

Moments of Motion: The Beginnings of Marx's "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts"

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Introduction

The recent past has seen a small torrent of scholarship on the editorial and publication history of Marx's literary remains (Rojahn, 2002; Carver, 2010; Xiaoping, 2010; Carver and Blank, 2014; Musto, 2015; Heinrich, 2016; Ghosh, 2017; Musto, 2018). It is now frequently suggested that many of the editions on which twentieth-century scholars relied were deeply flawed—less accurate representations of what Marx wrote than inventions of twentieth-century editors. Consider the manuscripts known as Marx's "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts." Since they first appeared in scholarly format in 1932, they have arguably been the most influential of all of Marx's early writings. They introduced his theory of alienation and opened a space in which Western Marxists could develop an approach that was both consistent with Marx's thought and distinct from Marxism-Leninism. They also instigated a protracted debate over "the young Marx." However, as Marcello Musto has shown, the twentieth century saw countless editions of the "Manuscripts," each of which was prepared by ideologically interested editors, and each of which distorted the original accordingly, resulting in further distortions in subsequent translations and commentary (Musto 2015, 234-39). It was only in 1982 that a complete version of the original became available in the second *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA). But that still means scholars have

had almost forty years to suggest new interpretations. And while the *MEGA* editions of the manuscripts called “The German Ideology” and those Marx produced while preparing *Capital* have resulted in significant changes in the way we understand those works, this has not happened with Marx’s earlier writings. In fact, over the same forty years, intellectual historians have tended to shift their focus away from Marx and toward other figures—treating Marx as a bit player in a larger drama that unfolded among *Vormärz* intellectuals (Toews 1980; Breckman 1999; Moggach 2006; Chitty and McIvor 2009; Moggach 2011; Hundt and Lambrecht 2013). But if we are witnessing a return to Marx, then perhaps it is time to return to this part of his career as well.

Any effort to address the “Manuscripts” today must begin by bracketing the editions on which twentieth-century scholars relied (and with them much of their scholarship) and consider the manuscripts themselves. Here Jürgen Rojahn’s work is instructive. Rojahn (2002) explains how Marx produced both *Notizbücher* (which include thoughts, plans, sketches, outlines, equations, and speeches) and *Exzerptheft* (where he compiles excerpts from texts he was studying). The “Manuscripts” refers to a combination of *Notizbücher* and *Exzerptheft* that Marx composed in 1844, the year he moved to Paris, encountered Engels’s work, and converted to communism. The central documents are three notebooks that Marx bound together in a highly idiosyncratic fashion (Fay 1983). In the twentieth century, this material was aggressively edited and made to appear as if it were a draft for a single work. Marx planned to write a series of books on the topics discussed in the “Manuscripts.” However, Rojahn notes, “if by ‘work’ we understand a coherent text in which the author, in a more or less premeditated, systematic way, unfolds his ideas, it is questionable whether the Manuscripts of 1844, as they have survived, can be regarded as a work at all” (Rojahn 2002, 33). And while twentieth-century scholars often presented them as an initial statement of Marx’s philosophy, “the Manuscripts of 1844 are not a systematic exposition of a world view, but rather, show Marx’s thought in *motion*” (44). They are not a draft of one coherent project, but an assemblage of

outlines, false starts, dropped threads, and foundational but directionless research. Here Marx attempts, and fails, to synthesize his familiarity with Hegel and the Hegelians, his emerging research into political economy, and his new commitment to communism. Whatever conclusions we draw from these pages should therefore be set against the backdrop of their inconclusive nature.

That said, Rojahn's characterization of the "Manuscripts" as "thought in *motion*" inadvertently captures one important theme of Marx's study of Hegel. For precisely what Marx credits Hegel with discovering is the motion of thought, or the way that thought does not involve applying fixed categories to experiences but comprehends experiences as moments within dynamic dialectical processes or what Marx calls "*moments of motion*" (Marx 2010c, 340). There is thus a sense in which the "thought in *motion*" we find in the "Manuscripts," or their probing, unfinished character, reflects the motion of thought that they describe—a sense in which they are an example of what they state. Much of the extant commentary on the "Manuscripts" has curtailed this "motion," in that it has sought to extract a set of fixed concepts (alienation, essence, species-being, humanism, communism, atheism, wages, rent, labor, proletariat) from Marx's "thought in motion" and give them definitions that somehow apply from the moment Marx used them into perpetuity. Thus, the major statements on the "Manuscripts" fall into two basic camps: either Western Marxists like Herbert Marcuse present them as elements of a continuous philosophical project through which Marx developed a humanist "concept of essence" (Marcuse 1968, 50-64; Marcuse 1972); or, Marxist-Leninists like Louis Althusser characterize them as examples of a youthful "theoretical humanism" with which Marx broke decisively in 1845 (Althusser 2005, 33-38, 49-86). For all their differences, these camps share the assumption that the "Manuscripts" constitute an independent theoretical statement, or Marx's statement of a philosophical position that he either remained committed to or abandoned for science.

This paper proposes that, to address Marx's "thought in motion," we must forgo treating the "Manuscripts" as his presentation of a discrete

philosophy and provide an account of the medium through which the thought contained in them moved—namely, the specific struggles and debates into which Marx was seeking to intervene. Thus, we approach Marx’s words not as abstract concepts with fixed definitions, but as speech acts designed to produce specific effects on specific discourses. I take this method in part from the so-called Cambridge School, which treats texts in the history of political theory not as individual responses to perennial normative questions of human coexistence, but as contextually located, rhetorically charged engagements (Skinner 2002). Texts are thus weapons in struggles, and their meanings are derived from their polemical use. Here the salient question is not, What was Marx trying to *say* when he composed his “Manuscripts”? but What was Marx trying to *do*? What effects was he hoping to achieve? What language games was he playing and what moves was he making? How was Marx seeking, through the act of writing, not only to describe the world, but to change it?

But to approach the “Manuscripts” in context is not to exhaust all contexts. An historian’s writing is no less of a speech act than that of those she studies. Both theorists and historians respond to the contexts in which they work. We delimit the field to address issues that earlier commentators mistook, and we identify the past struggles that appear relevant today. In this paper, I will emphasize two such struggles. First, I draw attention to Marx’s break with Bauer. Between 1839 and 1842 Marx worked closely with Bauer and was widely recognized as his protégé (Anonymous 1845, 80). He adopted Bauer’s atheist political theology and revolutionary republicanism, and he believed that Bauer was contributing to an impending crisis—that he would become something like the Luther of an atheist reformation that, much like Luther’s, would take shape in universities and spread throughout Europe, bringing an end to religion and galvanizing citizens to renounce their particular religious identities, orient themselves toward the universal, and participate directly in the state. Both Marx’s turn to Feuerbach and his reassessment of Hegel in the “Manuscripts” make sense primarily in relation to Marx’s decision to distance himself from Bauer. Second, I explore Marx’s study of the

relationship between landed property and industrial capitalism and show how it was designed to contribute to constitutional debates taking place in Germany—debates through which conservatives attempted to reinforce the traditional social order by devising policies to ensure that the noble estates remained intact during the economic crises that plagued Europe following the Napoleonic Wars (Berdahl 1988, 264-300). Marx's insight is not that politics is founded upon an economic base. That was everyone's presupposition. It was that the traditional base of the noble estates would not be able to resist the transformations initiated by industrial capitalism. This is the dominant concern of Marx's early studies of political economy, and one that we overlook if attend exclusively to the way those studies prepare for Marx's later work.

Radical Hegelians

The most egregious editorial manipulation of Marx's "Manuscripts" occurs at the beginning. As mentioned, the "Manuscripts" consists of three notebooks Marx compiled in 1844. While elements of these had been published previously, in 1932, two complete editions appeared simultaneously, one in the first *MEGA*, another in the collection *Der Historische Materialismus: Die Frühschriften*, produced by the Social Democrat scholars Siegfried Landshut and Jacob Peter Meyer (Musto 2015, 234). Both extracted a brief "Preface" that Marx had sketched toward the end of the third manuscript and situated it at the beginning. This intervention produced the impression that Marx had imagined all three manuscripts as one unified project. The "Preface" suggests that what follows will combine a critique of the Hegelian philosophy of law, a Feuerbach-inspired polemic against the "critical theologians," and a defense of communism based on Marx's investigations of political economy. It is intended to introduce not the "Manuscripts," but "series of distinct, independent pamphlets" on "the critique of law, ethics, politics, etc." that Marx planned to publish in sequence, and then follow with "a special work" that would "present them again in a connected whole." The same "Preface" claims that this project would conclude with a "critique of

the speculative elaboration of the material” (Marx 2010c, 231). Some pages of the third manuscript are divided vertically. On the left, Marx considers political economy and communism, on the right, Hegel’s speculative philosophy. Assuming the latter represented the conclusion mentioned in the “Preface,” the editors relocated it at the end of the text. Thus, along with fabricating the impression that the “Manuscripts” had a “Preface,” they fabricated the impression that they had a conclusion.

To bypass such manipulations, we must refrain from treating Marx’s reflections as a unified argument, and disambiguate them, or separate out the lines of thought, explore the operation of each, and propose explanations as to why Marx failed to synthesize them. The oldest line of thought in the “Manuscripts” is Marx’s criticism of Bauer, which provides context for his assessment of Feuerbach and Hegel. Marx met Bauer at the University of Berlin where Bauer, a brilliant Hegelian Bible scholar and philosopher, was a lecturer. He attended Bauer’s lectures and in 1839 began a dissertation on ancient atomism with Bauer as his mentor (Stedman Jones 2017, 90-121; Heinrich 2019, 273-92). The same year Bauer published *Herr Dr. Hengstenberg*, which was critical of the powerful conservative professor Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg. To protect Bauer from retaliation, the Minister of Culture and patron of Hegelians Karl von Altenstein had him transferred from Berlin to Bonn (Moggach 2003, 60-63; Bauer 1839). In a series of twelve letters that Bauer wrote to Marx between 1839 to 1842, Bauer offers Marx advice on his research, plans collaborative projects, and plots to have Marx join him at Bonn after receiving his doctorate. The same letters illuminate the practical politics of the otherwise obscure writings that both Marx and Bauer produced during the period (MEGA III: 1:335-36, 340-46, 349-50, 352-59, 369, 371, 386-87). Marx’s dissertation, for example, was not an antiquarian investigation of ancient texts. Marx sought to prove that the concept of “self-consciousness,” and thus the principle of subjective freedom, was not, as many (including Hegel) claimed, an invention of Christianity, but had been fully developed by the Epicureans, Stoics, and Sceptics. This meant that freedom could be based on philosophical reason and did not

require divine revelation. One can be free without God. And one can have a free state that is not only secular, but also not organized around a personal, divinely legitimated sovereign—one based on free "self-conscious" republican citizens (Marx 1975, 34-36).

As Douglas Moggach has shown, Bauer's work between 1839 and 1842 in which he developed his theory of "self-consciousness" consistently advanced this same revolutionary republican agenda (Moggach 2003, 59-96). But twentieth-century commentators typically read Bauer through the distorting lens of Marx's and Engels's later criticisms of him, and thus misunderstood the political meaning of his work, and especially the way it was articulated through his atheism and Bible criticism. Along with his Bible criticism, in which he argued that the gospels are neither historically true nor the myths of an early Christian community, but the literary invention of individual authors, Bauer wrote extensively on Hegel, theology, philosophy, aesthetics, and politics. He also intervened in debates over church governance, the relationship between church and state, and most famously the Jewish question. From our perspective, this range of topics appears eclectic. At the time, though, it was understood to be perfectly consistent. We need to allow that, during the *Vormärz*, church and state were not separate and that the organization of the church was consubstantial with the organization of the moral community of the state. Political questions were also theological ones (Nipperdey 1996, 356-98; Clark 2007, 412-27). Moreover, the constitution consisted of an integrated system of institutions that included the state, the churches, and the universities. Ecclesiastical and academic politics were no less practical or serious than state politics. Bauer's biblical criticism was designed to generate an interpretation of the gospels that, when percolated through the institutions of the universities and the church, would challenge the myth that society requires an individual sovereign (a God or a monarch), and offer popular consciousness an image of a republican state made up of free citizens. For Bauer, biblical criticism was a revolutionary act. The authorities agreed. In 1842, a committee of theologians judged his work atheist and revoked his license to teach.

Bauer's dismissal destroyed Marx's academic career. He turned to journalism, working for the *Rheinische Zeitung* until it was suppressed in March 1843. It was around this time that Marx began to challenge his former mentor. But between 1839 and 1842, he was committed to Bauer's agenda. His dissertation is but one example. Bauer's letters show that he and Marx made plans to coedit a new journal, *Annals of Atheism*. Marx also began to compose a theatrical farce attacking the anti-Hegelian theologian Karl Fischer called *Fischer Vapulans*; he prepared a book and lectures challenging a school of liberal Catholic theologians called the "Hermesians" (Bauer believed that, to advance history, it was necessary to criticize not only conservative positions but the most progressive ones); he conducted extensive research on the history of religion and art, which was to inform a sequel to Bauer's *Trumpet of the Last Judgement* (for Bauer, spontaneous aesthetic judgment as described by Kant was crucial to free self-consciousness); and he worked on a Hegelian response to Adolf Trendelenburg's devastating attack on Hegel in his 1840 *Logische Untersuchungen*. Bauer believed that once he and Marx were installed in academic positions, they would use them as platforms to pursue "the terrorism of true theory" (MEGA III: 1:358). The plan, clearly articulated in Bauer's letters, was to generate an academic crisis that would spill over into a popular movement and contribute to the creation of a revolutionary state (whence Bauer's reference to "terrorism"). When Bauer's dismissal (which Bauer arguably orchestrated to force a confrontation with church and state) did not lead to a popular uprising, or when it became clear that Bauer would be remembered for a minor public scandal, not as the Luther of an atheist reformation, Bauer's strategy changed, and he began to argue that what prevented revolution in Germany was "the Mass," who adopted possessive individualism rather than the public virtue of the republican citizen (Moggach 2003, 159).

Marx's first indication of his break with Bauer was "On the Jewish Question," which he wrote in late 1843 and which appeared in the *Deutsch-Französisch Jahrbücher* in February 1844. There, via a critical review of Bauer's book *Die Judenfrage*, Marx argued that Bauer's

criticism of religion was insufficient for true emancipation. Bauer held that separating church and state would open a space in which "self-conscious" individuals could abandon "particular" religious identities and become republican citizens participating in public life and orienting themselves toward the "universal." Marx noted that such "political emancipation" had been attempted in North America, and that, far from destroying religion, it had transplanted it in civil society, where it flourished. Moreover, the state became, not a space of collective deliberation over the universal, but a separate, formal sphere, while civil society became the realm of egoism and mutual exploitation. Individuals became political citizens endowed with formal rights; but the function of those rights was to secure a civil society in which the same individuals were atomized humans forced to treat one another as means not ends. Real "human emancipation," Marx insisted, would require a revolutionary transformation of all aspects of the social order, not only church and state (Marx 2010b, 149-52). In a second article in the *Deutsch-Französisch Jahrbücher* called "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," Marx reinforced this argument. "For Germany," Marx began, "the *criticism of religion* is in the main complete" (Marx 2020b, 175). Now "the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth." Revolution, moreover, did not involve individuals abandoning their particular identities for universal self-consciousness. It required conflict between particular groups or what Marx now called classes—not merely the "weapon of criticism," as Marx put it, but also "criticism by weapons" (182). Revolutions involve one class convincing the masses that its interests are universal, and successfully representing another class as the source of all injustice. Theory like Bauer's was insignificant unless combined with "a *passive* element, a *material* base," by which Marx meant mass action and class struggle (183).

The draft "Preface" and the discussion of Hegel in the third of the "Manuscripts" show that Marx intended to expand on these criticisms of Bauer. While Friedrich Wilhelm IV had been hostile toward the radical Hegelians from the time that he ascended to the throne in 1840, his régime moved decisively to eliminate them in 1843. Bauer's dismissal and the

suppression of the *Rheinische Zeitung* were parts of this larger campaign. Marx and Ruge, whose *Hallische* and *Deutsche Jahrbücher* were also suppressed, responded by moving to Paris to establish the *Deutsch-Französisch Jahrbücher*. Bauer and his followers remained in Prussia and opened the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. Its tenor was less political than Bauer's earlier work. This was partly to avoid censorship, and partly a consequence of Bauer's new strategy. While Bauer had previously sought to instigate popular revolt, he now believed that "the Mass" was consumed by self-interest, and that this had been shown when they failed to respond to his dismissal. The historical task of advancing free, universal self-consciousness would be the domain of a small group of independent "critics," namely those gathered around Bauer (Moggach 2003, 139-56). This was the group that Marx and Engels ridiculed in "The Holy Family" as "Critical Critics." "The Holy Family" was composed after Marx worked on the "Manuscripts" in the autumn of 1844. It was published in early 1845. It examined the first eight numbers of Bauer's *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* and makes little sense unless read alongside them. Marx's contributions characterized Bauer and his circle as self-inflated fantasists who had withdrawn from the arena of practical action but still believed that they alone represented the cause of self-consciousness. Marx reproached Bauer for not responding to his review of *Die Judenfrage*. He also developed a protracted literary analysis of Eugène Sue's *Mysteries of Paris*, which had been reviewed in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (Marx and Engels 2010, 162-209). But most of Marx's substantive arguments were abbreviated repetitions of the "Manuscripts."

While many scholars emphasize the relationship between Feuerbach and Marx, "The Holy Family" is the only work published by Marx that so much as mentions Feuerbach's name. The same scholars often claimed that another of Marx's manuscripts, namely his "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," which criticizes Hegel's theory of constitutional monarchy, was composed in response to Feuerbach's 1843 "Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy." Elsewhere I argue that Marx completed the relevant sections of that manuscript in 1842, and that the

case for Feuerbach's influence is overstated (Author, nd; Avineri 1968, 3-12; Abensour 2011, 38-46; Leopold 2007, 11-12, 19-20, 38). Thus the "Manuscripts" represent Marx's first extensive engagement with Feuerbach. But to understand the significance of that engagement, we must place them in the context of Marx's earlier opinion of Feuerbach. Prior to 1843, Marx's judgment of Feuerbach was either neutral or negative. Marx had referenced Feuerbach in his dissertation, but only as a source of historical information. At one point in his letters, Bauer suggested they approach Feuerbach as a potential contributor to the *Annals of Atheism*. Marx disagreed. Bauer himself was critical of Feuerbach. For Bauer, history was the story of self-consciousness liberating itself from "substance," by which Bauer meant all positive moral and natural limits. Feuerbach's species-being, Bauer maintained, was but another manifestation of such substance (Moggach 2003, 44-45). A letter from Marx to Ruge on 20 March 1842 indicates that Marx had his own reservations. In it, Marx described an article he was preparing on Hegel's state theory, probably the "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law." There, Marx wrote, he "necessarily had to speak about the general essence of religion" and "to some extent come into collision with Feuerbach" (MECW 1:385). Along with suggesting Marx's distance from Feuerbach, this comment also suggests that Marx did not derive his initial criticisms of Hegel from Feuerbach but developed them independently.

But Marx's attitude started to shift in the summer of 1843 when he and Ruge began to plan their *Deutsch-Französisch Jahrbücher*. The reason was at least partly mercenary. Feuerbach was the most prominent Hegelian philosopher at the time. Convincing him to contribute to a new journal would have been a coup. On 13 March 1843, after receiving a copy of Ruge's *Anekdoten*, which included articles by Marx, Feuerbach, and Bauer, Marx wrote to Ruge. The letter indicates that at this point, Marx's relationship with Bauer was not sour. Marx deemed one of Bauer's contributions a "not very successful rendering" of the section of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* on "The Unhappy Consciousness." But he was enthusiastic about Bauer's review of a book on the life of Jesus. "Bauer on

Ammon,” Marx wrote, “is delightful.” Marx had similarly positive things to say about Bauer’s *Die Gute Sache der Freiheit*, in which Bauer responded to his dismissal. Bauer had “never before written so well.” Marx also commented on Feuerbach’s contribution—his “Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy.” “Feuerbach’s aphorisms seem to me incorrect in only one respect,” Marx wrote, “that he refers too much to nature and too little to politics.” This was a common judgment of Feuerbach, one echoed in Ruge’s correspondence (MECW 1:400; Nerrlich 1886, 247). Bauer was perceived as an institutional warrior, Feuerbach a largely apolitical philosopher. Marx and Ruge both believed that their explicitly political journal would be more likely to succeed if they could draw Feuerbach into more explicitly political debates. Thus, on 3 October 1843, just before he moved to Paris, Marx wrote to Feuerbach. After showering him with praise, he described the mission of his and Ruge’s new journal and invited him to submit a critique of Friedrich Schelling (MECW 3:349-51). Feuerbach declined.

On 11 August 1844, while working on his “Manuscripts,” Marx sent Feuerbach another letter. Here he was not attempting to solicit work for the *Deutsch-Französisch Jahrbücher*, which lasted only one issue, after which Marx and Ruge split. Marx began with his “respect and—if I may use the word—love” for Feuerbach. “Your *Philosophie der Zukunft*, and your *Wesen des Glaubens*,” he declared, “are of greater weight than the whole of contemporary German literature put together.” Marx described Feuerbach’s popularity amongst the “French proletariat” and informed him of a “covert polemic against” him in the “*Literatur-Zeitung*,” the journal of “Bruno Bauer, my friend of many years standing—but now rather estranged.” He then told him of his intention to “publish a small booklet attacking this aberration of criticism” and asked for his “opinion” (MECW 3:354-57). The purpose of the letter appears to have been to ensure a positive reception of Marx’s book (which Marx never completed), and again to draw Feuerbach into politics, this time with the communists. The question is: what happened between October 1843 when Marx took a polite but not slavish attitude, and August 1844 when he was downright

fawning? History records no obvious answer. But the "Manuscripts" suggest one, provided we read them in the order Marx produced them. Marx's first manuscript begins with a survey of political economy. Half-way through, there is a digression on alienation. It includes themes found in Feuerbach but does not mention his name. Indeed, other than the draft "Preface" and discussion of Hegel, the manuscripts refer to Feuerbach once, and there parenthetically. "*Sense-perception* (see Feuerbach) must be the basis of all science," Marx writes (2010c, 303). It seems likely that, rather than setting out to write a Feuerbachian study of political economy, communism, and Hegel, Marx became increasingly aware of the relevance of Feuerbach to his project in the process of composing it.

Determining lines of influence among the radical Hegelians is a fraught exercise. They were all critical of Hegel; but they also all adopted Hegel's idiom, making it difficult to tell when they are referring to one another and when to Hegel. The concepts of estrangement and alienation, which some suggest Marx borrowed from Feuerbach, were developed in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, and all radical Hegelians, including Bauer, employed them. The same is true of species and essence. Thus when, in the first of the "Manuscripts," Marx writes of "estranged labour," or when he argues that the division of labor alienates humans from their "species-being" in a manner analogous to religious alienation, we should not assume that Feuerbach is his exclusive source. As Marx notes, Hegel was the first to portray labor as alienation, and one can read Marx's discussion of the issue as a response to Hegel, not Feuerbach. A more probable scenario is that Feuerbach's invocation of alienation, essence, and species helped convince Marx to work systematically through Hegel's use of those themes. The influence of Feuerbach on Marx only becomes apparent in the third manuscript, which has three elements. It begins with a discussion of political economy and communism, which Marx wrote as a supplement to a now lost portion of the second manuscript. Alongside his discussion of political economy and communism, on the right side of some pages, Marx develops his criticism of Hegel, probably thinking that it would become a conclusion, as suggested in the "Preface." Again, editors moved

this material to the end. Finally, at the actual end, Marx begins a separate essay on money. Most editors placed these reflections prior to Marx's commentary on Hegel, making them appear internal to the work.

The third manuscript represents a sustained effort to synthesize Hegelian philosophy, political economy, and communism. The left side has two interrelated elements. First, Marx uses Hegelian categories to historicize political economy. Political economy does not articulate universal laws; it is a product of the history of private property—a product of what it claims to explain. If modern private property, as distinct from the noble estates, is a negation of the feudal order, Marx argues, communism represents the “negation of the negation” or “the *positive* expression of annulled private property” (306). This argument allows Marx to explain the advance of the political economists over the Physiocrats, in that the former defined wealth as an expression of labor, while the latter based it on land. It also allows him to distinguish his communism, which treats private property as an historically mediated social relation, from that of Proudhon, whose criticisms of political economy presuppose its terms and thus cannot explain communism as their preservation and negation. Second, Marx develops an anthropology that draws on Feuerbach, but that Marx inflects with his communist understanding of the social nature of labor and the historical production of the senses. Marx uses this anthropology to intervene into ethical debates that took place among eighteenth-century political economists, notably the question of whether wealth is a product of luxury or thrift, and whether the pursuit of self-interest through exchange might mitigate against the unsocial passions and foster a pacific “commercial society” (Hirschman, 1977; Hont, 2010). Marx proposes that modern luxury and thrift are not opposites, but expressions of the same ethic of avarice, which forces modern subjects paradoxically to pursue both. He counters the image of a pacific commercial society with the “brotherhood” of “communist *artisans*,” and “the nobility of man” that “shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies” (Marx, 2010c: 313). And he mounts a defense of the passions, which he characterizes, not as unsocial, but as fundamental to

our species-being. "Passion," Marx writes, "is the essential power of man energetically bent on its object" (337).

Marx's efforts to historicize political economy and articulate a communist anthropology aside, the more compelling aspect of the third manuscript is its consideration of Hegel. Marx displays his comprehensive knowledge of Hegel's system, including *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. He pursues an immanent critique designed to show that it, on the one hand, constitutes the highest stage of alienation, or philosophical alienation from nature and society, and, on the other, opens the possibility of transcending such alienation through the affirmation of positive, material nature and society. Importantly, Marx frames these reflections on Hegel as a challenge to "the modern critical movement" or Bauer (232). He surveys Bauer's career, from his Bible criticism to his attacks on the Christian state to the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. He claims that Bauer's most recent work promulgates an absurd distinction between Bauer's own purely critical attitude, which accepts nothing positive and is committed to total negation, and the attitude of all other philosophers and "the 'masses,'" who, frightened of criticism, cling to something positive. Thus, Bauer's "absolute criticism" feigns to "reduce the whole process of history to the relation between the rest of the world and itself" (233). But such "absolute criticism" leaves one thing uncriticized—the Hegelian dialectic on which it relies, and especially Hegel's concept of "self-consciousness," which Marx characterizes as an abstraction incapable of accounting for the natural and social condition of the human essence. It is here that Marx turns to Feuerbach. For Marx, Feuerbach "is the only one who has a *serious, critical* attitude to the Hegelian dialectic." Only Feuerbach sees that philosophy alienates humans from their essence no less than religion; that "*true materialism*" and "*real science*" begin, not with individual self-consciousness, but with "the social relationship of 'man to man'; and that Hegel's 'negation of the negation' requires but cannot comprehend 'the self-supporting positive, positively based on itself' (328).

What follows is a draft for a work on Hegel. It is also Marx's most profound engagement with Hegel's system. The central problem that Marx must face is how to avoid Hegel's idealism (his claim to begin his logic "without presuppositions" or any reference to positive intuitions) without falling prey to what Hegel calls "reflection," or the notion that thought merely involves representing an external being (Hegel 1991, 80-108, 179-99). For Hegel, this two-tiered ontology characterized modern philosophy, including Kant's distinction between phenomenal appearances and the noumenal thing-in-itself. Kant insisted that thought was limited to the former. But how can thought posit a limit to its own operation without transgressing that limit in the same gesture? Dialectics was Hegel's solution. Rather than assuming a static realm of thought on the one side, and a static realm of being on the other, and attempting to explain how the two are related, Hegel argued that thought is motion, or a dynamic relationship between thought and being. This was true for both individual acts of cognition (when individuals encounter an alienated world, recognize themselves in it, and become self-conscious) and the historical development of self-consciousness more generally (what Hegel called Spirit). Hegel's key example of this motion of thought was the dialectic of sense-certainty that opens his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. There Hegel demonstrated that our most immediate, apparently static experiences of a present space and time ("here" and "now"), are actually mediated and dynamic, in that they presuppose an awareness of other, absent spaces and times (Hegel 1991, 60-66). Thus, while thought might begin with the naïve experience of representing external being, it quickly requires a concept, or an integrated totality of possible experiences that affords any given experience meaning. In his logic, Hegel pursued such concepts to ever higher levels of abstraction, ultimately arriving at the "absolute idea."

Frederick Beiser argues that post-Kantian philosophy had two components: the rational-speculative systems of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel; and the empirical-psychological theories of Beneke, Fries, and Trendelenburg (Beiser 2014a, 12-13). The former attempted to derive the

empirical sciences from their philosophical systems, the latter to provide philosophical foundations for empirical methods. The decisive blow to the rational-speculative school was administered by Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*, which targeted Hegel's claim to have produced a logic "without presuppositions" or reference to specific intuition. Relying on Aristotle, Trendelenburg argued that the motion that Hegel attributed to thought could only be derived from intuition—that thought on its own is dormant, and that Hegel's dialectical method of resolving contradictions with a third term furtively relied on references to intuition (Trendelenburg 1840, 29-31). As mentioned, Marx was aware of Trendelenburg and began to compose a Hegelian response. There is some evidence that, along with criticizing Trendelenburg, Marx was influenced by his work on Aristotle and logic, and that this can be discerned in "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law" (Jaulin 2016). But Marx's challenge to Hegel in the "Manuscripts" takes a different approach. Rather than confronting Hegel's speculative philosophy with an empirical alternative, Marx employs Hegel's own idiom of alienation to expose a blind spot in his system, namely his inability to account for the positive existence of a social or natural world. Here Marx does not proceed dogmatically, or by asserting that such a world must be given as a point of departure. He was a good enough Hegelian to know that this line would reinstate the problem of reflection. Rather, Marx seeks to preserve Hegel's insight into the motion of thought, or the sense in which individual experiences acquire meaning in relation to a concept or totality, while attributing this relation, not to thought alone, but to human practices in the social and natural world.

We can approach the issue from another direction. As Marx explains, Hegel thinks that the human essence is self-consciousness. Hegel's subject of self-consciousness posits the external, objective world as alien. It then appropriates that alienated world for consciousness, retaining its objectivity within subjective consciousness. Hegel treats this process as overcoming alienation. The same structure runs throughout his system. In his philosophy of law, we posit the state as alien until we appropriate its

institutions or recognize them as manifestations of our own self-conscious will. In his philosophy of religion, we encounter God as alien, until we recognize God as a manifestation of our own self-conscious faith. Here Marx takes issue, not with Hegel's description of the process of appropriation, but with his premise that the human essence is self-consciousness. For if we begin there, then the conclusion of the process of alienation and appropriation is not an unalienated relationship with the world, but an abstract self-consciousness that has internalized the objective world but remains abstract and thus alienated. Thus: "because [Hegel's] exposition is *formal* and *abstract*," the "suppression of alienation" he claims to achieve "becomes a confirmation of the alienation" (Marx 2010c, 342). Marx's solution is to begin with a different premise, to acknowledge that self-consciousness is not the subject but a predicate of the human essence, and that the human essence is a collection of social and natural practices or activities, and primarily labor, or the activity by which humans appropriate objects and give them subjective shape and purpose. Marx believes that the same definition of the human essence allows him to avoid the two-tiered ontology and the problem of reflection. He therefore writes:

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 his 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. (336)

The subjective practices that constitute the human essence are already part of the objective world. In positing and appropriating the world through practices like labor, we do not transform it from a real objective thing into an abstract subjective thought. We reveal the objective or natural status of our own subjective practices—our human essence.

Marx's final task is to articulate this understanding of the human essence with history, and the emergence of a communist society in which humans would no longer be alienated. On Marx's account, acknowledging that the human essence consists of subjective practices that are also "*objective essential powers*" involves suppressing a false conception of objectivity and alienation, or the false notion that the objective world is alienated inasmuch as it is distinct from the subjective one (336). Marx compares this suppression of a false objectivity to Feuerbach's critique of religion. For here we also begin with a false conception of an alienated, external being, namely God. And by suppressing that false objective being, individual subjects come to realize that the actual objective being that they experience as alien is something in which they, as individual subjects, also partake, or the human species-being. Thus, Marx claims, Feuerbach's "atheism" or "suppression of God" is "the advent of theoretical humanism" (341). For Marx, the same structure is at work in his critique of political economy. There we find the false objectivity of private property, which we experience as alienated from us. But the goal is not to appropriate that false object or make private property subjective. It is to realize that private property is the product of human practices, specifically labor. If atheism is "the suppression of God" and "the advent of theoretical humanism," communism is "the suppression of private property" and "the vindication of real human life as man's possession and the advent of practical humanism." Put differently, "atheism is humanism mediated with itself through the suppression of religion, whilst communism is humanism mediated with itself through the suppression of private property." This does not involve "a returning in poverty to unnatural, primitive

simplicity.” It is instead “the first real emergence, the actual realisation for man of man’s essence and of his essence as something real” (342).

Political Economy

While it comes from his engagements with Hegel and the radical Hegelians, Marx’s claim that communism is not a return to “primitive simplicity” but the “first real emergence” of the human “essence as something real” is integral to Marx’s discussion of political economy. Marx had been studying political economy only a few months. But the *Exzerptheft*e called his “*Pariser Hefte*” indicate he had made considerable headway. Along with Engels’ work, which undoubtedly inspired him, Marx excerpted the writings of Jean-Baptiste Say, Frédéric Skarbek, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, James Mill, John Ramsey MacCollouch, Guillaume Prévost, Destutt de Tracy, Carl Schütz, Friedrich List, Friedrich Oslander, and Eugène Buret (MEGA IV, 2:279-79). But Marx had only recently left Germany, where he had been trained in its constitutional traditions while studying law, and where he had taken part in constitutional debates in the *Rheinische Zeitung*. Marx was prepared to ridicule the parochial German culture, as he does in “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law.” And he was prepared to assert that the English and French were more advanced in terms of economics and politics. But he proceeded from the tradition he wanted to disavow. Norman Levine provides a good example when he shows that the materialist concept of history introduced in “The German Ideology” owes as much to the German Historical School of Law, which Marx was steeped in as a student, as it does to the historical sociology of the Scottish Enlightenment (Levine 1987). Something similar is true of Marx’s discussion of political economy in the “Manuscripts,” although here too, this only becomes apparent if we bypass editorial distortions and consider the original document.

The first of the “Manuscripts,” and thus their genuine beginning, looks nothing like the text found in all editions except the *MEGA*. Whereas the edited versions provide one continuous series of paragraphs, giving the

appearance of a linear argument, the first manuscript begins with three parallel columns, which Marx labels "*Arbeitslohn*," "*Profit des Capitals*," and "*Grundrente*." Following this are a series of pages that begin with the same headings, which Marx must have written at the top of those pages in advance, until the first column becomes the only one Marx completes. There are then a series of pages with two columns, labelled "*Capitalgewinn*" and "*Grundrente*," followed by another series with two columns labelled "*Arbeitslohn*" and "*Gewinn des Capitals*." There then follow a series of pages with only one column, labelled "*Grundrente*," and another series where there are three headings—"Arbeitslohn," "*Profit des Capitals*," and "*Grundrente*"—but only one column of text, presumably because, again, Marx had written the headings in advance but decided to stop using them (MEGA I, 2:187-247). This structure is significant as it suggests that Marx was thinking of a comparative exercise, with three separate paradigms for organizing the production of wealth—one based on labor, one on capital or private property, and one on the feudal system of nobles collecting rent from peasants with either customary or formal rights to use their land. The latter was an economic system, but also a political and legal one. It formed the basis of the established order in Germany. It granted the noble landowner legal authority over those who rented their land in the form of patrimonial courts, which had jurisdiction over a wide range of issues. And it was the mechanism by which the nobility articulated its power vis-à-vis the monarchy, which relied on taxation that the noble estates would grant via *Landstags*.

The system of noble estates was severely threatened during the *Vormärz*. A series of economic crises generated by the Napoleonic Wars, industrial production, and international trade forced noble families to sell portions of their estates to speculators and entrepreneurs. Conservatives searched for ways to protect the old order (Berdahl 1988). One mechanism was the laws of primogeniture, which dictated that the noble estates and the crown were to be inherited intact by the eldest son. This limited the ability of noble families to partition their property and slowed the pace of change. The state also secured low-interest loans for landowners and

provided direct subsidies. When estates were sold, a committee of nobles would vet applications from new owners for a noble title. Whether and how to preserve noble power in the face of economic change was a fundamental constitutional question. Marx's articles in the *Rheinische Zeitung* frequently intervened in this issue, always on the side of breaking up the estates system and replacing it with one founded on the will of the people. But Marx was also aware of the destitution that these changes were creating, as seen in his articles on the "Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood" and "Justification of the Correspondent from the Mosel." Marx addressed similar topics in his "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law." Hegel argued that modernity involves an irreversible separation of the state and civil society. But he also defended estates assemblies and laws of primogeniture, which worked to ground the state in society. Marx saw this as a contradiction. He studied the histories of the estates assemblies and the laws of primogeniture in his "*Kreuznacher Hefte*," which he compiled in the summer of 1843, ultimately coming to the conclusion that such laws limited the freedoms of the landowners and defended the freedom of the land itself (MEGA IV, 2:9-282). The modern constitution, Marx declared, was a constitution, not of humans, but of private property.

Marx becomes particularly vexed by these questions in the second manuscript. He begins with the dehumanization of the worker, and the sense in which political economy treats capital as subject and humans its predicate. Political economy is then juxtaposed to the feudal order, which grounds wealth in land, and which the Physiocrats attempted to express in scientific terms. Marx praises "modern English political economy" for destroying the feudal appeal to natural rank and representing the value of land as "the difference in the interest yielded by the worst and the best land under cultivation." This insight exposed "the landowner's romantic illusions—his alleged social importance and the identity of his interest with the interest of society" and thus "anticipated and prepared the movement of the real world which will transform the landowner into an ordinary, prosaic capitalist" (Marx 2010c, 285). Marx then summarizes a debate between the liberal proponents of industrial production and the

romantic-conservative defenders of patrimonial noble rule. He argues that the latter are destined to be transformed into the former. "The landowner," Marx writes, "knows the capitalist as his insolent, liberated, enriched slave of yesterday and sees himself as a *capitalist* who is threatened by him." On the other hand, "the capitalist knows the landowner as the idle, cruel, egotistical master of yesterday; he knows that he injures him as a capitalist, but that it is to industry that he owes all his present social significance, his possessions and his pleasures" On Marx's account, "this contradiction is extremely bitter and each side tells the truth about the other." The landowner privileges immobile property, emphasizes "his romantic disposition" and "political importance," and depicts the capitalist as "a sly, hawking, carping, deceitful, greedy, mercenary, rebellious, heartless and spiritless person who is estranged from his community and freely trades it away." The capitalist privileges movable property, emphasizes "the miracles of industry," and "claims to have obtained political freedom for everybody," to have fostered "trade promoting friendship," "created pure morality," and replaced "crude wants" with "civilized needs" (287). The manuscript ends by suggesting that this contradiction is resolved by the worker.

This debate provides the backdrop for the third manuscript as well, which, as noted, originated as a supplement to the second. It provides the context which allows Marx to knit together the themes of political economy, Hegelian philosophy, and the critique of religion. During the *Vormärz*, fields such as economics, philosophy, theology, law, and state theory, were not specialized disciplines. We cannot even say that one amounted to an indirect way of speaking about another, or that, for example, theology was code for politics. As Anton Jansson shows, all political ideologies were formed in relation to theology (Jansson 2020, 87, 95-96). Indeed, within living memory, theology had once been the dominant academic discipline. During the period that Jonathan Toews calls "Hegelianism," it was briefly replaced by systematic philosophy. But, by the time Marx appeared on the scene, that too was in retreat, as philosophy was repurposed as the underwriter of the natural sciences

(Beiser 2014b). Marx's early work straddles these changes. It has one foot in the old model, while another tentatively steps toward the new. The purported "break" between the young philosophical Marx and the mature scientific one signals, not an innovation on Marx's part, but his effort to stay apace of changes in intellectual culture. Few places in Marx's work better represent this tension than his "Manuscripts," in which he employs the idiom of the old research culture in order to advance the aims of the new one. Thus, Marx's third manuscript includes an aggressive call for empirical science. But it also begins by repeating Engels' comparison of Adam Smith to Luther. Just as Luther had smashed the Catholic understanding of objective faith, or faith objectified in the institutions and sacraments of the church, in favor of the subjective faith of the individual believer, so too had Adam Smith smashed the Physiocrat treatment of property as something objective and shown it to be the true self-conscious subject of the modern world. Here again property, not the human, is free.

The third manuscript is not systematic. It wanders discursively across the contradictions between the Physiocrats and political economy and presents communism as their practical resolution. This also involves dispelling myths about communism, especially as it relates to ethics. We have already noted how Marx addresses eighteenth-century ethical debates concerning commercial society, luxury and thrift, interests and passions. At this point in his career, it is these foundational debates, not specifically economic arguments, that attract Marx's attention. Marx proposes that, while the political economists render private property the subject of modern society, they also show that labor is "the subjective essence of private property" (Marx 2010c, 290). The aim of communism is to annul the final objective remnants of private property, and thereby realize true subjective freedom. It is not a regression to a prelapsarian order or a veneration of the value of work over the distortions introduced by private property (this being how Marx interprets Proudhon). Rather, "*communism is the positive expression of annulled private property.*" Marx thus relegates "crude and thoughtless communism" that trades

private property for common property without altering the property relation as such to an early stage in its development—one in which the ethic of "*greed*" is replaced with its counterpart, that of "*envy*." Marx's privileged example of such "crude communism" is "the *community of women*" in which "exclusive marriage with the owner of private property" becomes "universal prostitution with the community" (295). The question of whether communism democratizes or abolishes the state is similarly relegated to an early stage. Communism grasps the positive essence of what it cancels and preserves, namely private property. It is "the *positive* transcendence of *private property* as *human self-estrangement*," Marx writes, or "the real *appropriation* of the *human essence* by and from man" and "the complete return of man to himself as *social* (i.e., human) being—a return accomplished consciously and embracing the entire wealth of previous development." It is "the riddle of history solved" (297).

Central to Marx's remaining comments on the left of the third manuscript constitute his effort to intervene into disciplinary struggles and especially the ascendance of the natural sciences. Marx is particularly keen to deflate the claims of psychology and to orient the natural sciences toward their social purpose and historical condition. He does not mention Trendelenburg or any specific defender of psychology or natural science, but there is little question that he has the "empirical-psychological" school in mind. Thus, Marx opposes "the complete *emancipation* of all human sense and qualities" achieved by communism to mere "*psychology*," which cannot account for "history existing in the most perceptible and accessible form" and thus "cannot become a genuine, comprehensive and *real science*" (303). At the same time, Marx promotes "the *natural sciences*" and acknowledges that they "have developed an enormous activity and [...] accumulated an ever-growing mass of material." Philosophy, Marx continues, "has remained just as alien to them as they remain to philosophy," and the "momentary unity" of the natural sciences attempted by philosophical systems "was only a *chimerical illusion*." For Marx, "natural science has invaded and transformed human life all the

more *practically* through the medium of industry, and has prepared human emancipation, although its immediate effect had to be the furthering of the dehumanization of man.” The solution is to refrain from treating industry as extrinsic to humanity’s “*essential powers*” and thus forestall its “abstractly material—or rather, its idealistic—tendency” and allow it to “become the basis of *human science*” or “actual human life” for “to assume *one* basis for life and a different basis for *science* is as a matter of course a lie.” It is here that Marx declares that “*sense-perception* (see Feuerbach) must be the basis of all science.” He does not mean empiricism in the contemporary sense. He means that the basis of science is the sensuous practices that constitute the human essence. “*Man*,” Marx insists, “is the immediate object of natural science.” We can only study our sensuous essence sensuously. “The *social* reality of nature, and *human* natural science [...] are identical terms” (304).

The remainder of the third manuscript addresses two issues, both of which belie the tension between the old and the new intellectual cultures. First, Marx mounts an argument against the existence of God. “A being only considers himself independent,” Marx writes, here recalling a republican trope:

when he stands on his own feet [...]. A man who lives by grace of another regards himself as a dependent being. But I live completely by the grace of another if I owe him not only the maintenance of my life, but if he has, moreover, *created* my *life*—if he is the *source* of my life. When it is not of my own creation, my life has necessarily a source of this kind outside of it. The *Creation* is therefore an idea very difficult to dislodge from popular consciousness. The fact that nature and man exist on their own account is *incomprehensible* to it, because it contradicts everything *tangible* in practical life. (304)

To support this claim, Marx refers to the discoveries of “*geognosy*,” a field he had studied at Berlin under Carl Ritter. Here the earth is “a self-

generation" or "*Generatio aequivoca*," and the question of its origin is "wrongly put." "Ask yourself how you arrived at that question," Marx writes. "Ask yourself whether your question is not posed from a standpoint to which I cannot reply" (304-5). For the question presupposes a non-existence prior to existence and attempts to deduce existence from it. Marx takes this to be illogical. The argument that begins with the human essence as practices rather than self-consciousness has no need for a metaphysics of history.

This leads Marx to explore once more the transition from the feudal order, where "the landowner is the only true producer," to "modern political economy," where "the landowner as such is rather the only completely unproductive rentier" (316-17). The key for this transition is money, which detaches value from fixed coordinates and allows it to circulate independent of foundations. Thus, Marx conceives of an essay on money. He had addressed this issue in "On the Jewish Question," where, to reinforce his claim that excluding religion from the state allows it to proliferate in civil society, he characterizes the latter as inherently Jewish, in that it renders all egoistic hucksters. In the "Manuscripts" the anti-Semitic slurs are missing, and the analysis is more complex. Marx begins by rejecting Feuerbach's "merely anthropological" understanding of the human essence and presenting it instead as "truly ontological." "Only through developed industry," Marx declares, "i.e., through the medium of private property—does the ontological essence of human passion come into being, in its totality as well as its humanity; the science of man is therefore itself a produce of man's own practical activity" (323). This marks the beginning of the end of Marx's brief enthusiasm for Feuerbach. The ontological essence of humanity and the practical activity of science is an enormous load to hang on the hook of industry and property. Marx justifies his claim by treating money as congealed property, and as a universal metaphor for human interaction. More accurately, money is the universal metaphor for metaphor itself or creating meaning by comparing distinct phenomena. Money is "the bond of all *bonds*" and "the universal *agent of separation*." It is that which

“really *separates*” and that which acts as “the real *binding agent*” (324). Referring to *Timon of Athens*, Marx notes that money facilitates “the fraternization of impossibilities” that converts an imaginary wish into a sensuous reality. Marx rehearses the familiar moral argument against this capacity. Money distorts human relations, preventing those who possess a power from exercising it and allowing those who do not to appear as if they do. But Marx’s purpose is to liberate the power of money from its containment by capital. Communism too is a “fraternization of impossibilities” (325).

Conclusion

Marx was undeniably a Hegelian. But he arrived on the scene at the end of a movement called Hegelianism. Friedrich Wilhelm IV was successful in his campaign to rid his state of what, at the beginning of his reign, he notoriously called “the dragon-seed of Hegelian pantheism” (Pinkard 2000, 258). Bauer, Strauss, Feuerbach, and Ruge were all stripped of their academic posts. Young students like Marx were never even offered one. The journals hospitable to their views were extinguished. What intellectual culture they were able to craft remained bohemian and marginal. The potential audience for whatever Marx hoped to publish based on his “Manuscripts” was small. His vision, on the other hand, was world historical. His early writings took shape amidst a thick network of debates unfolding in Germany at the time. Despite decades of scholarship, they still tend to be read, not in relation to that network, but as components of his body of work. But Marx of all people did not write in a vacuum. On the contrary, he took his work to be what, in his “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law,” he called “*hand-to-hand combat*” (Marx 2010b, 178). There is nothing abstract about it. Marx used a technical idiom of institutional political struggles that would have been recognized by his interlocutors. If we attend only to what he was trying to say in that idiom, we overlook everything he was trying to do. Does this approach leave us filing past the coffin of a mummified Marx, preserved in the documents he obsessively kept and his

Charles Barbour, "Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts"

followers obsessively reconstructed? Is it an antiquarian exercise or an abuse of history for life? The answer can only be found in the practice. For as Marx said, precisely in his "Manuscripts," we humans are nothing but our practices—practices that we cannot grasp in the mysterious realm of ideas, but only through further practices.

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