in society, and to advance the cause of a more humane development of society.<sup>75</sup> Although it must be mentioned that class is a term which Marx never fully clarifies, he does say that the future form of society will be "more brutal or more humane, according to the degree of the development of the working-class itself."<sup>76</sup> It can only be assumed that the major part of that development is the concerted effort by workers as a group, or class, to initiate such acts of Parliament that reduce hours of work and improve the conditions of workers and their families as an immediate consideration to improve their situation under the domination of capital.

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<sup>73</sup> ibid., p. 386.

<sup>74</sup> ibid., p. 20.

<sup>75</sup> ibid., pp. 223ff.

<sup>76</sup> ibid., p. 460.



Marx offers another example of the motivation of workers in the section on "Piece-Wages". He explains that the capitalist lowers wages but doesn't lower the price of the goods produced for resale although the time it takes to produce such goods is substantially less because of labour intensification. The worker, Marx says, "revolts" against such a move and insists that his wages shouldn't be lowered while the capitalist's profits expand to consume the difference.<sup>77</sup>

Marx extends his treatment of the exploitation of individuals in capital-dominated society in order to propose steps that they could initiate within the capitalist system and these steps would reduce the interference on individuals in their immediate situation. He proposes "a very different scope for the employment of machinery" which isn't controlled only by a profit motive.<sup>78</sup> Education should "combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics" and not be a factory-type work situation where children work twelve to eighteen hours a day, and it shouldn't only be monotonous instruction.<sup>79</sup> Production methods should change from the simple but harsh one-job assembly-line roles where individuals are "crippled by life-long repetition of

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<sup>77</sup> ibid., p. 523.

<sup>78</sup> ibid., p. 371n.

<sup>79</sup> ibid., p. 454.

one and the same operation" to newer methods that will fit the individual "for a variety of labours, ready to face any change of production."<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, Marx proposes that women and children have to take up newer roles in industry, for changes in production will result in changes within the traditional family structure.<sup>81</sup> And, probably most importantly, the purpose of an industrial reserve army or vast numbers of unemployed and unemployables should be discarded because the total work of society should be shared by "all the able-bodied members of society."<sup>82</sup>

Marx often refers to the necessity for society to change existing work habits and methods. In particular he says that under capitalism the work-burden is unevenly divided for the labourer who does the work is hindered from "giving free scope to his natural and acquired powers."<sup>83</sup> Although Marx doesn't expand on the nature of these 'powers' he suggests in various passages that the individual should be free of the constraints which hinder him from doing things which

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<sup>80</sup> ibid., p. 458.

<sup>81</sup> ibid., p. 460.

<sup>82</sup> ibid., p. 496, pp. 596ff.

<sup>83</sup> ibid., p. 458.



would complement his existence as a human being.<sup>84</sup>

It is Marx's view that capitalism wastes a lot of people's energy that could otherwise be used to satisfy man's physical and social needs.<sup>85</sup> Marx wants more free time for the intellectual and social activities of individuals which would occur once the total work of society is more evenly divided, although he comments that the extent of the free time necessary to satisfy man's "intellectual and social wants" would be "conditioned by the general state of social advancement."<sup>86</sup>

The improvement, therefore, of the conditions in which the worker works within capitalism would allow for such a general state of social advancement, and individuals would have more time to call their own and do the things they want if the total work of society is more evenly distributed.

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Immediate steps towards the complete non-interference from capital aren't solely the concern of the workers, although they are in the most immediate need for non-interference because of the misery and

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<sup>84</sup> ibid., pp. 454, 582.

<sup>85</sup> ibid., p. 223.

<sup>86</sup> ibid., pp. 223, 496.

exploitation of capital. At present there are a few representatives of capitalism who see the need for change, and these few who do have an important role to play, particularly the factory inspectors and philosophers who help broadcast the inhumanity of capitalism and disclose the mystery of capitalist theory. One can gather from Das Kapital that such individuals help focus the awareness of exploitation in capitalism and help formulate or conceptualize into reports and programmes of action what workers only feel or experience. Marx singles out the moral integrity of those "men as competent, as free from partisanship and respect of persons as ... the English factory-inspectors, her medical reporters on public health, her commissioners of inquiry into exploitation of women and children, into housing and food."<sup>87</sup>

Another example Marx gives of a capitalist representative who sees the need for change from capital domination in society is Robert Owen whom Marx describes as one of the first theorists of capital "to throw down the gauntlet to the theory of capital."<sup>88</sup> Marx praises Owen's co-operative movement as initiating factory acts that have benefited workers and their families.

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<sup>87</sup> ibid., p. 20.

<sup>88</sup> ibid., p. 283.



Then, of course, there is the example of Marx and his friend and collaborator Frederick Engels who attempt to make people aware of the changes that occur and are constantly happening in society. Marx not only sets out to explain changes in capitalism by uncovering and disclosing how capital operates in society, but in Das Kapital he makes the position of capital "more accessible to the working-class" which he says is "a consideration which to me outweighs everything else."<sup>89</sup> Although Marx says that no nation can "clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development," he qualifies his remark with the suggestion that "it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs" by uncovering the course of that movement and working within it to change it.<sup>90</sup> It is inferred from these remarks that individuals have to be more aware of the development of society so as to be able to improve their situation. Otherwise they could continue to accept that they are under a continuous 'normal development' which according to Marx is what the ideology of capitalist economics would have people believe capitalism to be - a static and permanent normal development.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> ibid., p. 30.

<sup>90</sup> ibid., p. 20.

<sup>91</sup> ibid., p. 20.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MARX AND SOCIAL CHANGE

#### A. Marx and Positive Freedom

The discussion in the previous chapter of the contemporary formulation of the traditional notion of negative freedom by Berlin is used as a framework to explain Marx's concern for freedom from interference by capital. In my opinion Marx's consideration of freedom advances beyond the positions of Berlin and Taylor on the question of negative freedom for Marx explains that individuals have to be free of the interference of capital as a specific area of non-interference, and that individuals are motivated towards correcting the inequities that capital creates. It remains for me to discuss the relation of Marx's philosophy to Berlin's notion of positive freedom.

Berlin argues that authority as it is exercised in society has to be curbed while proponents of a positive theory want authority to be placed in their own hands. Berlin downplays the place of social authority in respect to individual freedom for he suggests that the individual is the best authority when it comes to one's freedom. "To strive to be free," Berlin explains,



"is to seek to curb interference, exploitation, enslavement by men whose ends are theirs, not one's own."<sup>1</sup>

Berlin places the major emphasis on negative freedom because "it leaves more paths for individuals or groups to pursue; positive liberty, as a rule, opens fewer paths ...."<sup>2</sup> Berlin does qualify his position by the view that freedom in either a negative or positive sense can't be an absolute criterion of freedom because "things being as they are, we are compelled to adjust claims, compromise, establish priorities, engage in all those practical operations that social and even individual life has, in fact, always required."<sup>3</sup> One example Berlin offers of this is with the universality of education allowing greater freedom.<sup>4</sup> It is with particular reference to this example that G.A. Cohen in his essay "Capitalism, Freedom and the Proletariat" suggests Berlin compromises his demand for the 'absence of obstacles to possible choices and activities' with the conditions for greater freedom.<sup>5</sup>

Although Berlin suggests that the confusion of freedom with other values or the conditions of freedom generally leads to less freedom, Cohen argues that

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<sup>1</sup>FEL., p. lvi.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*, p. lvii.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid.*, p. lxi.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*, p. liii.

<sup>5</sup>G.A. Cohen, "Capitalism, Freedom and the Proletariat", *The Idea of Freedom*, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 13.

freedom isn't necessarily reduced by enhancing other values, and he uses the example of economic security. Cohen claims: "When a man's economic security is enhanced there typically are, as a result, fewer 'obstacles to possible choices and activities' for him ..., and he therefore typically enjoys more individual freedom."<sup>6</sup> With particular reference to Berlin's illustration of a universal, uniform education allowing for the eventual enhancement of greater liberty for all, Cohen offers the following criticism of Berlin's position:

my criticism of Isaiah Berlin respects his distinction between liberty and the conditions for it ..., of which economic security is one. I do not say that economic security is liberty, but that typically, and certainly in the context of Berlin's comment, it causes liberty to increase, just as equality in education (also not a form of liberty) does to take Berlin's own example....<sup>7</sup>

Such criticism is directed by Cohen against those who support the position that individual freedom is enhanced with capitalism - a position supported by Berlin.

"They see," Berlin argues, "the freedom which is intrinsic to capitalism, but they do not notice the unfreedom which necessarily accompanies it."<sup>8</sup>

Both Cohen and Berlin suggest that any theory of

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<sup>6</sup> ibid., p. 13n.

<sup>7</sup> ibid., p. 13n.

<sup>8</sup> ibid., pp. 10/1.



freedom has to allow for the condition for its exercise, and they agree that freedom shouldn't be confused with those conditions. They disagree, however, as to the social form in which freedom is to be exercised. Cohen, on the one hand, explains that capitalism doesn't necessarily 'imply any greater freedom for individuals.<sup>9</sup> He doesn't expand his argument to incorporate discussion of the appropriate social form in which greater freedom is to be realized although he concludes his essay with a Marxist overtone when he remarks that the proletariat is a vehicle for liberation from class-dominated capitalist society.<sup>10</sup> Berlin, on the other hand, attacks those theories, especially the one set forward by Marx, which lend themselves to support of totalitarian regimes that dictate the exercise of freedom. Berlin maintains that the social form of capitalism allows for greater freedom.<sup>11</sup>

I suggest that Marx's account of freedom respects the distinction made by Berlin that individuals have the capacity to choose different courses of action as they set out to live their lives. It shouldn't

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<sup>9</sup> ibid., p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> ibid., p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> ibid., pp. xlvi/ii, 172.

be assumed, though, that Marx posits a particular form of society in Das Kapital which should be established so as to create the conditions for greater freedom and where individuals have to follow one particular path of social development, for example totalitarianism, in order to realize a certain goal of greater freedom. It is confusion and misinterpretation on this point which leads Berlin to discredit Marx because coercive theories and actions, where individuals have to follow one path of development, have been based on particular interpretations of Marx's philosophy. As Taylor implies Marx shouldn't be blamed for the totalitarian excesses of this century, and a clearer presentation of Marx's position in Das Kapital with respect to social change, which allows for the exercise of greater freedom, should allow for Berlin's criticism of Marx's philosophy to be discredited as an inadequate grasping of what Marx said.

The task of this chapter will be to clarify the confusion which surrounds Marx's remarks about reform and revolution as vehicles for social change. In particular dialectics has often become the sole



interpretation of social change in Marx's philosophy. I shall argue, however, based on my interpretation of Das Kapital that both reform and revolution play a part in how Marx conceives of social change, and that dialectics can't be accepted as an all-embracing law to explain such change. The first step, then, will be to discuss Marx's use of dialectics.

### B. Marx and Dialectics

The dialectics with which Marx is acquainted is that originally proposed by Hegel. Some of the prominent features of the complicated nature of Hegel's use of dialectics are explained in the following passages. Hegel has "a vision of Dialectic as the universal and irresistible power before which nothing can stay, however secure and stable it may deem itself."<sup>12</sup> He explains how society, the highest embodiment being the state, comes to be what it is by dialectical development.<sup>13</sup> Society, as well as history, is a resolution of the conflicts and contradictions that one can find embedded in the history of society. Society is what it is and

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<sup>12</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, Logic, trans. William Wallace (Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 118.

<sup>13</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, Philosophy of Right, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 155.

can be no other, although the state as an embodiment of society, can resolve itself in a higher form. In Hegel's opinion man progressively is more free in the society of his day than he has been in any previous society for the historical development of society contains the emergence of greater freedom for mankind, and for Hegel his society reflects such greater freedom.<sup>14</sup>

Hegel's political philosophy and use of dialectics are the subjects of one of Marx's early unfinished critiques written almost twenty-five years before the publication of Das Kapital.<sup>15</sup> Throughout his life Marx remains a "pupil of that mighty thinker" although he has a different emphasis on the completeness of dialectics as an absolute explanation of the development of society.<sup>16</sup>

Marx's use of dialectics of society is more limited than Hegel's account. In reference to Hegel during the writing of Das Kapital Marx explains that only "here and there, in the chapter on the theory of value, [he] coquetted with the modes of expression peculiar to him."<sup>17</sup> I suggest that the main reason why

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<sup>14</sup>G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 'Volume 1', trans. E.S. Haldane (New York: Humanities Press, 1963), pp. 49, 99.

<sup>15</sup>DK., p. 29.

<sup>16</sup>ibid., p. 29.

<sup>17</sup>ibid., p. 29.



Marx doesn't engage the constant use of dialectics in his work is that he doesn't wish to make it an absolute consideration in explaining the material world because there are too many variables in having a complete explanation. Furthermore, Marx's account isn't complete for Das Kapital is only part of the explanation of the operation of capital.<sup>18</sup> Such a position, however, doesn't necessarily discredit Marx's account of capitalism because he doesn't have an all-encompassing dialectical explanation. Instead it calls for further clarification of what Marx aims to accomplish in his investigation of capital and an explanation of his position with respect to dialectics.

My discussion of Marx's aim will not be in agreement with any suggestion that Marx has found the one and only science of society that has dialectics as its basis. The science to which Marx refers isn't a science of nature but the social science of political economy.<sup>19</sup> It is a science that changes with new discoveries and hypotheses, for example, Marx refers to the "recent scientific discovery, that the products of

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<sup>18</sup>ibid., p. 21

<sup>19</sup>ibid., p. 21.

labour, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labour spent in their production."<sup>20</sup> It is also a science that rests on assumptions, for example, Marx treats "the whole world as one nation, and assumes that capitalist production is everywhere established and has possessed itself of every branch of industry."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, it is a science that is bound by certain fundamental economic premises, for example, the law of value,<sup>22</sup> law of diminishing returns,<sup>23</sup> and law of population.<sup>24</sup>

Political economy was a relatively new science in Marx's day.<sup>25</sup> Marx contributed substantially to the separation of political economy from its service to capitalist production and, hence, a more independent field of inquiry into the nature of production developed. With respect to Marx's contribution to social science, Berlin remarks in his recently revised biography of Marx, Karl Marx: "Even if all its specific conclusions were proved false, its importance in creating a wholly

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<sup>20</sup> ibid., p. 21

<sup>21</sup> ibid., p. 545n.

<sup>22</sup> ibid., pp. 77ff.

<sup>23</sup> ibid., pp. 474/5.

<sup>24</sup> ibid., pp. 590ff.

<sup>25</sup> ibid., p. 344.



new attitude to social and historical questions, and so opening new avenues of human knowledge, would be unimpaired."<sup>26</sup> Although Marx undoubtedly would dispute any suggestion that his work was all wrong, he did allow for difference of opinion.<sup>27</sup> The implication, therefore, is that Marx himself left room for variations and that he didn't view his investigations and results as final explanations.

Many of Marx's comments on political economy are an attack on the "bourgeoise standpoint" of the science of political economy, which he says "cries out for rectification."<sup>28</sup> One particular example Marx offers on the attitude of some political economists of his day is with respect to the legal limit of the working-day which, Marx argues, develops from the protests of the working people. After the working-day is established Marx says some capitalist economists "proclaimed the discernment of the necessity of a legally fixed working-day as a characteristic new discovery of their 'science'."<sup>29</sup>

With reference to Marx and his use of dialectics,

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<sup>26</sup> Isaiah Berlin, Karl Marx (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 116.

<sup>27</sup> DK., p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> ibid., p. 553n.

<sup>29</sup> ibid., p. 280.

I suggest that there is a problem with interpretations of Marx's use of dialectics because dialectics has become mystified in a way that is similar to the situation which develops in German philosophy after Hegel - a situation which Marx attacks. After Hegel, Marx says, "dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seems to transfigure and to glorify the existing state of things."<sup>30</sup> Correspondingly, after Marx dialectics has also become a fashion in Marxist circles for there have been those, according to Terrell Carver in his book Engels, who have referred to Marx's philosophy as 'dialectical materialism' and have used it as "the basis of official philosophy and history in the Soviet Union and in most countries that declare themselves Marxist."<sup>31</sup> The categorization, therefore, of Marx's philosophy as dialectical has tended to mystify Marx's philosophy, according to C. Wright Mills in his book The Marxists.<sup>32</sup>

Ironically, Marx never uses the phrase 'dialectical materialism' although it has become identified as his philosophical method. Engels and other nineteenth and

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<sup>30</sup> ibid., p. 29.

<sup>31</sup> Terrell Carver, Engels (Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 48.

<sup>32</sup> C. Wright Mills, The Marxists (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 128n.



early twentieth century Marxists develop the doctrine of dialectical materialism as their interpretation of Marx's writings.<sup>33</sup> Carver explains that Marx's discussion of dialectics doesn't "venture into the murky realm of a causal linkage between natural phenomena and human behaviour beyond a notion that the material conditions of production create possibilities for human agency and at the same time set limits to what can be accomplished."<sup>34</sup> Carver's assessment of Marx's application of dialectics is based on Marx's comment in the afterword to the second German edition of Das Kapital, and it is simply that Marx identifies "a rational dialectic as one which includes in a positive understanding of a state of affairs an understanding of its negation."<sup>35</sup> It is, Carver claims, Engels who associates "the dialectic with natural laws of motion in nature, motion in history ... and motion in thought."<sup>36</sup>

Marx realizes his position on capitalism by investigating, as Heilbroner says in Marxism: For and Against, "the particular institutions and beliefs of capitalism."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Carver, Engels, p. 48; Singer, Marx, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Carver, Engels, p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> ibid., p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> ibid., p. 50.

<sup>37</sup> Heilbroner, Marxism, p. 94.

It is Marx's discussion and dissection of capitalism that, for Heilbroner, "has won for Marx his greatest fame and his strongest criticism."<sup>38</sup> Contrary to any belief that Marx has the one and only true account of capitalism, Heilbroner argues that Marx may have been all wrong in his analysis, but despite this there is a strength or power to his argument that stands the test of time. "I find it imaginable," Heilbroner says, "although unlikely that the next century will declare Marx to have been completely mistaken on the future course of capitalism but as long as capitalism exists, I do not believe that we will ever be able to declare that he was mistaken in his identification of its inner nature."<sup>39</sup> The inner nature of capitalism is based on the intense accumulation of capital and, through this accumulative motion of capital, the society based on it sometime will have to change, to collapse and be replaced by another social form, "presumably socialism."<sup>40</sup>

### C. Reform and Revolution

I now embark on a discussion of how Marx views

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<sup>38</sup> ibid., p. 94.

<sup>39</sup> ibid., pp. 94/5.

<sup>40</sup> ibid., p. 127.



capitalist society and this involves a discussion of reform and revolution in how change in the social form of capitalism can come about.

In order to avoid any suggestion that Marx has a complete and detailed theory that would see the immediate resolution to the change of social form from capitalism it is necessary to explain that Marx does have a view of capitalist society which, if it follows along the course dictated by the centralization of capital, will bring about a crisis once the centralization of capital is complete.<sup>41</sup> It is a crisis embedded within the nature of capitalism which is based on the accumulation of capital. Once all capital is centralized then it would be difficult to accumulate any capital. Consequently, there would have to be a new form of society other than that based on the accumulation of capital. Such a crisis, though is only "in its preliminary stage" in Marx's day for an all-embracing crisis that would end the reign of capitalism would require, according to Marx, both the "universality" or complete domination of capital, and the "intensity" or complete centralization of capital accumulation.<sup>42</sup> Although his position in the Communist Manifesto is

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<sup>41</sup> DK, pp. 714/5.

<sup>42</sup> ibid., p. 29.

more radical, Marx doesn't propose in Das Kapital that capitalism has reached the position where the crisis is immediate, but that a crisis will occur if capitalism follows the path of its development as evident in nineteenth century Europe, especially England. Marx's position on the immediate and inevitable revolution to replace capitalism is less immediate and less inevitable in Das Kapital than his earlier statements. Berlin says in Karl Marx that Marx's "belief in the proximity, even in the ultimate inevitability of a world revolution, diminished" in Marx's mature work. <sup>43</sup>

There are two positions which have evolved from interpretations of social change in Marx's writings. Mills contrasts these two views in The Marxists. He interprets Eduard Bernstein's philosophy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as basing his position of the evolution of a future form of society on the eventual demise of capitalism. "Bernstein's legal and evolutionary socialism contends that a socialist party enrolling a major section of the electorate and linked with trade unions and cooperatives can achieve socialism within a democratically constituted polity by use of constitutional means - that is, without a

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<sup>43</sup>Berlin, Marx, p. 183.



revolution."<sup>44</sup> Reform, then, and not revolution is the key to Bernstein's understanding of social change from capitalism. Mills says of Bernstein's position: "The revolution could wait, and the notion of the inevitability of a gradual drift toward a socialist society served to shore up hopes while waiting."<sup>45</sup> This position is in contrast to those, for example, of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky who promote the need for revolution and a vanguard to lead the revolution.<sup>46</sup> Both the reformists and the revolutionaries, Mills suggests, justify their positions with reference to Marx's philosophy.<sup>47</sup>

In opposition of the positions of the reformists and the revolutionaries as outlined by Mills, I maintain that the only solution which Marx offers in Das Kapital for the complete eradication of the accumulation of capital is for society ultimately to change once the accumulation of capital has all production and all individuals under its sway. The basis of Marx's position for the complete eradication of capital, and the form of society based on it, is that capital breeds such centralization of capital because of its accumulative tendencies that there would be few capitalists (or,

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<sup>44</sup>Mills, Marxists, pp. 132/3.

<sup>45</sup>ibid., pp. 133/4.

<sup>46</sup>ibid., p. 133.

<sup>47</sup>ibid., p. 132.

maybe just one capitalist!) left once the centralization of capital is complete. "In a given society," Marx says, "the limit would be reached only when the entire social capital was united in the hands of either a single capitalist or a single capitalist company."<sup>48</sup> Subsequently, the form of society based on the centralization of capital would lead to a new form which would have to come about because there would be no more accumulation of capital.

Marx argues that the change of social form that will result once centralization of capital is complete would be less "protracted, violent, and difficult" than the changes initiated by capitalism from the fifteenth century onwards.<sup>49</sup> There are two reasons for this: one, "the constantly diminishing number of magnates of capital"; and, two, the growing revolt of the workers who are "already increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself."<sup>50</sup>

The long-term consideration which Marx gives to the question of social change is that individuals, collectively, by their labour-power are taking more and more control over all aspects of production; and, with

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<sup>48</sup> ibid., p. 588.

<sup>49</sup> ibid., pp. 715, 669.

<sup>50</sup> ibid., p. 715. (The reader is referred to the earlier section "Marx and Individual Motivation", pp. 49ff., for the perspective of this thesis on the deterministic overtone of these statements.)



the gradual reduction in the number of capitalists through competition to accumulate more capital, more and more individuals are taking direct control of production.<sup>51</sup> Somewhere, however, along the path of the accumulation of capital the point will be reached where the power of the few (or one!) remaining capitalists will have to be usurped by the mass of working people.<sup>52</sup> This is the crisis of capitalism, and thus Marx highlights the aspect of revolution! Marx's consideration of revolution is only briefly mentioned in Das Kapital for the thrust of his analysis is to explore what happens with capital in society and to explain that society based on capital isn't a permanent form of society, no more than earlier forms, for example feudalism.<sup>53</sup> His major emphasis is to expose what capital does in society and to explain what would happen if it continues along its tendency, evident up to the nineteenth century, to accumulate more and more.

Within Marx's discussion of revolution lies the source of much confusion as is evident in Berlin and Taylor. In order for revolution to occur before the accumulation of capital is complete individuals who

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<sup>51</sup>ibid., pp. 714/5.

<sup>52</sup>ibid., p. 715.

<sup>53</sup>ibid., p. 713.

desire change and have some knowledge of how capital operates in society put forward a positive doctrine which has to be realized by its adherents. It is such a doctrine which Taylor sees as explicit in Marx's philosophy and such a doctrine which Berlin criticizes. In Das Kapital, however, such a doctrine is neither as explicit as Taylor presents nor as positive a theory of social change as that which Berlin is quick to criticize.

Marx's account of capitalism is based on two premises. He explains: "We, therefore, first of all consider accumulation from an abstract point of view - i.e., as a mere phase in the actual process of production."<sup>54</sup> This is Marx's economic doctrine, but it is insufficient in itself for Marx says the movement of accumulation requires a second feature or supposition which is the history of primitive accumulation "preceding capitalist accumulation; an accumulation not the result of the capitalist mode of production, but its starting-point."<sup>55</sup> With his economic analysis and historical support, Marx attempts to resolve in a concise form how the primitive accumulation of capital develops into the fully-fledged capitalism of mid-

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<sup>54</sup> ibid., p. 530.

<sup>55</sup> ibid., p. 667.



nineteenth century Europe and afterwards to explain how the very nature of society based on capitalist production should resolve itself in respect to the way it has developed up to his time. Marx does say that "capitalist production, begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation"<sup>56</sup> but the question is whether such a statement lends itself to a whole-hearted endorsement of a positive programme for the future?

Marx argues that the motion of the accumulation of capital will eventually cause capitalist society to be replaced; and, he suggests that individuals within society can "shorten and lessen the birth-pangs."<sup>57</sup> Marx, however, doesn't explicitly propose a positive programme to be realized by revolution to overthrow capitalism. In Das Kapital Marx seems to guard against the immediate use of revolution because capitalism isn't in the position of crisis! Already in his day there are a few who have their sights on changing society and they advocate the impending change of society or a new form of society which will have less misery and exploitation.<sup>58</sup> Such proclamations, for Marx, merely underlie his basic premise that because of the accumulation of capital

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<sup>56</sup>ibid., p. 715.

<sup>57</sup>ibid., p. 20.

<sup>58</sup>ibid., p. 21.

"the present society is no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change, and is constantly changing."<sup>59</sup> Marx cautions, however, that the proclamations of those who advocate change "do not signify that tomorrow a miracle will happen."<sup>60</sup>

Marx's earlier works, especially the Communist Manifesto, are more along the lines of a positive programme to shorten the transition of a change from capital-dominated society, but in Das Kapital Marx seems to steer clear of such a position and merely to expose the eventual failure of capitalism to be a permanent form of society. It shouldn't be inferred, however, that the position of this thesis presents a line of argument that is allied to Bernstein's position, as Mills presents it, where individuals can adopt a 'wait and see' attitude, work within the existing legal and social structures of capitalism to create changes for the benefit of the mass of workers and their families, and eventually the conflicts within capitalism will be resolved in a more socialized existence. Although Marx says capitalism has to have "the entanglement of all people in the net of the world-market"<sup>61</sup> before it satisfies the conditions necessary for it to change,

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<sup>59</sup> ibid., p. 21.

<sup>60</sup> ibid., p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> ibid., pp. 714/5.



it is questionable whether all of mankind has to go through the excesses of capitalism before change occurs. Marx does say that somewhere along the path of capital accumulation a revolution has to occur<sup>62</sup>; and, the danger which Marx undoubtably is aware of is that it may never occur if individuals just wait for such a revolution to happen. Marx doesn't discount the fact that violent revolution may have to be used as a lever to unify workers and capitalist representatives who desire change of social form or even immediate changes from the gross inequities of capitalism. For example, Marx compliments the advantage of the February 1848 revolution in France which results in "the same limit to the working-day in all shops and factories without distinction, whilst English legislation reluctantly yields to the pressure of circumstances, now on this point, now on that, and is getting lost in a hopelessly bewildering tangle of contradictory enactments."<sup>63</sup> In another passage, a footnote reference to the Communist Manifesto, Marx suggests that revolution has the feature of sharpening the distinction between workers and exploiters.<sup>64</sup> The use, therefore, of revolution will allow individuals to assess their situation in capital-dominated society and their position with respect to social change.

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<sup>62</sup> ibid., p. 715.

<sup>63</sup> ibid., p. 284.

<sup>64</sup> ibid., p. 715.

Indeed, in the light of the comments on revolution, my argument is that Marx leaves unresolved the question of what ultimately is the course of action that individuals should pursue in order to be free of the interference of capital. Neither reform nor revolution have ultimate value as vehicles of change for both have a purpose to serve.

Marx argues that the eventual result of the accumulation of capital in his day would be for the form of society, based on capital, to be replaced, initially, by that form of society which will be based "on co-operation and the possession in common of the land and the means of production."<sup>65</sup> Such a new social form, however, isn't the ultimate form of society! Although he doesn't discuss in Das Kapital the future form of society beyond the stage of 'co-operation', he comments that his explanation of "the existing state of things ... regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement."<sup>66</sup> Social forms, therefore, constantly change and the succeeding forms are entirely different from the preceding ones. Capitalism is the case under discussion in Das Kapital.

Because of the way society has developed as a

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<sup>65</sup> ibid., p. 715.

<sup>66</sup> ibid., p. 29.



result of the advance of capital since the fifteenth century, workers have become, progressively, more and more deprived of control over how their labour-power is used and the products of their labour-power. With the advance of capitalism Marx argues that such a position will be reversed as those who work will become more and more in control of their lives and the products of their labour-power. Furthermore, because of the advances in society brought about by capitalism it would be foolish in Marx's opinion to revert back to an earlier form of society, or he says, quoting a contemporary "to decree universal mediocrity."<sup>67</sup> Marx says that the noticeable change of emphasis in society, especially since the beginning of capitalism in the fifteenth century, is that production is no longer performed by isolated individuals but rather by individuals working together.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the future form of society beyond capitalism will have to consider how individuals use their labour-power. Their relation, then, to each other and the form of society they will require afterwards will be based on that relation and the choices they have at that time.

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<sup>67</sup> ibid., pp. 713/4.

<sup>68</sup> ibid., pp. 713ff.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MARX'S ACCOUNT OF FREEDOM

#### A. Introduction

Berlin's two-fold account of political liberty incorporates the notions of negative freedom and positive freedom. He claims that individuals should be left with the free determination provided by a minimum area of non-interference and the freedom to choose and not be chosen for. To this end, Berlin advocates a pluralism of values which individuals see as important in how they live and from which individuals can choose how they live their lives. He is sharp disagreement with any belief in a monist position of belief in only one absolute principle upon which positive theories have developed. Berlin includes interpretations of Marx's philosophy amongst those positive theories and he says that adherence to such theories over the past one hundred years has led to less freedom in society.

Various commentators have criticized Berlin's position and the liberal tradition upon which it is based. The focus of this thesis has been to incorporate reservations which certain commentators have of the position which Berlin holds into a concerted criticism



of that position which proposes that Marx's view of freedom can be realized only by adopting a positive position. The particular point that has been raised is that a positive position isn't necessarily the only outcome of Marx's philosophy, especially in Das Kapital, and that adherence to a strictly positive interpretation of Marx's philosophy has blinded some contemporary political theorists to the merit of Marx's philosophy and the aspects of political liberty, including aspects of negative freedom, that are incorporated in it.

Two arguments have been put forward to clarify Marx's position in Das Kapital with respect to political liberty. First, Marx also proposes free determination and the freedom of individuals to choose and not be chosen for, but that the area of non-interference in the individual's immediate existence in capitalist society has to be clearly set out. It has been argued that despite the interference of capital individuals, through their labour, have the capacity to think and to act on their own and that such a position implicitly suggests that individuals in capitalist society are motivated towards an immediate area of non-interference from

capital. Second, it has been argued that the accumulative tendencies of capital will resolve themselves into a new form of society if such tendencies continue as evident in nineteenth century European capitalism, but that such inevitability doesn't lessen the need for individuals to initiate change either by reform or revolution.

It is now necessary to expand Marx's discussion of political liberty by presenting his account of freedom in terms of individual freedom and social freedom.

#### B. Individual Freedom

Marx argues that man labours and fulfills his wants through his labour. Within capitalist society man's nature is thwarted because he fulfills the wants of capital. The interpretation which I offer of Marx's view of individual freedom involves the consideration of labour as the universal consideration of man's condition. Furthermore, individuals can only attain the benefits of their labour by exercising the choices they have open to them in how they live and work in society.

Marx suggests that individuals should have non-interference from capital because it is capital which is the major cause of interference of individuals by individuals in capitalist society. Capital advances a



society, capitalism, at the expense of the misery and exploitation of the vast number of people who work, and even those who accumulate capital aren't free of its devastating influence. Marx wants to curb the influence that capital has over people and make production serve the needs of mankind instead of mankind serving the needs of capital.

The rationale which Marx offers on why the influence of capital has to be curbed is that greater freedom than that presently experienced by people has to be brought about in society. Under the sway of capital the freedoms that are proclaimed by the economics of capital become the freedoms of society, especially those concerned with freedom of trade, freedom to amass a fortune, and freedom to own this or that.<sup>1</sup> For Marx this view of freedom distorts the nature of freedom. The result of such freedoms is the interference of others by those who pursue the course of such economic freedoms, much to the detriment of the mass of people in society who have to remain subservient to the dictates of capital.

It could be assumed that the individual is helpless in the face of the powerful sway of capital in society.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there are certain proponents of capitalism who promote theories which support the capitalist "mode

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<sup>1</sup>DK., p. 172.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 252.

of production as one eternally fixed by Nature for every state of society."<sup>3</sup> Marx attacks the suggestion that any system of production, and capitalism is the particular focus of his arguments, is either permanent or has complete control over all segments of an individual's life and thought. Despite the powerful influence of capital, there remains the nucleus of Marx's position with respect to how individuals effect change in capitalism. The consideration is that individuals create capital; or, Marx remarks, "in capitalist production, he is governed by the products of his own hand."<sup>4</sup> Equally, it is by his own hand, i.e. his labour, that he can effect change. Marx's position, therefore, is that individuals have a variety of choices open to them in how they will live at present and in the future. The basis of the individual's choices is his or her labour, that is the actual expenditure of human energy and intelligence that is common to each and every individual.

In the second step of his discussion of the distinction of negative and positive freedom, Taylor argues that in Marx's writings the basis to curb interference rests on the positive notion of man's 'species-nature', and not, as I claim, to be based on an expanded consideration of negative freedom where individuals

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<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 85n.

<sup>4</sup> ibid., p. 582.



are motivated by their labour to be free of the exploitation of capital. Taylor's position with respect to Marx's view of freedom is that freedom is found "in Marx's doctrine of man as a species-being who realises his potential in a mode of social production, and who must take control of this mode collectively."<sup>5</sup> Taylor, however, offers little elaboration of this comment which is the second step of his distinction.

Taylor suggests that it is the species-life of man which motivates individuals in order to be free of the confines of capitalism, and that it is the realization of such an ultimate goal which he argues is Marx's position. A difficulty I see in Taylor's interpretation is that his account of man in Marx's philosophy rests on the notion of 'species-being' which appears in Marx's early and mostly unpublished manuscripts - unpublished, that is, in Marx's lifetime - when Marx is heavily influenced by Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach.<sup>6</sup> Marx avoids extended reference to the expression 'species-being' in his later writings, especially the refined work of Das Kapital. I believe that it is no mere oversight on Marx's behalf but it is part of the refinement of his philosophy. I suggest that instead of putting forward

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<sup>5</sup>Taylor, "Negative Liberty", p. 181.

<sup>6</sup>John Plamenatz, Karl Marx's Philosophy of Man (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 110.

the notion of 'species-being' Marx prefers later in life to concentrate on the nature of man to labour and what happens once he places part of his labour under the sway of capital. Although Marx doesn't dispute the claim that a long-term goal of freedom may be that all men will be one with their species-nature, or that they will be equal members of the same species, man, an even more important step is that individuals discern by their labour that the goal isn't yet evident in their present situation under capitalism. In support of this claim I refer to a footnote reference Marx makes to his earlier Communist Manifesto that capitalism has finally forced man to face up to the fact of economic domination and exploitation. He says: "man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."<sup>7</sup>

In their daily lives in capitalist society individuals judge that the excesses of capitalism have to be curbed. Most individuals satisfy their subsistence in capitalism and produce the form of life in society through the sale of their labour-power.

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<sup>7</sup> DK., p. 457n.



Under the domination of capital their subsistence is one of subservience and the form of life is one which perpetuates misery and exploitation by that subsistence. Their freedom from either subsistence living or misery and exploitation is confined by capital.

Individuals are dissatisfied with the misery and exploitation of capitalism and, through their labour, they aim to solve the immediate problems of capitalism in the understanding that they will have a fuller and more free life if the problems of capitalism are overcome. Despite the claim that Marx's philosophy leads to a monist position, there is a pluralism that underlies Marx's philosophy which takes account of the choices and actions undertaken by individuals. It is the situation that arises in capitalist society where individuals are motivated to overcome the major inhibiting influence on their daily lives, namely the interference of capital.

### C. Social Freedom

Social freedom in Das Kapital is the freedom of individuals to use their labour-power in a society where the benefits and burdens are more evenly divided by the

members of that society as opposed to the unequal sharing of benefits and burdens in capitalist society. Social freedom will change with the changing conditions of society but, in any foreseeable social development, individuals will have to exercise their labour-power in society; and, how they will use it and the benefits they will realize from it will be the concern of social freedom.

Marx's consideration of social freedom involves a discussion of a two-fold stage of society's development. First, society will change its social form from that which is dominated by capital accumulation and, second, society will continually change its social form again and again in the future. Marx's examination in Das Kapital discusses the first point although the basis of such a position rests on a continually changing social form.

The immediate consequence of Marx's account of social freedom is for individuals to decrease the amount of time they utilize their labour-power in the employ of capital and thereby to increase the amount of rest, freedom, and happiness, which would come about with a shortened working-day. Individuals develop, through reform and revolution, a form of society whereby they can use their labour-power to satisfy more of their own needs and not the needs of capital, or a form of society



where capital isn't the ruling principle but "a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle."<sup>8</sup> The underlying rationale to any foreseeable change in society is that the use of labour-power has to serve another purpose in society other than the accumulation of capital. This isn't the same position of Berlin's identification of the individual with some ideal which he categorizes as the 'social whole' but it is the existence of the surplus which labour-power creates to serve the needs of society and not just the few owners of capital.

Marx doesn't say that labour-power will be done away with in the form of society after capitalism. On the contrary he says that it will remain in the next form of society although a different scope will be offered for its limited use.<sup>9</sup> In the third volume of Capital Marx expands on the specific nature of labour-power in the immediate future where the "réduction of the working-day is the basic prerequisite" for a greater degree of social freedom.<sup>10</sup>

"Surplus labour," Marx says, "in some form must always remain, as labour beyond the extent of given needs."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> ibid., p. 555.

<sup>9</sup> ibid., p. 496.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Marx, Capital 'Volume Three', trans. David Fernbach (New York: Random House, 'Vintage Books', 1981), p. 959.

<sup>11</sup> ibid., p. 958.

The progressive development of society from capitalism will require that surplus-labour will form a necessary basis to the future development of society although it will be "combined, in a higher form of society, with a greater reduction of the overall time devoted to material labour."<sup>12</sup> Social freedom in the next form of society will still be based on the necessity of individuals to use their labour-power, but labour-power will be co-operatively undertaken with the result that there will be less expenditure of it by individuals.

Marx says that such freedom in the next form of society

can consist only in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature.<sup>13</sup>

In his work Karl Marx Berlin interprets Marx's statements in the above passage to mean that freedom from capital-domination is achieved, initially, through the reduction of the working-day. He, therefore, contrasts freedom in Marx's thought to leisure when one doesn't work. In the light of Marx's remarks on

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<sup>12</sup> ibid., p. 958.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., p. 959.

<sup>14</sup> Berlin, Marx., p. 95



Smith's view of labour and labour-power, I suggest that Berlin confuses aspects of labour and labour-power, for Marx's consideration of freedom, in the sense of social freedom, doesn't end with a discussion of the reduced working-day.

Society's progressive development in capitalism and in the stage beyond capitalism is through the use of surplus-labour. The concern of social freedom, or the freedom of individuals in society, will be how surplus-labour is utilized in both these social forms. Social freedom, however, will not be concerned indefinitely with surplus-labour. The underlying rationale for Marx's account of social freedom, both now and in the immediate future, is how the individual has the individual freedom to be able to develop or to use his or her own labour within and beyond the perspective of society's progressive development. Marx says that "the development of human powers as an end in itself", which begins both beyond the necessity of surplus-labour and with it as its base, is the "true realm of freedom."<sup>15</sup> With reference to the progressive development of society, Marx says:

It is one of the civilizing aspects of capital that it exhorts this surplus labour in a manner and in conditions that are more advantageous to social relations and to the creation

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<sup>15</sup>Marx, Capital 111, p. 959.

of elements for a new and higher formation than was the case under the earlier forms of slavery, serfdom, etc.<sup>16</sup>

A form of society has its origins in a previous form of society although each social form develops differently from the previous one. Correspondingly, the 'true realm of freedom' will have its origins in how freedom is exercised in a previous society although the 'true realm of freedom' will develop differently from the type of freedom which is based on surplus-labour.

Marx says that the development of society from capital-domination is a progressive development towards greater and greater freedom in society. He doesn't say that surplus-labour is a permanent condition of future forms of society but only for those societies which have a progressive development based on the use of surplus-labour which both capitalism and the form beyond capitalism will have as its basis. Surplus-labour in both these societies "is needed to keep pace with the development of needs and the progress of population."<sup>17</sup> Marx doesn't discuss the situation where the rate of population may stabilize or be reduced in the unforeseeable future and the scope which would be offered afterwards to surplus-labour and the social freedom concomitant with it. I maintain that the only

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<sup>16</sup> ibid., p. 958.

<sup>17</sup> ibid., p. 958.



permanent condition that Marx discusses is the use of labour by the individual if he or she is to survive, but how individuals will labour in some unforeseeable future social form isn't discussed by Marx and therefore is open to question and interpretation as to what he might envision.

Marx entertains very little discussion in any of his writings about the next stage of 'associated producers' and nothing about what happens afterwards except his comments about constantly changing social forms. My suggestion of the situation where surplus-labour may not be needed in the unforeseeable future is based on part of the fragment on freedom and necessity published by Engels in the third volume of Capital.<sup>18</sup> Any interpretation, however, of Marx's statements in the third volume of Capital has to be viewed in the light of a difficulty which is brought out by Carver in his book Engels. "Up to the present day," Carver explains, "Engels's editing of the manuscript drafts left by Marx for the second and third volumes of Capital has not been scrutinized, because the manuscripts themselves, said to be in Moscow, have not been available."<sup>19</sup> Until such a time as the manuscripts are studied, it

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<sup>18</sup> ibid., p. 953n.

<sup>19</sup> Carver, Engels, p. 44.

will not be know how "Engels conceived 'the bounds of editing' his phrase in the preface to the third volume."<sup>20</sup>

The major emphasis in Das Kapital is on the social change from capitalism and the emphasis isn't to what social form the change should be made. In the section in the opening chapter dealing with the "Fetishism of Commodities" Marx illustrates what, in my opinion, has become conceived as the positive aspect of his approach in the creation of a new social form to replace capitalism.

Marx alludes to communism in his example of the possible future uses of labour-power. He says: "Let us picture to ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour-power of the community."<sup>21</sup> The purpose of Marx's illustration is to discuss the situation whereby the "social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are ... perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution."<sup>22</sup> Although the illustration is based on the premise that 'all the different individuals' share

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<sup>20</sup> ibid., p. 44.

<sup>21</sup> DK., pp. 82/3.

<sup>22</sup> ibid., p. 83.



the total labour of society, Marx uses the illustration merely in contrasting the example of isolated individuals, or the Robinson Crusoes, of other economic theories, and not to suggest that his example is a positive programme or definite guide for the future.<sup>23</sup>

Marx doesn't suggest that all individuals immediately partake or be forced to partake in the sharing of their labour-power. As he argues throughout Das Kapital the direction of nineteenth century capitalism with its concentration on the accumulation of capital is bringing about the co-operation and association of labourers. Eventually, the situation may be reached whereby there is such a 'community of free individuals' where production "is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan,"<sup>24</sup> but Marx's investigations in Das Kapital are less than a positive guide for individuals to realize such a plan. The major emphasis in Das Kapital is the distortion in Marx's view where "the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him."<sup>25</sup>

There is the implication that can be drawn from Marx's comments that individuals with an understanding of society's development can have a better life in

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<sup>23</sup> ibid., pp. 81, 83.

<sup>24</sup> ibid., p. 84.

<sup>25</sup> ibid., p. 85.

society if they just decide to take control of production and then plan the future. For this to happen, Marx cautions, there has to be "a certain material groundwork or set of conditions of existence."<sup>26</sup> Marx doesn't say in Das Kapital that the groundwork has been completed in his day. The groundwork, however, is being prepared for the replacement of capital-dominated society by the motion of capital and the reaction, by reform and revolution, of individuals to the inequities that capital creates.

#### D. Conclusion

The account of freedom in Das Kapital incorporates two aspects of individual freedom and social freedom. Marx's discussion of individual freedom centres on the freedom of each and every individual to decide on how he or she labours in order to survive and, at present, it entails freedom from the domination of capital in capitalist society, for capital is the main cause of interference to the individual's freedom to use his or her labour.

Marx's account of social freedom has to consider his position on social change and development which follows along the lines of the philosophy already outlined by Hegel. For Marx, there is no static or

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<sup>26</sup>ibid., p. 84.



permanent form of society but the social form of society continually changes.<sup>27</sup> In this respect Marx's position is similar to the position where Hegel proposes that underlying the movement of society is a progressive development, an all-prevailing spirit in the world.<sup>28</sup> That spirit is the spirit of freedom!

I maintain that for Marx freedom in society develops with the progressive development of society. The focus of Marx's attention in Das Kapital is that greater freedom develops in capitalist society by the actions of individuals who either work within the social form of capitalism to change it or who actively encourage a radical change of the social form of capitalism. Although the capitalism of nineteenth century Europe can only be fully overcome by the complete domination of capital in society, the mass of people become more united and more experienced by the movement of capital in society and, thereby, the mass of people assumes far greater control over society as it progresses.<sup>29</sup> Once capitalist society is replaced then there will be a further form which society will assume afterwards and further considerations of social freedom in that form of society. Although these

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<sup>27</sup> ibid., p. 29.

<sup>28</sup> Hegel, Lectures, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> DK., pp. 714/5.

conditions are as yet unknown, they will develop as society develops.

I suggest that the only aspect in Das Kapital which Marx entertains on the future form of society beyond the next stage of 'co-operation' is that individuals will have to continue to use their labour to satisfy their needs. The needs will change with the changes in society and aspects of man's nature will change or develop to meet those needs. The basis, however, of those needs and the ability of individuals to fulfill them through the actual expenditure of their own energy and intelligence will remain a permanent condition of human existence; that is, individuals will always have to labour in some fashion in order to survive by the appropriation of Nature to their own needs in the various forms which society assumes.

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