

Fall 2015 Proseminar

Marx & the Alienation Concept

In "The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," Marx identifies four chief aspects of alienation under capitalism. These are: the worker's loss of ownership in her own products; the debasing and stultifying character of wage-labor itself; the inability of human beings to recognize and to treat one another as human and therefore as of the same kind, with interests in common; the individual human being's separation from her own nature as a member of the human species. Particularly in his earlier writings before *The Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx regularly characterizes communism as "the return of man to himself"--the abolition of alienation in each of its forms.

In this course, we will investigate the contours of the "alienation" concept in Marx's thought. We will consider its meaning and its justificatory role in Marx's critiques of class society and his arguments for communism. We will investigate the relationship between Marx's views on alienation and his views about human nature. We will also engage the question of whether Marx abandoned the alienation concept in his "mature" work, and of the potential theoretical implications of such abandonment.

In addition to reading Marx and his collaborator, Engels, we will read several of those with whom Marx entered into conversation about the alienation concept, particularly Hegel, Feuerbach, and Stirner, and we will read relevant secondary literature.

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Mondays 11:10 – 1:00 pm

