Marx and the gendered structure of capitalism

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Abstract I argue that Marx's central concern, consistent throughout his works, is to challenge and overcome hierarchical oppositions, which he considers as the core of modern, capitalist societies and the cause of alienation. The young Marx critiques the hierarchical idealism/materialism opposition, in which idealism abstracts from and reduces all material elements to the mind (or spirit), and materialism abstracts from and reduces all mental abstractions to the body (or matter). The mature Marx sophisticates this critique in his theory of the commodity fetish, in which exchange-value (the mind) abstracts from the use-value (the body) of the commodity. Although Marx aims to challenge capitalism by abolishing the hierarchical relation among binary oppositions, I show that in his early as well as his later writings on the working-class woman he reinforces hierarchical binaries, which points at the gendered unconscious structure of capitalism.

Key words abstraction · alienation · binary oppositions · early Marx · late Marx · working-class woman

1 Introduction

Marx's political philosophy does not strive towards a unified system. Rather, it is led by a plurality of doctrines, an ambiguous use of terminology, and unfinished drafts.[1] As Agnes Heller puts it: '[Marx's] greatness . . . is based precisely upon this brilliant lack of coherence. For this reason it is always possible to rediscover him.'[2] In my rediscovery of Marx I show that, throughout his political philosophy, Marx aimed to challenge and overcome hierarchical oppositions, which he considered as the core of modern, capitalist societies. Marx's challenge of capitalism was led by a dialectical approach. He aimed to 'start out' from what has been suppressed by the primacy of the mind in capitalist societies –

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the body and all those traits associated with it: practice, the object, and nature. However, Marx did not aim to introduce new hierarchies or to do away with binaries altogether. Rather, he aimed to abolish the hierarchical relation between binaries.

Contemporary readings of Marx have hinted at Marx's central concern with oppositions. An example is the critical theory reading of Marx provided by Moishe Postone, who, by mainly focusing on the later Marx, argues that Marx analyzed oppositions 'as forms of thought related to the structured and structuring social forms that are constitutive of capitalist society'.[3] Another example is Bertell Ollman, who, by focusing on Marx's theory of alienation, points at Marx's challenge to oppositions.[4] However, a reading which shows that Marx, consistent throughout his works, challenges and aims to overcome hierarchical oppositions, is currently missing. I aim to provide such a reading in this paper.

My reading of Marx counters then Marxian critics, who suggest a 'break' between the early and the late Marx. This break has been famously introduced by Louis Althusser,[5] who argues that Marx's 'Thesen über Feuerbach' (1845) mark a sharp break in Marx's works, where we see the mature Marx emerging, in contrast to the young, 'immature' Marx, who remains stuck in essentialist thought.[6] My reading of Marx shows his consistent concern with oppositions throughout his thought, which renders the claim of a 'break' in Marx untenable. Although he changes in the ways he presents and tackles the problem of oppositions, at the core of his political philosophy he aims to do away with the hierarchical relation between binaries. Despite his sophisticated critique on hierarchical oppositions, I also show that Marx, at certain instances of his texts, reinforces hierarchical thought.

These instances are especially salient in his writings on the working-class woman, who becomes linked to the 'despised body', which stands in an absolute opposition to the 'pure mind' (linked to the middle class and men).[7] The reinforcement of binary thought in the works of a thinker, at whose core is the overcoming of such thought, supports my argument that hierarchical oppositions concern deep, unconscious structures of capitalist societies. The signifiers 'woman' and the 'working classes' as well as racial minorities are, mostly unconsciously, linked to what constitutes the negative side of hierarchical oppositions in capitalist societies: the body, the object, and nature. This link contributes to uphold the force of hierarchical oppositions and often undermines attempts, such as Marx's own, to abolish hierarchical relations between binaries.[8]

I will unfold my reading of Marx in the following six sections. In the second section, 'Marx's attempt to overcome hierarchical oppositions: revolutionary activity', I focus on reading 'Die Thesen über Feuerbach', where Marx advanced the concept of 'practical-critical activity' as a

means to oppose the primacy of theory over practice. In the third section, 'Alienation: the consequence of the mind/body opposition', I focus on *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie* (1844) and *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (1846) to counter those Marxian critiques that have accused Marx of introducing a notion of human essence with his theory of alienation. In the fourth section, titled 'Commodity fetishism: the basis of capitalist society', I show that the themes Marx elaborated in his early work re-emerge in his later work. I focus on *Das Kapital*, vol. I (1867), where Marx elucidates with his theory of commodity fetishism most profoundly that binary structures are at the core of modern, capitalist societies.

In the fifth section, 'The working-class woman in Marx's early writings', I explain Marx's critical view on the situation of the bourgeois woman in capitalist societies. I then focus on the early texts *Kritische Randglossen* (1844) and *Die Heilige Familie* (1844) to analyze Marx's problematic view on the working-class woman. I show that working-class woman becomes in these texts the despised 'masculinized' woman, who stands in opposition to the 'real feminine' bourgeois woman. In the sixth section, 'The working-class women in the late Marx', I mainly focus on *Das Kapital*, vol. I to explain Marx's conservative stances and moralistic interventions in relation to the working-class woman, which contradict his sharp critique put forward in relation to bourgeois women and his otherwise non-moralistic political philosophy. I explain these contradictions as the result of unconscious desires and fears that women (and men), who counter traditional female/male oppositions, incite.

2 Marx's attempt to overcome hierarchical oppositions: revolutionary activity

Marx composed 'Die Thesen über Feuerbach', a series of aphorisms, in the spring of 1845. The theses have often been read as Marx's attempt to exit theory and philosophy. As an example, Etienne Balibar argues that 'Die Thesen' 'demand a definite exit (*Ausgang*) from philosophy, as the only means of realizing what has always been its loftiest ambition: emancipation, liberation'.[9] I suggest in my reading of 'Die Thesen' that Marx did not aim at an exit from philosophy or theory, since such an exit would imply a new hierarchy: this time with practice on top and theory below.[10] I suggest that the central aim of Marx in 'Die Thesen' is to challenge the hierarchical theory/practice opposition.

Marx finds such an opposition operating in the works of Ludwig Feuerbach:[11] 'The chief defect of all previous materialism – that of Feuerbach included' is that 'he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and defined only in its dirty Jewish form[12] of appearance. Hence he does not grasp the

significance of "revolutionary", or "practical-critical", activity.'[13] Marx aims to counter these previous, 'old' forms of materialism, in which practice remains defined as the negative opposite pole of theory, with a *new* materialism, where 'practical-critical activity' is the tool of revolutionary activity. For Marx, not mere contemplation, but 'practical-critical activity', leads to changes in the existing inhuman *Verhältnisse*.

Marx repeats his challenge on the theory/practice opposition in the famous thesis 11: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.'[14] The question is: What does Marx mean with this term 'practical-critical activity' that can lead to such changes? First of all, he does not mean to do away with theory altogether. Instead of introducing a new hierarchy in which practice claims primacy over theory, Marx conceptualizes these two terms in a dialectical fashion: practice and theory are intertwined and dependent upon each other. Hence, there can be no absolute opposition between practice and theory. Marx's putting of the term 'practical' in front of the term 'critical' in the notion of 'practical-critical activity' suggests such a reading on a symbolic level.

Marx aims to 'start out' from the practical. However, this 'starting-out' from the practical does not imply that Marx conceptualizes the practical as superior to the theoretical, since we need practice *and* theory to revolutionize the world. My reading of thesis 11 is supported by thesis 8, where Marx asserts: 'social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which mislead theory into mystification find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.'[15] The solution to countering mystification, which is a result of theory's abstraction from the practical, is for Marx not a practice that abstains from all theoretical reflection. Rather it is a practice that is *comprehended*. Practice needs theory in order to counter a theory that abstracts from practice and leads into another mystification.

In thesis 4, Marx explains that subjects create a religious, imaginary world because of their 'inner strife and intrinsic contradictoriness'.[16] For Marx it is not enough to do away with religion (as suggested by Feuerbach), since this leaves the source of why religion is created by subjects untouched: 'The latter [the subject] must itself, therefore, first be understood in its contradiction and then, by the removal of the contradiction, revolutionised in practice.'[17] Marx does not suggest here that revolutionary activity is an activity that can be carried out merely through practice. His argument is that we need both: we must *understand* the contradictions that lead subjects to create an imaginary world and this involves theoretical reflection.

At the same time, it is not enough to merely understand and contemplate these contradictions in order to revolutionize them. We must *do* something in order to change them, and this involves *practice*. 'Once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family,' asserts

Marx in thesis 4, 'the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and practice.'[18] For Marx, both are crucial for revolutionary activity: practice and theory – there is no hierarchy between them.[19] Practical-critical activity is the tool to revolutionary change and becomes the defining moment in communism. Daniel Brudney suggests that in communist society 'a split between the theoretical and the practical is absent'.[20] I disagree with such a reading of Marx's notion of communism.

In *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie*,[21] Marx argues that in communist society the 'senses have . . . become theorists directly in their practice'.[22] He does not suggest that the split between theory and practice has ceased to exist. Rather, what has ceased to exist is the primacy of theory, which abstracts from and devalues practice. What Marx aims at with his conception of 'practical-critical' activity, which is the defining moment of communist society, is a dialectical relationship between theory and practice. As Agnes Heller argues, there will be no 'purely intellectual' or 'purely manual' activity in Marx's future society.[23] Yet this does not mean that the difference between intellectual and manual activity (or theory and practice) has ceased to exist. Rather, what has ceased to exist is their hierarchical arrangement.

In the famous thesis 6, Marx is concerned to challenge another hierarchical opposition: the hierarchy between the subject and nature.[24] 'Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the human essence', states Marx. 'The essence of man is no *abstraction* inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.'[25] What is at stake in thesis 6 is the problem of abstraction.[26] If subjects abstract from the object (society), then we are left with some problematic notion of a human essence, which Marx counters throughout his works. The moment the subject aims to get rid of her or his dependence upon the object, he argues, human essence 'can be regarded only as "species", as an inner, mute, general character which unites the many individuals *in a natural way*'.[27]

However, Marx's dialectical approach to the subject/nature opposition implies that he does not aim to get rid of all notions of human nature, which he reiterates in *Die Deutsche Ideologie*. Here he argues that the subject cannot be 'divorced from all its empirical conditions of life . . . separated from the world that forms its basis and from its own body'.[28] Marx did not discard the notion of human nature. Rather, he was concerned that the primacy of the subject in capitalist society leads to an abstraction from nature and with that to an abstract individual. His central aim was then to abolish the hierarchical relation between the subject/nature opposition. Given Marx's sophisticated critique of this opposition, I find Sebastiano Timpanaro's definition of materialism somewhat misguided. 'By materialism', he argues, 'we understand above all acknowledgement of the priority of nature over "mind".'[29]

The problem with this definition of materialism is that it introduces a new hierarchy – the hierarchical opposition between nature and the subject, which Marx himself aimed to challenge. Although Marx aims to start out from nature to counter the primacy of the subject in capitalist society, he does not suggest a priority of nature over the subject. Such a suggestion merely creates a new hierarchical opposition, which leads to the same as the priority of the subject over nature, an 'abstract – isolated – individual'.[30] It is important to emphasize Marx's assertion that 'the abstract individual . . . belongs to a particular form of society'.[31] This particular form of society is modern, capitalist society, in which the primacy of the subject reigns over and against nature. In capitalist society we encounter fundamentally *alienated* subjects.

3 Alienation: the consequence of the mind/body opposition

Nationalökonomie und Philosophie (1844), the text in which Marx elaborates his theory of alienation, is the one most responsible for his reputation as an essentialist thinker or an 'immature Hegelian'.[32] The critique runs as follows: if there is something subjects are alienated from in capitalist society, as Marx argues, then this 'something' Marx has in mind must be a human essence. This text is taken as proof of Marx's early unreflected essentialism, which he (so the critique goes) abandons in his later works, starting with thesis 6 elaborated above. In my reading of this text, Marx did *not* introduce some notion of human essence with his theory of alienation. On the contrary, Marx aimed to express with this theory that a notion of human essence, which is the result of hierarchical oppositions – in which one side of the pole (the subject) abstracts from the other side (her or his nature) – *leads* to alienation.

Since such abstractions are characteristic of capitalist societies, alienation is its central feature. As Ollman rightly argues: 'An "abstraction" is a part of a whole whose ties with the rest are not apparent; it is a part which *appears* to be a whole in itself. According to Marx, to hold that the world is actually composed of such "abstractions" is evidence of alienation.'[33] In *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie*, Marx argues that the subject is the result of her or his productive activity.[34] He praises here Hegel for acknowledging the subject as a process, as a result of her or his own productive activity. However, he complains that Hegel, like his followers, the Young Hegelians, knows and recognizes only abstract, mental production. Moreover, Hegel, Marx argues, recognizes only the positive side of work and not its negative side.

I agree with Tom Rockmore that Marx's critique on Hegel does not imply that he abandoned philosophy.[35] Rather, Marx develops and transforms Hegel's central ideas as he sets out to critique the negative side

of productive activity with his theory of alienation. Marx elucidates four moments of alienation: (1) alienation in the act of production; (2) alienation from the product of work; (3) alienation from the subject's species-being; and as a consequence of these three forms of alienation, (4) the alienation of the subject from other subjects.

(1) *Alienation in the act of production* occurs for Marx through the *division of labor* in modern, capitalist societies. In *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, we find Marx's most sustained discussion of the division of labor in his early work. Here he argues that the 'division of labor only becomes a real division from the moment the separation between material and mental production has entered'.[36] For Marx, the division of labor is not problematic in itself. It becomes problematic only when the split between material and mental production becomes construed as an absolute. According to Marx, 'the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity'.[37] However, in modern, capitalist societies, where we encounter an absolute opposition between material and mental production, these productive activities *appear* as separated from each other and lead to the alienation that is characteristic of such societies.

Marx returns to this theme in *Das Kapital*, vol. I, when he states that 'headwork and handwork' are naturally unified. In the capitalist mode of production, however, they are 'divided into a hostile opposition'.[38] The moment material and mental production is divided, each subject, Marx argues, 'obtains a specific, exclusive circle of activity that is forced upon [her/]him and from which [she/]he cannot get out'.[39] This implies that the subject is subsumed under a specific work activity through which the subject 'does not affirm [herself/]himself but denies [herself/]himself'.[40] Marx is not proclaiming a specific essence of the subject that is denied to her or him through the capitalist mode of production. Rather, what Marx aims to tell us is that the subsumption of the subject under a specific work activity creates a 'one-sided nature', which is in fact anything but natural.

This essence is the result of a specific mode of production that needs such 'natures' for its own preservation. In communist society, argues Marx in a famous citation, one is not restricted to a one-sided activity of either mental or material work, but can partake 'today in this, tomorrow in that, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, engage in cattle-breeding in the evening and also critique the food, whatever pleases one, without ever being a hunter, fisher, herder or a critic'.[41] Again, Marx does not argue that in communist society there are no differences between mental and material production. However, what has ceased to be constitutive is their absolute opposition and hierarchy, which sets critical activity (mental production) above and in opposition to material production (fishing, herding, and so on).

(2) For Marx, *alienation from the product of work* implies not only that the product of work activity becomes 'an object, an external existence', but also that the life that the subject in her or his work activity 'has conferred on the object confronts [her/]him as something hostile and alien'.[42] As the division of labor becomes more advanced, which creates an extended productive power, the hostility of the work product becomes stronger.[43] The productive power is experienced by subjects not as their 'own, united power, but an alien power that stands outside themselves', which comes to subjugate them.[44] Since alienation from the product of work is somewhat difficult to understand in the context of his early works, I will come back to this form of alienation in the next section, when I discuss *Das Kapital*, vol. I.

(3) Both of these forms of alienation, the alienation from the product of work and the alienation in the act of production, are related to Marx's third form of alienation, *alienation from the subject's species-being*. For Marx, 'free, conscious activity is [woman/]man's species character'.[45] Because of the separation between mental and physical productive activity, which forces subjects into one or the other side of the opposition, such a free and conscious work activity is not possible in capitalist societies. This led, according to Marx, to an alienation of the subject from her or his species-being. In my reading of Marx, this notion of a 'species-being' does not refer to an essentialist moment in Marx. Rather, I understand this form of alienation as consistent with Marx's critique on the subject/object opposition. The subject, according to Marx, is a part of a generality, what Marx calls here the 'species-being'. Since in capitalist societies the subject abstracts from such a generality (the object), she or he becomes alienated from her or his species-being.[46]

(4) The abstraction of the subject from her species-being leads us to the fourth form of alienation elaborated by Marx: the *alienation of the subject from other subjects*. For Marx, an 'immediate consequence of the fact that [woman]/man is estranged from the product of [her]/his labor, from [her/]his life activity, from [her/]his species-being is the estrangement of [woman/]man from [woman/]man.'[47] Marx hints here at a central consequence of the capitalist mode of production, with its separation of mental and material productive activity: the instrumental character of capitalist relations, and with that the sense of *having* that permeates all relationships between humans.[48] He expresses this with the following statement: 'We consider the object only as ours, when we *have* it and when we use it.'[49]

For Marx, in communism the subject does not abstract from the species-being, but acknowledges herself or himself to be a member of such a generality. In communism, 'subjectivity and objectivity, spirituality and materiality, activity and passivity lose their antithetical character, and thus their existence as such antitheses'.[50] In Marx's future

society not the binaries themselves, but their antithetical character, their appearance as an absolute opposition, has ceased to exist. Only through a critique of hierarchical oppositions can we overcome the alienating character of capitalism.

4 Commodity fetishism: the basis of capitalist society

In *Das Kapital*, vol. I, a late work of Marx written in 1867, Marx elucidates the problems of the mind/body opposition as he identified it in his earlier works by elucidating the central elements of capitalist society, the commodity form, money, and capital. It is important to note that these categories of Marx's critique are not purely economic categories, as has often been argued.[51] Rather, Marx shows us with these categories that hierarchical oppositions are indispensable to the project of capitalism. Moreover, although Marx starts out to explain the nature of the commodity, then proceeds to explain money, followed by capital, the chronological introduction of these terms does not suggest a progression from the commodity form leading to capitalism. Rather, Marx starts out with the commodity form, because he believed its inherent binary structure to be at the core of modern, capitalist societies.

In chapter 1 of *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx starts out to explain *das Ding*, the work product, with his concepts of *use-value* and *exchange-value*. The use-value refers to the 'body' and exchange-value to the 'mind' of *das Ding*. Whereas use-value satisfies particular needs, exchange-value (or value) allows the product to circulate, to be exchanged with another product.[52] In order for a product to be able to circulate, its use-value needs to be transformed into an abstract category, an *equivalent*. For Marx, 'the equivalent form of a commodity is the form of its immediate interchange-ability with another commodity'.[53] The equivalent abstracts from the use-value of *das Ding* and turns it into an exchange-value. The work product, according to Marx, only becomes a commodity when it is transformed into an exchange-value and circulates as such. The commodity thus possesses a dual character: it appears in its particular form as a use-value and in its general or equivalent form as an exchange-value.

The problem that Marx perceives in relation to the exchange-value or the commodity is the same problem he sees in the abstract categories of the Young Hegelians: 'If we abstract from its [the product's] use-value, we also abstract from the bodily components and forms, that constitute its use-value . . . All its material components are erased.'[54] The abstract category (the commodity) is based upon the abstraction from its bodily or material elements, which are the particular work activities implied in the work product. The exchange-value, argues

Marx, erases the 'different concrete forms of labor, they do not differ any longer, but are all reduced to the same human work, abstract human labor'.[55] For Marx, human labor, like the commodity, also possesses a dual character in capitalist societies: as concrete labor, it produces use-values; as abstract human labor, it produces exchange-values.

The exchange-value is the element of the commodity that leads us to its *gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit* (ghostly objectivity).[56] For Marx, once the work products are turned into a commodity, 'nothing is left of them but a ghostly objectivity, a mere *Gallerte* of undifferentiated human work'.[57] In *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx elucidates this *gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit* famously as the *fetish-character* of the commodity. The work product turns into a fetish, precisely because its transformation into exchange value implies an abstraction from its use-value, its bodily components. As Marx expresses it, the exchange-value of commodities is 'distinct from their palpable and real bodily form. It is, that is to say, only an ideal or imaginary form.'[58] However, there is a slight difference between what humans establish in the realm of thoughts and the commodity, which Balibar explains:

> In the one case, that thing is an 'idol,' an abstract representation which seems to exist all on its own in the ethereal realm of ideas (Freedom, Justice, Humanity, Law), whereas in the other it is a 'fetish,' a material thing which seems to belong to the earth, to nature, while exerting an irresistible power over individuals (the commodity and, above all, money).[59]

What is the irresistible power that money has over individuals? For Marx, money plays the role of the general equivalent in the world of commodities.[60] Whereas with the commodity there is a slight possibility of difference between different commodities, money manages to erase 'all qualitative differences of commodities'.[61] Money is the privileged general equivalent, which, according to Marx, not only 'erases all qualitative difference between commodities' but is the 'radical leveller of all differences'.[62] Thus, we are confronted in money with *the* fetish, with exchange-value (the mind) that manages to abstract itself completely from use-value (the body). It is precisely this incarnation of pure exchange-value in money that accounts for its irresistible power over subjects in capitalist society. 'The enigma of the money fetish', says Marx, 'is only the becoming visible of the eye blending commodity fetish.'[63] Although Marx argues that exchange-value is nothing else but a *Spuk* (specter) in our heads, this does not mean that it does not have all-too-real effects upon subjects.

Capital, like the commodity and money, also has a double character: on the one side, exchange-value constitutes an abstract dimension – this is the famous Marxian notion of *surplus-value*;[64] on the other side, the specific dimension (the body) is the work that the working class

performs, which lies behind and is erased through abstraction. According to Marx, the original source of surplus-value is a use-value, the labor power of the worker. However, for surplus-value to exist, this use-value of labor power needs to be transformed into an exchange-value, a commodity. For Marx, this is the precondition of capitalism.[65] Expropriation created a class of subjects that had nothing but their labor power to sell on the labor market, so it was necessary that another class could transform its means of production into capital.[66] This means of production, as part of capital, is what Marx calls 'dead work', which become 'enlivened' through the blood of 'living work', i.e. the labor power of the worker.

Here the meaning of Marx's notion of *alienation through the product of work*, which seemed difficult to grasp in *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie* and *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, becomes clearer: the alien power, the work product of the worker, that confronts the worker is nothing else but capital. Throughout *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx underlines the hostile and alien character of capital by signifying it as a 'vampire',[67] a 'dead work, that only enlivens itself through the vampire-like sucking in of living work and that lives, the more it sucks in from it'.[68] The question is, what can one do to stop this blood-sucking enterprise whose consequence is that one side of the opposition becomes richer and the other side poorer and where everybody is alienated?

Marx argues in his late work that the commodity, money, and capital 'express the forms of being, the determinations of existence . . . of this *specific* society'.[69] It is precisely this *specific* upon which Postone bases his general argument that we can overcome these determinations: 'the overcoming of capitalism must occur on the basis of historically constituted values that represent the transcendence of the sorts of internally related, anti-nomic oppositions . . . that characterize the capitalist social formation.'[70] In a similar vein, Agnes Heller argues that 'where the oppositions are reciprocally arranged and interdependent, total revolution is the only way [for Marx] of transcending this opposing pair'.[71] I am certainly sympathetic to Postone's and Heller's optimistic reading of Marx and the prospect of overcoming capitalism. However, can one *transcend* the hierarchical oppositions that characterize capitalist society?

In my reading of Marx, Marx did not argue that we actually could. Marx, consistent throughout his works, did not aim to transcend binary oppositions. Rather, Marx aimed to abolish the hierarchical relations between oppositions, but the binaries as such are meant to remain. Moreover, Marx was aware that attempts to challenge hierarchical binary oppositions are a difficult enterprise, since they concern deep, unconscious structures in capitalist societies. Thinkers such as Jean-Joseph Goux have shown us that Marx understands hierarchical oppositions as referring to unconscious symbolic structures.[72] Marx helps us then to understand

that we cannot challenge capitalism through material redistribution alone, since this leaves deeper, unconscious binary structures intact.[73]

What Marx did not see is that hierarchical oppositions are difficult to challenge, because the signifiers 'women', the 'working classes' and 'racial minorities' are, mostly unconsciously, linked to what constitutes the negative side of hierarchical binaries in capitalist societies: the body, the object and nature. This link contributes to uphold the force of hierarchical oppositions and often undermines attempts to abolish the hierarchical relationships among them. As I will show in the second part of this article, Marx, despite his sophisticated challenge on hierarchical oppositions, reinforces the primacy of the mind and the devaluation of the body in his writings on the working-class woman. The reinforcement of binary thought in the works of a thinker at whose core is a fundamental challenge to hierarchical oppositions underlines the unconscious binary structure of capitalism and its gendered, classed, and raced character.

5 The working-class woman in Marx's early writings

Although Marx signifies women in general as *Weiber*, a somewhat derogatory term, he uses more polite terms for the bourgeois woman, such as *Dame* (lady) and *Frau* (woman). In contrast, whenever the working-class woman appears in his texts she is the *Weib*. Marx never calls her a woman or a *Dame*. As such, working-class woman appears in Marx's text as an opposition: the rude *Weib* over and against the sensitive bourgeois *Dame*. It is important to note that Marx had a rather critical view of the situation of *Damen* in capitalist societies. Throughout his works Marx advances the argument that one can judge the level of human emancipation achieved in a society by male/female relations and the position of women in a society.[74] He asserts in *Die Heilige Familie* that 'the general position of women in modern society is inhuman'.[75]

Such inhumanity is for Marx the consequence of the primacy of *having* in capitalist society, where women, especially in bourgeois marriages, are reduced to being private property of men. Marx couches the inhumanity of the relations between the sexes in bourgeois families in the language of slavery, which, according to Marx, often leads to suicide of bourgeois women.[76] In *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (1846), as an example, Marx and Engels state: 'The *Frau* and the children are the slaves of the man . . . This raw and latent slavery in the family is the first private property.'[77] Although Marx and Engels already come to the conclusion in *Die Deutsche Ideologie* that the bourgeois family is the basis for bourgeois rule, only in *Das Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848) do they proclaim the need for its annulment.[78]

Marx had a rather advanced view on the situation of the bourgeois woman in capitalist societies. However, when he aims to critically analyze the situation of the working-class woman in modern society, he reinforces hierarchical oppositions. Already in his early text, *Kritische Randglossen* (1844), Marx refers to the working-class woman, or more precisely, to her 'faded, shrunken flesh'. Here Marx starts out to challenge Francis Bacon's inductive reasoning and its application upon British national economy in his cynical statement that Bacon's thought step by step overcomes all hurdles to finally 'reach the summit of science, where peace and pure air may be enjoyed, where nature presents itself to the eye in all its beauty, and from where it is possible to descend by a comfortably sloping path to the last details of practice'.[79]

Marx criticizes here the primacy of theory, which aims to abstract from and set itself above practice. He aims to challenge the primacy of theory by referring to the working-class woman. He continues the citation above: 'Great *beauty of nature* . . . the faded, shrunken *Fleisch* [flesh] of the *Weiber*, eaten up by work and misery; children crawling about in the dirt; the *Missgeburten* [freaks], which are produced by the excessive labor in the monotonous mechanical operations of the factories! The most delightful *last details of practice*: prostitution, murder and the gallows!'[80] Marx aims to counter philosophy's abstraction from the body and practice, by starting out from the working-class woman's fate in capitalist society.

Although Marx makes clear in this citation that her fate is *produced* by capitalist work conditions in factories and is *not* a natural state, the problem I see with Marx's signification of the working-class woman lies in his reinforcement of the theory/practice opposition. Marx signifies her *as* practice in opposition to thought. Moreover, he is concerned mainly with her flesh (her body) that is, according to him, 'eaten up by work and misery'. Although there are instances, where Marx reduces the working-class man to the body, especially in his theory of alienation, he remains concerned with how the monotonous mechanical operations in the factories destroy both the male worker's mind *and* his body.

In contrast, Marx restricts his criticism of capitalist production in relation to the working-class woman to the ways in which it fades and shrinks her *Fleisch* (flesh) – not her mind. The mind/body opposition is also reinforced in the *Weib*'s close association with what comes out of her womb (the body) – children. In *Das Kapital*, vol. I, the main text where Marx discusses the fate of working-class woman in capitalist society, she constantly appears with the signifier 'child'. This close association suggests that the *Weib* is not entirely grown-up, but a child herself, which is supported by Marx's argument that she, like the child, is *unmünding* (immature).[81] In the citation above, the working-class woman's children are 'crawling about in the dirt'.

This suggests that the working-class woman does not fulfill that which is 'naturally' ascribed to the female side of the male/female opposition: the task of caring for children.[82] It does not surprise that the whole working class becomes, in Marx's imagination then, a *Missgeburt* (freak), a body defunct by birth (nature). Although such freaks are according to him the outcome of monotonous mechanical factory operations, the close textual association of the working-class woman and *Missgeburten* suggests that it is she who bears such freaks. In the 'last practical details', Marx brings the close association of the signifier 'working-class woman' with the prostitute and crime to the forefront. This association leads us to another early text where working-class woman appears.

In *Die Heilige Familie* Marx criticizes the mind/body opposition in the Young Hegelians' primary focus on abstraction and thought. In aiming to defend the socialist Flora Tristan against the 'critical critics' attacks of female dogmatism, Marx argues that the writings of the Young Hegelians imply just such a dogmatism: 'She is and remains an old *Weib*, the faded and widowed Hegelian philosophy, who makes up and polishes her most repulsive body, which abstraction has dried out and then sneaks around in the whole of Germany to find a suitor.'[83] Here Marx aims to challenge the primacy of the mind, by showing how its abstraction from the body leads to nothing else but a 'disgusting and dried-out' body. The problem I see here is that Marx turns the Hegelian abstracted mind into a female working-class body.

As in the citation in the *Kritische Randglosse* above, it is her 'faded, shrunken' *Fleisch* (flesh) through which Marx signifies working-class woman. Here she is again reduced to her body, whose image arouses Marx's repulsion. Moreover, his argument implies a certain ageism, suggesting that an old woman needs to polish and make up her body and 'sneak around' to find a *Freier* (suitor). He repeats this statement in a later text when he argues that the 'critical critique' is 'sensitive like an old spinster', suggesting that an old woman is less likely to score a man or a woman.[84] Luckily, however, there is money. In *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx argues that the money fetish, the universal equivalent, is the radical leveler that erases all (even age) differences. Citing Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, gold, which becomes the *gemeine Hure* (mean whore) of humans, even 'brings suitors to the over-aged widow'.[85]

These images lead us to the close link between the working-class woman and the prostitute, as well as to another passage in *Die Heilige Familie* in which the working-class woman appears, this time in the form of a body whose flesh is still 'fresh'. Marx discusses the fate of the prostitute Fleur des Marie, a character in Eugène Sue's novel *Les Mystères de Paris*.[86] The general aim of this discussion is to show us that the one-sided focus on the mind leads to hostility towards the flesh (the body), which results in the *Entleibung* (disembodiment) of Fleur de

Marie and her eventual death. To begin with, Marx presents us with a *Weib*, whose body is not 'faded' and 'shrunken'. Marie, argues Marx, despite her debasement 'as a prostitute in bondage to the proprietress of a criminal's tavern . . . preserves a human nobleness of soul, a human unaffectedness and a human beauty'.[87]

Marx challenges the male/female (strong/weak) opposition, when he notes that Fleur de Marie defends herself with scissors against the men who abuse her: 'That is the situation in which we first find her. She does not appear as a defenseless lamb who surrenders without any resistance to overwhelming brutality; she is a girl who can vindicate her rights and put up a fight.'[88] This passage is the only one in Marx's works that addresses the active resistance of a woman to male violence.[89] However, if we proceed in the text, we encounter a certain problematic aspect of Marx's imagination of Fleur de Marie. After Marx explains how Marie has come into the situation of prostitution, he argues that she, 'contrary to Christian repentance . . . pronounces on the past the both stoic and epicurean human principle of a free and strong woman: "*Enfin ce que est fait, est fait.*"'[90]

Given Fleur de Marie's situation in bondage, the fantasy of a free woman is somewhat problematic, although Marx's main aim here is to show us that Marie understood her humanity, even though she was in an inhuman situation. This knowledge has been taken away from her, when she is turned over to a priest and a nun, who look to purge Marie of her 'sins' (flesh). These 'virtuous people' made her believe, Marx tells us, that 'the dirt of the contemporary society, which has touched her externally, has become her inner being'.[91] It is here where Fleur de Marie's hostility towards her 'flesh' makes its first appearance, and when it reaches its height, she enters herself into a monastery to devote her life to God (the mind) and rid herself of the body.

According to Marx, Marie's fate encapsulates the Young Hegelians' and Christianity's primary focus on an abstract mind that aims to get rid of the body. Given the fact that Marx is concerned with preserving the body 'flesh' of the (beautiful, young) working-class woman, it does not surprise us that he argues 'that monastery life does not correspond to her *nature* – she dies'.[92] The problem with this 'nature' of the working-class woman is that it does not truly oppose the mind/body opposition. Rather, by reducing her to her body, this opposition is merely turned on its head, but the hierarchy remains. Certainly, her flesh is not available for the eye of the bourgeois man any more once she enters the life of the mind, the monastery. The question remains if *this* is Marx's main concern.

6 The working-class women in the late Marx

Throughout *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx reinforces the male/female (strong/weak) opposition in relation to the working-class woman by advancing the argument that women could only enter the industrial workforce, 'in so far as machinery dispenses with muscular power, it becomes a means of employing workers without muscular power [i.e. women] or of immature bodily development, but with greater suppleness of their limbs'.[93] This argument is already put forward in his earlier works, such as *Das Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, where Marx and Engels state that the 'less the skill and exertion of strength implied in manual labor, in other words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labor of men superseded by that of women'.[94] It corresponds with Marx's suggestion (1867) that women need to be excluded from any kinds of work that are 'harmful for their more sensitive body'.[95]

Although Marx aims to keep up the male/female opposition as a 'natural' one to reconfirm his assertion that the difference between man and woman is a *Naturdifferenz* (a difference of nature),[96] he is at pains to explain the existence of women who do not neatly fit into this opposition. In chapter 8 of *Das Kapital*, vol. I, 'Der Arbeitstag', Marx cites a report about girls and women employed in the coal mines in England, which states that the 'females employed with the men, hardly distinguished from them in their dress . . . are exposed to the characteristic *Entartung* (degeneration) . . . which is the almost inevitable consequence of their unfeminine occupation'.[97] The working-class woman's *Entartung* from her *Art* (her species, her 'feminine nature') suggests that the 'unfeminine' woman becomes a 'masculine man'. This masculinization of the working-class woman is reinforced in chapter 13 of *Das Kapital*, vol. I, 'Maschinerie und große Industrie'.

Here Marx cites a report that explains how girls and young women working in the tile industry become 'rough, foul-mouthed boys, before nature has taught them that they are *Weiber*'.[98] It is important to note that Marx does not make this statement himself, but cites a report, which might hint at his own uneasiness about the male/female opposition. Nonetheless, the fact that he does not question the content of these reports but uses them to back up his arguments about the situation of working-class woman in capitalist society, makes him an accomplice in the reinforcement of hierarchical oppositions. The characterization of women who find themselves in 'unfeminine' occupations as '*entartet*' (degenerated) contributes to refer them back to their 'proper feminine' place in society.

However, Marx considers the entry of women into the workforce to be not entirely negative and with that counters the male/female opposition. In a speech in 1868, he declares: 'I do not say with this, that it

is bad when women and children participate in our societal production . . . but the ways in which children under current conditions are forced to work are horrible.'[99] In the 13th chapter of *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx reiterates this point. He argues that the decisive role that the capitalist mode of production ascribes to women can, under appropriate *Verhältnisse* (relation), become a 'new economic basis for a higher form of family and the relations of both sexes'.[100] According to Marx, such an entry may 'even become the fountain for human development'.[101]

Nonetheless, in the same statement Marx argues that such an entry into the labor force leads to a 'frightful and disgusting' erosion of old family structures. This contradicts Marx's sharp critique of bourgeois family structures, which, as I explained earlier, connote according to him the slavery of women. I argue that this contradiction is not so much the result of Marx's fears about an erosion of family structures, but derives from his fear of women who threaten the stability of male/female opposition. It is precisely here where we are confronted with an unusual element in Marx's political philosophy: moralistic interventions. As Lawrence Wilde argues, 'Marx in general disdained ethical discourse and consistently opposed moralistic interventions in the social and political issues of his day, once proclaiming that "communists do not preach *morality* at all".'[102] Nonetheless, in relation to the working-class woman, we are confronted with just such moralistic statements, which are aimed at putting the working-class woman back into her 'proper' place – the female side of the male/female opposition.

In *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx coins the curious term *moralische Verkümmerung* (moral atrophy).[103] It is important to note that nowhere does this term appear in relation to the working-class man or the bourgeois woman or man. It is chiefly reserved for the working-class woman. Interestingly, when Marx introduces this term he states at the same time that there is also *intellektuelle Verödung* (intellectual desolation) which is for him 'artificially produced through the transformation of unripe humans into the mere machinery for the fabrication of surplus-value'.[104] The fact that Marx describes the *intellektuelle Verödung* as artificial but does not make the same claim about *moralische Verkümmerung* suggests that the latter is somehow 'natural' to the working-class woman.

Again, in contrast to the working-class man, Marx is here not concerned with working-class woman's mind, but chiefly with her body. *Moralische Verkümmerung* refers to her body – more precisely, her sexuality – which reduces her to the body in opposition to the mind. Marx is here concerned with the working-class woman's sexual morality, which evinces a close (unconscious) link between the working-class woman and sexuality. We find such a close link also in chapter 8, under 'Der Arbeitstag', where Marx explains the *Relaissystem* of the early capitalist mode of production. This production system repeatedly employed a

worker for a time period and then released him or her again during the workday, which led according to Marx to 'hours of forced idleness', which drove the 'young worker into the pub and the female worker into the brothel'.[105]

This statement contradicts Marx's sharp critique in his earlier works, such as *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie*, where he argues that a central motive of capitalism is to make subjects *abstain* from such bodily pleasures as going to the pub.[106] The young, working-class men's and women's going to the pub can be considered as a resistance to the mind/body opposition and the attempt of capital to do away with the worker's bodily pleasures. Moreover, Marx does not give us any hint why the working-class woman would go to the brothel in her hours of free time. This statement, in relation to both the working-class man and the working-class woman, is then moralistic and refers to unconscious male, bourgeois fears (and desires), which link the working-class woman (and man) to the despised body in capitalism.

Such fears and desires are also evident in Marx's explanation of the 'gang-system' used in 19th-century rural England. Here women, employed by a male 'gang-leader', wandered from one village to the next and offered their labor power to the farmers. At an earlier point in *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx cites a report that tells us that one can meet such women 'morning and evening on the road, dressed in short petticoats, with suitable coats and boots, and sometimes trousers, looking *wonderfully strong and healthy*, but tainted with a *customary immorality*, and heedless of the *fatal results* which their love of this busy and independent life is bringing on their unfortunate offspring who are pining at home'.[107] In this passage we are confronted with the bourgeois, male gaze upon the working-class woman.

This gaze is not only disgusted by but also *desires* the woman, who appears in this scene as the 'full' woman who leads an independent life, wears trousers and looks 'wonderfully strong and healthy'. However, such a desire for a woman, who does not fit neatly into the female side of the sexed opposition, becomes overshadowed by fears of her 'customary immorality'. This fear is the fear of an erosion of the male/female opposition, which Marx aims to counter with the notion of a *moralische Verkümmerung*, whose consequence is the 'frightening and disgusting' erosion of 'old family structures': her unfortunate offspring is pining at home, whereas she lives a busy and independent life outside. At a later point in *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx returns to the gang-system, arguing that it is 'coarse freedom, a noisy jollity, and obscenest impudence that give attractions to the gang'.[108]

It seems to me that the gang-system also had some attraction for Marx. However, he discards such an attraction by alarming our concern for these working-class women, because 'how girls bred in these schools

perform on morality as married women has been hinted at earlier'.[109] Marx's concern with the morality of married working-class women contradicts his otherwise sharp critique on the institution of marriage in general. One might think that Marx considers the 'freedom, jollity and impudence' of the gang-women as a resistance to their slavery in marriages and the family, where they are reduced to prostitutes of their husbands. Instead, he is more concerned that such women 'morally perform' in such marriages. Marx's moral intervention brings us to another topic, which appears whenever the working-class woman enters the stage of Marx's texts: her (supposed) alienation from her children.

It is important to note that Marx, with some exceptions, hardly uses the term 'alienation' in *Das Kapital*, vol. I. It is therefore somewhat a surprise that it comes up when he discusses the dangers of the working-class woman's employment beyond the house, which, according to Marx, leads to an 'unnatural alienation of mothers from their children'.[110] He reinforces the male/female opposition by ascribing to the woman 'natural' functions of caring. This opposition is further suggested by the implication that there should be a 'natural' connection between mothers and their children (this of course does not exist for the male sex).[111] Marx paints a rather grim picture of the working-class women as mothers. They abuse, neglect, and starve their children to death: 'the mothers lose to a frightening extent all natural emotions towards their children – usually they are not concerned about their death and sometimes . . . they turn to direct measures to bring it about.'[112]

An interesting aspect here is that Marx, on more than one occasion, states that working-class woman uses opium to bring about the death of her children.[113] This leads us back to Marx's famous statement in *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, the other instance where Marx refers to opium: 'Religion is the sigh of the distressed creature, the *Gemüt* of a heartless world, as well as the spirit of a spiritless condition. She is the *opium* of the people.'[114] He explains here that subjects invent God as a solace, a painkiller, to which the notion of opium alludes in 19th-century Germany, to deal with their misery produced by capitalism.[115] However, Marx does not consider that the working-class woman's supposed alienation from her children might express a 'heartless world' under both patriarchy and capitalism, where she is exploited not only by the capitalist entrepreneur but also by men, who consider her to be 'naturally' responsible for children.

Marx also reinforces the male/female opposition in his concern for the working-class man, since it is the 'free work' in the household, hitherto 'naturally' performed by the working-class woman, that is lost once she enters the labor force.[116] In the article 'Prosperität – Die Arbeiterfrage' (1853), Marx cites the report that refers to the 'impertinence that married women work in the factories and neglect their children and

duties as a housewife', and he supports the decision that 'the married part of the female population does not go to work until their men are justly and fully paid for their work'.[117] This conservative move of Marx's shows us that he was a man of his time and therefore caught in its prejudices. In addition, on more than one occasion in *Das Kapital*, vol. I, Marx argues that women who enter the male domain break the resistance of the working-class man.[118]

Woman, once she enters into the male domain, contributes to the 'feminization' of the male worker who has just started to flex his muscles (that is, he has started to regain his 'masculinity') against the capitalist exploiters. Marx's concern with the 'feminization' of the worker is also prevalent in his statement that a woman who participates in the capitalist mode of production 'devalues his labor power'.[119] Marx is right that women, once they enter male domains, 'devalue' men's work – this is as true now as it was in the 19th century. However, he is unable to realize that this is a consequence of hierarchical male/female opposition, in which everything associated with the female is devalued, and everything associated with the male is valued – a judgment which is, at certain instances, also repeated in Marx's political philosophy.

To conclude, Marx's reinforcement of hierarchical male/female oppositions, as we find them in relation to the working-class woman, supports my central argument put forth in this article. Hierarchical oppositions prevalent in modern, capitalist societies, such as the mind/body and subject/object opposition, concern unconscious structures that are gendered, classed, and raced. In this article, I have not explained the raced aspect of capitalism, which has been elaborated by thinkers such as Himani Banerji, albeit not in relation to raced hierarchical thought structures – an important work which still needs to be accomplished.[120] However, my explications of the working-class woman as we find her accomplished in Marx's thought explain the gendered and classed nature of hierarchical thought.

Marx is in agreement with me on two accounts. First, he considers hierarchical oppositions to lie at the basis of modern, capitalist societies. I agree with him that the critical task is to challenge such oppositions by starting out from the devalued pole and with that abolish the hierarchical relation between binaries. Second, like me, Marx conceptualizes oppositions as unconscious structures.[121] However, Marx does not consider the link of the feminine, the working-class, and racial minorities to what constitutes the negative pole of hierarchical oppositions which, so my argument runs, is crucial to sustain the force of hierarchical oppositions.

This link threatens to undermine conscious efforts, such as Marx's own, to eliminate the hierarchical relation between binaries. Marx's reinforcement of hierarchical oppositions in his writings on the working-class woman, where we see the gendered and classed natures of oppositions interact, supports my argument that we are dealing with an unconscious

link that sustains capitalism. The oppositions that Marx declared as characteristic of capitalist societies cannot be thought as independent from those oppositions that sustain patriarchy and the rule of a white society. Women and men who counter the hierarchical male/female opposition, such as working-class men who perform tasks 'unsuitable' for men or working-class women who find themselves in male domains, pose a fundamental threat to the symbolic order because the stability of this order is based on these sexed, classed, and raced oppositions, which underwrite the gendered and raced structure of capitalism.

The problem with Marx's 'revolutionary activity' is that he did not grasp the link between capitalism and patriarchy, which is necessary to overthrow the capitalist enterprise. The mostly unchallenged, unconscious link of the feminine, working-class people and racial minorities to the negative side of hierarchical oppositions has important theoretical and practical implications. It is not enough merely to 'start out' from what has been rendered as negative in modern, capitalist societies – the body, practice, the object – in order to obtain a 'total revolution'. Such a revolution is only possible if we grasp these binary oppositions as a classed, gendered, and raced unconscious structure. Only if we make this unconscious structure conscious and fundamentally challenge it, as I tried in this article, can we counter hierarchical oppositions that continue to plague modern, capitalist societies.

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Notes

1 All translations of Marx's work from the original German texts are mine unless otherwise noted. When I use the assistance of an English-language edition, I cite it alongside the German edition. Unless otherwise noted, English-edition versions of Marx's work will be from the International Publishers edition of *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 47 vols (abbreviated as 'MECW').
2 Agnes Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1976), p. 88.
3 Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 78.
4 Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1973 [1976]).
5 Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. B. Brewster (New York: Penguin Books, 1979). See especially the chapters 'On the Young Marx' and 'Marxism and Humanism'.
6 A major debate has developed around Althusser's claim, which consists of

two basic camps: on the one side we find those thinkers that follow Althusser's notion of a break between the early and the late Marx, while on the other side there are thinkers who do not see a change of mind in Marx's theories that qualifies the term 'break'. I put thinkers such as Eugene Kamenka, *The Ethical Foundations of Marxism* (New York: Routledge, 1972), and Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York and London: Continuum, 2003) (see pp. 172, 189–92, and 278) in the first camp; and thinkers such as Ollman, *Alienation* (see p. x) and Norman Geras, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (London: Verso, 1983) (see p. 79) in the second. I do not intend to enter into this debate in this article, since to do so would be an article in itself.

7 Such a fixing to what constitutes the negative side of hierarchical oppositions in capitalist societies does injustice to the working classes, women, and especially the working-class woman, because it is used as a pretext to exclude and marginalize them in all those contexts associated with the mind, such as academia and politics.

8 Although Marx himself did not produce a text that is specifically devoted to the fate of women in capitalist society, such as Engels' publication of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), one can find more or less scattered statements on women throughout his major works, as well as in lesser-known texts. Instead of restating what Marx said about women, which has been done before by important thinkers, such as Raya Dunayevskaya and Lise Vogel, I show that Marx, although he rethought the hierarchical male/female opposition in his critique on the situation of the bourgeois woman in capitalist societies, failed to apply his insights when it came to discussing the situation of the working-class woman in such societies. See Raya Dunayevskaya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1996[1985]); Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983).

9 Etienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx* (New York: Verso, 1995), p. 17.

10 Hannah Arendt has accused Marx of such an endeavor. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998[1958]). See especially parts III, IV, and V.

11 In this text, Marx, for the first time in his writings, sharply critiques the Young Hegelian Ludwig Feuerbach, an influential source in his own writings, whom he still praised in *Die Heilige Familie*. Again, I am in my reading not concerned whether Marx is correct in his critique of Feuerbach, since this would need an engagement with Feuerbach, which is not the aim of this article.

12 For a more detailed elaboration on what Marx means by 'dirty Jewish' form of practice see Daniel Brudney's elaboration of 'Die Thesen' in *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 261.

13 'Thesen über Feuerbach', in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke*, Band 3 Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1958), pp. 5–7 (p. 5). All citations from this edition will be accompanied by the abbreviation 'MEW'; 'Theses on Feuerbach', in MECW, vol. 5, 1845–47 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), pp. 1–8 (p. 6);

14 'Thesen über Feuerbach' (MEW), p. 7.

15 ibid., p. 8.
16 ibid., p. 6.
17 ibid.
18 ibid.
19 Marx's political philosophy is itself the living example of how theory can turn into practice. As Allen Wood argues, Marx is 'the original voice of revolutionary emotions and instincts as the author of radical theory's concepts and principles. Not only movements of class emancipation, but also those of racial, national, and sexual liberation, have derived their radical spirit, their conception of their emancipation . . . from Marx.' Allen Wood (ed.) *Marx: Selections* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 18–19.
20 Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy*, p. 213.
21 *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie*, in *Die Frühschriften, Von 1837 bis zum Manifest der kommunistischen Partei 1848*, ed. Siegfried Landshut (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1971), pp. 225–316 (p. 300). All citations from this edition will be accompanied by the abbreviation 'F'.
22 I am putting practice here first to support Marx's attempt to counter the primacy of theory.
23 Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx*, p. 107.
24 Although Marx explains that the theory/practice opposition is linked to the subject/nature opposition, he does not make clear the link (or its distinctiveness) between these or other hierarchical oppositions as we find them in late capitalist societies.
25 'Theses on Feuerbach' (MECW), p. 7; emphasis added.
26 Around thesis 6 a whole 'Marx and human nature' debate has evolved. This somewhat, but not completely, coincides with the early/late Marx distinction and its two camps. On the one side there are those authors, such as Louis Althusser, who argue that thesis 6 is the central moment when Marx ceases to be essentialist. On the other side, authors such as Norman Geras and Sebastiano Timpanaro argue that Marx does not abstain from a notion of human nature with and after 'Die Thesen'. I somewhat disagree with both camps. I disagree with Althusser, because Marx, even before 'Die Thesen', such as in his *Die Heilige Familie* and, as I will show, in *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie*, counters any notion of an essential human nature. I also disagree with authors on the other side, such as Norman Geras, because in their search for Marx's affirmation of a human nature, they miss Marx's dialectical conception of the subject/nature opposition, which I argue is more consistent with Marx's dialectical approach to binary oppositions. Such an approach is certainly lost in Geras' own one-sided conceptualization of human nature, which he defines as an 'intrinsic universality and permanence' or as 'permanent characteristics innate in each human being'. Geras, *Marx and Human Nature*, pp. 48–9.
27 'Theses on Feuerbach' (MECW), p. 7.
28 *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke 1845–1846*, Band 3, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962), pp. 11–530 (p. 289). All citations from this edition will be accompanied by the abbreviation 'MEW'.
29 Sebastiano Timpanaro, *On Materialism*, trans. L. Garner (London: Verso, 1980), p. 34

30 'Theses on Feuerbach' (MECW), p. 8.
31 ibid., p. 7.
32 Here we find again the opposing camps that have alternatively discredited Marx's theory of alienation as the immature work of a young Hegelian or considered it as central to Marx's later writings.
33 Ollman, *Alienation,* p. 61.
34 Marx uses the term 'production' or 'productive activity' in *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie* as well as in *Die Deutsche Ideologie*. These terms refer in my reading to Marx's notion of 'practice', which Marx uses in 'Die Thesen'.
35 Tom Rockmore, 'On Recovering Marx after Marxism', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 26(4) (2000): 95–106 (103).
36 *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (MEW), p. 31.
37 ibid., p. 36.
38 *Das Kapital, vol. I: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, Erster Band*, Buch I, *Der Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals*, in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke*, Band 23 (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2001[1947]); *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996; New York: International Publishers, 1996), p. 531.
39 *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, in *Die Frühschriften*, ed. Landshut, pp. 339–485 (p. 361) (F).
40 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844', in MECW, vol. 3, *1843–44* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 229–357 (p. 274); 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844', in Robert C. Tucker (ed.) *The Marx–Engels Reader* (1972, 1978, New York/London: Princeton University Press), pp. 66–125 (R).
41 *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (F), p. 361.
42 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (R), p. 72.
43 *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (F), p. 361.
44 ibid., pp. 361–2.
45 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (R), p. 74.
46 Marx expresses this with the fact that in capitalist society she produces only for herself but not for others with the consequence of an alienation from the generality.
47 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (R), p. 79.
48 *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (F), p. 359.
49 *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie*, in *Die Frühschriften*, ed. Landshut, pp. 225–316 (p. 240); emphases added.
50 ibid., p. 302.
51 For a more thorough discussion of this issue see M. Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, p. 18.
52 *Das Kapital I*, Buch I, *Der Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals*, p. 49. Up to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx tends to consider exchange-value and value as synonymous. In *Das Kapital*, vol. I he works with two concepts of value: one in which he considers it as synonymous with exchange-value, and the other as one that is a general category. In order not to confuse the two I use here exchange-value whenever I point to the mystical fetish form of the commodity, which is the result chiefly of exchange-value.

53 ibid., p. 70.
54 ibid., p. 52.
55 ibid.
56 ibid.
57 ibid.
58 ibid.
59 Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, p. 76.
60 *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 83.
61 ibid., p. 146.
62 ibid.
63 ibid., p. 108.
64 Surplus-value is the amount of the work product that is *not* returned to the worker in the form of wages. It is the extra work that the worker does beyond the necessary time she or he needs to sustain herself or himself. Through the surplus work time, which the worker does not get paid for, surplus-value is generated, which facilitates the accumulation of capital. It is precisely this surplus-value that, once transformed into capital, allows the capitalist to accumulate more capital in the form of means of production (such as machinery) and labor power, allowing the capitalist in turn to create more surplus-value.
65 The capitalist, besides being in the possession of money that she or he can transform into means of production, needs to find in the market the worker, who is separated from the means of production and has nothing but her labor power to sell.
66 It is important to note that this difference between the ones who have and the ones who do not have the means of production is not a 'natural' condition, but is the result of a history of brutal violence that started with the expropriation of the means of production (land and work tools) of farmers during the 15th and 16th centuries, which Marx vividly elucidates in the last chapters of *Das Kapital*, vol. I.
67 ibid., pp. 229, 247, 271, 319, 440.
68 ibid., p. 247.
69 *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. M. Nicolaus (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 106; emphasis added.
70 Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, p. 277.
71 Heller, *The Theory of Need in Marx*, p. 85.
72 Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, trans. J. Curtis Gage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990[1973]).
73 My reading of Marx also challenges those thinkers who enlist Marx 'merely' on the side of redistribution.
74 See 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844', in MECW, vol. 3, p. 296; *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie*, p. 234 (F); for his later works on this topic see 'Marx and Ludwig Kugelman', in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke*, Band 32, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1965[1868]), pp. 582–3.
75 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Die Heilige Familie oder Kritik der Kritischen Kritik: Gegen Bruno Bauer und Konsorten*, in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke*, Band 2, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962), pp. 1–221 (p. 207). *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical*

Criticism: Against Bruno Bauer and Company, in MECW, vol. 4, *1844–45* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 1–293.

76 The little known text 'Peuchet: Vom Selbstmord' (1846) in Marx's early works is his most sustained elaboration on the situation of bourgeois women in capitalist society, as well as his only article on suicide. Here Marx shows that the inhuman position of bourgeois women in modern societies often leads to the suicide of women. 'Peuchet: vom Selbstmord', in *Marx on Suicide*, ed. E. A. Plaut and K. Anderson, trans. E. A. Plaut, G. Edgcomb and K. Anderson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), pp. 77–101. This text is Marx's translation and commentary on the memoirs of the French police administrator, economist, and statistician Jacques Peuchet (1758–1830). Marx not only translates the text, but changes it at certain parts and adds phrases of his own. See Kevin Anderson, 'Marx on Suicide in the Context of His Other Writings on Alienation and Gender', in *Marx on Suicide*, pp. 3–27 (p. 13).

77 *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, p. 359 (F).

78 *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, in MEW, Band 4, p. 478; *The Communist Manifesto*, in MECW, vol. 6 (New York, International Publishers, c1976), pp. 477–519.

79 Cited by Karl Marx in 'Kritische Randglossen', in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke*, Band 1, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1961), pp. 392–409 (p. 396); 'Critical Marginal Notes', in MECW, vol. 3, *1843–44*, pp. 189–210 (p. 193).

80 'Kritische Randglossen', p. 396; 'Critical Marginal Notes', p. 193.

81 See *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 418.

82 This topic is taken up at full length by Marx under the headline of '*moralische Verkümmerung*' (moral atrophy) in *Das Kapital*, vol. I, which I will discuss further below.

83 *Die Heilige Familie*, in MEW, p. 20.

84 ibid., p. 158.

85 Cited by Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 146.

86 Sue was a popular member of the Parisian literary left, whose sentimental novels sold widely.

87 *Die Heilige Familie*, in MEW, p. 178; *The Holy Family*, in MECW, p. 168.

88 *Die Heilige Familie*, in MEW, p. 179; *The Holy Family*, in MECW, p. 169.

89 Interestingly, Marx signifies her as a *Mädchen* (girl), a not quite grown-up woman, which somewhat weakens the powerful image of a woman defending herself against a man.

90 'What is done is done', cited in Karl Marx, *Die Heilige Familie*, in MEW, p. 179; *The Holy Family*, in MECW, p. 169.

91 *Die Heilige Familie*, in MEW, p. 185.

92 ibid., p. 187; emphasis added.

93 *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 416; *Capital*, vol. One, in MECW, vol. 35, p. 486.

94 *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, in MEW, Band 4, p. 469, *The Communist Manifesto*, in MECW, vol. 6, p. 491.

95 'Instruktionen für die Delegierten des Provisorischen Zentralrats zu den einzelnen Fragen', in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke*, Band 16, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962[1867]), pp. 190–99 (p. 190).

96 *Das Kapital*, vol. I, pp. 542, 665.
97 ibid., p. 272.
98 ibid., p. 488.
99 Interestingly, when he addresses these conditions, women disappear out of this statement and he is merely concerned with the working conditions for children. Karl Marx, 'Aufzeichungen einer Rede von Karl Marx über die Folgen der Anwendung von Maschinen durch die Kapitalisten', in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke*, Band 16, pp. 552–4 (p. 552).
100 *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 514.
101 ibid.
102 Lawrence Wilde cites here Marx from *The German Ideology*; see Lawrence Wilde, *Ethical Marxism and its Radical Critics* (Basingstoke, Hants: Macmillan, 1988), p. 1.
103 *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 421.
104 ibid., pp. 421–2.
105 ibid., p. 308.
106 *Nationalökonomie und Philosophie* (F), p. 258.
107 *Capital I* (MECW), p. 396; emphasis added.
108 *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 724.
109 ibid.
110 ibid., p. 420.
111 The notion of an 'unnatural alienation' might tell us more about Marx's unnatural male/female opposition, which ascribes caring functions chiefly to the female side of the binary, than would any alleged alienation of the working-class woman from her children.
112 ibid.
113 ibid., p. 421.
114 *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, in Die Frühschriften, Von 1837 bis zum Manifest der kommunistischen Partei 1848, Siegfried Landshut (ed.) (1971, Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag), pp. 207–24, p. 208; emphasis added.
115 I am indebted for this insight to Jonathan Wolff, *Why Read Marx Today?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 19.
116 *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 416. This work must now be performed by other people and 'ready-made' products must be bought, which, according to Marx, 'unnecessarily' raises the costs of the working-class family.
117 'Prosperität–Die Arbeiterfrage', in *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke*, Band 9, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1960), pp. 476–82.
118 *Das Kapital*, vol. I, p. 425.
119 ibid., p. 417.
120 Himani Bannerji, 'Building from Marx: Reflections on Class and Race', *Social Justice* 32(4) (2006): 144–60.
121 Although Marx did not directly explain the commodity form as an unconscious core of capitalism, successful readings of Marx such as Goux's support such an endeavor of Marx's project.