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Productive forces, the passions and natural philosophy: Karl Marx, 1841–1846

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the emergence of Karl Marx's concept of history over the period 1841 to 1846. Whereas in Marx's view the productive forces shaped human history, it is argued in this article that Marx believed the productive forces in their turn were fuelled by psychological drives; in effect, Marx made the passions the deepest motive force of history. 'Historical materialism' as it crystallized in those early years was a theory of materialized subjectivity. Marx's comments on various Antique and Modern philosophies of nature evince that he discerned important parallels between the developmental processes of human history and of nature. If Marx traced the dynamism of the productive forces to the human passions, he was adhering to an essentially Romanticist ontology of self-creative, impassioned nature.

This article explores the emergence of Karl Marx's concept of history over the period 1841 to 1846, the years when he moved from Young Hegelianism to the new theory of history Friedrich Engels later dubbed 'historical materialism'.¹ It aspires to contribute to our understanding of this complex problematic by zooming in on the very short period of time when Marx first formulated his ideas. In a further limitation, I will sidestep the problem of Marx's intellectual relationship with Engels, by exclusively concerning myself with the former.

The main point I will be concerned with is the conclusion Marx reached in the mid-1840s to the effect that humanity's non-economic pursuits, and human history in general, are mainly conditioned by the development of the 'productive forces'. This idea that, for Marx, productive force came to represent the fundamental determinant of human history is not *per se* wrong, but it is fundamentally inadequate.

Marx surely worked on the assumption that the world is structured as a material productive force, and that it is from the workings of this force that social consciousness emerges. But he also believed that society's productive substratum is fuelled and brought to productivity and life by passionate drives inhering in it. He regarded productive forces as material articulations of the human passions; to him, humanity represented an *impassioned productive force*. In arguing that productive force was empowered by the human will and by humanity's life-enhancing passions, he in effect cast the passions as the deepest motive force of human history.

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There is a powerful intuition in the literature that something is inherently problematic about the idea of the primacy of the productive forces and that Marx must have realized that. What would have provided productive force with its irresistible momentum? What makes the productive forces move and develop? Cornelius Castoriadis observes that one cannot just endow technology with an ‘autonomous evolution’; it is always people that create its dynamic.² We are thus referred back to the human subject.

The question of what Marx believed to provide the impulse behind the irresistible dynamic of the productive forces has been answered in different ways in the literature. Louis Althusser traced an ‘underground current’ of ‘aleatory materialism’ from the antique philosopher, Epicurus, to Machiavelli and others. Even though Marx’s commitment to it lacked firmness, Althusser believed he participated in this current. Given the significance of Epicurus in the early stages of Marx’s thinking this is an intriguing suggestion. However, I can see very little in Marx’s work to suggest that he would have shared Althusser’s reading of the history-creating subject as the fruit of an essentially contingent process.³

A much stronger case for a subjectivist reading of Marx’s productivism was, ironically, presented by an author who was known for his insistence that Marx was a pure technician. G.A. Cohen suggested that, with Marx, the source of the development of the productive forces was human rationality, the growth of technical knowledge, and thus ‘subjective’.⁴

Recently, Michael Quante has provided yet another powerful subjectivist reading of Marx. Quante argues that the primacy of labour in Marx’s work remained underpinned by a subjective factor; with Marx, humanity collectively represented an extension and the apex of Nature, which Marx, again, regarded as a self-developing process possessing the ‘status of a subject’. More concretely, Quante argues that people objectify themselves in material products because, in a Hegelian motive, they hope to gain increased self-knowledge at the hand of their own products. The production process is thus fuelled by humanity’s purposive drive for self-knowledge.⁵

Other authors have sought to answer the question in less Hegelian and more Romanticist directions. Robert Tucker and Andrew Chitty point to Marx’s tendency to ground the productive forces in humanity’s life process in a terminology with obvious Romanticist connotations. They trace Marx’s conceptualization of human society in terms of ‘life forces’, which he later translated into ‘productive forces’.⁶

Alvin Gouldner directly points to human creativity as the urge behind Marx’s productive forces. ‘Marx’s paean to productivity is the “scientific” *sublimation* of the early nineteenth-century romantic adulation of Promethean “creativity.” It is only that, whereas the Romanticist counterposed ‘*living*’ creativity to “dead” mechanization’, for Marx creativity was embodied precisely in modern, mechanized production.⁷

The Marxist scholar, Antonio Negri, places Marx in the Spinozist tradition to reach very similar conclusions. In Negri’s reading, the 17th-century Dutch philosopher cast humanity as an active productive force driven by the will and the passions and by the desire to appropriate its environment.⁸ In this reading of Spinoza, productive-force determinism emerges from the subjective factor of human passion. Significantly, Negri suggests that Marx’s idea of ‘living labour’ as the motor of production and innovation reflected this Spinozan passionate, productive self-activity.⁹

Marx’s thinking was of course never monolithic. It would be better to say that it represented a patchwork of various strands. But, overall, I will argue in what follows that

he envisioned humankind more as a passionate force of self-creation and self-enhancement than as the Hegelian seeker of knowledge and self-understanding, or, for that matter, as a Fichtean activist.

The assumption of the primacy of the passions runs like a red thread through Marx's writings in the years 1841 to 1846. The terminology in which he expressed his 'passionate' interpretation of productivity was subject to significant changes, but he never fundamentally changed his mind. Given the profound political and philosophical changes his thinking underwent, this constancy is quite surprising. When he was writing his dissertation, Marx was a Young Hegelian with a particular attachment to Bruno Bauer. Subsequently, he shifted his allegiance more to Ludwig Feuerbach, finally to abandon the radical-democratic party altogether to convert to communism. I will use the method of close textual analysis to demonstrate that, despite Marx's changing philosophical and political allegiances, the same core assumptions remained in place through the years 1841 to 1846.

Romanticism

The second, closely related point I will be making in this article is that, if Marx traced the dynamism of the productive forces to the human passions, while casting the human species in terms of dynamic, self-determining creative energy, he was elaborating on an essentially Romanticist ontology and philosophy of nature. Marx's Romanticist proclivities are evinced most strikingly in his comments on various philosophies of nature, to be found in his 1841 dissertation as well as in other places. These comments are an important source base of the present research.

It has been asserted that natural philosophy was of little concern to Marx and that he did not care for speculating about natural laws.¹⁰ True, Marx never systematically worked out a philosophy of nature of his own, not even in bare outlines. But his interest in the subject is sufficiently attested by the fact that he chose the Democritean and Epicurean philosophies of nature as the subject of his dissertation.

The many references in his dissertation and other writings suggest that natural philosophy mainly interested Marx because of the important parallels between the developmental processes of human history and those to be discovered in nature. Marx was especially sympathetic to those natural philosophers who regarded nature as self-creative; as he saw it, atoms and matter were at once productive of consciousness and structural complexity, *and* the embodiment of deep-seated living passions. In a close parallel, Marx cast the human productive forces as the creative driving force of human history *and* as the instrument of the human passions, i.e. of the desire to consolidate, beautify and expand human life. In several philosophies of nature with which he familiarized himself, Marx found confirmation of this intuition that the passions represented the most deep-seated motive force of human history.

I believe the implications of Marx's comments on nature and matter for his reading of human society have not been sufficiently appreciated. This is probably because we tend to associate an interest in the natural sciences and a concomitant tendency to determinism more with Engels than with Marx. On the contrary, my point here is that Marx did have a strong interest in the dynamics of nature and matter, but that, ironically, that interest turned him away from determinism and helped him to establish a philosophical basis for the primacy of the human passions.

Romanticism and Young Hegelianism

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Friedrich Schleiermacher and other German Romanticist philosophers, writers and poets of the late 18th and early 19th centuries imagined nature as an active, self-creative and self-organizing living force that is for ever in a state of becoming and that is held together by the divine cosmic spirit. The Romanticist philosophy of nature has been interpreted as a dynamic reinterpretation of Spinoza's substance.¹¹

There is no consensus about the significance of Marx's debt to Romanticism, but the fact that he was indebted to that tradition at all has been widely acknowledged in the literature. The young man's restless, rebellious, combative mentality and his 'ironic' rejection of the existing world have been interpreted as a Romanticist frame of mind.¹² Obviously, Marx's ideal of the restoration of unalienated humanity owed something to the German Romantic tradition.¹³ Romanticism has also been referred to as one of the possible sources of Marx's attachment to *Sinnlichkeit* or sensuousness.¹⁴

Marx began his studies at Bonn University in 1835, only to relocate to Berlin University the next year. His studies would have familiarized him with the Romantic philosophy. Bonn University was one of Romanticism's bastions. Marx attended the lectures of a major figure of the movement, literary critic and philosopher of art and language, August Wilhelm von Schlegel. In Berlin Marx followed classes of Henrik Steffens, pupil of the great Romanticist philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling.¹⁵ Marx knew by heart and deeply admired the poets Goethe and Heinrich Heine.¹⁶

Regardless of how strong his initial sympathies might have been, it did not take long for Marx to begin to turn away from Romanticism, which had been a progressive tendency at the turn of the century but under Schelling's and other hands acquired a reactionary theological orientation. He informed his father in November 1837 that, while in Berlin, he had drifted to the more exciting company of a 'Doctors' Club' of young Hegel followers.¹⁷ It was the core business of the Young Hegelians to critique Romanticist thought.¹⁸

The Young Hegelian 'party' emerged roughly after 1839. Hegel had passed away in 1831. As the Prussian state entrenched itself in conservatism, some of his young followers assumed an ever more critical stance towards established religion and the existing political order, defending democratic republicanism as they did in an often abstruse philosophical jargon.

Marx participated in the Young Hegelian search for a definition of the human subject as a spiritual but non-transcendent world-shaping force.¹⁹ The first Young Hegelian to make his mark among a wider public was David Friedrich Strauss, who argued in his iconoclastic 1835 *Life of Jesus* that the divine had not been incarnated exclusively in a single man, but on the contrary in humanity collectively.²⁰ In his 1841 *Essence of Christianity*, Ludwig Feuerbach rejected the whole idea of a transcendental god, whom he downgraded as the projection of humanity's own divine essence.²¹ Again, Bruno Bauer translated Hegel's transcendent *Geist* into the critical human self-consciousness combating established religion and archaic political establishments.²²

World of atoms

When Marx was writing his dissertation about the Epicurean and Democritan philosophies of nature he was still on very good terms with Bauer. The dissertation was accepted

by the University of Jena in 1841.²³ The fact alone that he chose this subject may have testified to a wish to create a distance between himself and Romanticism: Epicurus was 'the philosopher most hated by Romantics'. In him they saw the source of the modern mechanistic materialism detested by them.²⁴ Yet, the drift of Marx's argument was precisely to show that Epicurus had *not* been a mechanist.

The dissertation's focus on self-consciousness testifies to Marx's closeness to Bauer.²⁵ But the Bauerian celebration of the human subject also served Marx well in accommodating his Romanticist Prometheism. The dissertation defined 'human self-consciousness' as the 'supreme deity', while at the same time identifying the god-hating rebel Prometheus as its pre-eminent mythological representative.²⁶

Roberto Finelli convincingly argues that Marx's preference for Epicurus betrayed his continuing Hegelian inspiration. Whereas, according to Marx, Democritus regarded the atom merely as a material object of empirical research, Epicurus understood it primarily as a concept whose material and ideal stages of development could be deduced philosophically and dialectically.²⁷

Marx accused Democritus of seeing only the 'material side' of 'blind necessity' while failing to recognize the 'ideal' side of 'movement as self-determination'.²⁸ This allowed Marx to make a case for human liberty: in his eyes, in avoiding Democritan determinism, Epicurus made room for freedom and the autonomous human self.

Marx regarded the atom as an ideal point, which, as it moves, dialectically negates itself to become a straight line representing the material world. Marx was particularly fascinated by the next following negation, i.e. by the Epicurean idea that atoms display a swerve or declination, a tendency to trace a skewed path deviating from the straight line of mere falling. By following its own, deviating path, the atom becomes an ideal entity liberated from its only relative, purely material existence.²⁹ As Marx expressed it in his notebooks, the atom comes to real, i.e. ideal existence in a process of abstraction, which he imagined as a 'collision' with the 'concrete world', i.e. with 'the living, the spiritual [*Seelenhafte*], the organic'.³⁰

If the straight line represented the atom's merely material existence, Marx saw the process of deviation as the atom's act of self-confirmation.³¹ In declining from its straight path, the atom embarks on a 'self-centred [*selbstische*]' movement.³² Through the declination, the atom liberates itself from the 'bonds of fate'; the declination represents the atom's 'real soul'.³³ Thus, an atomic self-consciousness of sorts is seen to be emerging from the merely material background.

Marx made the swerve responsible not only for the origination of the atoms' 'soul' but also for the structures they form. Quoting and paraphrasing the Roman Epicurean Lucretius, he referred to the emergence of 'combinations of atoms [*Bildungen aus den Atomen*]' in the tense, tumultuous process of the atoms' 'repulsion and attraction'. The atoms forge themselves in the 'workshops and smithies of the world' that they really are.³⁴ Once again following Lucretius, he noted that it was only the atoms' tendency to decline from their paths that make it possible for them not only to clash but also to 'assemble [*sich treffen*]'. Without the force of repulsion the atoms would never meet but would always continue to fall in parallel, but the process of declination and repulsion changes 'the whole inner structure [*Konstruktion*] of the atomic empire' and really creates the world.³⁵ Thus, Marx conjured up complex structures emerging from the primitive material background in a self-productive process.

To my knowledge, it has not been pointed out in the literature that Marx's interpretation of the emergence of structures closely resembled Schelling's. In his 1798 work, *On the World Soul*, the latter had argued for the existence of an original force moving in a straight line, which however is confronted with an opposite force of attraction that causes it to deviate from the straight line and circle back to itself. According to Schelling, that is how matter comes to organize itself.³⁶

In Marx's Epicurean scheme, the atom's self-consciousness or 'soul' was a derived phenomenon, a product of its separation from a pre-existing material background represented by a straight line. Likewise, structures emerge from underlying atomic forces, cast by Marx as active and productive ('workshops and smithies'). This may have been the first occasion for him to suggest very tentatively that spirit and structural complexity are generated by underlying material forces that are seen to be productive.

However, all this begs the question of what makes the atom swerve in the first place. In Marx's dialectical scheme, the atom's declination from the straight line is a philosophical deduction, a step in the deployment and realization of the concept of the atom. But it is also at this point that we recognize the degree to which Marx remained under the spell of Romanticist readings of nature. In exploring what lies at the basis of the swerve, Marx suggested that atoms are driven to their erratic behaviour by deep-lying passionate forces: the atom contains 'something in its breast that can fight back and resist', and it is that which manifests itself in its askew path.³⁷ He also referred to an 'energetical principle' inhering in nature.³⁸ Following Lucretius, Marx referred to a 'power [*potestas*]' representing the element of 'the defiance, the obstinacy of the atom'.³⁹ He also copied out Lucretius's conceptualization of the world of atoms as 'life forces [*vitalia rerum*]'.⁴⁰

Marx thus cast atoms in terms of living, productive *and impassioned* forces. The atom's soul remained a derived phenomenon insofar as it emerged from these forces. But it would be closer to Marx's intention to say that soul is inherent in that material world, that it is always already there: it is the restless passion that makes it unavoidable for the atom to decline from its straight path, and through which process passion eventually turns into self-consciousness.

Whereas Marx surely followed Hegelian dialectics and made the Bauerian notion of self-consciousness the focus of his dissertation, his notions of the world as an impassioned force reflected his continued Romanticist inclinations.

The dissertation furthermore testifies to Marx's instinct that the processes playing themselves out at the atomic level had their parallels in the human realm. Following Epicurus, he discerned an intriguing parallel between the emergence of atomic and individual human self-consciousness: quite like the atom's self-centredness emerging in the process of the atom's separation from the straight line, so he believed human self-consciousness emerges when the individual crushes within himself 'his relative existence, the power of desire and of mere nature'. Marx concluded: '*Repulsion is the first form of self-consciousness*'.⁴¹ In a striking formula, Epicurean '*atomistics*' represented '*the natural science of self-consciousness*'.⁴² Finally, Marx also believed that friendships between human beings and the political 'contract [*Vertrag*]' result from underlying forces of repulsion.⁴³ These formulations may represent the very first inklings of what later became historical materialism.

Living forces and natural ground

In the years 1841–1843, the Young Hegelian Karl Marx remained preoccupied with liberal issues such as freedom of speech and democratization. In the Bauerian spirit, he demanded that state constitutions conform to the achievements of the critical spirit; but in his 1843 *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* he identified that critical spirit, in a Feuerbachian turn, with the 'real person [*Menschen*]'.⁴⁴

Marx's point was that the state must not only be made to conform to the demands of the critical spirit but also be made to represent society's real, underlying vital forces. In his dissertation, he had suggested that the state, which he conceptualized as a force of reason, must conform to the 'living powers [*lebendigen Mächten*]'.⁴⁵ In July 1842 he compared the state to a 'great organism', with philosophy as its 'living soul' and which was to be fed by the precious 'juices' of the people.⁴⁶ In August he identified the 'new spirit' with the 'new life's feeling of its own identity [*Selbstgefühl*]'.⁴⁷ In November he repeated once again that the law must reflect the 'practical life powers [*Lebensmächte*]'.⁴⁸ The next month he compared the state to a 'living organism', that was 'animated [*begeistet*] by one and the same life'.⁴⁹ A true state would be a 'natural-spiritual domain [*natürlicher Geisterreich*]'.⁵⁰ It would have to represent the 'self-assured vitality [*Lebendigkeit*] of the supreme force', to which Marx referred either as the 'spiritual powers' or as the 'natural powers'.⁵¹ Thus, Marx now began to conceptualize society's infrastructure as a compound of vital forces, shot through with and animated by a wilful, self-assured soul.

Marx's thinking once again resonated with some of Schelling's work. There is a respectable tradition pointing to the latter's possible contributions to Marx. In particular, Schelling's critique of Hegel's deduction of reality from thought would have contributed to Marx's turn to historical materialism.⁵² Marx indicated in the 10 November 1837 letter to his father that he had been studying the 'natural science, Schelling, history'.⁵³ But it is notoriously hard to make the point of possible Schellingian contributions to Marx stick empirically. Norman Levine insists that Marx never acknowledged any debt to Schelling, that he paid very little attention to him in his writings, and that on the sporadic occasions that he did it was in the negative.⁵⁴

Even so, the parallels between Marx's and Schelling's conceptualizations are too striking to ignore. On 3 October 1843, the former addressed a letter to Feuerbach, praising him as philosophical representative of the supreme powers of 'nature and history' and for resurrecting the 'earnest ideas of Schelling's youth'. Marx congratulated Feuerbach for following the example of the young Schelling, who had discarded 'transcendental idealism' in favour of 'realism' and a 'philosophy of the world', while replacing 'abstract thought' with 'thoughts of flesh and blood'.

Marx commented very negatively on the 'windbag' Schelling of 1843, but in placing the young Schelling in line with Feuerbach, who at the time was the philosopher to which Marx felt the closest, he was paying Schelling in his earlier incarnation the highest possible compliment.⁵⁵ With a high degree of probability, Marx was referring to passages in Schelling's last published, 1809 book, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, in which the philosopher had warned that idealism was in danger of remaining an empty abstraction. Too often, European philosophy overlooked what Schelling referred to as the 'basis of a living realism', the 'living force' of nature, the 'living basis [*Grunde*]', or the 'living foundation [*Fundament*]' of 'flesh and blood'.⁵⁶

Schelling defined 'nature' as the world's 'dark ground'. The force of darkness in nature is gravity, from which light emerges.⁵⁷ The philosopher furthermore observed a close parallel with the origination of the human spirit from the 'dark ground' of unconsciousness. He conceptualized this process in three stages. A blind 'desire' to give birth to itself was the first to emerge from the dark. From desire emerges the only dimly aware human 'will', which Schelling cast as a 'tie of living forces'. Finally, from the will, the 'light' of the intellect goes forth.⁵⁸ Thus, Schelling identified living forces as the natural foundation of the spirit, while at the same time defining these forces themselves as animated by more primitive spiritual phenomena such as desire and the will.

Various passages in Marx's dissertation seem directly to refer to Schelling's 1809 work. The comment that individual self-consciousness emerges by crushing natural desire, quoted earlier, had distinctive Schellingian overtones. Schelling was even more obviously present in the passages where Marx made the spirit arise as '*will*' out of the 'empire of the shadows', while conceptualizing the philosophical intellect as an energetical 'drive [*Trieb*]' and 'inner light'.⁵⁹ In early 1842 Marx once again defined the spirit as the highest reflection of nature's diversity and as a '*light*'.⁶⁰

In another fascinating passage in his 1843 critique of Hegel's philosophy of right, Marx accused Hegel of treating the family and civil society as passive forces compared to the state, as if, in Marx's Schellingian terminology, they were 'the dark natural ground from which the light of the state is being kindled'. On the contrary, Marx insisted that family and civil society must be grasped as active living forces, – and here he was again following Schellingian terminology – as 'real spiritual forms [*Existenzen*] of the will'.⁶¹ Again, in August 1844 he called the system of private property the 'natural foundation [*Naturfundament*]' of the modern state.⁶² All the time, then, Marx seemed to refer to a natural basis of society that was at one and the same time articulating the will and spawning the light of consciousness.

That Marx failed to acknowledge the closeness of his thinking to Schelling's makes considerable sense. The latter's 1809 work marked the moment when that author was beginning to turn to conservatism, a move Marx thoroughly despised. It would have represented a major problem for him that Schelling gave God an essential role in the emergence of the intellect. Moreover, Schelling identified the dark ground of nature not only as a creative but also as a negative principle that was always threatening to overwhelm the light. He regarded the human will and desire as dangerous forces to be curbed and restrained.⁶³ Even though, as we saw, Marx himself suggested at one point that desire was a force to be crushed, as a revolutionary he would have been dissatisfied with Schelling's presentation of the passions in this negative light.

Sensuous person

In the course of the early 1840s, an awareness grew among the Young Hegelian milieu that Bauer's philosophy of the spirit took insufficient account of real life. When Friedrich Wilhelm IV ascended the Prussian throne in 1840, he relaxed censorship restrictions, but in late 1842 he tightened the reins again.⁶⁴ The new enforcement of censorship undermined Bauer's philosophy of the critical spirit as a potentially effective strategy. Without an open press, it became progressively less likely that reform could be achieved through critical press campaigns. The idea that a narrow scholarly elite might be able to trigger political reform rapidly lost credibility.⁶⁵

Feuerbach was the main Young Hegelian to take issue with the Hegelian assumptions underlying Bauer's work. In his 1841 *Essence of Christianity*, he redefined the spirit as an attribute of real, living people, while distinguishing three animating 'forces' or 'powers' within the human spirit – not only reason but also the will and the heart.⁶⁶ Feuerbach grounded the spirit in a 'living realism', which he associated with the 'sensuous impulses [*sinnlichen Triebe*]' and with the body: 'the body is nothing *without flesh and blood; flesh and blood is life; and life alone is the reality of the body.*'⁶⁷

Feuerbach however never completed the shift from the intellect to the passions. He cast the senses as essentially passive elements – not as a dynamic impulse or force motivating history. In his 1843 essay, *Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy*, he described his own philosophy as a synthesis of Hegel and Schelling. While identifying Hegel with the 'head', thought, the spirit, he derived the principles of the 'heart', 'passion' and the 'principle of life' from Schelling. Feuerbach associated the passions with the capacity for suffering, receptivity and 'intuition [*Anschauung*]'. The head, not the passions, remained for him the faculty that allowed humanity to put its mark on material reality. Most succinctly, Feuerbach cast the head as 'the source of activity' and the heart as the 'passive principle'.⁶⁸

When in early 1843 the Young Hegelians began to divide their sympathies between Bauer and Feuerbach, Marx and Engels sided with the latter.⁶⁹ Marx was sufficiently impressed by Feuerbach's 1843 essay to fall in line with him and cast the human passions as an essentially passive element.

In the introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, written late 1843 to January 1844, Marx pointed to philosophy as the initiator of the revolution, which however could not do without what he called a 'passive element'.⁷⁰ He identified that passive element as the living people with their needs, the proletariat, the 'naive popular soil' that needed to be struck by the 'thunderbolt of thought' to be set into motion.⁷¹ The term 'soil' suggests that the living people in Marx's eyes represented society's real basis. He referred to society's 'material basis' in so many words.⁷² But he followed Feuerbach in casting the passions animating that material basis as essentially passive forces.

Active productive force

In October 1843 Marx went to Paris to establish a new French-German journal. This co-production with his friend Arnold Ruge was no success – only one issue of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* ever came out. But Marx remained in the French capital until February 1845. He became a communist in Paris and it is in that city that he befriended Engels in the late summer of 1844.

In the preface to his *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*, written between April and August 1844, Marx acknowledged his important debt to Feuerbach.⁷³ But the Feuerbachian conceptualization of the sensuous living human being as essentially passive could no longer satisfy him. He reframed humanity as an 'active natural being'.⁷⁴

Marx set to work to reinterpret the subject in terms of productive activity. He now began to refer to humanity as a 'productive force' engaged in a labour process.⁷⁵ This does not mean, though, that he ceased to imagine humanity in terms of a life process. Quite the contrary, he directly deduced productive activity from the condition that human beings are biological entities and particles of nature. It is because people are

living natural beings that have to maintain themselves that they must produce in the first place. Marx cast production as a function of life; in his own words, production represents 'life engendering life' or the '*activity of life* [*Lebenstätigkeit*]'.⁷⁶ Briefly, production is what life does to sustain itself.

Marx believed that people concretely feel the urge to produce because they possess certain faculties, which he called the 'essential forces [*Wesenskräften*]' and which are common to us all.⁷⁷ He referred to these faculties as humanity's 'essential productive forces [*produktiven Wesenskräfte*]'.⁷⁸ Again, he continued to use the terms '*natural forces*' and '*life forces*' to refer to humanity's active faculties.⁷⁹

The essential forces defined the human individual as a decentred, innerly fragmented ensemble. Marx believed that 'in each of [a person's] essential forces inheres the quality of self-centredness [*Selbstigkeit*]'.⁸⁰ He furthermore identified the essential forces with the individual's 'organs' or 'senses'. In addition to sight, hearing, and so on, the 'senses' comprised the Feuerbachian triad of thought, the will, and the heart.⁸¹

In Marx's eyes, the essential forces or senses function as *Triebe*.⁸² People are motivated to engage in production by these drives, instincts, or impulses. In Marx's blunt words, 'industry' is the '*opened* book of the *human essential forces*, the human *psychology* turned into sensuous reality [*sinnlich vorliegende*]'.⁸³ This passage is extraordinarily important, as it indicates that even when Marx was beginning to conceptualize humanity in terms of productive forces he stuck to the idea that productive activity was fuelled by psychological drives.

Marx never completely discarded the Hegelian-Bauerian heritage. He never stopped seeing the essential force of self-consciousness or thought as one of humanity's active motive forces. Self-consciousness remained the one essential force to distinguish humans most sharply from animals.⁸⁴ He furthermore accepted a significant role for the natural sciences and the intellect in boosting production.⁸⁵ But the sensuous passions, too, were now upgraded to active essential forces. Marx defined 'passion [*Leidenschaft*]' straightforwardly as '*activity*' and as the '*sensuous eruption*' of the human '*essence*'.⁸⁶

What is more, Marx identified the passions as the essential force most directly engaged in fuelling the productive effort. In his eyes, people are '*suffering*' beings, for they lack that which they vitally need: the objects of consumption needed for survival are external to them and must be procured from nature. In a brief but absolutely crucial formula he indicated that it is the passions that set people in motion to solve this problem: while defining humankind as '*a passionate being*', he asserted that '*passion is the essential force of humanity that energetically strives for its object*'.⁸⁷ Even in humanity's new incarnation as productive force, it remained, then, humanity's own passions that made them move.

Marx now began systematically to criticize the identification of the passions with passivity. In a letter to Feuerbach dated 11 August 1844, he referred to the definition of the passions offered by the French utopian socialist, Charles Fourier, as the '*main impulse* [*Hauptmobil*] of nature and society'. Marx regarded the downgrading of the active role of reflection as one-sided. But taking '*critique*' as the '*only active element in history*', to be opposed to '*the whole of humanity as [...] an inert mass*', was no less untenable in his view.⁸⁸

In his 'Theses on Feuerbach', the famous notes likely dating from spring 1845, Marx criticized Feuerbach for regarding sensuous reality merely under the angle of *Anschauung*, passive intuition, while leaving the '*active side*' to be dealt with by idealism. This would leave society divided between an active educational elite and the passive common people, i.e. the position Marx himself had recently occupied but had now

abandoned. In opposing Feuerbach's tendency towards passive contemplation, Marx associated human practice with 'sensuous activity'. This is essential, for it allows us to see that Marx did not merely wish to complement the passive senses with the active spirit, but that he recast *the senses themselves* as an active force.⁸⁹

Marx's activist reconceptualization of the human passions resonated with his natural-philosophy views. In a fascinating passage in his Paris manuscripts, he observed that 'self-creation', which he referred to either as *Durchsichselbstsein* or as *Selbsterzeugung*, or again as spontaneous generation (*generatio aequivoca*), represented the fundamental principle of emergence of both nature and humanity.⁹⁰

The Holy Family, a co-production with Engels published in February 1845, contains a section analysing the contributions to materialism of Bacon, Descartes and several other British and French philosophers from the 16th century onwards. Marx and Engels regretted that, since Thomas Hobbes, the human spirit had been reduced to a 'purely rational being [*Verstandeswesen*]', an abstract entity '*without flesh* [*fleischlosen*]' that could no longer accommodate the 'human passion'. Matter, the 'subject of all changes', had come to be understood in purely mechanical terms.⁹¹

Marx and Engels sympathized with views of matter as a creative, i.e. productive force moving itself. In their reading, Bacon believed in 'living, individualising *essential forces*' inhering in matter.⁹² In paraphrasing Bacon, Marx and Engels decked out matter with certain 'inborn qualities' of which movement was the main one, and which, again, Bacon traced to passionate qualities such as '*impulse, vital spirit, vigour, [...] agony* [*Trieb, Lebensgeist, Spannkraft, ... Qual*] inhering in matter'.⁹³ Marx and Engels sympathetically referred to Descartes, in his capacity as physicist not as philosopher, for endowing matter with a 'self-creating power', and for representing mechanical movement as the 'manifestation of the life [*Lebensakt*]' of matter.⁹⁴ Movements of matter were thus being traced to living forces and the passions inhering in them. And once again Marx and Engels did not hesitate to assert that the human subject and matter manifest the same working principles: 'Humanity and nature are subject to the same laws.'⁹⁵

Historical materialism

In December 1844, the Prussian authorities prevailed upon the French government to expel the politically dangerous Karl Marx from the country. In February 1845 Marx left Paris and moved to Brussels.

In the 1845–1846 *German Ideology* fragments,⁹⁶ he and Engels revisited the idea of humanity as a productive force. But they now added a new dimension to it by making society's philosophical life and its 'social system [*Verkehrsform*]' directly dependent on the 'productive forces': social systems in their view tended to correspond with these forces, but, unavoidably, they would be made subject to revolutionary overthrow once they become a 'fetter' upon their development.⁹⁷

Marx did not invent the economic model of historical analysis. The idea that a society's legal and political institutions tend to correspond with its mode of subsistence had been formulated by Adam Smith and other authors of the Scottish Historical School during the 1760s and 1770s.⁹⁸

To my knowledge, it has not been noted in the literature that some of Schelling's formulations, too, strikingly foreshadowed the Marxian dynamics of productive activity

in fetters. In one of his influential works of natural philosophy, Schelling had defined nature as 'productive activity', 'productivity', or 'productive force [*Produktionskraft*]'. He further assumed that the underlying force of productivity would inevitably crash into a countervailing, retarding force. In the process, 'points of inhibition' or 'eddies' will be created, which is, again, how Schelling thought material objects and structures emerge. Schelling furthermore asserted that the inhibited productive force will always be driven by its own dynamic to uproot and destroy such barriers.⁹⁹

This brings us to the question of whether the new Marx of *The German Ideology* broke with his earlier, 'passionate' reading of productive force. Althusser famously argued that the text represented a complete break with what Marx had been writing in 1844. Marx now supposedly discarded his former humanist philosophy, while replacing the category of the subject with that of the productive forces.¹⁰⁰

That reading of *The German Ideology* is very difficult to uphold. To be sure, there is no doubt that Marx made humanity's non-economic pursuits dependent on the development of its productive forces, but all the same he continued to cast the productive forces as materializations of human subjectivity.

Marx continued to refer to production as humanity's 'active life process' – exactly as in the 1844 manuscripts. It was 'life' that determined consciousness.¹⁰¹ And when he and Engels referred to life, they were referring to living individuals. Production represented the process of individuals materially moulding themselves, while enriching and expanding their lives. In their words, production represented a 'particular form of activity of these individuals, a particular way for them to express their life, their particular *mode of life*. As individuals express their life, so they are.'¹⁰² More briefly, in production, the individuals bring their 'real-life content' to expression.¹⁰³

It was therefore only natural for Marx bluntly to define the productive forces as 'the forces of the individuals'.¹⁰⁴ The productive forces represented the 'mode of self-activity [*Selbstbethätigung*] of the individuals'.¹⁰⁵ Briefly, then, Marx regarded productive force as the human individual's self-expression.

Conclusions

The young Karl Marx adhered to an ontology of both nature and humanity as self-creative, self-productive, self-organizing processes. He worked under the assumption that these processes were, first, being fuelled by certain passionate impulses, while, second, in the process, generating consciousness and complex structures.

In his dissertation, as well as in the Paris manuscripts and in the *Holy Family*, Marx pointed to the close parallels between the workings of material nature and human society. This not to say, though, that he made humanity directly subject to the laws of nature or that he ended up with a deterministic and naturalistic view of history. The philosophical position occupied by him has been referred to in other contexts as a 'correlative cosmology'.¹⁰⁶ Briefly, Marx assumed that the material and human spheres run in parallel and operate in much the same way, though on a different level – not that the former determines the latter.

I believe the research presented here allows us to look at the question of determinism and human agency in Marx's work in some new ways. Undeniably, Marx believed that material production represented overwhelmingly the most important human pursuit,

and that morality, philosophy and politics were conditioned, defined or determined by humanity's productive forces. Marx did importantly narrow human agency to the production process, while largely ignoring other drives such as, for example, the sexual urge and the will to power.

But this does not at all imply that Marx disregarded human agency. He did not regard the development of the productive forces as an autonomous process imposing itself upon humanity, but as a creative process driven by humanity's own mental make-up and psychology, in particular by the passionate urge to mould and expand human life and strength. Production represented a *self-imposed* commitment to which people devote themselves to give their lives shape and direction.

Marx cast humanity as an unbridled, passionate species with limitless ambitions. That is also why he found it self-evident that stagnation of the productive forces eventually must trigger revolution: humanity is just too passionately aspiring, too Promethean a being, to accept the stagnation of their life force. Passions earlier channelled creatively into expanding productive forces are bound to be rechannelled into the revolutionary destruction of a social system that impedes productive growth and human life.¹⁰⁷

Apart from the obvious Romanticist connotations, the anthropological hypothesis of humanity as a self-determining species driven by passions resonates with other philosophies influential in Marx's days. Marx was following in the footsteps of Spinoza, the philosopher who contributed so significantly to the Romanticist philosophy of nature with his concept of *natura naturans*, nature's self-causing activity.¹⁰⁸ Marx's anthropological hypothesis closely resembled Spinoza's 'conatus', the inclination possessed by all things to persevere in their existence.¹⁰⁹ His reading of human nature as a longing for preservation and expansion might also refer us to Marx's contemporary, Arthur Schopenhauer's concept of the *Wille zum Leben*, the 'will to live'. This German philosopher discovered a blind striving towards existence and reproduction at the basis of all things.¹¹⁰

What fundamentally distinguished Marx from these thinkers was his insight that, to become real and effective, the will must channel its energies onto production. The passion for life is only to be effected *through* productive force. Without a material extension, the human aspiration is powerless, but the passions drive production – not the other way around.

Human agency in Marx's work must not mainly be sought in 'relatively autonomous' spheres or in the class struggle, but within the productive forces themselves. Whereas these forces determine social consciousness and the political sphere, it is the human passions that bring them to development in the first place. Even though their work is mainly that of a productive force, it is the passions that drive history. Historical materialism in its original, 1845–1846 formulation was a theory of materialized desire and subjectivity.

Notes

1. For Engels's use of the term 'historical materialism', see 5 August 1890 letter to Conrad Schmidt: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol. 37 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1967), p. 437 [henceforth *MEW*]; 21 September 1890 to Joseph Bloch, *ibid.*, p. 464; 27 October 1890 to Conrad Schmidt, *ibid.*, p. 493.
2. Paul Cardan [Cornelius Castoriadis], *History and Revolution: A Revolutionary Critique of Historical Materialism* (London: Solidarity Pamphlet no. 38, 1971), pp. 7–8.

3. Althusser traces the emergence of new modes of production and the creation of states to purely coincidental encounters of structural complexes. See Louis Althusser, 'The underground current of the materialism of the encounter', in François Matheron and Oliver Corpet (Eds) *Louis Althusser. Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978–87* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), pp. 163–207.
4. G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 41–2, 152. For similar interpretations: Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx* (London, Boston, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 78–9; Allan Megill, *Karl Marx: The Burden of Reason (Why Marx Rejected Politics and the Market)* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Cardan, *History and Revolution*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 2, pp. 8, 10.
5. Michael Quante, 'Kommentar', in *Karl Marx: Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 2018), especially pp. 233–262, 267–268, 273–274, 301–315. Quotation at p. 304.
6. Robert C. Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx. Second Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 130. Andrew Chitty, 'The basis of the state in the Marx of 1842', in Douglas Moggach (Ed.) *The New Hegelians: Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 220–241. See also Ernst Kux, *Karl Marx – die Revolutionäre Konfession* (Erlenbach-Zürich, Stuttgart: Eugen Rentsch Verlag, 1967), p. 11.
7. Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Two Marxisms. Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1980), p. 201.
8. Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics* (Minneapolis, Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), especially Chapter 9. See also: Antonio Negri, *Spinoza for Our Time: Politics and Postmodernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
9. Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 31–33, 326–327. For some of the implications of the 'living labour' concept with Marx, see also: Mark Neocleous, 'The political economy of the dead: Marx's vampires', *History of Political Thought* 24, no.4 (2003), pp. 668–684.
10. Norman Levine, *Divergent Paths: Hegel in Marxism and Engelsism*, vol.1, *The Hegelian Foundations of Marx's Method* (Lanham: Lexington, 2006), p. 211.
11. For Romanticism and Spinoza's substance: Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA., London: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 141–143.
12. See, for example: Kux, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 6. See also: Arend Th. van Leeuwen, *Critique of Heaven: The First Series of the Gifford Lectures Entitled 'Critique of Heaven and Earth'* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1972), p. 45.
13. See, for example: Kux, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 6, pp. 8–9, 11–12; Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp.53, 74; James D. White, *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins of Dialectical Materialism* (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 1996), especially pp. 14–15, 21–22, 66, 146; Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), pp. 43–44; David Priestland, *Stalinism and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Inter-war Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 24–29; Heinz Dieter Kittsteiner, 'Von der Geschichtsphilosophie zur Ästhetik. Von der Ästhetik zur Geschichtsphilosophie', in Georg Bollenbeck and Lothar Ehrlich (Eds) *Friedrich Schiller: Der unterschätzte Theoretiker* (Köln, Weimar and Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), pp. 39–58, especially pp. 50–52. In Petra Röder's reading, Marx's social ideal mainly reflected a poetic-aesthetic motive derived from early Romanticism: *Utopische Romantik: Die verdrängte Tradition im Marxismus. Von der frühromantischen Poetologie zur marxistischen Gesellschaftstheorie* (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen + Neumann, 1982).
14. Kux, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 6, pp. 11, 32–33, 41, Chapter 7.

15. On Marx and the Romantic milieu at the universities of Bonn and Berlin, see comments in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels. Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)*, vol. I.1 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1975), p. 1220; Kux, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 6, p. 12; Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 1, *The Founders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 96–97; White, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 13, pp. 14, 126; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (St Ives: Allen Lane, 2016), pp. 62–63; Warren Breckman, *Adventures of the Symbolic: Post-Marxism and Radical Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 75.
16. Leonard P. Wessell, *Karl Marx: Romantic Irony and the Proletariat. The Mythopoetic Origins of Marxism* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), p. 13. For Heine's possible influence on Marx: Nigel Reeves, *Heinrich Heine: Poetry and Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 151–159.
17. *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 10. See for Marx's moving into this new milieu also Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York, London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013), pp. 65–66.
18. White, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 13, pp. 21–22.
19. For Marx and the Young Hegelian movement: David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (London, Melbourne and Toronto: MacMillan, 1969), introduction; William J. Brazill, *The Young Hegelians* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), especially Chapter 7; White, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 13, Chapter 3; Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Josef Rattner and Gerhard Danzer, *Die Junghegelianer: Porträt einer progressiven Intellektuellengruppe* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005); Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels', in Gareth Stedman Jones, Gregory Claeys (Eds), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 556–600; Martin Hundt, 'Linkshegelianismus', in Wolfgang Fritz Haug *et al.*, *Historisch-kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*, vol.8/II, *Links/Rechts bis Maschinenstürmer* (Hamburg: Argument, 2015), 1169–1179; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 15, pp. 77–78, 112.
20. See most concisely the 'Schlussabhandlung' of David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, vol. 2 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969).
21. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums. Nachwort von Karl Löwith* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2011).
22. See for example Bauer's 1841 'Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antchristen', in *Die hegelische Linke*, ed. Karl Löwith (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Fromann Verlag, 1962), pp. 123–225.
23. 'Differenz der demokritischen und epikureischen Naturphilosophie nebst einem Anhang', *MEW*, vol.40, pp. 257–373. The work was written from 1840 to March 1841. For Marx's preserved notebooks, see: 'Hefte zur epikureischen, stoischen und skeptischen Philosophie', *Ibid.*, pp. 13–255. For discussions of the dissertation: van Leeuwen, *Critique, op. cit.*, Ref. 12, Chapters 4 and 5; 'Einleitung', *MEGA*, vol.IV.1, pp. 11*–31*; David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1973), pp. 37–38; Karl Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche: Der revolutionäre Bruch im Denken des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1978), pp. 106–110; Kolakowski, *Main Currents, op. cit.*, Ref. 15, pp. 100–102; Sperber, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 17, pp. 59, 66–69; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 15, pp. 79–83.
24. Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 15, p.79.
25. It was Bauer who guided Marx to the Young Hegelians in the first place: Sperber, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 17, pp. 65–66. For Bauer's influence on Marx see also: Zvi Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx: The Influence of Bruno Bauer on Marx's Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), especially Chapter 6, pp. 153, 157–158. See also: J.M. Barbalet, *Marx's Construction of Social Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 34–35; Roland Boer, 'Friends, radical and estranged. Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx', *Religion & Theology* 17, nos. 3–4 (2010), pp. 358–401; McLellan, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 23, p. 37;

- Sperber, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 17, pp. 68–69; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx, op. cit.*, Ref. 15, p. 92; ‘Einleitung’, *MEGA*, vol. IV.1, p. 23*.
26. *MEW*, vol. 40, pp. 262–263.
 27. Roberto Finelli, *A Failed Parricide. Hegel and the Young Marx* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), especially Chapters 4 and 9. For a similar argument see Peter Fenves, ‘Marx’s doctoral thesis on two Greek atomists and the post-Kantian interpretations’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol.47, no.3 (1986), pp. 433–452.
 28. *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 284.
 29. *Ibid.*, pp. 280–283.
 30. *Ibid.*, p. 39. See also dissertation, p. 282.
 31. Notebooks, *ibid.*, pp. 165, 167.
 32. Notebooks, *ibid.*, pp. 43, 45.
 33. *Ibid.*, pp. 281–282.
 34. Notebooks, *ibid.*, p. 163. For Lucretius’s significance for Marx: ‘Einleitung.’ *MEGA*, vol. IV.1, p.16*.
 35. *MEW*, vol. 40, pp. 283–285.
 36. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Werke, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, vol.6, *Von der Weltseele – Eine Hypothese der höhern Physik zur Erklärung des allgemeinen Organismus* (1798) (Stuttgart: Fromann-Holzboog, 2000), for example: pp. 69, 77–78. For a similar argument in terms of repulsive and attractive forces: *ibid.*, vol. 5, *Ideen zur einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797) (Stuttgart: Fromann-Holzboog, 1994), pp. 185, 195, 220–1. In his dissertation, Marx only briefly referred to Schelling’s later religious views, which in his eyes negatively contrasted with those of the young Schelling: *MEW*, vol. 40, pp. 369–370, 373. For Marx’s references to Schelling in the dissertation, see also van Leeuwen, *Critique, op. cit.*, Ref. 12, pp. 133, 147; Manfred Frank, *Der unendliche Mangel an Sein: Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Marxschen Dialektik* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 216.
 37. *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 281.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
 39. Notebooks, *ibid.*, p. 171.
 40. Notebooks, *ibid.*, p. 176–177.
 41. *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 284.
 42. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 285. According to Van Leeuwen (*Critique, op. cit.*, Ref.12, pp. 102–104), with this ‘very casual allusion to the consequences of the principle of repulsion in other realms than the atomic one’, Marx ‘implicitly formulated the principle of a civil society.’ He let ‘the world of appearances’ emerge out of ‘repulsion and the consequent conglomerations of the qualified atoms.’
 44. *MEW*, vol. 1, p.218.
 45. *Ibid.*, vol. 40, p. 81.
 46. ‘Der leitende Artikel in Nr. 179 der “Kölnischen Zeitung”’, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 97–98, 104.
 47. ‘Das philosophische Manifest der historischen Rechtsschule’, *ibid.*, p. 80.
 48. ‘Die Kommunalreform und die “Kölnische Zeitung”’, *ibid.*, p. 145.
 49. ‘Die Beilage zu Nr.335 und 336 der Augsburger “Allgemeinen Zeitung” über die ständischen Ausschüsse in Preussen’, *ibid.*, vol. 40, p. 408.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 409.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 419.
 52. See Manfred Frank’s introduction in F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp. 7–84. See also: Jürgen Habermas, *Das Absolute und die Geschichte: Von der Zwiespaltigkeit in Schellings Denken* (Bonn: Gummersbach, 1954), pp. 35, 402; Jürgen Habermas, ‘Dialektischer Idealismus im Übergang zum Materialismus – geschichtsphilosophische Folgerungen aus Schellings Idee einer Contraction Gottes’, in Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis: Sozialphilosophische Studien* (Neuwied am Rhein, Berlin: Luchterhand, 1963), pp. 108–161; Friedrich W. Schmidt, *Zum Begriff der Negativität*

- bei Schelling und Hegel (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1971), p. x; Frank, *Unendliche Mangel*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 36, pp. 10, 17–18, Chapters 8 and 9; Karl Löwith, *Hegel zu Nietzsche*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 23, pp. 130–134; Alan White, *Schelling: An Introduction to the System of Freedom* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 189; George E. McCarthy, *Marx's Critique of Science and Positivism: The Methodological Foundations of Political Economy* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer, 1988), pp. 8–14, Chapter 3.
53. *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 9.
 54. Levine, *Divergent Paths*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10, pp. 211–212.
 55. *MEW*, vol. 1, pp. 420–421. For the letter and Marx's positive attitude towards the young Schelling, see: Schmidt, *Zum Begriff*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 52, pp. 108–109; van Leeuwen, *Critique*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, pp. 147–148; Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (London: NLB, 1973), p.88; Frank, *Unendliche Mangel*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 36, p. 184; R. Gascoigne, *Religion, Rationality and Community: Sacred and Secular in the Thought of Hegel and his Critics* (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), p. 206; Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), p.3. For discussions of Schelling's possible influence on Feuerbach, see: Frank, *Unendliche Mangel*, *op. cit.*, Ref.36, p. 10, Chapter 7; Breckman, *Adventures*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 15, pp. 48–49.
 56. F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände* (Frankfurt M.; Suhrkamp, 1975), p.51.
 57. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
 58. *Ibid.*, pp. 54–60. For Schelling's philosophy of nature, see Walter Schulz's introduction to *ibid.*, especially pp. 11–12; Werner Marx, *Schelling: Geschichte, System, Freiheit* (Freiburg, München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1977), pp. 101–104, 116–118; Bowie, *Schelling*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 55, Chapter 2; Alison Stone, 'Philosophy of nature', in Michael N. Forster, Kristin Gjesdal (Eds), *The Oxford Handbook of German Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 319–335, especially p. 321–326; Andrew Bowie, 'Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling', *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 2016 [<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schelling/>] [accessed 11 April 2016], p. 5.
 59. *MEW*, vol. 40, pp. 327–329.
 60. 'Bemerkungen über die neueste preussische Zensurinstruktion', *MEW*, vol. 1, p. 6.
 61. *Ibid.*, pp. 205–207.
 62. 'Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel "Der König von Preussen und die Sozialreform. Von einem Preussen"', *ibid.*, p. 401. The formula of private property as 'natural basis' of the state was repeated in *The Holy Family: ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 120. Alfred Schmidt (*Concept of Nature*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 55, pp. 20–21, 88–89, 97, 220) finds Marx's use of the concepts of life process and natural basis reminiscent of Romantic natural philosophy and of Schelling in particular. But Schelling applied the notion of life process only to organic nature, not, like Marx, also to human society. Andrew Bowie (*Schelling*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 55, p. 58) refers to 'the younger Marx's Schelling-derived concern for non-human nature'.
 63. Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 56, pp. 54–58. For Schelling's turn to a more negative view of nature and the human drives in this work, see also Walter Schulz's introduction to the book: *ibid.*, pp. 14–21.
 64. See: McLellan, *Young Hegelians*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 19, pp. 6, 16–18; Sperber, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 17, p. 64.
 65. McLellan, *Young Hegelians*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 19, pp. 18–19; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 15, pp. 122–123.
 66. Feuerbach, *Wesen des Christentums*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 21, pp. 39–40.
 67. *Ibid.*, pp. 156–158. On Feuerbach's views: McLellan, *Young Hegelians*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 19, pp. 85–116; Brazill, *Young Hegelians*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 19, pp. 135–156; John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path towards Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Chapter 10; Breckman, *Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 19, Chapter 3, pp. 206–216; Rattner and Danzer, *Junghegelianer*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 19, pp. 89–110.
 68. 'Vorläufige Thesen zur Reform der Philosophie', in Max Gustav Lange (Ed.), *Ludwig Feuerbach: Kleine philosophische Schriften (1842–1845)* (Leipzig: Verlag Felix Meiner,

- 1950), pp. 68–71. See also Feuerbach's other essay published in the same year: 'Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft', *ibid.*, pp. 87–170. For the association of the senses and the passions with suffering, intuition, and receptivity, see also: 'Zur Beurteilung der Schrift "Das Wesen des Christentums"' [1842]: Ludwig Feuerbach, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, vol. 3, *Kritiken und Abhandlungen II (1839–1843)* (Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), p.221; February 1843 forward to second edition of 'Das Wesen des Christentums': Feuerbach, *Wesen des Christentums*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 21, p. 21. For the senses in Feuerbach's reading see also: Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 6, p. 80; McLellan, *Young Hegelians*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 19, pp. 97–113; McLellan, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 23, pp. 67–68; David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 218–219; Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 15, p. 154.
69. McLellan, *Young Hegelians*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 19, pp. 33–34, 104–105.
70. 'Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie', *MEW*, vol. 1, pp. 385–386.
71. *Ibid.*, p.391.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 386.
73. Marx referred to Feuerbach's 1843 essays in *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 468. See also p. 569.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 578. Also: pp. 516, 538.
75. See for example: *Ibid.*, pp. 476, 487, 491, 495–496, 528, 559–562, 574. Marx became acquainted with the term through works of political economy. In his Paris notebooks, written between October 1843 and January 1845, he copied out the terms productive forces, natural forces, productive powers, and so on, from the works of Jean Baptise Say, Fryderyk Skarbek, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, James Mill, Friedrich List and others. See: *MEGA*, vol. IV.2, pp. 301–546. See also: 'Erläuterungen', *ibid.*, pp. 870–917; Wood, *Karl Marx*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 4, pp. 66–67; Barbalet, *Marx's Construction*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25, p. 51; Scott Meikle, 'Marx, the European tradition, and the philosophic radicals', in Andrew Chitty, Martin McIvor (Eds), *Karl Marx and Contemporary Philosophy*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pp. 55–75. For Marx's summer 1844 to early 1847 excerpts from works of political economy, see *MEGA*, vol. IV.3. Marx also acknowledged a debt to Engels: *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 468. He referred to Engels's late 1843-early 1844 'Umrisse zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie', in which the latter introduced the concept of 'productive force': *ibid.*, vol.1, pp. 516–517.
76. *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 516.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 577. See also pp. 541, 573.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 562.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 578.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 575.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 539–541.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 578.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 542. See also p. 543.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 516–17.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 543.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 544.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 578–579. See also p. 544.
88. *Ibid.*, vol. 27, pp. 426–427.
89. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 5–6. According to Erich Fromm, Marx regarded passion, not intellect, as the main driving force behind humanity's 'principle of movement' and productive life: *Das Menschenbild bei Marx* (Frankfurt M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1972), pp. 37, 41. Barbalet (*Marx's Construction*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25, pp. 39–42) argues that Marx united Feuerbachian sensuousness with idealist activism, but in the sense that he derived the activism from the sensuousness: 'Marx [...] holds that Feuerbach's conception of man's sensuousness entails human praxis.'
90. *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 545.
91. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 136.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

93. *Ibid.* Schmidt (*Concept of Nature, op. cit.*, Ref. 55, pp. 96–98, 175, 220) finds these observations reminiscent of Schelling and the Romantic philosophy of nature in general.
94. *MEW*, vol. 2, p. 133.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 136. Marx had announced in the Paris manuscripts that the natural sciences and the science of humanity eventually would become one: *Ibid.*, vol. 40, p. 544.
96. ‘Die deutsche Ideologie’, *MEGA*, vol. I.5. This text forms a collection of fragments co-authored in 1845–1846 by the two men. For its history: ‘Einführung’ in *ibid.*, pp. 725–799; Terrell Carver, ‘The German Ideology never took place’, *History of Political Thought*, vol. 31, no.1 (2010), pp. 107–127.
97. *MEGA*, vol. I.5, pp. 102–103. Marx made a similar argument in his March 1845 draft article about Friedrich List’s 1841 *Das nationale System der Politischen Ökonomie*: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 4 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), pp. 282–283.
98. For Marx’s possible inspiration by Smith and others, see Ronald L. Meek, *Studies in the Labour Theory of Value* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1956), p. 52; Ronald L. Meek, ‘The Scottish contribution to Marxist Sociology’, in Ronald L. Meek (Ed.), *Economics and Ideology and Other Essays: Studies in the Development of Economic Thought* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1967), pp. 34–50; Hans Medick, *Naturzustand und Naturgeschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: Die Ursprünge der bürgerlichen Sozialtheorie als Geschichtsphilosophie und Sozialwissenschaft bei Samuel Pufendorf, John Locke and Adam Smith* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), Chapter 5, in particular p. 252; Andrew S. Skinner, ‘Adam Smith. An Economic Interpretation of History’, in Andrew S. Skinner, Thomas Wilson (Eds) *Essays on Adam Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 154–178, especially p. 155; Karl G. Ballestrin, ‘Sources of the materialist conception of history in the history of ideas’, *Studies in Soviet Thought*, vol. 26.no.1 (1983), pp. 3–9.
99. *Werke, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 7, *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie (1799)* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2001), see especially pp. 67, 74, 82, 101–102, 106, 142–143, 201–203, 276. In his dissertation Marx refers to Democritus’s thesis of ‘eddies’ [*Wirbel*] resulting from the clash of repelling atomic forces: *MEW*, vol. 40, p. 284.
100. Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London; Verso, 1979), pp. 158–189, 225–229. For the debate about the 1845 break: Barbalet, *Marx’s Construction, op. cit.*, Ref. 25; Ernie Thomson, *The Discovery of the Materialist Conception of History in the Writings of the Young Karl Marx* (Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004); Marcello Musto, ‘The ‘Young Marx’ myth in interpretations of the *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*’, *Critique* 43, no.2 (2015), pp. 233–260.
101. *MEGA*, vol. I.5, p. 136.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
106. See Antony Black on the Confucian notion of heaven, earth, and humanity going through similar, interrelated cycles: *A World History of Ancient Political Thought: Its Significance and Consequences. Revised and Expanded Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 115.
107. In the 1867 first volume of *Das Kapital*, Marx spelled out this mechanism: from the moment when the relations of production begin to obstruct the productive forces, ‘there stir forces and passions [*Kräfte und Leidenschaften*] within the womb of society that feel themselves fettered’, *MEW*, vol. 23, p. 789.
108. See: Eugene Kamenka, *The Ethical Foundations of Marxism* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 27–30, 96–97.
109. In 1841 Marx excerpted passages from Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise* referring to the conatus: *MEGA*, vol. IV.1, pp. 784–785. For the conatus see Don Garrett, ‘Spinoza’s ethical theory’, in Don Garrett (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 267–314; Thomas Cook, ‘Conatus: a pivotal doctrine

at the center of the *Ethics*', in Michael Hampe, Ursula Renz, Robert Schnepf (Eds), *Spinoza's Ethics: A Collective Commentary* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), pp. 149–166.

110. Christopher Janaway, *Schopenhauer: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 45–47; Dale Jacquette, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Montreal, Kingston and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), Chapters 3 and 4.

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