

Heidegger, Marx, and the Concept of Alienation

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In the observation of the philosophical concerns of Martin Heidegger and Karl Marx, a point of convergence may be found in the assertion that the human condition, for the most part, exists in alienation. The point of convergence may not stop immediately at this assertion, but to suggest that both stances on alienation are essentially alike would be amiss. For, the alienation of being that Heidegger speaks of in *Being and Time* is not altogether the same kind of alienation that Marx refers to in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, and in many cases, may be considered quite different. Both stances on alienation are also coming from different points of departure, but to be sure, both assert the possibility of the alienation of being.

To begin the investigation on Heidegger's concern with alienation and its possible similarities and differences from Marx's concern, we must first individuate each philosopher and elucidate the meaning of alienation as such, for each. To begin, we will take a look at Marx's view on alienation as seen in the section of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* entitled "Alienated Labor". A brief look into Marx's *Critique of Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy in General* will follow.

In the section of the *Manuscripts* entitled "Alienated Labor", Marx attempts to get at the basic cause(s) of alienation. The first presupposition that must be taken into account before interpreting Marx's work on alienation is that this alienation, first of all, takes place within the economic system of capitalism.

"We now have to grasp the essential connection among private property, greed, division of labor, capital and landownership, and the connection of exchange with

competition, of value with the devaluation of men, of monopoly with competition, etc., and of this whole alienation with the *money*-system."(59)

We see here the basic grounds on which Marx builds his perception of alienation. Without this ground of capitalism, the interpretation of Marx's "alienation" would be completely amiss. Upon further investigation, and later in comparison with Heidegger, we shall attempt to see if this basis is accurate.

The first assertion of what alienation is, in Marxist terms, is that the worker is alienated from the "product of his labor" (60). That is to say, because the worker is working to produce something *for* someone or something other than himself, the product then becomes alien to the worker. Here we find what is a constant labor process that is creating for the purpose of capital and profit for the capitalist. The worker has so little to do with what it is he is producing, that the product is alien to him. Marx even goes so far as to say that the object (or product), "exists *outside him* independently, alien, an autonomous power, opposed to him" (60).

To make the claim that the product is "independent" and "autonomous" would seem to carry overtones of the product almost having animated and lively characteristics. The product becomes so completely alienated from the producer that it is in 'opposition' to him. The product is no longer merely a thing, but it possesses qualities of a connection to the worker, or in this case, a disconnection. These characteristics display a strong and intense alienated relationship of the worker to the product.

In relation to this claim of the alienated product, Marx states that it is the natural world that is a necessary element for the worker's production and his basic physical subsistence. The alienation from the natural and "external world" means that the worker "receives labor, and secondly that he receives the *means of subsistence*" (61). This

consequential form of alienation plays a key role directly in the life of the worker. This is because the worker is not only given labor by something outside of himself (no longer part of him), but that he is also given his basic means of physical living. This, to Marx, creates the vicious cycle that the worker *must* work in alienation for even his most basic needs (food, clothing, shelter). The key is that the worker is working not for himself, but for someone else.

In this first mode of alienation, we have seen the worker become alienated from things existing outside of his self. That is, these modes of alienation (which are both dependent upon each other, so in turn are one mode), are forms of alienation 'in the world'. The second seminal mode of alienation that Marx discusses is that of alienation from man's own self.

Next, man is alienated from the act of labor in itself. That is, the very act of laboring becomes alien to man. Marx claims that the 'fact' that the worker is alienated from his product also necessitates the 'fact' that he is alienated from his very action of labor. The justification that Marx gives is "if the product of work is externalization, production itself must be active externalization..." (61). Marx also claims that labor is alien to man because it is always "*forced labor*". Man is forced to work for someone other than himself, in capitalism, if he wants to survive at all. In this way, the labor is not the worker's own labor because it is not *for* the worker.

By claiming labor is alien to the worker is also to say that man is then alienated from his self. If indeed the act of labor requires the worker's own physical, and as Marx says, "spiritual energy", then man is alienated from his own self. Man's self becomes alien to him in this labor process because the very act of laboring is in man's nature. If

this labor is alienated from man, then his nature is also alienated. We shall later contrast this very important assertion with Heidegger's assertion of the alienated being of Dasein (that being for which being is a concern).

The next mode of alienation that Marx discusses relies on the actual form of 'alienated labor'. Marx asserts that alienated labor changes what he deems the "species-existence of man" into something alien to him (63). In this assertion is a very important, and even bold statement about alienation that shall later be contrasted with Heidegger. Marx claims that "life activity is the entire character of a species, its species-character" (64). Thus, Marx claims that this "life activity" is the essence of man, and in alienated labor, man is alienated from his *essence*. Consequently, alienated labor takes this "essence" and makes it a mere "means of existence". That is, what man would naturally do as a part of life, he must take hold of as a sort of tool in order to survive. It is no longer essential, but an alien "means for his existence" (64).

As stated before, this claim of "life activity" as being the essence of mankind is a bold claim to make. This is because Marx has claimed that, man, at his most primordial roots, is an active producer. That is, man *is* a producer through his essential activity. This state of existence is not a mere something that man 'does', but this "life activity" is what man *is at his basis*. This, as we will see, shall be a significant point of divergence between Marx and Heidegger.

The last form of alienation that Marx discusses in this section of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* is the "alienation of man from man".

"In general, the statement that man is alienated from his species-existence means that one man is alienated from another just as each man is alienated from human nature" (64).

This alienation of “man from man” stems from the ‘fact’ that alienated labor causes alienation from the product, and that this product must then belong to someone else other than the producer. Marx claims that this ‘alien’ is man himself. That is, the worker produces a product alien to him then it is handed over to *another man* more powerful than the worker. This man is alien to the worker; hence, the alienation of man from man.

Marx then claims there is hostility brewing within this mode of alienation. He states:

“If man is related to the product of his labor, to his objectified labor, as to an alien, hostile, powerful object independent of him, he is so related that another alien, hostile, powerful man independent of him is the lord of this object. If he is unfree in the relation to his own activity, he is related to it as bonded activity, activity under the domination, coercion, and yoke of another man” (65).

Just as there is a hostile relationship between man and his alienated object, he is consequently hostile towards the alienated and coercive master of this object. This is the point where the class dichotomy becomes obvious in Marx’s work. In so far as there are class struggles between man and man, there is no chance of what Marx would call living in man’s true, unalienated, essential existence.

To sum up Marx’s talk of alienation as demonstrated in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, we have seen four modes of alienation. First, man is alienated from his product and consequently, the natural world. Second, man is alienated from the action of labor, or the labor process. Next, man is alienated from human nature, or his essence. The last point of the *Manuscripts* discussed thus far is man’s alienation from man (in a hostile manner). Next in the discussion of the *Manuscripts* we shall mention Marx’s brief comment on death; the only comment that gives any kind of assessment of the nature and meaning of death.

As we shall see in Heidegger's work, death is part of the foundation for the existence of Dasein. Contrarily, Marx merely seems to mention the topic in passing, thus saying:

“Death seems to be a harsh victory of the species over the particular individual and to contradict the species' unity, but the particular individual is only a particular generic being and as such mortal” (73).

At the basis of this statement lies the supposition that man, even individually, is a social being and that the individual must become saturated into the social whole. The treatment that Marx gives the subject of death is quite insufficient and fails to assess the true existential and fundamental nature of the phenomenon of death. We shall discuss this topic thoroughly when an overview of Heidegger's assessment of death is given.

The last point that is worthy of being made in the comparison between Marx and Heidegger, and their assessment of alienation, is to bring out Marx's thoughts on the alienation of philosophy as shown in his *Critique of Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy in General*. This may be useful in the comparison due to Marx's somewhat extreme views on 'philosophy' as compared to Heidegger's thought process.

In this section of the *Manuscripts*, Marx dedicates much of his focus to the criticism of Hegelian philosophy. But, Marx does not fail (as the title of the section suggests) to throw his thoughts in about 'philosophy in general'. Marx does this in agreement with what he deems “Feuerbach's great achievement” (80). By pointing out two of these 'great achievements', we shall later be better able to contrast these views with Heideggerian thought.

Marx claims that:

“Feuerbach's great achievement is: (1) proof that philosophy is nothing more than religion brought to and developed in reflection, and thus is equally to be

condemned as another mode of alienation of man's nature; (2) the establishment of *true materialism* and *real science* by making the social relationship of 'man to man' the fundamental principle of his theory..." (80).

Here we see two assertions of Marx's agreement with Feuerbach which are, in turn, assertions that may be seen as cornerstone to Marx's theories in general. In the first assertion, we see that 'philosophy' is a mode of alienation. This alienation is an alienation from man's nature (part of that nature being the 'real', sensuous world).

In the second assertion, Marx is in agreement with the idea of a materialistic and scientific world that gets down to the true 'social relationship' of mankind. That is, that the 'real world' (nature, man, etc.) is the only world that should be a focus for man's occupation. Any philosophical thought that has anything to do with something other than materialism or the problems of science is a mere abstraction from human nature; it is alienated thought. Only the 'real' relationship of 'man to man' is the relationship that is not grounded in alienation.

This 'materialism' is cornerstone to Marxist thought because it is the foundation of the revolution with the goal of communism. Social and economic change is what is important to Marx, not the 'abstraction' of philosophy. Marx is concerned with changing the world as it is, not concentrating on the other worlds of philosophy. This idea of materialism shall turn up to be key point in the contrast between Marx and Heidegger.

As we shall now see in Heidegger's assessment of alienation, there is no need to go as far as class dichotomies, and hostile relationships between economy and man, or man to man, in order to find the phenomenon of alienation. This assessment of alienation is reached through an ontology of being.

In *Being And Time* Martin Heidegger addresses alienation in a way that does not rely on the presuppositions of economy or any other circumstances other than Dasein's existence and being in the world. Dasein, that being for which being is a concern, is the focus of Heidegger's assessment of being. It may do well to note that Dasein does not necessitate only 'human being'. That is, Dasein does not rely on any biological facticity of an entity. But, a human being does happen to also be Dasein, and it is only safe to say so because we have the proof that some human beings take up the task of an ontology of being. So, in the task of interpreting Heidegger's stance on alienation, we shall use the term Dasein (in most cases) to refer to 'man'.

For the most part, Dasein exists in the world. That is, Dasein is 'fallen' into the world of what Heidegger calls the 'they-self'. The world of the 'they' is the world of everyone and yet no one in particular. Heidegger states that Dasein exists inauthentically within this world. In the fundamental ontology that Heidegger takes up, there is no evaluation of Dasein's inauthenticity as 'bad' or 'good', or as being worse than authenticity. Heidegger, in *Being And Time*, has simply taken up the task of a fundamental ontology to get at the primordial roots of Dasein. The fact that Heidegger found Dasein's existence to be, for the most part, inauthentic, does not hold evaluative elements in a fundamental ontology.

In chapter five of the first section of *Being And Time*, Heidegger first uses the term 'alienation' to characterize the everyday being of Dasein. Heidegger states, "falling Being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquillizing; it is at the same time *alienating*" (Heidegger, 222). In this sentence alone we can see a myriad of ways that Dasein exists in an everyday manner. To break this sentence down into a sectional

analysis and explanation may be helpful to grasp the extent to which Heidegger is describing being as such.

First, Dasein is fallen into the world of the ‘they’. This ‘fallenness’ means that Dasein is separated from its potential authentic and unitary being—the being of affirmation of life in the face of death. Dasein loses its self in the ‘they-self’. Heidegger also asserts that there is a temptation to fall into the ‘tranquilizing’ world of the ‘they’. This kind of world is tranquillizing because Dasein feels at home there; Dasein feels comfortable. The temptation leads Dasein into the depths of this comfort zone. There is a temptation for Dasein to be constantly caught up in the ways of the ‘they’; or more precisely, ‘*entangled*’ in itself because of the ‘they’.

This entanglement in itself through the ‘they’ may be likened to the story found in the first two chapters of Genesis. The characters ‘Adam’ and ‘Eve’ have fallen into the world by tasting the fruit. They have been tempted into the world of fallenness and tranquility. They essentially become alienated from God, and from authentic being, and now must uphold the burden of the world.

In the explanation that Heidegger gives of the character of alienation, we may see a vast chasm opening up between he and Marx’s assessment of alienation. Heidegger states:

“[Alienation] does not, however, surrender Dasein to an entity which Dasein itself is not, but forces it into its inauthenticity—into a possible kind of Being *of itself*. The alienation of falling—at once tempting and tranquillizing—leads by its own movement, to Dasein’s getting *entangled* in itself” (Heidegger, 223).

Here we find that alienation is not alienation from anything (object) in the world, but Dasein is alienated from itself. Moreover, we see that this alienation is not a kind of separation of Dasein from itself, but is an ‘entanglement’ within itself. Dasein becomes

lost in itself. This is a significant point of divergence between Marx's assessment of alienation and Heidegger's assessment, and shall be further elaborated later in the essay.

Because Dasein is for the most part in the world of the 'they' it exists inauthentically, and exists in a state of alienation. This alienation is consequently part and parcel of the everyday life of Dasein. This alienation is something that, for the most part, Dasein wants. That is, because Heidegger states that Dasein is tempted by the world of the 'they', Dasein is consequently tempted into alienation. Dasein wants to be taken away from its authenticity and possibilities of being and placed into the comfort of the 'they'. This is because authenticity, and the realization of one's ownmost possibilities, requires courage in a state of uneasiness, or, as Heidegger would say, a state of 'uncanniness'.

Let it be made clear, though, that Dasein is not 'originally' an authentic being in the temporal sense. That is, Dasein does not 'start off' in authenticity. Rather, Dasein always has authenticity as its ownmost possibility of being. At any moment, Dasein could be called into a state of anxiety from what Heidegger deems the 'call of conscience'. "Conscience summons Dasein's Self from its lostness in the 'they'" (Heidegger, 319). This 'summoning' of Dasein to come out of the 'they-self', is a summoning to freedom.

This freedom is only possible through the call of conscience. That is, once Dasein is called into a state of anxiety, and realizes its ownmost possibility and being towards death, only then can Dasein choose its possibilities of freedom. Heidegger states:

*"...anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned **freedom towards***

death—*a freedom which has been released from the Illusions of the ‘they’, and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious”* (Heidegger, 311).

In this state of anxiety and being-able-to-choose, Dasein is no longer alienated because it is no longer in the world of the ‘they’. It is no longer entangled within itself. It has been called forth to become authentic, or to become its true and individuated Self. Dasein is now free to choose its ownmost possibilities.

As we see in the previous statement from Heidegger, anxiety before death allows for Dasein to become resolute with his ownmost possibilities. This, as Heidegger states, is a “freedom towards death”—a *freedom*. In this freedom, Dasein is able to do what individuates and makes Dasein an authentic being; in this freedom, Dasein is able to *choose*. Marx’s curt treatment of death ignores this cardinal phenomenon which allows Dasein to become affirmed in his being—this resolution in the face of death is an affirmation of life and an authentic way to be.

Now that Heidegger’s stance on alienation and being, in very general way, has been addressed, we shall address Marx’s notion of the modes of alienation from the standpoint of Heidegger. That is, the analysis and criticism of Marx’s notion of alienation shall be taken from a Heideggerian point of departure. In doing so, arriving at what notion of alienation is more accurate and applicable to the ontology of being should become apparent.

To address the “presupposition” of capitalism mentioned in the beginning of the essay is the first point at which Heidegger would most likely consider Marx amiss. Heidegger does not claim any ‘prerequisites’ of alienation other than being-in-the-world, which, by the fact of being concerned of our being, we are already in the world. Heidegger’s assessment of alienation begins with Dasein’s ontological being (what

Dasein is, for the most part). Moreover, the characteristics of capitalism i.e., the economic and power relationships between the working class and the capitalist class are all part of the ‘everyday’ ways of being of Dasein. It is, therefore, not capitalism that alienates the being of Dasein, but Dasein’s fallenness into the ‘they-self’—it is Dasein who alienates Dasein.

In the presupposition of capitalism necessitating the alienation of ‘man’ lies the worker/capitalist dichotomy. Through being a coerced worker, Marx claims that man is alienated. For Marx, there is first a labor process, hence a worker, and then the alienation of capitalism takes its course. But, in Heidegger’s ontology of being, is not the ‘worker’ already an alienated form of Dasein? Dasein *is not* the ‘worker’. That is, Dasein’s ontological being is not that of a worker, as Marx would assert. To ‘be’ a worker is only a mode of the everyday existence of Dasein. Likewise, a typist, football player, and singer are all modes of existence separate from the primordial being of Dasein. These are only ways that Dasein ‘is’, proximally and for the most part. These things, like the ‘worker’, are not what Dasein *is in the fundamental sense*.

With the grounds of the Marxist assessment of alienation being destructed using Heideggerian thought, each of the four modes from *Alienated Labor* may be easily criticized from an ontological perspective. Each of the modes of alienation contains particular ingredients that can now be individually addressed.

In the first Marxist assertion that we have mentioned, the alienation of the product to the worker exists in capitalism because it is not the worker’s product. It is being created for someone other than he, and will have a use that is ‘alien’ to him. This would suggest that there is a form of producing that is not alien to the worker, and that the

product does not have to be an ‘alien’ object. This means that the product is ‘part’ of the worker because it is ‘his’ creation. It is, to Marx, not a mere thing in the world. The product possesses a kind of being that, when alien to the worker, is a dominating being over the worker. But is not any product exactly that, merely an entity in the world?

These entities within the world can only become apparent through Dasein’s concern for that entity. These things “present-at-hand” have no world of concern like that of Dasein’s world of concern. Heidegger states:

“when two entities are present-at-hand within the world, and furthermore are *worldless* in themselves, they can never ‘touch’ each other, nor can either of them ‘be’ ‘*alongside*’ the other” (81-82).

This statement shows the nature of entities within the world. In the creation of a hammer there is the creation of a ‘thing’. This ‘thing’ is only a hammer in Dasein’s world of concern. Moreover, this hammer never ‘touches’ the nail in itself; the hammer itself does not possess the ‘sense’ or characteristic of touching. The hammer only ‘touches’ the nail because there is first the concern of Dasein hitting the nail with the hammer. The hammer possesses no ‘touching’ qualities because it has no concern, and furthermore it has no world at all. To go further, it ‘is’ only a hammer insofar as Dasein intends it to be, and uses it as such. The hammer is meaningless until it is an object of Dasein’s concern.

The next notion of alienation to be addressed is that of the labor process as alien to man, and this labor process as “man’s nature”. Marx states that this alienation of the “act of production” is based on the ‘fact’ that man is, in essence, activity. By the act of labor being alien to man, man is consequently alienated from himself because, as Marx states, “for what else is life but activity” (62). This small phrase is a bold claim. Because man is active in life, does this mean that life, in itself, is nothing more than activity?

Biologically, perhaps, life is active or else it is not life but this is merely biological life. A horse has biological life, and hence activity, but has it a 'life' outside of this everyday activity of horse-ness? Certainly not; moreover, 'man' (or Dasein) is not ontologically 'activity'. Here is where Marx's "real science" and "true materialism" takes root. Activity is something that Dasein may 'do' in its everyday world of concern but is not a fundamental ontological characteristic of Dasein.

To take this notion further, labor itself would merely be an everyday 'action' of Dasein's world of concern. Labor places Dasein in the world and allows for Dasein's focus to be completely aimed towards the project that this labor demands. Heidegger states that these projects are 'involvements'. In being involved, Dasein's concern is attuned to the particular project. For example, "the Self must forget itself if, lost in the world of equipment, it is to be able 'actually' to go to work and manipulate something" (405). Here it may be said that the labor process is alienation, but it is alienation irrespective of the aim of the worker. It is alienation because it is a mode of being in the world of concern and inauthenticity.

The previous statement pertaining to the "Self" being lost in its work is ostensible in the empirical life. Each time we focus our energy towards a project (fixing an appliance, building a house, etc.) we forget ourselves and everything else that isn't part and parcel of this project. In this 'forgetting ourselves', there certainly cannot be an authentic state of being one's self for we have forgotten ourselves. There is no freedom because we are captured under the dictates of our projects. Because there is no freedom—freedom towards death, through anxiety—there is certainly no authentic Dasein.

The last of the four modes of alienation as discussed in *Alienated Labor* is that of “man from man”. This assertion shall contrast from Heidegger’s notion of the ‘they-self’ in an interesting way. Because Dasein exists inauthentically for the most part, it exists within the ‘they’ in this inauthenticity. To recapitulate, the ‘they’ is everyone and yet no one in particular. “They say this” or “they do that”—both of these are ways to think of the ‘they’. Moreover, no individuality can be found within the ‘they’ because authentic individuality requires Dasein to be pulled out of the dictatorship of the ‘they’ into having to choose its ownmost possibilities.

In our everyday dealings and concerns we exist as ‘they-self’. The “idle talk” and tranquility of the ‘they’ is what we exist ‘in’ for the most part. Through this inauthentic way of being we are alienated. Heidegger states:

“The supposition of the ‘they’ that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine ‘life’, brings Dasein a *tranquility*, for which everything is ‘in the best of order’ and all doors are open” (222).

Thus, through this “tranquility” of the ‘they’ Dasein becomes alienated. It is enthralled in the ‘they’ and can only escape through the assailment of anxiety; whereupon, Dasein, if it chooses to hear the call, is called into a potentiality of being authentic. But because Dasein for the most part exists as ‘they-self’, it exists inauthentically and in alienation.

It is important to point out that this alienation can be comfortable to Dasein. Because Dasein is under the influence and dictates of the ‘they’, and is comfortable with this, it is in a state of comfortable alienation. This is a drastic difference from Marx’s assessment of alienation wherein the worker may become malcontented in his alienation—an opposition of man to man, a ‘materialistic’ alienation.

In this assertion of constantly being in the ‘they’ it seems as though the being of ‘man’ or Dasein, exists in alienation from itself through the relationship and dictates of ‘everyone else’. Hence, Dasein would have to be twice alienated, so to speak, to also be alienated from fellow man, as Marx asserts. Dasein would first be alienated from itself because of the ‘they’, and then would have to be alienated from ‘they’. It seems as though the only way Dasein could be alienated from other Dasein, is if each Dasein was first in a mode of authenticity and then one Dasein falls back into inauthenticity. This cannot stand to reason. The very being of Dasein is for the most part inauthentic *because* it is part of ‘everyone’. It is through this ‘they-self’ that Dasein is alienated from authentic self-hood.

In addressing the problem of relating “man to man” we have also addressed the second assertion in Marx’s agreement with Feuerbach’s idea of the “social relationship of man to man”. Now we shall address the preceding assertion that philosophy is alienation from this ‘scientific world’.

In the *Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy* Ludwig Feuerbach asserts the importance of the body as the fundamental being of man. Thus saying:

“The old philosophy had its point of departure in the proposition: I am an abstract, merely thinking being to which the body does not belong. The new philosophy proceeds from the principle: I am a real and sensuous *being*; *indeed, the whole of my body is my ego, my being itself*. (Feuerbach, 63).

While this statement may seem plausible; that is, we do indeed exist biologically and sensuously. This cannot be denied and Heidegger would also not deny this fact. But, Feuerbach states that this sensuousness is “being itself”. Consequently, being is thus reduced to that which can be sensuously experienced. This is the whole of being according Feuerbach. That which is not of the body or in relation to the sensuous is

merely the abstraction of the “old philosophy”. Hence, to see being in its fullness and at its zenith, we need not do anything more than to point at any ‘being’ which is biologically capable of sense perception.

Heidegger is certainly an author who, at least in *Being and Time*, writes and thinks in a way that may, at first site, seem very abstract from ‘real life’ issues. But, on the contrary, Heidegger is looking to do just the opposite. Through a fundamental ontology, Heidegger has focused on the *core* of being. From a Heideggerian standpoint, the critique of capitalism and its potential evils would be secondary and even tantamount to finding the meaning of being itself, and being in the world. In fact, it may stand to reason to say that this fundamental analysis of being may be necessary before embarking on a revolution. For to understand the ‘ways of the world’ it seems necessary to first understand what this world fundamentally is, and what being in that world fundamentally and ontologically means.

In taking up this task of a fundamental ontology, Heidegger has found what he deems to be the state of Dasein’s being in general. In this being, there is the potential for authenticity, but for the most part, Dasein’s being is inauthentic. Through this ontology Heidegger arrives at a basic state of alienation. If this thought process seems alienating, then it is only because it is misunderstood. Through the fundamental ontology, Heidegger has focused on what it means to *be*, for the most part. After taking up this task one may then wish to get down to existing in the world and even changing that world. But isn’t the understanding of this world preferably and even necessarily to come first?

In this philosophical thought process is an attempt at getting at the primordial roots of being. The true meaning of alienation has been uncovered. Through philosophy,

Heidegger has taken up this task of ontology. Philosophy is the love of wisdom; how can Marx then claim that this is alienating or merely ‘abstract thought’? It may be the case that some philosophy is abstract and even amiss in its conclusions, but the true philosophical inquiry and pursuit of truth and wisdom are not alienating, but have the goal of enlightening.

By both Marx and Heidegger we have seen the assertion of different modes of alienation. Marx, as we have seen, relies on an economic system to spawn and sustain this alienation. Through Heidegger, we have seen what is thought to be a fundamental assessment of alienation. The only presupposition with Heidegger is being itself, a presupposition that must exist because Heidegger did, after all, take up the task of an ontology. Without Dasein, alienation is irrelevant. And, without analyzing the fundamental being of Dasein, we cannot arrive at alienation in its true and most basic form.

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