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Class Analysis for Anti-Capitalist Struggle

Antagonism

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direct authority relationships, capital, and the spectacle. The function of, and need for a class theory is to understand how to destroy capitalist society by and through the creation of anti-capitalist modes of living. The revolutionary proletarian struggle is not an attempt to raise the proletariat to the position of a ruling class, but to abolish all classes through the destruction of capitalist social relations. The real communist movement is our struggle, the community we create through struggle against the social relations that destroy us. Communist or anarchist society is the victory of this real social movement, the generalisation of this human community.

eas, where the means of subsistence aren't paid directly as a wage for work done, it is often necessary to look at the "class background" of the people involved. So that if a woman who doesn't go out to work is married to a middle class man, it is probably reasonable to say that she is middle class too. She would certainly share some of his material interests, and therefore consciousness. It is still the case that "housewives" don't have any direct usage of social power, and are effectively unpaid workers, so this may mean a downward pressure on class position, a partial proletarianisation. I am aware that this is a weakness in the class analysis I have put forward. There are other difficulties that now arise. What happens when a couple are from two different classes, say one a manager, the other a non-supervisory worker? From the example on housewives, we would have to say that the non-supervisory worker is elevated into the middle-class. If this is starting to get silly, it is not because the class analysis is totally wrong, it is because this is the wrong way to use it. Classes are social phenomenon, that are created in the mutual antagonism inherent in exploitative society. Using class analysis to analyse individual people in isolation is a moralistic endeavour, not a radical one. This is an important fact that many leftists totally ignore. For them the ability to individually "analyse" and condemn particular political enemies (or justify themselves) is their only reason for using class theory.

Class Community

Class is a social relation amongst large groups in society. It is not an object open to scientific analysis but exists in the conflict between classes. These class conflicts are power struggles primarily between a minority of possessors of social power and a majority whose social power is alienated from them. In capitalist society, alienation takes on specific forms. These include

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to capital, defines the police as proletarian, because cops don't own any means of production. Some groups run with this result, and call for the unionisation of the police (in Germany, unionised cops have been on strike for more repressive powers). Other groups find it embarrassing to define pigs as working class, and twist their theory to correct this one error. In reality, police are middle class, and not because they are the exception to the rule. They are the purest example of holders of alienated social power. Those radicals who call teachers or shop stewards "soft cops" hit the nail on the head; these other middle class groups are only a diluted form of the archetype.

Contradictions

I have pointed out contradictions or capitalist interests in certain class theories. I can't however claim that the one I have presented can unerringly categorise every individual. One problem area is that of "housewives" or other full-time unpaid carers. (The role of the stereotypical housewife, who stays at home, looking after the house and the kids, has gone into decline since the sixties. This is due both to women's struggle, and to capitalist restructuring, away from the model of factory and stable nuclear family. But this role is still something of an archetype for women in this society.) "Housewives" and other carers perform labour in the context of a capitalist society. They produce and reproduce the commodity of labour power. The work they do is productive labour appropriated by capital as surplus value. Having said this, the category of "housewives", like the category of wage labourers, is not homogenous. Just as some wage labourers are middle class because of the social power they wield, so it is with "housewives" as well. These at first glance all appear to have the same social power and so all appear to be of the same class. It would be wrong to argue this way. As hinted at in the discussion above on school kids, in these ar-

ful, supposedly trying to win over public opinion. The struggle of the sacked printers, local youths, and extremists was continuingly violent, aimed at the cops, scabs and NI property. The police tactics were also very violent. The top bureaucrats of course condemned any violent action by the pickets (but not the cops) over their PA. This surprised no one of course. What particularly struck me were the actions of the steward in charge of the picket, Mike Hicks. He not only condemned the violence, even that in self-defence, but called anyone attacking the police, "agent provocateurs" (i.e. police agents). He also physically attacked people who argued for this type of action. These counterrevolutionary actions were carried out not by the top union bureaucrats, but by a low level official. Hicks himself was a Stalinist, and so a more or less conscious counter-revolutionary. But his actions are not so far removed from that other union officials. Unions are capitalist institutions which have as their function the representation of variable capital, i.e. workers. They negotiate the rate or form of exploitation, according to their own interests (they need, from time to time to demonstrate their usefulness to both boss and worker). They are entirely part of the present system and can only attempt to repress any struggle that goes against this system. Union officials, at all levels, are in the belly of the beast, and are in fact separated from the proletariat. This is due to the increased social power that they enjoy. Their middle class nature can be seen by the fact that despite often being the most militant of workers on day to day issues, in the more bitter struggles they always play a conservative role, pulled three ways trying to represent the workers, the union, and the manager or boss.

Growing up in a working class environment, I gained a hatred for the police before gaining any formal radical politics. Friends and family were arrested or imprisoned, the pigs came round our house to check up on us, we were stopped and hassled in the street, they came to our school to indoctrinate us. The "marxist" class theory, that just looks at the relationship

This article is an attempt at communication with individuals and groups involved in subversive activity. The background of all present radical struggles is an attack on the social relation of capital, whether or not this is realised by the participants. The destruction of modern global conditions implies a global struggle; the only terrain on which a world-wide struggle can be fought is one which centres on a global class. The success of all or any of the partial struggles now being fought (over wages, squatting, environmental defence, work refusal etc.) means an extension and integration of proletarian struggle. An understanding of class relationships, although useless on its own, can lead to a greater effectiveness of our own struggles. This analysis has been developed out of practical experience. It is hoped that it may have practical results, that it is not theory separate from practise.

I have found that apparently minor disagreements on class analysis (such as whether teachers are middle class or working class) can turn out after much discussion to rely on very basic disagreements as to how the world is. In particular, disagreements on the nature of truth. Therefore it is necessary to start at a very basic level. My own understanding of the world is materialist. But I don't plan to waste much time arguing materialism versus idealism. The opposing world views are so far apart that there is no common ground to argue from. I will state though that the world is made and remade by material forces not by ideas. For instance, it may be or may not be the case that your ideas change after reading this. But any such change would be totally irrelevant if your actions, your behaviour do not change as well. In any case, ideas are not changed merely by the reading of some article, but in the context of some wider experience. If that were not the case then everyone reading the same stuff would end up thinking the same thing, which certainly isn't what happens.

Where is your truth, when god is dead?

In some societies such as Europe in Medieval Times, and perhaps in some modern theocracies, it was the case that truth was something that appeared to come from outside of society. Certain important disputes were argued out and decided upon according to a fixed official truth. In Medieval Europe the fixed truth was the scriptures. The particular interpretation of the "fixed truth" might in fact be determined according to interests of the most powerful groups in society, but it was nevertheless the case that there existed some reference point around which important disputes would turn. In particular, revolutionary class struggles in the Middle Ages seemed always to have religious disagreements that corresponded to the opposing class forces. (For instance, the Muenster commune was created by Anabaptists, the Taborites were also protestants who fought against the established church, and the various class forces in the English civil war also had their own religious sects.)

This state of affairs was smashed by the bourgeois revolution. God was ripped from the centre of society leaving a vacuum that cannot be filled by a constantly developing science. With no generally accepted truth, new opposing truths are developed by contradictory sections of society. Nowhere is this more obviously so than in the area of class theory.

One current capitalist version of class theory is based on sociology. With this method, society is categorised according to type of occupation, education, and salary. In one variant, skilled workers are categorised as C2's, for example. This class analysis is used most especially by the advertising industry. In order to maximise sales, advertising is aimed at particular groups. More interestingly, this type of analysis is also used by political parties in order to maximise the efficiency of their campaigning. In Britain, the C2's are seen by most political pundits as a crucial territory on which to fight. People

als who are more strongly against their official role, I certainly have met a couple of teachers who have been involved in riots for instance. But class analysis is not useful for predicting the behaviour of each individual in a certain class position, only the general characteristics of that group as a whole. I should add here that there are certain categories of teachers, those who do not work in the compulsory sector and who are not deeply involved in the reproduction of ruling ideology, who are probably proletarian, or at least much closer to that condition. I'm thinking in particular of those that work in community education colleges, and some of those that do workplace training. This is not because I want to make some exception, perhaps for someone I know, but because they do not possess the criteria that make them middle class; i.e. capital, power, a significant spectacular function. This lack of homogeneity, sameness, is not just restricted to teachers, but appears in almost any sociological grouping. I will say again, sociology, the identification and classification of separate groups in society, is of no use as a basis for radical class analysis.

It's Official

I have worked only in the non unionised private sector, or in temporary or casual jobs. This, together with the fact that I had a basic anarchist critique of unions before I left school, has meant that I have never been a union member. To me they have always seemed organisations of this society, not things outside or against it. This has meant that much of my criticism of unions has been second hand, based on the experiences of friends, family and comrades as well as stuff I have read. I have only come into conflict with unions in certain large workers' struggles, and first of all that against News International 1986 - 1987. This struggle started when the majority of the workforce was sacked. The union tried to keep things legal and peace-

but where people are "temporarily" outside of the cycle of accumulation, it is probably sensible to look at their class background.) That year there were a number of teachers' strikes which resulted in some disruption of classes. We even got sent home early a couple of times, which was brilliant. Some kid, with a good sense of humour, had the idea that we should all go on strike "in support" of the teachers. Basically we just all met up at the tennis courts and didn't return to lessons. What was the reaction of the teachers to this mass "support" for their cause? They made no attempt at fraternisation with us. Their only response was to try to get us to return to normal passivity. One vision that stays with me is of one of the teachers, a left-winger, fighting with one of the fifth years to prevent him joining our strike. All the teachers, and all the pupils recognised the true situation, that there could be no unity between the students and staff, only class conflict. Teachers, as part of their job, have a role in supervising and disciplining pupils. They also disseminate capitalist propaganda. Their role is one of socialising school kids into capitalist normality, the five day week, obeying orders; even the more or less useful stuff such as teaching kids to read is carried out because capitalism needs an educated workforce. Teachers, at least those who work in compulsory education, are part of the middle class, because of the direct power they wield and because of their role in perpetuating ruling class ideology (although they are not major players in this field). Of course teachers do engage in collective class struggle. When these struggles are not aimed at protecting their "status", but are for a wage increase say, then we can even see some sort of "proletarian" content. But struggles that go against this society, struggles which hold the seeds of capitalism's destruction, are those that are expansive, which tend to unite more and more people. Teachers are, through their social position, divided against a large part of the proletariat (schoolkids) and they will have to go that much further to break from their social position. This doesn't mean that there can't be some individu-

lower down the scale might have a tendency to vote Labour, those higher up Conservative. Skilled workers are a significant group where careful campaigning and policy making can tip the scales one way or the other. The Conservative policies of selling off council houses, mortgage relief and of widespread share issues, were deliberately aimed at this group. Their use of the sociological class analysis has been crucial to their continued grip on power. This theory is therefore certainly true; it corresponds in an exact way with the real world. But it is only true for capitalist forces. It corresponds to their worldview, it is useful for them to plan their strategies against us. It is true, but true only for the capitalist class in the maintenance of its power. We need class theory for an entirely different reason. We wish to understand this society in order to destroy it. Therefore our theory must be based not on the scientific notion of categorising differentiable strata, but instead on the active relationship of different groups, with each other, and with capitalism and the struggle against it.

Class in history

Every civilised society has been a class society. Each of these societies has based its civilisation, its culture, its technology, on the oppression of the majority by a minority. The earliest civilisations were based on open class power. The main productive class were the slaves, who originally were kidnapped from free communities or rival civilised societies. Over time, the master slave relationship became accepted by both parties as normal, and the slaves participated in the reproduction of their slavery.

In more recent times, the place of the slave class was taken by that of the peasant. The peasants lived in their own village communities. But these communities were not the free communities that existed before (or outside of) civilisation. The communities were dominated by the power of the lord, the church, and

eventually the state. These forces were external to the agrarian community but none the less played an important role within it. The lord was the protector of the community (providing a form of protection that is usually associated with organised crime), the peasants worked perhaps one day a week on his lands in return for his care. This relationship, also tended to become accepted, and both lord and peasant recognised a system of complementary rights and duties.

Previous historical societies had class relationships that were very different from today's. But these relationships are also recognisable. Workers are often referred to as wage-slaves, and although, workers are not bought and sold, but are legally free, this phrase has some obvious reality to it. How do we relate our own class oppression to the class oppression of our ancestors? What is the common factor in all systems of class domination? The answer, which is both obvious and commonly denied is the existence of social power. In all class societies, the members of the lowest class have their power alienated from them in one way or another. This alienated power is wielded by the ruling class and their functionaries. In ancient societies, the power of the slave was alienated absolutely, so that the slave was an object, a simple commodity to be bought and sold, a dog to be kicked. The peasant on the other hand, was allowed a measure of social autonomy, within strict limits. Today the alienated power of the majority is wielded especially by the functionaries of capital and by the agents of state and spectacle. This use of alienated social power is an active relationship with those it is used against.

"Marxism"

The society we live in is capitalist, characterised by wage labour, a centralised state, commodity production, the accumulation of capital. Can we still talk of class being determined

can never be institutional. We use enough violence to achieve our aims; we need to create a new community out of our struggle, hopefully as many people as possible can be integrated into this human community as rapidly as possible. As the revolution develops, more and more people will be attracted to it. We aim to unite with whoever really shares our struggle no matter what role they play under normal conditions. The situationist Ratgeb/Vaneigem expressed this brilliantly: "Doesn't it give you a certain sense of pleasure to think how, some day soon, you will be able to treat as human beings those cops whom it will not have been necessary to kill on the spot?"

Back to reality

This article has presented a theory, an analytical tool. But it has done it in a too abstract way. Where did these thoughts come from, a book, a discussion, a dream? These ideas did not appear fully formed but have been put together by me from my own experiences in this society, and my own experiences in my struggle against it, as well as from talking with other radicals and reading different books. This is a process started perhaps fifteen years ago and still continuing (though my ideas on class have only changed in details in the last eight years, say). I will retell some of my own experiences, so that you can understand more where I am coming from, and to bring this down to earth a bit more.

"But Teacher!"

My first involvement in any collective class struggle was at age eleven. At that time I was going to the comprehensive school on the council estate where I lived. Most of the kids there were working class, or else they were lower middle class. (Of course they all had similar amounts of social power, none,

against themselves, but also against all the other classes. The ruling class is under permanent assault from many directions. This results in a high degree of class consciousness possessed by the capitalist class. When a powerful anti-capitalist struggle breaks out, rival capitals can temporarily bury the hatchet and act in concert against the proletariat. The usual stereotype of the bourgeois is of a fat, top-hatted oaf, smoking a large cigar. It should be realised that the ruling class is small, fast and ruthless.

So who are our enemies; just the capitalist class or both they and the middle class? When it comes down to it the answer is: neither. What really destroys us is not the rich or their functionaries, it is the social relations of capitalism. It is the accumulation of capital, wage labour, social isolation, the state, borders, and more besides, that we are really need to do away with. In as much as the capitalist class, the middle class, or even the working class defend these relationships they act against our own liberation and the liberation of humanity as a whole. The point about class analysis, is that we can see who is most likely to defend these relations, and who is most likely to attack them. I once had a talk with someone who said that we should reopen Auschwitz and exterminate the richest 2% in this country. This kind of extremism has a sort of gut appeal. But there were a couple of problems. One was that this guy was a South African fascist who identified himself as an Anglo-Saxon. He argued that apartheid was more strongly established in the UK than it then was in South Africa, and that the ruling class was entirely of Norman origins. His wish to wipe out the rich was akin to the Nazi extermination of (Jewish) finance capitalists. The second problem was the industrial, and therefore capitalist, nature of his solution. The reason that we can't use prisons, concentration camps, or even firing squads for our liberation is not that we are liberals who respect an absolute right to life. It's because these are dehumanising institutions for the jailers as well as the condemned. Rebel violence can be liberating, but

by power in this society? The first "coherent" class analysis I came across was a Trotskyist version, touted by the Workers Revolutionary Party, the then official British section of the 4th International. The class theory they put across was that class position is determined by whether or not a person owned capital. Those that owned a large amount are the bourgeoisie, those who own a small amount, petty bourgeois, the rest of us working class. This theory (which is held by many more or less marxist groups) obviously has a lot going for it. Ownership of capital definitely is important in capitalist society! But the theory also has serious flaws in it. The biggest problem was revealed by the WRP's analysis of the Soviet Union. The USSR had all the typical social relations of capitalism; wage-labour, commodity production, etc. However it did not have a class of people who owned capital. The position of the WRP was therefore that the USSR did not have a capitalist class and was a form of worker's state. The idiocy of this position does not come from the WRP misusing the theory, but from the theory itself. A class analysis that looks only at whether individuals own capital or not to determine their class position, is worse than useless. It provides a theoretical justification for supporting particular states which are in every way capitalist. It fails to locate the real fault lines in all modern societies.

Ownership of capital is a crucial determinant of class; if you own a large amount of capital you are a capitalist. But it is incorrect to turn this statement round. It is not true that not owning capital makes you proletarian. The Soviet Union was a capitalist state with a class society. The class contradiction was not one of ownership against non-ownership, it was one of possession of social power against powerlessness. The ruling class, the capitalist class of the USSR were the top managers who commanded its economy, its state and its ideological apparatus. The intermediate class between capital and labour was primarily that of the lower managers, whose job it was to rule

the enterprises on a day to day basis.¹ This recognition of the forms of class power in the USSR leads us directly to an examination of so-called mixed economies such as Britain. In Britain too there is state ownership of certain industries. Certainly traditional bourgeois benefit from these industries (through the advantages of planning, or subsidies etc) but these industries are not capitalist by proxy. State industries are in no way "socialist" (in the non capitalist sense). The nationalised industries use wage-labour in order to produce and accumulate surplus value; this is the very essence of capitalist production relations. The individuals who run these industries are themselves a part of the capitalist class in their own right. Finally we look at private enterprises. The stereotypical description of a capitalist enterprise is of a factory owned by a capitalist who controls it directly. This quaint vision must be well over a century out of date (in as much as it was ever really accurate). Typical private enterprises today are owned collectively by capital, through multiple share ownership by both individuals and institutions. They are not operated primarily by individual bourgeois but by top managers. In free market societies, as in state controlled societies, the capitalist class includes top managers, the middle class includes lower managers. In the free market these strata exist along side private capitalists and petty bourgeois. The bourgeoisie, the owners of capital, are ruling class not because they are rich and we aren't. The bourgeoisie are ruling class because their ownership of capital gives them certain rights, abilities, power over productive forces (including

¹Although Marx's *Capital* was written half a century before state-capitalism started masquerading as socialism, some of Marx's comments still throw light on the social situation that existed in Russia. "An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers), and sergeants (foremen, onlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist." and "It is not because he is a leader of industry that a man is a capitalist; on the contrary, he is a leader of industry because he is a capitalist. The leadership of industry is an attribute of capital..." volume 1, page 314, Lawrence & Wishart.

is precisely because it has no material interest in the maintenance of capitalism, either immediately or in the long term. The capitalist class, both owners and top managers, are the class that directly benefits from the present society, and will organise whatever measures are necessary to ensure its continued existence. The middle class, be they petty bourgeois, peasants or the new middle class, are society's leftovers.

The middle class are both exploiter and exploited, or they are neither; they have some small privilege but no real security. Proletarianisation is a constant imminent danger for the middle class, and something they always fight to prevent. This struggle can be reactionary where it means a struggle against the proletariat to defend middle class position. But it can potentially be revolutionary when it is a struggle against capital's encroachment, and can lead to united action with the proletariat. In general, the middle class are only defined by their position in this society, and not by their struggles. This is because this class has no clear class interest in or against capital, and so never struggles as a class.

The proletariat is defined first of all by its dispossession. It exists as a negativity, as something alienated from this society, and which can never be wholly integrated. These radical chains lead to radical struggle. Proletarian struggles are always anti-capitalist (in potential) because the proletariat can find no liberation within capitalism. Its struggle therefore tends towards an all out struggle against capital. This tendency comes to the fore only too rarely. Most of the time the proletariat exists primarily as a class defined by capitalism. Only through struggle can it form itself into a community consciously opposed to capitalism. The material conditions of existence of the class precede radical class consciousness.

The capitalist class is a small minority of the world population. Capitalism requires competition and therefore struggles between rival capitals. The capitalist class can therefore never be fully unified. However, capitalists must struggle not only

of producing yourself through your product is itself an almost alien concept. It belongs to another world.

If in general, we can say that Marx's class theory was correct for its time, we should also point out his most spectacular failure in class analysis. In Statism and Anarchy, Bakunin had written that

"former workers .. as soon as they have become rulers and representatives, cease to be workers .. and look down on the whole common workers' world from the height of the state. They will no longer represent the common people but only their own claims to rule them."

Marx responded that workers, as representatives or governors, cease to be workers "as little as a factory owner today ceases to be a capitalist if he becomes a municipal councillor" Here Marx misses the point disastrously. Proletarians are defined by their alienation, just as bourgeois are defined by their possession of capital. Factory owners are not proletarianised by the assumption of even greater alienated social power. But proletarians cease to be such when they become representatives, because they take on the power that a ruler or representative possess by definition. Marx is useful where he talks about alienation or political economy, but his politics (and activity) were mostly bourgeois.

Class theory and its use

So far a way of determining the class position of different groups in society has been identified, by analysing the amount of social power that they wield. But it has not yet been said what this characterisation means, how it helps us. The utility of class analysis is in identifying the material interests of different social groups, both in the day to day running of capital, and in the on going struggle against it. The main reason why the proletariat is so often identified as the revolutionary class,

variable capital, i.e. their employees). Ownership of capital is only a form of class power that appears in particular variants of capitalism. It has its own characteristics but also has some continuity with other forms of domination, just as the proletarian condition has similarities (as well as differences) to historical forms of subjugation.

Wages

I will mention another variety of false class theory. Sometimes, it is claimed that class is determined by the amount of wages that a person receives. Now, there is a class difference between the rich and the poor, but this is not due to wage differentials. A class analysis based on wage differences would result in "an infinity of classes". There would also be the problem with differences in wages paid in different regions; either we have regional class differences or regional variations in class analyses. Silly. More to the point such a theory fails to understand what wage differences are about. At one level, wages are determined by the class war, with higher wages reflecting successful struggle by workers. But this is only one side of the story as wages are determined within the context of the capitalist system. In part they reflect the different exchange value of different forms of labour power; some people are paid more because their labour power is more expensive to reproduce. More commonly, wages vary due to fluctuations in the labour market, reflecting supply and demand for different types of labour. Most importantly, wage differentials are deliberately created by capital in order to divide the proletariat. The class is divided by jealousy or elitism, against itself. Basing a class analysis on wage differentials means taking artificial divisions created by capitalism to ensure its own survival, and then deliberately accentuating them. Such theory does capitalism's work for it, and against us.

Communist analyses

The class analyses I have criticised so far have been essentially, or absolutely, counterrevolutionary. They are used more or less consciously to defend capitalism (though not in each individual instance of their use). There are also class analyses produced by revolutionary currents which I believe are incorrect. Jean Barrot's "Capitalism & Communism", which appeared in "Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement", is perhaps the best introduction to communist theory. Especially because it recognises the limitations of theory, and the poverty of what normally passes as theoretical activity. His description of what the proletariat is, for the most part, is an excellent modernisation/generalisation of Marx's theory. One position I disagree with though, is his characterisation of the proletariat as "those who have no reserves". Barrot attributes this phrase to the Left Communist Bordiga but says his purpose was to go back to "the general definition". The function of this definition in Barrot's theory, is to make the struggle of the proletariat primarily a struggle against economic oppression. The class struggle then becomes a function of the ill health of capital. This process is obviously a major source of class composition and class struggle, but is far from adequate to describe the proletariat. If we accept this definition, then we should also accept the arguments of those sociologists, who (especially in the 60's & 70's) declared that the proletariat no longer existed in the developed countries. We should also accept the arguments of liberals and Trotskyists, that revolution is now located in the third world. The Trotskyists say this because western workers are a labour aristocracy and the real proletariat are the impoverished workers overseas. The liberals say it because the west is their (imperfect) paradise, and the third world countries need a democratic revolution to achieve our own general conditions of existence. Barrot recognises alienation as a producer of the proletariat but makes too much of the economic imperatives. Barrot is being

too economic in fact. If we go back to "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction" as Barrot recommends, we see that "the proletariat .. is ... formed ...from the mass of people issuing from society's acute disintegration and in particular from the ranks of the middle class". This identification of the middle class origin of the proletariat ties in with comments in the "Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts" on the workers alienation from the product of their labour.

"...man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself created. In tearing away the object of his production from man, estranged labour therefore tears away from him his species-life..."

This idea that workers (who might be women or men) create themselves in the creation of their product, is almost incomprehensible in really modern industry. Most workers hardly see the product they collectively produce. Where they are really directly involved in its production, then the division of labour is so acute, that they have no room to assert their individuality in the productive process. This was not true in Marx's day. At this time, petty-bourgeois producers were being collected together to produce as proletarians for a single capitalist in manufacturing. Or else petty-bourgeois or manufacturing workers were being collected together in the new social institution of the factory. These new proletarians, issuing from the disintegration of middle-class society, would really have directly felt the alienation of the product of their labour, which previously they themselves would have owned, but which now was possessed by the capitalist. From this we can see the importance of alienation, ahead of impoverishment in Marx's theory, as well as the archaic form of alienation which he talked of in the above passage. Alienation is still the crucial pre-condition for the proletariat, but today takes on yet more acute forms. Nowadays, the worker is alienated from their product to the degree that they hardly recognise it as their own product. The process