

KARL MARX
FREDERICK ENGELS

Volume
3

Karl Marx March 1843-August 1844

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therefore denotes not only the annulment of *estrangement*, but of *objectivity* as well. Man, that is to say, is regarded as a *non-objective, spiritual* being.

The movement of *surmounting the object of consciousness* is now described by Hegel in the following way:

The *object* reveals itself not merely as *returning into the self*—this is according to Hegel the *one-sided* way of apprehending this movement, the grasping of only one side. Man is equated with self. The self, however, is only the *abstractly* conceived man—man created by abstraction. Man is selfish. His eye, his ear, etc., are *selfish*. In him every one of his essential powers has the quality of *selfhood*. But it is quite false to say on that account “*self-consciousness* has eyes, ears, essential powers”. *Self-consciousness* is rather a quality of human nature, of the human eye, etc.; it is not human nature that is a quality of *self-consciousness*.

The self-abstracted entity, fixed for itself, is man as *abstract egoist*—*egoism* raised in its pure abstraction to the level of thought. (We shall return to this point later.)

For Hegel the *human being*—*man*—equals *self-consciousness*. All estrangement of the human being is therefore *nothing* but *estrangement of self-consciousness*. The estrangement of self-consciousness is not regarded as an *expression*—reflected in the realm of knowledge and thought—of the *real* estrangement of the human being. Instead, the *actual* estrangement—that which appears real—is according to its *innermost, hidden* nature (which is only brought to light by philosophy) nothing but the *manifestation* of the estrangement of the real human essence, of *self-consciousness*. The science which comprehends this is therefore called *phenomenology*. All reappropriation of the estranged objective essence appears, therefore, as incorporation into self-consciousness: The man who takes hold of his essential being is *merely* the self-consciousness which takes hold of objective essences. Return of the object into the self is therefore the reappropriation of the object.

Expressed in *all its aspects*, the *surmounting of the object of consciousness* means:

(1) That the object as such presents itself to consciousness as something vanishing.

(2) That it is the alienation of self-consciousness which posits thinghood.¹⁰¹

(3) That this alienation has not merely a *negative* but a *positive* significance.

(4) That it has this meaning not merely *for us* or intrinsically, but *for self-consciousness itself*.

(5) For *self-consciousness*, the negative of the object, or its annulling of itself, has *positive* significance—or it *knows* this futility of the object—because of the fact that it alienates itself, for in this alienation it posits *itself* as object, or, for the sake of the indivisible unity of *being-for-self*, posits the object as itself.

(6) On the other hand, this contains likewise the other moment, that self-consciousness has also just as much superseded this alienation and objectivity and resumed them into itself, being thus *at home* in its other-being *as such*.

(7) This is the movement of consciousness and this is therefore the totality of its moments.

(8) Consciousness must similarly be related to the object in the totality of its determinations and have comprehended it in terms of each of them. This totality of its determinations makes the object *intrinsically a spiritual being*; and it becomes so in truth for consciousness through the apprehending of each one of the determinations as *self* or through what was called above the *spiritual attitude* to them.¹⁰²

As to (1): That the object as such presents itself to consciousness as something vanishing—this is the above-mentioned *return of the object into the self*.

As to (2): The *alienation of self-consciousness* posits *thinghood*. Because man equals self-consciousness, his alienated, objective essence, or *thinghood*, equals *alienated self-consciousness*, and *thinghood* is thus posited through this alienation (*thinghood* being *that* which is an *object for man* and an object for him is really only that which is to him an essential object, therefore his *objective* essence. And since it is not *real man*, nor therefore *nature*—man being *human nature*—who as such is made the subject, but only the abstraction of man, self-consciousness, so *thinghood* cannot be anything but alienated self-consciousness). It is only to be expected that a living, natural being equipped and endowed with objective (i.e., material) essential powers should of his essence have *real natural objects*; and that his self-alienation should lead to the positing of a *real*, objective world, but within the framework of *externality*, and, therefore, an overwhelming world not belonging to his own essential being. There is nothing incomprehensible or mysterious in this. It would be mysterious, rather, if it were otherwise. But it is equally clear that a *self-consciousness* by its alienation can posit only *thinghood*, i.e., only an abstract thing, a thing of abstraction and not a *real* thing. It is ||XXVI||¹⁰³ clear, further, that *thinghood* is therefore utterly without any *independence*, any *essentiality* vis-à-vis self-consciousness; that on the contrary it is a mere creature—something *posited* by

self-consciousness. And what is posited, instead of confirming itself, is but confirmation of the act of positing which for a moment fixes its energy as the product, and gives it the *semblance*—but only for a moment—of an independent, real substance.

Whenever real, corporeal *man*, man with his feet firmly on the solid ground, man exhaling and inhaling all the forces of nature, *posits* his real, objective *essential powers* as alien objects by his externalisation, it is not the *act of positing* which is the subject in this process: it is the subjectivity of *objective essential powers*, whose action, therefore, must also be something *objective*. An objective being acts objectively, and he would not act objectively if the objective did not reside in the very nature of his being. He only creates or posits objects, because he is posited by objects—because at bottom he is *nature*. In the act of *positing*, therefore, this objective being does not fall from his state of “pure activity” into a *creating of the object*; on the contrary, his *objective* product only confirms his *objective* activity, his activity as the activity of an objective, natural being.

Here we see how consistent naturalism or humanism is distinct from both idealism and materialism, and constitutes at the same time the unifying truth of both. We see also how only naturalism is capable of comprehending the action of world history.

< *Man* is directly a *natural being*. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with *natural powers, vital powers*—he is an *active* natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities—as *instincts*. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the *objects* of his instincts exist outside him, as *objects* independent of him; yet these objects are *objects* that he *needs*—*essential objects*, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers. To say that man is a *corporeal*, living, real, sensuous, objective being full of natural vigour is to say that he has *real, sensuous objects* as the object of his being or of his life, or that he can only *express* his life in real, sensuous objects. *To be* objective, natural and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing. > *Hunger* is a *natural need*; it therefore needs a *nature* outside itself, an *object* outside itself, in order to satisfy itself, to be stilled. Hunger is an acknowledged need of my body for an *object* existing outside it, indispensable to its integration and to the expression of its essential being. The sun is the *object* of the plant—an indispensable object to it, confirming its life—just as the

plant is an object of the sun, being an *expression* of the life-awakening power of the sun, of the sun's *objective* essential power.

A being which does not have its nature outside itself is not a *natural* being, and plays no part in the system of nature. A being which has no object outside itself is not an objective being. A being which is not itself an object for some third being has no being for its *object*; i.e., it is not objectively related. Its being is not objective.

||XXVII| A non-objective being is a *non-being*.

Suppose a being which is neither an object itself, nor has an object. Such a being, in the first place, would be the *unique* being: there would exist no being outside it—it would exist solitary and alone. For as soon as there are objects outside me, as soon as I am not *alone*, I am *another*—*another reality* than the object outside me. For this third object I am thus a *different reality* than itself; that is, I am its object. Thus, to suppose a being which is not the object of another being is to presuppose that *no* objective being exists. As soon as I have an object, this object has me for an object. But a *non-objective* being is an unreal, non-sensuous thing—a product of mere thought (i.e., of mere imagination)—an abstraction. To be *sensuous*, that is, to be really existing, means to be an object of sense, to be a *sensuous* object, and thus to have sensuous objects outside oneself—objects of one's sensuousness. To be sensuous is to *suffer*.

Man as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a *suffering* being—and because he feels that he suffers, a *passionate* being. Passion is the essential power of man energetically bent on its object.

<But man is not merely a natural being: he is a *human* natural being. That is to say, he is a being for himself. Therefore he is a *species-being*, and has to confirm and manifest himself as such both in his being and in his knowing. Therefore, *human* objects are not natural objects as they immediately present themselves, and neither is *human sense* as it immediately is—as it is objectively—*human* sensibility, human objectivity. Neither nature objectively nor nature subjectively is directly given in a form adequate to the *human* being.> And as everything natural has to *come into being*, man too has his act of origin—*history*—which, however, is for him a known history, and hence as an act of origin it is a conscious self-transcending act of origin. History is the true natural history of man (on which more later).

Thirdly, because this positing of thinghood is itself only an illusion, an act contradicting the nature of pure activity, it has to be cancelled again and thinghood denied.

Re 3, 4, 5 and 6. (3) This externalisation of consciousness has not