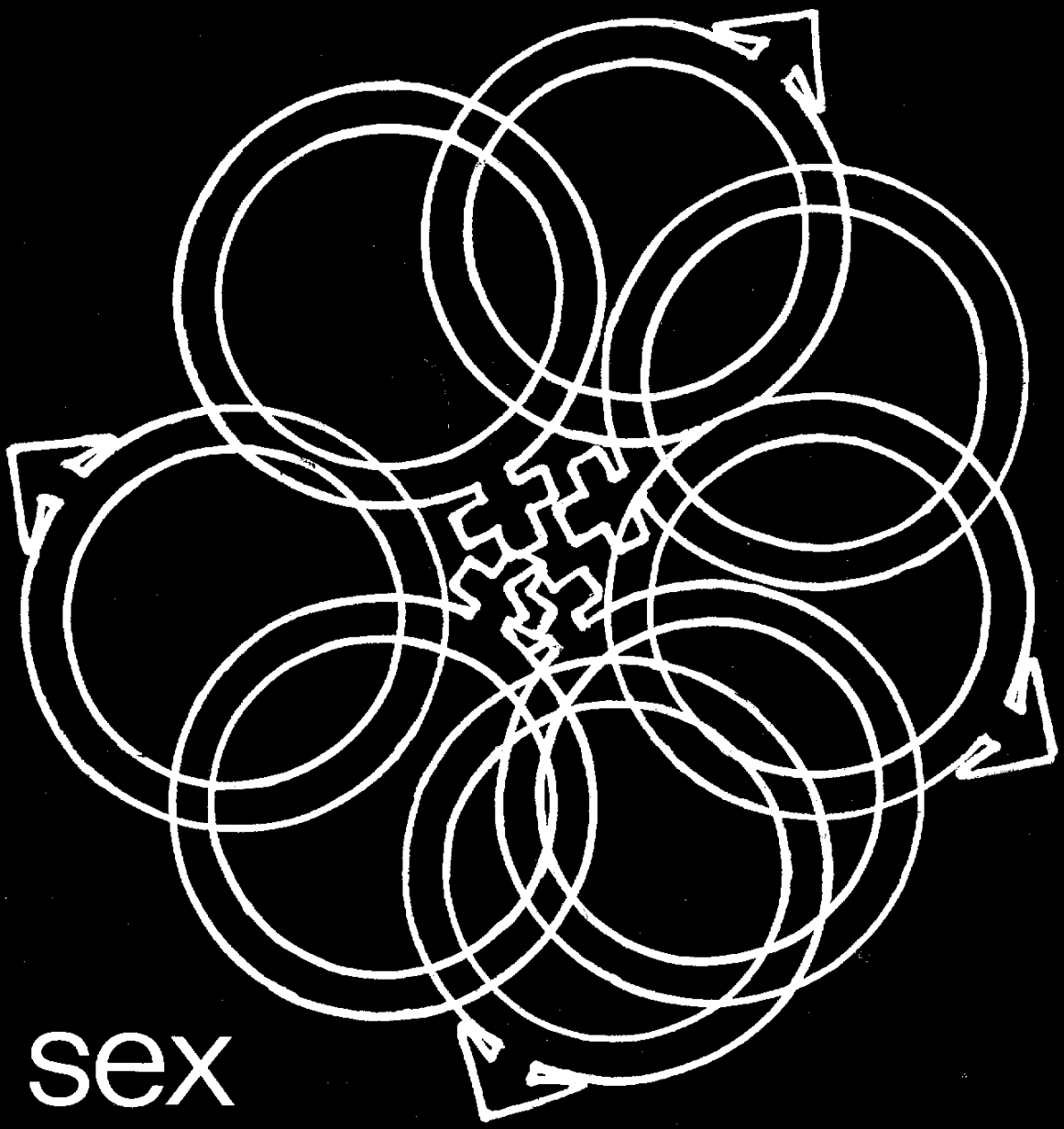
Selected works of Wilhelm Reich

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CHRIS KNIGHT



sex and the class struggle

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INTRODUCTION TO FIRST EDITION

The Marxist movement is today hopelessly at sea when it comes to dealing with the women's movement. Since virtually no worth-while theory on the family question has been developed since Engels, and since Engels' 'Origin of the Family' is quite inadequate in a whole series of respects, the theoretical pre-condition for a genuinely revolutionary proletarian women's movement just doesn't exist.

But at least the Marxist tendencies today recognise the legitimacy of the women's movement – even if only by 'supporting' from time to time demands such as that for equal job opportunities and pay. Wilhelm Reich's work is concerned with a form of sexual oppression which is not even politically-recognised at all. The reason why the masses' sexual rights as such have remained unrecognised by the revolutionary movement for so long is in itself a failure which requires explanation.

Reich's main concern in his writings is not with the women's movement as a separate struggle. Much more is he out to initiate what might even be called a 'men's movement'. Reich is concerned with the real price the male sex pays for its dominance over women and children in the family. According to Reich, the price men pay is *sexual impotence* in various forms – ranging from the incapacity for full 'surrender' in the sexual act to the complete inability to perform it.

But this has nothing to do with politics! The screams of self-styled 'Marxists' can already be heard, protesting that the whole subject is a 'diversion'. Those who scream loudest will cry that the women's question is a 'diversion' too.

In actual fact, these related questions are in no way separable from the general struggle of the working class for state power. Our movement and class cannot conquer power without a full understanding of what we are doing. One of the things we will be doing – assuming our revolution succeeds this time on an international scale – will be to transform our family and sexual relationships in a fundamental way. We cannot hope to assume the leadership of the coming revolution without a consciousness of its full significance – even down to its effects on the deepest instinctual roots of our personal and social being.

The idea that 'sexual matters' are without political significance is reactionary through and through. So-called 'Marxists' who adopt this line reveal, firstly a contempt for the dialectical-materialist world-outlook in general, secondly, a complete ignorance of the work of Engels on the family in particular, and thirdly, an equal ignorance of the sexual legislation enacted by the Bolshevik Soviet Government under Lenin in the very first years of the Revolution.

'The roots of contradictions and psychological inconsistencies', wrote Leon Trotsky, 'lie in the disorganisation and muddle of the conditions in which people live. Psychology, after all, is determined by life.' (1) The sexual problems of the mass of men and women in capitalist society *are* a political question. They cannot be solved in a purely 'personal' way. Their only ultimate solution is the completion of the world communist revolution itself: i.e. the global destruction of capitalism and imperialism, the socialisation of the world's means of production, the re-organisation of society on the basis of relations of solidarity and, as a result of all this, the replacement of the isolated family unit by communal living as the state itself 'withers away.'

It should be remembered, incidentally that Leon Trotsky himself – in contrast to the Stalinists – by no means dismissed even the work of Sigmund Freud, whose theories were considerably more confused and reactionary than those of Reich. It is true that Reich wrote plenty of idealist rubbish. His view that the 'vast majority' of us human beings under capitalism are 'neurotics' may seem hard to accept. And it is true that even the best work of Reich – like that of Freud – must ultimately be placed within the category of *bourgeois* science. But dialectical materialism, as Trotsky wrote,

> 'can be applied to new spheres of knowledge only by mastering them from within. The purging of bourgeois science presupposes a mastery of bourgeois science. You will get nowhere with sweeping criticism or bald commands." (2)

To dismiss psychoanalysis altogether would be as stupid as to accept it uncritically. The only correct course is to master the material we are given in order to purge it. Trotsky's attitude to this question must be our own:

> 'The attempt to declare psychoanalysis 'incompatible' with Marxism and simply turn one's back on Freudism is too simple, or, more accurately, too simplistic. But we are in any case not obliged to adopt Freudism. It is a working hypothesis which can produce and undoubtedly does produce deductions and conjectures with proceed along the lines of materialist psychology." (3)

Of Reich's best work we can hardly say less.

But what about Reich himself? Wasn't he a reactionary? Didn't he go mad? This much-loved line of defence must be answered here.

Reich's political views – on the degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy, the need for world revolution, the need for an anti-fascist workers' united front in Germany, etc. etc. – at one time seemed to

be approaching those of Leon Trotsky. Like virtually all middle-class intellectuals of prominence to the 'left' of Stalinism in the 'thirties, however, he came soon to lose faith in the fighting capacity of the working class. Like the advocates of the theory of 'State Capitalism', he began, in his despair, to consider Stalinist Russia to be little better than Nazi Germany. Denounced by the Fascists as a Communist of the very worst sort, and by the Stalinists as a Trotskyite agent of Fascism, Reich developed an almost pathological and reactionary (however understandable) hatred of all politicians as such. His initial moves from the German Communist Party towards the Trotskyists came to nothing when he realised that the latter was increasingly becoming obsessed.

Reich turned inwards. He abandoned the arena of political action in which his theories had developed. Instead he turned towards an increasingly apolitical preaching of the need for personal self-redemption through sex-love. His hatred of all forms of 'authoritarian society' never died, but before long the capitalist world, virulently hostile to his theories on all sides, had driven him literally mad. He ended up convincing himself that he had discovered a 'universal life-energy' which he called 'orgone', which he said was coloured blue. To cure people from their sexual troubles, he put them into an 'orgone box' where this 'energy' was reflected into them. Needless to say, the whole concept was a form of self-hallucination. Its psychological function was clear enough: his real social and political impotence was being compensated for in his imagination by the delusion that the all-powerful life-giving forces to the universe were in his hands.

Conditions determine consciousness. Fascist and Stalinist counter-revolution in Reich's case transformed him from a confused yet in many ways revolutionary thinker into a semi-religious, anti-political charlatan and crank. Early in his life he had broken from the Freudians and from the whole of official psychology on a single issue: their belief that mental disturbances could be cured, without a political transformation of society, simply by injections, pills, or at best by psychoanalytic therapy administered to the individual. He ended his life, tragically, by renouncing his own greatest theoretical conquests, believing a man's repressed love-life could be emancipated simply by placing him in an 'orgone box' made of wood and metal foil.

It is fortunate that Reich's best work remains immune from the effects of his own political self-destruction. Although Reich was never a Trotskyist, we can say the same about the writings of Harold Isaacs, Felix Morrow and a host of other one-time supporters or sympathisers with Bolshevism. If Reich's writings are today being understood more than ever in his own time, it can only be because, now as always, conditions determine consciousness. The revolutionary workers' movement on a world scale is once more becoming strong, allowing communists to face squarely even the most difficult questions as a precondition for the seizure of state power.

Chris Knight. April 1974.

1. Leon Trotsky, 'Problems of Everyday Life' (Deutscher Anthology p 303)
2. Leon Trotsky, 'Culture and Socialism' (Deutscher Anthology p 311)
3. Ibid. (Deutscher Anthology p 312)

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INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION

The following selections from Reich may not be representative of the author's total output. He wrote a good deal of almost complete nonsense. But the aim has been to choose some of his best writings, which provide the outline of a position on sexual questions which at least partly fills an otherwise serious gap in the programme of the working-class movement.

Reich was not very familiar with Marx's writings. If he had been, he might have strengthened his arguments in the eyes of socialists by showing where his theories fitted in with the analysis of sexual questions already developed embryonically by Marx in his early writings. Reich in this pamphlet speaks for himself, and a critique of his views here might seem superfluous. Since Marx's own evaluation of the sexual question is very little known, however, the most valuable introduction to Reich's ideas might be a survey of this aspect of Marx's thought.

Marx's standpoint was the materialist premise that man is, however different from the animals in other respects, a part of nature, with natural instincts, drives and needs which can only be satisfied from the world outside himself. [1] In sustaining his private physical existence, a man (like any animal in this respect) breathes, eats, drinks and so on, in a continuous relationship with nature both inside and outside himself. [2] But the individual of any species (human or animal) does not spend all its time merely preserving its own self. It also participates in another kind of activity, which is productive in relation to the species. This is its 'life-producing-life,' its 'species-life' — the supreme manifestation of which is sex. Here its need is for another being of its own kind.

Before the evolutionary appearance of man, 'life-producing-life' existed in the universe only as a biological activity — primarily as sex. But with the appearance of human production, this kind of life began to be carried on on a qualitatively higher plane and in a new form. As they engaged in *labour*, the first human individuals were 'reproducing their species' not only sexually but in a new way, by producing and reproducing the material wealth (food, dwellings, tools etc) which formed their communal basis of life. This was the *essentially human* expression of life, in which men *needed one another* as much as they needed nature itself.

But since the natural model for this 'life-producing-life' (in which men produced *one another's* lives instead of merely their own) had been the process of *procreation* in the animal world, sex remained, as it were, the essentially human activity in its natural or biological form.

Hence Marx wrote of the relation of man to woman as the 'immediate, natural and necessary' social relationship, and as the *essential* human tie in natural form. It is worth quoting Marx here in full:

> 'The immediate, natural and necessary relation of human being to human being is also the relation of *man* to *woman*. In this *natural* species-relationship man's relation to nature is directly his relation to man, and his relation to man is directly his relation to nature, to his own *natural* function. Thus, in this relation is *sensuously revealed*, reduced to an observable *fact*, the extent to which human nature has become nature for man and to which nature has become human nature for him. From this relationship man's whole level of development can be assessed. It follows from the character of this relationship how far *man* has become, and has understood himself as, a *species-being, a human being*. The relation of man to woman is the *most natural* relation of human being to human being. It indicates, therefore, how far man's *natural* behaviour has become *human*, and how far his *human* essence has become a *natural* essence for him, how far his *human nature* has become *nature* for him. It also shows how far man's needs have become *human* needs, and consequently how far this other person, as a person, has become one of his needs, and to what extent he is in his individual existence at the same time a social being.'

(Economic and Philisophic Manuscripts, Karl Marx, Early Writings, ed., T.B. Bottomore, (London 1963), P 154.)

'Species-life' in its natural form, then, was sexual life—with all that that implied in terms of relations of reciprocity, exchange, productiveness and so on. In its new social or cultural form, it was economically-productive life — again with all that that implied in terms of exchange, reciprocity etc. Human production, in other words (and it was in

1. '*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* and *faculties*, which exist in him as tendencies and abilities, as *drives*. On the other hand, as a natural, embodied, sentient, objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited being, like animals and plants. The *objects* of his drives exist outside himself as *objects* independent of him, yet they are objects of his *needs*, essential *objects* which are indispensable to the exercise and confirmation of his faculties' — *Karl Marx Early Writings*, ed. T.B. Bottomore, London 1963, pp 206-7.
2. Marx refers to the fact that life 'for man as for animals, has its physical basis in the fact that man (like animals) lives from inorganic nature' — ibid p 127.

his production that man first distinguished himself from the animals [1] was from the start a *dual* process of species - life:

> . . . the production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship.

(Ibid. p 18.)

The natural relationship, sex, was itself, however, social in that two individuals were required for it, while the social relationship, labour, was of course itself a relationship with nature .

(See the long passage quoted above and on previous page.)

Marx approached the question of the family from a historical standpoint. From the dawn of human existence on earth 'the family' has existed in the loosest, biological sense of that term. It has always been a fact, as Marx put it,

> that men, who daily remake their own life, being to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and wife, parents and children, the family.

(Ibid p 17.)

But, to begin with, there was no conflict between the two forms of species-life: between sex and labour, family and industry, woman and man. As a separate institution, isolated from the wider community and counterposed to it, the family did not exist. Both production and procreation were carried on through the clan, and were the spontaneous, enjoyable expressions of men's and women's own lives, under their reciprocal and communal control.

In this earlier period, as under capitalism, men's and women's lives consisted of acts of exchange. But the difference then was that these acts were between individuals as consciously social beings:

> Exchange, both of human activity within production itself and also of human products with each other, is equivalent to species-activity and species-enjoyment whose real, conscious and true being is social activity and social enjoyment. Since human nature is the true communal nature of man, men create and produce their communal nature by their natural action, they produce their social being which is no abstract, universal power over against single individuals, but the nature of each individual, his own activity, his own life, his own enjoyment, his own

(Karl Marx, Early Texts, ed., David McLellan, (Oxford 1971) pp 193-94

The motive of exchange was not private gain, but the pleasure of giving, since here (as in the sexual relation itself) one's partner's enjoyment was one's own. Marx notes:

> In so far as man is human and thus in so far as his feelings and so on are human, the affirmation of the object by another person is equally his own enjoyment.

(Ibid pp 178-79)

At a certain point in history, however, a change took place. Instead of the earlier relations of sexual and economic reciprocity there arose

> Property: the nucleus, the first form, of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband.

(The German Ideology, p 21.)

Woman was now exploited, both sexually and economically. Species-life itself, in an extraordinary contradiction, was now subordinated to its opposite: the lust for purely private gain. The cause was an economic one: the rise of agriculture, beginning as the labour of women and children on the land.[1] The family as a definite institution has now arisen, to the extent that the husband's sexual dominance now isolated it from the wider community and subordinated it one-sidedly to his private greed. Marx wrote:

> This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others.

(The German Ideology, pp 21-22.)

With the addition of slaves to the family, with 'the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another', (Ibid.) with the rule of certain families over others and with the development of the forces of production resulting from the new, compulsory form of labour, the whole structure of class-society and the state came into being. The essence of the new form of production remained the same, however. As Marx put it:

> It makes species-life into a means of individual life.

(Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Karl Marx Early Writings, p 127.)

Just as the male treats sexual life (species-life in

1. 'Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. . .This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce' – Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology,* Parts I and III, ed R. Pascal, New York, 1947, p 7.

1. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Karl Marx Early Writing,* p 114: 'The rule of private property begins with the ownership of land, which is its basis.'

its natural form) as a mere means of satisfying personal lust, so the whole system treats communal production and reproduction as a means of gratifying the wants of individuals motivated only be personal greed. As Marx explains:

> . . *life activity, productive life*, now appears to man only as *means* for the satisfaction of a need, the need to maintain physical existence. Productive life is, however, species-life. It is life creating life.

(Loc. cit.)

The contradiction is therefore total. The very activity in which men and women go beyond themselves, the very activity in which they are most human — producing for others rather than merely themselves — becomes subordinated to purely private, animal greed. This is reflected in the French bourgeois revolutionists' declaration of the right of property, according to which:

> The sphere in which man functions as a species-being is degraded to a level below the sphere where he functions as a partial being. . . . . .

since the right of property is conceived as

> the right to enjoy one's fortune and to dispose of it as one will; without regard for other men and independently of society.

(On the Jewish Question, Karl Marx Early Writings, pp 25-26).

Since individuals act independently of society, this means that society acts independently of individuals. Social production —human species-life in both its forms-appears as a separate thing, an alien power opposed to the individuals of whose activities it is composed. To say that man alienates himself, therefore, is the same as to say that he opposes himself as a private being to his own human essence, so that everything about himself is turned upside-down:

> . . .to say that man alienates himself is the same as to say that the society of this alienated man is a caricature of his real human nature, his true species-life, that therefore his activity appears to him as a suffering, his own creation appears as an alien power, his wealth as poverty, the natural tie that binds him to other men appears as an unnatural tie and the separation from other men as his true being; his life appears as a sacrifice of life, the realization of his essence as a loss of the reality of his life, his production as a production of his own nothingness, his power over the object as the power of the object over him, and he himself, the master of his creation, appears as its slave.

(Karl Marx Early Texts, p 194).

In its original form, productive exchange, in labour as much as in sex, had been an enjoyment for the individuals participating in it. Illustrating this, Marx pictured how matters would have appeared had he and his reader been able to conclude (in the modern world) an exchange-act of such a kind:

> Supposing that we had produced in a human manner; each of us would in his production have doubly affirmed himself and his fellow men. I would have (1) objectified in my production my individuality and its peculiarity and thus both in my activity enjoyed an individual expression of my life and also in looking at the object have had the individual pleasure of realizing that my personality was objective, visible to the senses and thus a power raised beyond all doubt. (2) In your enjoyment of use of my product I would have had the direct enjoyment of realizing that I had both satisfied a human need by my work and also objectified the human essence and therefore fashioned for another human being the object that met his need. (3) I would have been for you the mediator between you and the species and thus been acknowledged and felt by you as a completion of your own essence and a necessary part of yourself and have thus realized that I am confirmed both in your thought and in your love. (4) In my expression of my life I would have fashioned your expression of your life, and thus in my own activity have realised my own essence, my human, my communal essence.

(Ibid p 202).

In its new, alienated, form, this exchange-process was still the essentially human life—the species-life of man — but congealed or crystallized as something external to human beings. It had re-appeared as trade, money, property-relations and so on. Thus, in Marx's words,

> exchange or trade is the social species-act, the communal nature, the social commerce and integration of man inside private property and thus the exterior, externalized species-act.

(Karl Marx Early Texts, p 196).

As this seemingly external power became more and more powerful, men bowed down before it, particularly in its form as money:

> Money is the alienated essence of man's work and existence; this essence dominates him and he worships it.

(On the Jewish Question, Karl Marx Early Writings, p 37).

From the standpoint of the producer, exchange remained, as before, a process of gift-giving. But it was no longer reciprocal. Since no equivalent gifts were received in return, the model of this form of exchange was the ritual of religious sacrifice:

> If my own activity does no belong to me, but is an alien, forced, activity, to whom does it belong? To a being *other* than myself. And who who is this being? The *gods?* It is apparent in the earliest stages of advanced production, e.g. temple building, etc. in Egypt, India, Mexico, and in the service rendered to gods, that the product belonged to the gods.

(Ibid pp 129-130).

The institutions of celibacy (sacrifice of sexual enjoyment), animal-sacrifice (sacrifice of livestock as wealth), human sacrifice (the principle carried to its extreme) and so on, having originated in the earliest centres of civilization, set the pattern for the next few thousand years, culminating economically in the capitalist system, in which the life and production of virtually the entire globe are offered up. Writing of this one-way gift-giving or self-sacrifice in the modern world, Marx explains:

> . . .the more the worker expends himself in work the more powerful becomes the world of objects which he creates in face of himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life, and the less he belongs to himself. It is just the same as in religion. The more of himself man attributes to God the less he has left in himself.

(Early Writings, p 122.)

Referring to the morality of capitalism, Marx writes:

> Its principal thesis is the renunciation of life and of human needs. (Ibid p 171)

Naturally, this includes the renunciation of sexual life and needs. As just one example, Marx points to a suggestion made by J.S. Mill:

> Mill proposes that public commendation should be given to those who show themselves abstemious in sexual relations, and public condemnation to those who sin against the sterility of marriage. Is this not the moral doctrine of asceticism? (Ibid p 174).

Life itself, under capitalism, appears as 'the sacrifice of life' (Ibid p 134).

Work is a process of sacrifice, of self-alienation, in that, paradoxically, it appears as the very opposite of instinctual or natural species-life. It is a process of self-alienation in that:

> the work is *external* to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, *forced labour*. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a *means* for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. (Ibid p 124).

All this, in a sense — as has been seen — stemmed from men's sexual dominance over women and children in the family. This, then, is the price which has been paid. To be in a one-sided process of giving without receiving is to be de-humanized. It is the same as in the sexual relationship:

> Let us assume *man* to be *man*, and his relation to the world to be a human one. Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust, etc. . . If you love without evoking love in return, i.e. if you are not able, by the *manifestation* of yourself as a loving person, to make yourself a *beloved person*, then your love is impotent and a misfortune.

(Early Writings, p 194).

In other words, the system through which men treat women as mere 'instruments of production'[1] ends up treating men as mere 'things' — impotent objects — too. The sacrifice of women's lives becomes the sacrifice of men's.

In the same way, on the economic plane, it is not merely the worker who sacrifices his life. There is another renunication.

> . . .because the capitalist too brings a *sacrifice*, the sacrifice of *abstinence*, in that he grows wealthy instead of eating up his product directly.

(Grundrisse, (trans. M. Nicolaus, Harmondsworth, 1973), p 612.

Marx explains the principle on which the capitalist has to act:

> The less you eat, drink, buy books, go to the theatre or balls, or to the public house, and the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence etc. the more you will be able to save and the *greater* will become your treasure which neither moth nor rust will corrupt— your *capital*. The less you *are*, the less you express your life, the more you *have*, the greater is your *alienated* life and the greater is the saving of your alienated being.

(Early Writings, p 171.)

The attempt to get without giving— to hold without surrendering — leads, in economics as much as in sex, to the loss of all capacity for real human life.

The act required to re-animate the human exchange-process, correspondingly, must start from both ends. On the one hand, the materially-productive but passive class (and sex) must move to regain

1. Marx sees that the system draws an exact parallel between, on the one hand, woman (in opposition to man) as the naturally-productive sex and, on the other, labour (in opposition to capital) as the socially-productive class. The class-relation is thus a duplication(on the social level) of the sexual relation, and includes the sexual relation. Consequently, just as the bourgeois 'sees in his wife a mere instrument of production', so the bourgeoisie sees the working class ('the greatest productive power of all the instruments of production') as a mere supply of wealth-producing machines. *Communist Manifesto, Marx Engels Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Moscow 1962, pp 50-51; *Poverty of Philosophy*, quoted by D. McLellan, *The Thoughts of K. Marx*, (London 1971), p 125; *Early Writings* p 153.

the activity, wealth and power of which they have been robbed. This process begins with the development of *organization:*

> . . .the workers begin to form combinations (Trades' Unions) against the bourgeoisie; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots. (Communist Manifesto, p 42)

On the other hand, a part of the materially-unproductive yet active class (and sex) must move to *surrender* what they have seized. This process begins with the development of *theory:*

> . . .a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. (Ibid p 43).

The whole exchange-act, in other words, needs 'a *passive* element, a *material* basis', (*Early Writings* p 53) but this itself needs to become active, to become its opposite, a process which it can only complete 'once the lightning of thought has penetrated deeply into this virgin soil of the people.' (Ibid p 59.) Marx sums up the relation of reciprocity involved here by writing:

> Just as philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy. (Loc. cit.)

In all this, Marx is not merely using a sexual metaphor. Rather he sees the parallel as a real one produced by the historical dialectic itself. Class domination *includes* (and starts with) sexual domination. Everything else follows from that. For example, Marx takes the question of prostitution as merely something already included within the class-relation of labour to capital itself. Capitalist economic principles, in and of themselves, writes Marx, can make no objection.

> if I earn money by the sale of my body, by prostituting it to another person's lust.(*Early Writings,* p 173.)

On the contrary: prostitution is the very principle of capitalist economic morality—applied, however, to the natural species- relation instead of to the social one:

> Prostitution is only a *specific* expression of the *general* prostitution of the labourer.

(*Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts,* ed. D.J. Struik, (New York, 1964), p 133.)

Prostitution is only the system carried to its logical extreme, in which

> Even the species-relation itself, the relation between man and woman, becomes an object of commerce. (*Early Writings,* p 37.)

In the same way, so far as male dominance prevails, marriage is incontestably a form of exclusive private property. (*Early Texts,* p 146.) (and in fact a kind of prostitution, private rather than public).

(*Communist Manifesto,* p 51.)

Sexual oppression, for Marx, then, was *included* in the oppression of labour. [1] In the same way, the alienation of sexual life was included in the alienation of species-life more generally. Capital included male sexual dominance, and its conquest could only include the re-discovery by men and women of their genuinely human, naturally-productive lives. This re-discovery, however, would be a re-discovery of more than that . In a historical perspective, it turns out that the epoch of capitalism has been a necessary stage:

> Universal protitution appears as a necessary phase of the development of the social character of personal talents, abilities, capacities and activities.

(*Grundrisse,* trans. M. Nicolaus, Harmondsworth, 1973, p 163.)

Its result has been the establishment of an immediately global form of intercourse, a 'universal development of productive forces' and 'a universal intercourse between men.' (*German Ideology,* p 25). Admittedly, this at the moment takes the alienated form of trade, money, and general capitalist wealth. It seems to be the very opposite of human species-life, human experience and communally productive enjoyment. 'In fact, however,' writes Marx,

> when the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers etc. of individuals, produced in universal exchange? What, if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature — those of his own nature as well as those of so called 'nature'? What, if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of this evolution — i.e. the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any previous established yardstick — an end in itself? What is this, if not a situation where man does not produce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? (*Grundrisse,* quoted in: *Karl Marx Early Texts.)*

Money, trade, capital and so on —embodied in the machines, roads, ships, communication-media and so on of modern civilization — are the very body of

1. . .'all human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production' — *Early Writings,* p 132.

the human species, our actual limbs, nerves and reproductive organs, which have been prostituted, alienated from us, so that we do not even recognize them as our own at all.[1] Separated from one another, we cannot even see ourselves as a species, let alone enjoy our own 'inorganic body'. (Loc cit.)

But just as all this is true, so is it certain that in the communist revolution the forces separating us

> will be dissolved; and that then the liberation of each single individual will be accomplished in the measure in which history becomes transformed into world-history. . .the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man). Universal dependence, this natural form of the world-historical co-operation of individuals, will be transformed by this communist revolution into the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them.

(German Ideology, pp 27-28.)

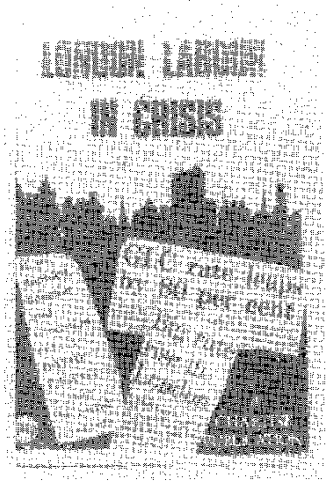
'All emancipation', according to Marx,

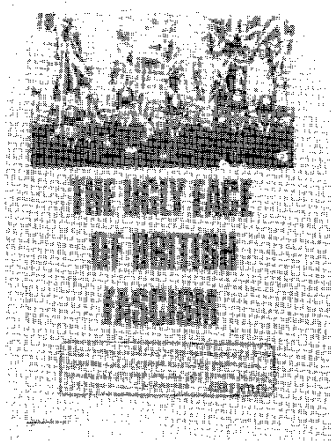
> is bringing back man's world and his relationships to man himself.

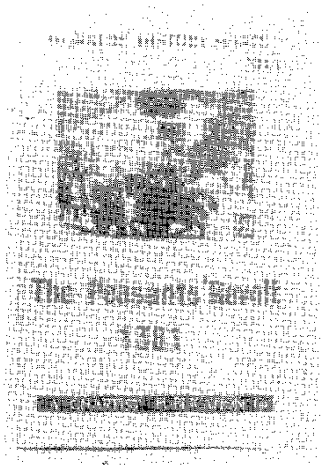
(Early Texts p 108.)

Chris Knight, January 1976

1. Marx even says that this alienation of man 'turns the advantage he has over animals into a disadvantage in that his inorganic body, nature, is torn from him' – *Early Writings* p 128.







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