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PRIVATE PROPERTY IN MARXIAN AND CATHOLIC  
SOCIAL THOUGHT.

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY, PH.D., 1979

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DISSERTATION

PRIVATE PROPERTY IN MARXIAN AND  
CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

Submitted by  
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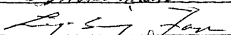
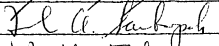
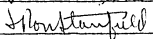
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, Colorado  
Summer, 1979

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Summer, 1979

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY GENE PAUL PETERSON ENTITLED PRIVATE PROPERTY IN MARXIAN AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Committee on Graduate Work

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Adviser



## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### PRIVATE PROPERTY IN MARXIAN AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

This study deals with the teachings of Karl Marx and of the Roman Catholic Church on the role of private property in an economic system. Marx vehemently demanded the abolition of private property in productive goods, while the Catholic Church supports the property institution as a natural law right of man. The immediate goal of the study is to discern those propositions or intuitions which are the fundamental bases leading to these property conclusions.

The study, after a brief summary of the property doctrines of each system and in light of these doctrines, establishes four topical categories: analysis of the economic process, human nature and its development, property and power in society, and normative society and private property. These categories provide areas for the further analysis and comparison of the property views of Marx and of the Church. This analysis and eventual comparison constitutes the major part of the dissertation.

The study holds that both Marxian and Catholic property teachings are arrived at by a heuristic or guiding deductive methodology. The validity of this thesis does not affect the validity of the other specific conclusions arrived at in the study. The more significant of those conclusions are the following: (1) The Marxian view on private property is not a logical necessity flowing from Marx's economic interpretation of history. (2) Marx's property teachings were not

a conclusion from his technical economic analysis. (3) The Catholic Church holds that private property is an institution demanded by natural law, that is, it is an inalienable right which flows from man's nature. The property doctrine of Marx rests on an analogous natural law foundation. (4) The contradictory views on private property of Marx and the Church are due in part to their conflicting views on the nature of man. (5) These two systems also have different views on the importance of class struggle as a radical social relationship. This difference, along with the different opinions on man's nature, affects each system's view on the distribution of power within society. (6) The opinions of both Marx and the Catholic Church on the developmental possibilities of man also have some effect on their property doctrines.

Probably as important as the specific conclusions is the fact that the study uses a quasi-interdisciplinary approach and attempts to analyze the private property question within the context of the total social order.

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## CHAPTER I

### IN SEARCH OF UNDERSTANDING

#### Nature of the Thesis

This study deals with the teachings of Karl Marx and of the Roman Catholic Church on the role of private property in an economic system. Marxian thought and Catholic social doctrine have some remarkable similarities. Both start from a position which champions the dignity of man. Both decry the exploitation of the common laborer. Both have as a goal of their systems the development of the individual, of society, and of human freedom.

Radical differences exist, however, between the two systems. One of the major differences concerns the position of private property within the respective systems. Marx held that private property, specifically ownership of the means of production, is the source of alienation and misery of the worker. Catholic social doctrine sees private property, and this includes the ownership of capital goods, as a permanent and inviolable right of man. Marx saw no hope for human freedom and development until the private ownership of productive goods is abolished and a socialized state established. The Marxian position justified the socialist economic system. Catholic doctrine, while not advocating capitalism, provides an important property justification for the capitalist system.

The core of the conflict between Marxian and Catholic thought on property is the right to ownership of productive goods. But this central issue involves attitudes of both systems under investigation toward all forms of property. These attitudes flow from and reflect themselves in what can be called a philosophy of the use of tangible and intangible possessions. This central issue is also extended by both systems into descriptions of and prescriptions for a normative socio-economic society.

It is the purpose of this study to discern the basis of the contradictory views of Marxian thought and Catholic social doctrine on the issue of private property. The study seeks to discover and analyze the source of intellectual conflict regarding property rights between the two systems of thought. The question being asked is: "What ultimately accounts for the contradictory views on property which are espoused by Karl Marx and by the Catholic Church?"

This specific goal, the discernment of the ultimate basis of the Marxian and Catholic dichotomy on property, has been divided into three logical steps. The first step is to review the positions on property of the two systems and to develop a basis for comparing them. Secondly, the study examines the conceptual development of the two doctrines in order to discover their respective premises and philosophical foundations. Thirdly, the study compares the two positions on property and evaluates the implications of these findings.

It is important to notice that this study does not attempt to make value judgments about the propriety of the two different systems of economic organization. Certainly Marxian and Catholic teachings on property involve ethical judgments which represent systems of value. The problem this study faces is to discover how these value systems affect the respective property doctrines, not to judge the value systems themselves. A further comment on the role evaluative judgments play in this study is given in the final section of this chapter.

The relationship of this study to recent property-rights literature should also be noted. The general tone of much of this recent work revolves around the response of individuals to the established system of property rights. This approach holds that "individuals respond to economic incentives, and the pattern of incentives present at any time is influenced by the prevailing property rights structure."<sup>1</sup> This statement may also be reversed and the claim made that the economic incentives present in a particular situation help to establish a structure of property rights. H. Demsetz has presented this latter thesis in an effort at establishing a theory of property rights and asserted that "the emergence of property rights can be understood best by their

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<sup>1</sup>Eirik G. Furubotn and Svetozar Pejovich, "Introduction: The New Property Rights Literature," in Eirik G. Furubotn and Svetozar Pejovich, eds., The Economics of Property Rights (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1974), p. 1. This work is a collection of recent articles and some original contributions on various issues related to property rights.

association with the emergence of new or different beneficial and harmful effects."<sup>2</sup>

Analysis resulting from both of the above theses allows an extension of traditional microeconomic techniques. At the same time deviation from profit optimizational considerations allowed by organizational structures "tends to support the proposition that the opportunity for discretion does have a systematic effect on resource-allocation decisions . . ." <sup>3</sup> A well-known example of such an analysis is the utility maximizing approach to decision making of the Galbraithian technostructure.

There is another body of recent literature associated with property rights which stresses their function as an instrument of economic power. Allan Gruchy has provided an example of this literature in claiming that such an institutionalist approach uses "conflict rather than harmony" as the starting point for economic analysis. Gruchy noted that "conflicts are settled not by the operations of the forces of the competitive market system, but, rather, by the exercise of economic power buttressed by political and legal power."<sup>4</sup> He stressed the interrelationship among the

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<sup>2</sup>H. Demsetz, "Toward a Theory of Property Rights," in Furubotn and Pejovich, The Economics of Property Rights, p. 34. Demsetz likens the process of emerging property rights to a response to a cost-benefit type of analysis.

<sup>3</sup>O. Williamson, "Managerial Discretion and Business Behavior," (reprinted from the American Economic Review 53 [December 1963]: 1032-1057), in Furubotn and Pejovich, The Economics of Property Rights, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup>Allan G. Gruchy, "Law, Politics, and Institutional Economics," Journal of Economic Issues 7 (December 1973), p. 623. In a similar



economic, political, and legal systems and established this as the institutionalists' paradigm.

The present study is one on a theoretical level using something of this institutionalist approach, although the issue of conflict will be seen as only partially verifiable. The goal of the study is one of discovery. This goal is to uncover the philosophic and economic foundations of two disparate property doctrines. Philosophic is used here to refer to the ultimate and fundamental insights or tenets which result in specific normative positions on property rights. After a comment on the importance of the present work, some initial clarification of these property rights concepts will be made.

#### Significance of the Study

The specific problem this thesis faces is the discovery of the extent and content of two divergent doctrines on private property. In a broader sense this problem extends itself into an investigation of the justification and role of private property in an economic system. This study is inspired by questions fundamental to economic organization. Should the right to private property prevail in an economic system? If so, to what extent should this right be prevalent? What function, positive or negative, does

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approach Warren Gramm maintained that capitalism has forced the law to be less concerned with individual justice and more with the protection of property rights which constitute positions of power. Cf. Warren S. Gramm, "Industrial Capitalism and the Breakdown of the Liberal Rule of Law," Journal of Economic Issues 7 (December 1973): 577-603.

property fulfill in an economic system? Is property necessary in order to provide to individuals incentives adequate for the proper functioning of the economic order? Is the degradation of labor a necessary concomitant of the property institution of capitalism so that "genuine workers' control has as its prerequisite the . . . reorganization of the mode of production"?<sup>5</sup> This study of two major systems of social and economic philosophy attempts to uncover arguments which bear upon these issues.

The relationship between the broader purpose and the specific goal of the study points out the study's significance. This significance is seen to lie in three areas. The first area is the nature of an economic system in its property institutions. As was previously mentioned, the position of Marx demands an abolition of private property and the establishment of a socialist society, while Catholic teaching allows some form of private property. Marxian and Catholic teachings thus present arguments which are pertinent to major decisions of economic systems--their socialist or capitalist form in the matter of private property.

Nations must make many decisions regarding the status of property within their borders. Such questions as the nationalization of industry, the structure of antitrust laws, the extent and the size of corporate structures, and the right of citizens to hold some form of capital assets must be faced. Equally important questions regarding the planning of economic activity, the extent of

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<sup>5</sup>Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital, Foreword by Paul M. Sweezy (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), p. 78.

private wealth, incentives for workers, and the nature of the tax structure involve decisions related to property rights.

Along with these questions other economic and social issues emphasize the need for further study of property rights. In countries allowing private property in capital goods environmental quality is of major concern. The proper use of nature's resources in a manner which is most beneficent to present and future generations has to be considered. The fluctuations of economic activity, with concomitant unemployment and persistently high inflation rates, are frequently present. Questions of economic justice, both within a nation and in regard to less developed countries, reflect a failure in the current mode and distribution of property rights. Socialist countries face many of these same problems as well as the issue of the extent of human freedom which an economic system should provide.

This study does not treat these issues directly, nor does it claim that property rights is the essential element in their consideration or solution. But a nation's system of property rights and international laws and institutions which reflect a consensus of various opinions on such rights do play some role, and often a vital one, in the treatment of all the above issues.

The second area of significance lies in the intellectual impact of the doctrines presented. In this regard it does not seem necessary to trace the importance of Marxian thought upon the development of socialism, although there is some dispute as to whether present communist systems are faithful to the Marxian

vision. The intellectual heritage of Catholicism, on the other hand, has had some influence upon the right to property, especially in its natural law justification. It is true that the natural law right to property, even if it is not philosophically argued, is still claimed by countries with any degree of capitalist structure. The doctrine as known to modern society was much influenced by the writings of John Locke. The natural law doctrine is, of course, much older than that. It is easily traceable to Aristotle and the Greek Stoic philosophers. But it was the Catholic scholastic writers of the Middle Ages, especially from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries, who developed natural law theory in a more complete form. Catholic teaching on social issues has been founded on this theory and Church documents still refer to its legitimacy.

The intellectual importance of the two doctrines presented is heightened by the fact that both systems present their doctrine as part of a conceptual whole. Marxian thought and Catholic doctrine have a totality of vision; they are built around a complete philosophy of man. Catholic social doctrine began its more formal development in 1878 and has continued to the present in a variety of documents from various sources. Moreover, it relies upon intellectual and theological traditions dating back through the Middle Ages to the time of Jesus. Marx's range of thought is vast and his development of views is comprehensive. Schumpeter used the word "system" to refer to the teachings of Marx and made the comment: ". . . the totality of his [Marx's] vision, as a totality, asserts its right in every detail and is precisely the intellectual

fascination experienced by everyone, friend as well as foe, who makes a study of him."<sup>6</sup> A study of property as seen in the above two systems not only provides two contrasting opinions on the subject, but it also displays these opinions within the context of two complete philosophical outlooks.

The third area of significance is seen to be the practical or political influence which these two doctrines possess in the contemporary world. Obviously many communist nations have built their systems, in name at least, upon Marxian principles. The political power of these nations is enormous. Also of great power is the Marxian-influenced effort at building an economic order which Marx saw as the only way to provide a true humanism. An archbishop of the Catholic Church has written:

Marx also has in his system--why should we deny it?--truths that surely are able to benefit the development of human thought. . . . When a man, either philosopher or not, irresistibly attracts millions of human beings, especially young people, when a man becomes the inspiration for life and for death of a great part of humanity, and makes the powerful of the earth tremble with hate and fear, this man deserves to be studied.<sup>7</sup>

The Catholic Church's teachings regarding a normative social and economic order also play an important role in contemporary world affairs. The Church has played a predominant role in the history and culture of Western Europe, and its influence has been felt in many other areas of the world. Today the Roman Catholic

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<sup>6</sup>Joseph A. Schumpeter, History of Economic Analysis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 384.

<sup>7</sup>Helder Câmara, "What Would St. Thomas Aquinas Do If Faced with Karl Marx," New Catholic World, May/June 1977, p. 108. Archbishop Câmara heads the see of Olinda and Recife in Northeast Brazil.

Church has almost 700 million members throughout the world. These members are united in common beliefs and are under a more strongly centralized authority structure than most religious groups. This organizational system frequently extends the influence of the Church's dogmatic and moral beliefs. The fact that many of its members hold positions of leadership in politics and in all areas of social and academic life adds to that influence.

There is a further characteristic common to both the Marxian and Catholic systems which contributes to their importance. Both systems not only involve intellectual convictions, but these convictions also demand actions which reflect the ethical concerns contained in those convictions. The followers of each system see the world's salvation, and their own, to lie in society's acceptance of their respective positions. Salvation here means a well-ordered economic system which establishes conditions of social justice and personal fulfillment. Salvation also means that the proponents of both systems see their efforts as a type of crusade, a moral duty which brings meaning and value to their personal lives.

#### Preliminary Definitions and Clarifications

This section offers preliminary definitions of some important concepts and attempts to clarify a few terms which might be ambiguous to the reader. Throughout the study the term "property" is used repeatedly. Like many commonly used expressions the term is difficult to define. A popular definition of property formerly saw it as those physical objects which a person held as his own

and of which he had the exclusive use. This was also the common law meaning of property which was used in the United States courts until the latter part of the nineteenth century. The U.S. Constitution holds that no state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."<sup>8</sup> A majority decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1872 held that property "retained its common-law meaning of physical things held exclusively for one's own use." Not long after this, however, the state and federal courts reversed this definition and "in 1890 the Supreme Court itself made the transition and changed the definition of property from physical things having only use-value to the exchange-value of anything."<sup>9</sup>

There are two noticeable changes here. The one change is from tangible objects to both tangible and intangible ones. This new legal interpretation of property was first introduced, as Commons pointed out, by a minority opinion in the 1872 case referred to above, the original Slaughter House Cases. This case involved the protests of the butchers of New Orleans against a state granted slaughtering house monopoly. The legal definition of property was eventually extended to include intangible objects other than labor, such as the patent rights of an inventor and the goodwill of a business.

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<sup>8</sup>U.S., Constitution, amend. XIV, sec. 1.

<sup>9</sup>John R. Commons, Legal Foundations of Capitalism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1924), pp. 12, 14.

The other important change in the definition of property was the substitution of exchange value for use value. This was really not a substitution of the one for the other, but simply an extension. Property not only included the use value of objects, it included the exchange value as well. Frequently, however, use value was measured by exchange value, so the effect was one of substitution. This change was the logical consequence of considering a man's labor as his property. The individual possesses property in his labor and he must therefore have a right to the value of his labor. This value is usually expressed not by the use value but by the exchange value measured as a wage.

This emphasis upon exchange value in the definition of property simply reflected what had happened in industrialized countries by the end of the nineteenth century. Commons saw this, however, not as a transition from one outlook to another but as a complete reversal which reflected the capitalistic nature of society. A legal dictionary defines property as: "That dominion or indefinite right of use or disposition which one may lawfully exercise over particular things or subjects."<sup>10</sup> The word "use" means not just the present and expected use value which an object has for its owner, either for production or consumption, it means more especially the expected exchange value which the owner will receive from the use of the object. Commons commented:

The trouble is that . . . not only the courts and business men, but also theoretical economists, pass

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<sup>10</sup>Black's Law Dictionary, rev. 4th ed. (1968), s.v. "Property."



over from the significance of "uses" in the sense of producing an increase in the supply of goods, to its exact opposite meaning in the business sense of an increase in the power of owners to command goods from other persons in exchange.<sup>11</sup>

Commons further noticed that the first meaning of use is that of a producing power which increases the supply of goods, while the latter meaning signifies a bargaining power which limits the supply of goods.

The view of property as "the exchange value of anything," while not legally recognized in the United States until the latter part of the nineteenth century, indicates the change in the nature of property which the capitalist mode of production had brought about, and would continue to bring about, throughout society. The implications of this change will not be made explicit until Chapter 6, where the power of property is more carefully noted. The change in view itself, however, sees property not as something to be consumed but as something to be used. The essence of property under capitalism thus centers around exchange value, and "This exchange-value," wrote Commons, "is not corporeal--it is behavioristic."<sup>12</sup>

Commons' definitions of property reflect the behavioristic nature of exchange value. He regarded property as "the liberty of expected activity in acquiring, using and disposing of things," and saw its significance to be "in the behavior expected with regard to the thing." Commons held that property was "the beneficial

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<sup>11</sup> Commons, Legal Foundations, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

exercise of the will in dealing with nature or other persons." He saw the essence of property to lie in a relationship between a person's physical and mental faculties and the world in which he lived. He wrote:

Property is not a physical object but is the relationship which a person necessarily sets up between his personal abilities and the world about. . . . Property thus becomes human faculties in preparation for, or in occupation of, opportunities.<sup>13</sup>

Recent definitions of property in economics reflect in substance the view of Commons, although there is still some ambiguity about the meaning of property. One area of ambiguity is the possible distinction between property and property rights. This distinction has a legal foundation and sees property as the tangible or intangible good capable of being possessed and property right as the legal entity's claim upon that good. While such a distinction is often used in legal discussions, the legal definition of property is that it is a right or set of rights.

The discipline of economics usually holds that any distinction between property and property rights is "irrelevant to economic analysis." Thus the two concepts are considered to be synonymous. A recent definition holds:

Property is a bundle of rights or a set of relations between people with regard to some good, service, or "thing"; such rights must have economic value and must be enforced in some societally recognized manner.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>14</sup>Frederic L. Pryor, Property and Industrial Organization in Communist and Capitalist Nations (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 375, 2.

Another definition defines property rights, understood to be synonymous with property, as "the sanctioned behavioral relations among men that arise from the existence of goods and pertain to their use."<sup>15</sup> The two definitions are seen as equivalent and either may be accepted as an accurate definition of property (rights) for purposes of this study.

Thus property is held to be "behavioral relations" or "a set of relations between people." There is a definition, similar to those above, which introduces a further note of ambiguity into the concept. Adolf Berle defined property as "in essence relationship between an individual (or perhaps a group of individuals) and a tangible or intangible thing."<sup>16</sup> A possible point of contention results: Is property constituted by relations between people or is it a relationship between persons and things? Not much importance will be given to this distinction. A definition which looks upon property as a relationship between men and objects is not held suspect because, as Pryor has noted, such an interpretation usually understands these objects as "social entities." He commented: "The alleged distinction between the relationships of 'man and objects' and 'man and man' is overdrawn since in most cases a relationship between 'man and objects' defines a relationship between men."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Furubotn and Pejovici, The Economics of Property Rights, p. 3. An excellent explanation of the equivalence of property and property rights is to be found in Irving Fisher, The Nature of Capital and Income (New York: Macmillan Co., 1919), pp. 18-22.

<sup>16</sup>Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Power Without Property (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959), p. 60.

<sup>17</sup>Pryor, Property and Industrial Organizations, p. 9.

On the other hand, the definition which regards property as relations between people always has reference to some good or service, so the two types of definitions are not contrary or exclusive.

Property is considered to be either privately or publicly owned. Private property places the ownership right in a person, a group of persons, or a legal person such as a corporation. Public property refers to that property whose ownership right rests with the entire community. This community may be a sovereign state, a political subdivision of a state, or a city, or it may be represented by some agency established by any of these political entities. Public property also includes that property which is held to belong to the community itself considered as a social entity. Comments on property as the concept is understood both by Marx and by Catholic thought will be found in Chapter 2.

It will be helpful to note that the word "doctrine," when used of Catholic social doctrine, should not be understood in exactly the same sense as in the phrase "religious doctrine." Catholic religious doctrine or dogma comprises a set of beliefs about faith in God and about a system of morality, both of which define man's relationship to God. This religious doctrine implies a more formal creed which is held to be based upon divinely revealed truth and demands intellectual assent.

Catholic social doctrine or teaching, on the other hand, is prescriptive of an economic and social order. These prescriptions are rationally derived and reflect the Church's view on how the Gospel of Jesus can best be lived in a complex, industrialized

society. These prescriptions, therefore, are intimately connected with religious doctrine but cannot be said to constitute such doctrine. By way of example any religious group might demand that society have clean and efficient hospitals to care for the sick. The insistence upon such hospitals would not be a part of that group's religious doctrine, but simply a judgment of how its concern for human life can best be carried out in contemporary society.

There is one consequence of this nature of Catholic social teaching which deserves mention. The Church presents its social teaching as a rational and humanistic system of social justice and order and intends that it be judged as such, not as a system of religious beliefs. Of course for its own members the Church expects its arguments to be particularly forceful because they flow from a system of commonly accepted beliefs and practices. But the Church also presents its social doctrine to the world to be considered and commented on as legitimate solutions to some of society's social and economic problems.

This study usually refers to Catholic teaching as if it were a monolithic structure and capable of only one interpretation. This procedure is often justified because many issues center around general principles which can be found enunciated in official Church documents of the highest authority--the writings of the popes, Church councils, and synods of bishops. In some cases, however, there may be two or more Catholic interpretations of general prescriptions or even of specific prescriptions found in Church documents. At times these other interpretations are noted;

at times they are ignored because they would distract from the coherence of the study and would not significantly enhance its accuracy or further its intended purpose. A similar procedure is followed, perhaps more evidently, with Marxian doctrine. This doctrine is synthesized from the writings of Marx and of his commentators according to the judgment of this study's author. Most probably others would disagree with or qualify some or many points of this synthesis. Hopefully new understanding of the doctrines discussed can be reached by this entire process.

#### A Note on Value Judgments

Before economics became known as political economy it was a branch of moral philosophy. The emphasis upon the moral nature of economic decisions was greatest in the Middle Ages. This emphasis has continued into the modern era. A reviewer of Adam Smith's major economic treatise wrote: "The Wealth of Nations is, in fact, fundamentally concerned with the question, 'what is a just economy?'"<sup>18</sup> The question of the moral element of economics as a science has been modified in the twentieth century by the emphasis upon positive rather than normative theory as the only proper concern of the science. One argument supporting this thesis is that positive theory provides the real solutions to economic and consequently social problems. Another argument is that the science of economics

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<sup>18</sup> Leonard Billet, "The Just Economy: The Moral Basis of the Wealth of Nations," Review of Social Economy 34 (December 1976), p. 295.

is not capable of making moral decisions, primarily because these decisions cannot be quantifiably justified.

But the moral concern of modern economics is still very much in evidence in the entire conflict between Marxism and capitalism. This conflict is not just concerned with economic efficiency, but involves, one might say predominantly involves, questions of social justice and human fulfillment.

The present study is a theoretical one related to one aspect of that conflict. It will be helpful to understand the role value judgments play in this analysis. This study is striving to understand and to compare two sets of value judgments concerning the form property should take in society. The specific goal of the study, as distinct from any application which might be made from its findings, is to discern the theoretical structure of each value system and to show how this structure results in property conclusions. An understanding of each system will thus allow them to be compared and contrasted. This comparison is not for the purpose of espousing one particular system over the other, which process itself would require a justified or hypothesized system of values. This comparison is rather the exposition of those ultimate judgments which result in specific property recommendations and the logical development of such recommendations from those judgments.

A value judgment represents a choice between or among alternative sets of human actions or states.<sup>19</sup> This choice is a rational

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<sup>19</sup>For a treatment of the nature of value judgments and their role in the social sciences see Eugene J. Meehan, Value Judgment and Social Science (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1969).

process and involves decisions as to the propriety of the goals of human action or the best means to be chosen to arrive at accepted goals. The acceptance or proposal of a value judgment has been likened to a type of cost-benefit analysis where the costs and benefits are not measured in monetary terms but in the congruence between human action and some normative position which is the goal of the activity. This is true as long as it is realized that the setting of the goal itself is a value judgment.

Gunnar Myrdal defined value judgments as "ideas about how [reality] ought to be, or ought to have been." Myrdal realized that the entire process of means and ends selection requires value decisions. He wrote: "Every combination of end, means, and by-effects, i.e., every alternative sequence itself thus becomes a value premise and a category of classification."<sup>20</sup>

The present study involves some technical economic analysis, particularly of the Marxian position. Much of the discussion, however, revolves around value judgments. The problem, as already stated, is not one of evaluating these judgments according to some normative position. Thus there are no specific criteria presented

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<sup>20</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, Value in Social Theory, ed. Paul Streeten, International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 71, 213. Myrdal revealed a life-long search for the most appropriate way to rid social science of value judgments. He concluded that, with the (then) present state of social sciences, the best way was to make these valuations explicit so that they themselves might be open to criticism. Cf. *Ibid.*, "Postscripts," pp. 237-262.



by which to select between alternate value systems.<sup>21</sup> What is of concern is the methodology of communicating the two systems so that their positions on one central issue, private property, can be understood and these positions compared between themselves.

Duncan MacRae, Jr., in an article cited below, has treated the specific area of communication in a social science. He noted the warning of Abraham Kaplan and Thomas Kuhn to beware of the myth of methodology, which holds that scientific progress depends primarily upon the method utilized in scientific investigation. MacRae did see some difficulties in presenting ethical arguments and proposed some rules to overcome those difficulties.

The major difficulties MacRae summarized as attempts to achieve clarity, consistency, and generality. His definitions of these concepts were as follows:

"Clarity" refers to the capacity of a verbal or symbolic expression to indicate precisely those observations or actions to which it would or would not apply, independently of the speaker, the listener, or subsequent explanation. "Consistency" refers to the capacity of a set of principles to withstand searching scrutiny and to reveal no instances in which its implications are contradictory. "Generality" refers to breadth of application, perhaps in relation to economy of expression if this latter norm of scientific theorizing is to apply.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Value here is obviously not to be taken in the economic sense but in the ethical and sociological sense. It can thus be understood as the quality of an "object" which makes that object desirable in itself. Value can also be understood in a subjective way as a human response to any object. Cf. Dictionary of Christian Ethics, 1967 ed., s.v. "Values and Value Judgment," by John E. Smith.

<sup>22</sup>Duncan MacRae, Jr., "Scientific Communication, Ethical Argument, and Public Policy," American Political Science Review 65 (March 1971): 45.

Perhaps the concept of generality needs further comment. What the author meant by generality is that propositions of opposing systems must be sufficiently broad enough to apply to the same situations. A lack of generality in the present study would be indicated by a Marxian rejection of ownership of productive goods contrasted with a Catholic espousal of personal possessions. MacRae further saw in generality an effort to make the principles enunciated "extend to cover the widest possible range of actual or conceivable situations, so as to increase the chance that we will discover inconsistency among them."<sup>23</sup>

MacRae gave three rules to follow in the exposition of arguments in the social sciences. These rules are paraphrased as follows. (1) The proponents of ethical systems should be accurately specified at the beginning of the study. This specification can include definitions and special word meanings; its purpose is to provide clarity. (2) The views of each system must be fully and adequately expressed. This expression should include each system's criticism of the opposing system with which it is contrasted. (3) The counterarguments of each system to the above criticism should be considered. These counterarguments should note acceptance of the criticism and modification of the criticized system or rejection of the criticism and maintenance of the original thesis.

In addition to providing clarity, consistency, and generality to the investigation, MacRae saw two other major advantages in

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

following these rules. The first advantage is that the rules prevent the making of a criticism that an ethical system conflicts with a shared moral conviction, while at the same time this moral conviction is not consistent with the critic's own system. MacRae felt that criticism of inconsistency is justified only if it springs from a system which is itself consistent.<sup>24</sup> The second advantage is that the generality thus obtained by the utilization of these rules will enable the ethical systems considered to be applicable to future problems.

There has been an attempt to utilize the above rules, insofar as they do not detract from a coherent exposition, in the present work.<sup>25</sup> These rules are incorporated, however, into a more specific manner of presentation. Chapter 2 begins this presentation with an overall view of the two property doctrines and a listing of the major categories within which these doctrines will be analyzed and compared.

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<sup>24</sup> A scholar in Catholic social philosophy has noted the following criteria for a specific ethical system: The three definitive methodological touchstones of every scientific system are the exhaustive analysis of the facts of experience, logical stringency of arguments, and the consistency of the system" (Johannes Messner, Social Ethics, rev. ed., [St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1965], p. 39).

<sup>25</sup> Other equally valuable insights into critical analysis have been considered, such as the following: "It is perhaps one of the most important canons of critical work, that the critic should attempt so far as possible to see the work of an author in the perspective of the intellectual situation and tradition out of which it has developed" (Talcott Parsons, Introduction to The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations, by Max Weber, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. and with an Introduction by Talcott Parsons [New York: The Free Press, 1947], p. 8).

## CHAPTER II

### TWO VIEWS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

This chapter contains three major sections. The first section presents, after a discussion of Marx's understanding of property terms, a summary of his views on the role of private property in society. The second section contains similar analysis for the Catholic position. In the third section these summaries serve as the basis for the development of various topical categories which will allow a deeper investigation and comparison of the two sets of teachings. The function of the chapter as a whole is twofold. It is meant to provide a basic introduction to the reader who is not acquainted with either one or both of the systems under consideration. More importantly, this chapter is meant to lay the foundation for a more comprehensive and more analytical look at the Marxian and Catholic positions on private property.

The summaries of the two systems of property teachings are meant to be of sufficient depth to establish the categories for further analysis without making this further analysis repetitious.

#### Marx on Private Property

This study deals with the writing of the German political and social theorist Karl Marx. Marx lived from 1818 until 1883. He was aided in his intellectual endeavors by his closest friend,

Frederick Engels. Since Marx and Engels collaborated so completely, it is difficult at times to separate Marx's insights from Engels' elaborations or to know to what degree Engels influenced Marx's conclusions. In addition, the two men authored many works jointly, and Engels himself was a prolific writer. Marxian thought refers to the writing of Marx, the joint works of Marx and Engels, and also the works of Engels alone. Thus Marxian thought is synonymous with what Robert C. Tucker has called "classical Marxism." "Marx was the great system-builder," Tucker wrote, but he added later: "Classical Marxism is an amalgam in which Engels' work constitutes an essential and inalienable part."<sup>1</sup>

#### Marx's Concept of Property

In Chapter 1 property was defined as a societally recognized set of relations between people with regard to some good of economic value. Marx saw these behavioral relations as social ones bearing upon the act of production. In one place Marx claimed a definition of property as a separate category to be an impossibility. "To try to give a definition of property as of an independent relation . . . can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics or jurisprudence,"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert C. Tucker, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), pp. xxxiii, xxxiv. Schumpeter claimed that Engels "was not Marx's intellectual equal," and that he [Engels] was particularly deficient in technical economics." Schumpeter upheld, however, the high quality of Engels' philosophical and sociological works and noted that at one time he "helped to educate Marx in economics and socialism" (Schumpeter, History, p. 386, footnote 5).

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, with an Introduction by Frederick Engels (New York: International Publishers, New World Paperbacks, 1963), p. 154.

he wrote. Marx did give a generic description of the concept, holding property to be "the relationship of the individual to the natural conditions of labour and reproduction, the inorganic nature which he finds and makes his own, the objective body of his subjectivity."<sup>3</sup> He seemed to hold that this generic description of the concept of property given above applies to property in all stages of its historical development. Marx's denial of the possibility of defining property as an independent category simply meant that the concept is realized by different relations in different historical periods.

It should be noted that the relations which constitute property are social ones, even though Marx spoke of them as between man and the conditions of production. These conditions may be the soil, fish in the sea, animals in the forest--all the natural resources available to man. This relation between man and resources, however, is in reality a relation between man and man. It is only as a member of a tribe or a community that this relationship has any meaning. Marx stated, for example, that the attitude "to the earth as the property of the 'working individual'" is mediated by the "existence of the individual as a member of a community." Marx made an analogy between speech and property. Speech can only take place,

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<sup>3</sup>Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, trans. Jack Cohen, ed. and with an Introduction by E. J. Hobsbawm (New York: International Publishers, New World Paperbacks, 1964), p. 69. The Formations is a small section of a much larger work originally published under the title Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie. This larger work has no English title and is simply referred to as Grundrisse.

he asserted, by an individual who is a member of a community. Language coming from, as well as property "belonging" to, an isolated individual Marx claimed to be "an absurdity."<sup>4</sup>

Marx held that the particular form which property would take in society depended upon the mode of production. He pointed out that different forms of property predominated in the major historical periods which he enumerated; these historical periods were decided by the mode of production which was prevalent in each era.<sup>5</sup> It was evident to Marx that the origin of private property was not coincident with the origin of the capitalist mode of production. Although he did not attempt to ascertain the exact time of the beginning of private property, he recognized that it was present very early (by 367 B.C.) in the Roman Empire. The private property which is under discussion in this study is that private ownership which is the predominant property form under the capitalist system. This is the private property which Marx examined at length and which he vehemently decried.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 81, 88.

<sup>5</sup>Marx traced the forms of socio-economic structure from the earliest beginning of such structure to the then-present capitalist form. He divided this structure into four different eras, each era having a specific form of ownership. These ownership forms were: tribal ownership of primitive societies, communal and state ownership of ancient communities, feudal or estate property of the Middle Ages, and the private ownership of the capitalist system. For Marx's analysis of these eras see his Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations and The German Ideology (co-authored with Engels), Part I, and Capital, vol. I, Parts 7 and 8.

## Marx's Rejection of Private Property

In line with his general definition of property Marx held that private property consists in the totality of relations which form the basis of the production process and constitute that process. In the capitalist mode of production these relations establish a class of owners--the bourgeoisie--with power over a class of workers--the proletariat. Not only do the bourgeoisie own the instruments of production, they also purchase the labor power of the workers. This purchase of labor power gives the owner-class control of the workers themselves, since the only way the workers have of supporting and maintaining themselves is by selling their labor power.

Private property involves not only the owners' right to use all the instruments of production as well as the products made, but also the right to prohibit the use of these goods to others. This right not only to use goods but also to prohibit use to others enables property owners to extend the power which they have over tangible (and intangible) goods into power over people. The only way that the worker can survive is by selling his labor power to the owner of capital. The laborer is free, Marx noted, because he can dispose of his labor power, and also, Marx added sarcastically, because "he has no other commodity for sale."<sup>6</sup> It is the totality of these relations which Marx understood as private property.

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<sup>6</sup>Karl Marx, Capital, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, 3 vols. (New York: International Publishers, New World Paperbacks, 1967), 1:169.



In the Grundrisse Marx expressed the relations between capital and wage labor, and these can be understood as the relations between owners and workers, in two laws. The first law states "that the worker does not appropriate the product of his own labour," but that this product becomes the possession of someone else. The second law Marx called an inversion of the first and stated as follows: ". . . alien labour appears as the property of capital."<sup>7</sup>

These two laws expressed for Marx what takes place in the capitalist process. The fundamental relation of this process is the existence of the wage laborer and his subservience to a capitalist whose only goal can be to increase the wealth at his disposal.<sup>8</sup> The worker is alienated, in a legal sense, from the product which he makes; he is not able to dispose of the fruit of his labor. Not only is the product produced by the worker not his own, but also the entire production process is directed by someone other than the worker. The worker is coerced into laboring for someone else; the manner of his work is determined by that other person; the purpose of his work is to satisfy that other person's goals. The worker's own labor thus also becomes the possession of another--the capitalist. As a consequence the worker becomes subordinate to the machinery he uses and he appears to exist as an adjunct to the instruments of labor.

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<sup>7</sup>Karl Marx, Grundrisse, trans. with a Foreword by Martin Nicolaus (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 469-470.

<sup>8</sup>Marx's technical explanation of capital is given in Chapter 5 and the inherent antipathy between the capitalist and the wage laborer is highlighted in Chapter 6.

In an earlier work Marx traced the alienation of the worker to the relation of private property; indeed he saw a reciprocal relationship between the two.

Only at the last culmination of the development of private property does this, its secret, appear again, namely, that on the one hand it is the product of alienated labor, and that on the other it is the means by which labor alienates itself, the realization of this alienation.<sup>9</sup>

Marx held that the private property prevalent in a capitalist society necessarily results in alienated labor while this same alienated and hostile labor established the social and economic relation of private property. Alienation or estrangement is primarily a psychological condition involving feelings of hostility and frustration on the part of the worker. This alienation of the worker extends itself throughout all of human society so that all mankind is affected by this alienation. Marx noted that "the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production."<sup>10</sup>

Marx's major work, Capital, the ultimate aim of which was to discover the economic laws which would determine the evolutionary

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<sup>9</sup>Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, ed. and with an Introduction by Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: International Publishers, New World Paperbacks, 1964), p. 117. Gunnar Myrdal analyzed a similar "mutual interaction" in regard to "the Negro plane of living" and white prejudice. He noted that any lowering in the Negro standard of living increased white prejudice which further lowered the Negro standard (Myrdal, Value in Social Theory, p. 200). Myrdal emphasized quantifiable effects, while Marx stressed the logical relationship, based upon real social and economic conditions, between private property and alienated labor.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

development of capitalist society, comments extensively upon the exploitative nature of that system of production. The system rests on private ownership of productive or capital goods. In the first volume of Capital Marx explained how the capitalist production process exploits the worker. The exploitation, according to Marx, is due to the fact that private property in productive goods allows the capitalist to command the labor power of the worker.

The role that Marx saw for private property analyzed in the above manner is not hard to guess. The Communist Manifesto summarized communist (and Marxian) theory by the simple phrase: "Abolition of private property." Marx and Engels were recommending here the dissolution of that social and economic system whereby a few owners possess the instruments of production and force the workers to sell their labor power to these owners. This type of property represents "the exploitation of the many by the few"; it "is based on the antagonism of capital and wage labour."<sup>11</sup>

It is possible to place this conclusion of Marx, that private property must be abolished, into the broader schema of Marxian thought. The central tenet in the Marxian analysis of history is the doctrine of historical materialism. This theory of historical development establishes the production process as the factor determining all facets of a society's culture. The position of a particular class is determined by the role which that class plays in

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<sup>11</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto, with an Introduction by A. J. P. Taylor, trans. Samuel Moore (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 96, 97.

the production process, that is, by its relation to the conditions of production. Furthermore, for Marx all history is a history of class struggles. These struggles result from changes in the production process and represent efforts to establish new social relations of property.

The capitalist system represented the dominant form of production in Marx's day, certainly in those countries which Marx saw as important in setting the patterns of historical development. In his Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations Marx analyzed the dynamic process of socio-economic change which resulted in capitalism, while in Capital he described the historical development of capitalism in England. One of the major institutions of this capitalist system is private property. This property arose under capitalism as a functional institution in response to social and class needs. The institution originally granted power over material and intangible goods to a particular class of people. This power over goods evolved into power over people.

In The German Ideology Marx and Engels stressed that private property must be abolished because under its domination productive forces have become destructive of man and forced class conflict to its limit. Only the abolition of private property and of the detailed, capitalist-fragmented division of labor will bring about the union of individuals. In the "Preface" to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy Marx called the capitalist production system, and he was referring to its ownership nature, not its technology, "the last antagonistic form of the social process

of production."<sup>12</sup> Marx saw the demise of capitalism as ending the "prehistory of human society" and as beginning the historical period of truly human development.<sup>13</sup>

A summary of Marxian thought on private property shows that property to be a set of social relations. Chief among these relations is that one class is allowed the ownership of productive goods. The nature of this ownership is such that the capitalist can refuse to the worker access to these means of production. As a consequence the worker is left with no other alternative but to utilize the only "good" which he has at his disposal--his labor power. He is forced to sell this labor power to the capitalist to work at a task the capitalist imposes and in the manner the capitalist prescribes. Even the product produced goes to the capitalist and not to the worker. The worker has no control over his own life and is completely alienated by this production process. Human freedom and human development are not possible until private property in productive goods and the capitalist mode of production have been abolished.

The remainder of this study will, in part, attempt to understand more thoroughly the intellectual convictions which support and constitute the Marxian position on private property. Some of these convictions have been outlined in the brief quotes and

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<sup>12</sup>Karl Marx, Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 21.

<sup>13</sup>This paragraph hints at the role that capitalism plays in the historical development of human society. Insights into this evolutionary role of capitalism are given in the next five chapters, Chapter 7 containing the most complete analysis of this topic.

analysis just given. Before going more thoroughly into this position it will be necessary to understand the Catholic position with which it is contrasted. A brief glance at this Catholic teaching is given in the following section.

### The Catholic Church and Property

The major questions addressed in this section are: How does the Church define property and private property? and: What is the specific doctrine of the Church on private property? In answering the former question the Church's doctrine will be placed in its correct historical setting. The latter question will be answered by giving pertinent teachings on private property in chronological order and then by summarizing these teachings in a few general principles.

#### The Meaning of Property

Any effort to formulate a synthesis of Roman Catholic teaching on private property presents a gargantuan task. In order to reduce this task to manageable proportions this study concentrates on the Church's doctrine as it has evolved and been presented since 1878. This date was chosen because it marks the beginning of the reign of Pope Leo XIII as head of the Roman Catholic Church. It was this pontiff who began to apply the Church's theological and philosophical traditions in a formal and systematic way to the problems of an industrial society. Modern Catholic teaching on property relies heavily upon the teachings of the scholastic doctors of the Middle

Ages as well as upon the teachings of Jesus and the early Church. It will be necessary to consult these scholastic teachings, especially those of St. Thomas Aquinas, and to make occasional reference to earlier Church teachings.

The social teachings of the Church are contained officially in papal encyclicals, documents of ecumenical councils,<sup>14</sup> and in various addresses delivered and documents written by the popes and bishops. Helpful insights into these teachings come from the works of Catholic theologians and writers who treat of social questions. Often the views of these scholars are incorporated into the official documents themselves. The phrase "Catholic doctrine" in this study refers to that doctrine found in these official Church documents, with the reminder mentioned in Chapter 1 that there may be more than one possible interpretation of these documents.

The Catholic Church recognizes that property has had different forms in different historical eras. The Church has no difficulty in accepting these forms as legitimate variations of property. In its documents touching on property matters, however, the Church implies that the concept of property has a general definition which is applicable to property in all its historical forms. This implication is obvious in that arguments from the nineteenth and even thirteenth and earlier centuries are applied to property in the

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<sup>14</sup>An encyclical letter of the Roman Catholic Church is a document which the reigning pope addresses to the entire Church or to the Church in one country and which deals with matters of religious belief or moral discipline. The documents are titled by the first two or three words of their Latin versions. An ecumenical council is a meeting of all the bishops and prelates convoked by the pope in order to deliberate on matters of theological or pastoral importance to the Church.

twentieth. But it is difficult to ascertain what that commonly applicable definition of property is, since the Church does not define the concept in its documents.

Catholic thought has usually looked upon property as a relationship between man and the things of nature; the institution of property is a formalization of that relationship in society's laws and customs. A general description of this property relationship has been given as "the moral power to acquire and dispose freely of material goods within the strict limits of mine and thine."<sup>15</sup> It is this general description of property, although somewhat imprecise, which seems to indicate most accurately the Catholic notion of property. It is possible to make the description more precise by stating that the limits imposed on ownership are determined by divine, natural, and civil law.<sup>16</sup> One definition of the Catholic concept of property sees it as "a natural right to dispose freely of material things for the benefit of oneself or family and for the common good, within the limits determined (in accordance with the natural and divine law), by civil law and one's titles of acquisition."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Raymond J. Miller, Forty Years After: Pius XI and the Social Order (St. Paul: Radio Replies Press, 1947), no. 44: 2 (p. 75).

<sup>16</sup>The concepts of divine and natural law will be treated in Chapter 9. Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI both spoke of the role of civil authority in determining the precise form property relations should take. Cf. Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, No. 7; Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 49. Complete references to these documents will be given in the next several pages.

<sup>17</sup>Miller, Forty Years After, no. 52: 6 (p. 94). The concept of the common good is introduced at the end of this section and treated again in Chapter 8.



Private property simply becomes this moral power which is possessed by an individual or a group of individuals, either by themselves or incorporated into some legal entity. This legal entity, by virtue of its being private, consists of individuals, groups of individuals, or moral persons, all as members of the community but not as representatives of it.

Church thought on the material nature of property has reflected secular thought, which formerly saw property as a relation between men and tangible goods. But the Church has always held that the social nature of man demands that any right he enjoys be subject to the needs of society as a whole. Thus for the Church relations between individuals and objects have always implied social relations, that is, relations between persons.<sup>18</sup> The current recognition of intangible forms of property and the emphasis upon property as a set of relations between persons is an historical development of the concept of property, and this development is accepted by the Church.

It is important to notice that the arguments in Church documents which emphasize the natural law right to private property have always been formulated in terms of material goods. This mode of expression has also been historically determined by the fact that property was almost exclusively in this form. These arguments may logically and validly be extended to cover the many forms of intangible goods which represent property today, although this extension

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<sup>18</sup>See The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911 ed., s.v. "Property," by V. Cathrein. This excellent article has been replaced in New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967 ed.).

presents some problems. Recent Church documents, it will soon be observed, are beginning to pay more attention to these new forms and to incorporate their importance into Catholic theory.

The real point of discrepancy between the Marxian and Catholic interpretations of private property centers around productive goods. When Marx spoke of private property under the capitalist mode of production he almost always referred to productive goods. In Catholic documents private property is a more comprehensive term referring to all types of goods: consumer and capital goods, land and all other natural resources.

A correct understanding of this discrepancy in the meaning of private property is obviously important and requires further comment. The Marxian concept of private property as it is analyzed in this study refers to productive goods. The term in Catholic documents refers to all categories of consumer goods as well as to productive ones. The Church's arguments justifying private property have always understood the term with this universal extension, although at times the inclusion of productive goods is made explicit for purposes of clarity and emphasis. It is accurate to say that the two viewpoints studied are contradictory in that Marx rejects the private ownership of productive goods while Catholic doctrine supports such ownership. Both systems are presented in their original contexts which means with their particular understandings of private property. This must be done in order to ensure the orderly development of thought of each system. Marx's ideas on the possession of personal goods will be touched on in Chapter 7. Comments

on the importance of changing property forms to the Catholic position will be given in the final chapter.

### Catholic Teaching on Private Property

What is the Catholic Church's teaching on private property? In this section only the major principles of this teaching will be given. The purpose of this section, as mentioned earlier, is to provide a basic introduction to Catholic property views and, along with the earlier section on Marx's doctrine, to guide the establishment of categories for further analysis of both doctrines. The more elaborate treatment of the Catholic position will be given in Chapters 8 through 11.

In an encyclical letter written in 1891 Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) wrote:

. . . the Socialists . . . endeavor to destroy private property, and maintain that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies . . .  
 . . . the remedy they propose is manifestly against justice. For every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own.<sup>17</sup>

Leo XIII noted that this right to possess refers to goods consumed by use and to those "which, though used, remain for use in the

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<sup>17</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum (Encyclical Letter on the Condition of Labor, May 15, 1891), in Seven Great Encyclicals, with an Introduction by William J. Gibbons (New York: Paulist Press, 1963), nos. 3, 5, 6. References to most Church documents are given by section or paragraph numbers. These numbers usually correspond to the paragraph numbers in the official Latin versions of these documents. The various English editions have not been uniform in their numbering, although that defect seems to have been remedied in the editions of more recent documents.

future," to the produce of the earth and to "the earth itself."<sup>18</sup> The major force of the Pope's teaching on property in this document centers around private ownership. "For every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own," the Pontiff wrote. The foundation for this right is man's rational nature. Because "man alone among animals" possesses a reasoning faculty, "it must be within his right to have things not merely for temporary use . . . but in stable and permanent possession."<sup>19</sup>

Leo XIII affirmed another important aspect of Catholic teaching--the communal aspect of private property. He quoted with approval St. Thomas Aquinas to the effect that "Man should not consider his outward possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without difficulty when others are in need."<sup>20</sup> The Pope was reaffirming here what has been a traditional doctrine in the Church--although man has a right to private ownership of goods, these goods should be used in a way that will benefit others as well as the owners of the goods.

In 1931 Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) wrote a social encyclical in which he noted:

Their [Pope Leo XII and Catholic theologians] unanimous contention has always been that the right to own private property has been given to man by nature or rather by the Creator Himself, not only in order that individuals may be able to provide for their own needs and those

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 5.

<sup>20</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-II, Q. 66, art. 2, quoted in Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 19.

of their families, but also that by means of it, the goods which the Creator has destined for the human race may truly serve this purpose.<sup>21</sup>

Here again there is emphasis upon the ability of private property to satisfy both individual needs and the needs of mankind in general. Pius XI saw private property as an institution necessary to satisfy these individual needs and to promote the common good or common welfare of society.

The fact that the earth's resources are needed for all generations of men and consequently that all men have some claim to the use of these resources does not nullify the private property right, according to Pius XI. To illustrate this point the Pontiff maintained, following the lead of Leo XIII, that there is one type of justice which governs man's right to property and another which governs the correct use of property. The implication of this distinction is precise and important. The right of all men to share in this world's goods does not destroy an individual's right to possess property as his own. The universal purpose of the world's resources does affect the way an individual may use his property. If an individual uses his property in a way which is contrary to the common good, public authority may force a relinquishment of that particular piece of property.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno (Encyclical Letter on Reconstructing the Social Order, May 15, 1931), in Seven Great Encyclicals, no. 45.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, no. 47. A practical example of the state's confiscatory power may help to illustrate the importance of this distinction. If, in an economically underdeveloped area, a large landowner does not cultivate his landed property in a manner which

Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) also maintained that private ownership has a social function as well as an individual one. He pointed out that man's rational nature demanded private property, while at the same time he postulated a fundamental right by which material goods are destined for the use of all men. This right--that material goods are destined for the use of all--the Pope held to be prior to and truly fundamental to all aspects of the property question.

Does this more fundamental right conflict with the right to private property? The Pope implied that private property is an appropriate and efficient way of assuring an abundance of material goods. Thus this type of property helps to provide a plentiful supply of such goods so that they will be available for all generations of men and the fundamental goal of material goods will be achieved. However, it is not just an abundance of material goods which is important, but these goods must be provided in a social structure which allows human freedom and the possibility of human development. In this regard Pius XII saw private property to be a necessary institution of society. He cautioned, however, that such

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provides jobs for the area or needed produce for society, the state may confiscate his land. But, if the state does confiscate his property, it must make some adequate compensation to the legitimate owner. The owner's use of the land has hindered the common good and the land may be legitimately confiscated, but the legitimate ownership was based upon just claims and requires some remuneration. This differs from a misuse of land destroying an owner's claim to that land without any compensation in return. Cf. Miller, Forty Years After, pp. 82-85.

The broader implication of this point is that the capitalists' misuse of property does not destroy the property right itself.

property must be used with the common good in mind or it would not fulfill its function.<sup>23</sup> The Pope wrote:

Only thus [by society's recognition of the commonality of material goods] can we and must we secure that private property and the use of material goods bring to society peace and prosperity and long life, that they no longer set up precarious conditions which will give rise to struggles and jealousies, and which are left to the mercy of the blind interplay of force and weakness.<sup>24</sup>

Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) reaffirmed the natural right of man to property. In 1961 he wrote:

For the right of private property, including that pertaining to goods devoted to productive enterprises, is permanently valid. Indeed, it is rooted in the very nature of things, whereby we learn that individual men are prior to civil society, and hence, that civil society is to be directed toward man as its end.<sup>25</sup>

The Pope urged that the use of this right be spread among all people. This universal distribution of private property is an important element of the Catholic position. It is a more equal distribution of property rather than the justification of capitalism's inequities which is the practical goal of Catholic theory. John XXIII stressed

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<sup>23</sup>It might be implied from statements such as this that the Catholic view sees private property as a functional institution. To an extent this is true, but this functionalism is founded in an essential nature. The Catholic explanation of the natural law right to private property is contained in Chapter 9.

<sup>24</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Radio Address of June 1, 1941," in The Unwearied Advocate, Public Addresses of Pope Pius XII, 3 vols., ed. Vincent A. Yzermans (Saint Cloud, Minn.: Saint Cloud Bookshop, 1956, 1:214.

<sup>25</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra (Encyclical Letter on Christianity and Social Progress, May 15, 1961), in The Gospel of Peace and Justice, ed. Joseph Gremillion (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), no. 109.

also the social function of property. Our predecessors," he wrote, "have always taught that in the right of private property there is rooted a social responsibility."<sup>26</sup> The essence of this responsibility is that an individual may not use his goods in a way which is detrimental to other individuals or to society. In Catholic terms this means that an individual's use of his own property may not hinder the common good, a concept to be more formally introduced shortly. More positively, privately owned goods must be used in such a way that by and in addition to benefiting the individual, other individuals or society as a whole may profit from this use. Specific examples of social benefit are the production of goods useful to society, the provision of jobs for other individuals, and direct aid to the indigent.

In the document cited above Pope John also highlighted changing socio-economic conditions which are bringing into existence the recognition of new property forms. Some of these new forms are social security and insurance programs, as well as the acquisition of professional skills, the latter taking the place of external goods. The Pontiff asserted that these changing conditions do not lessen the force of the arguments for the right to private property.

The Second Vatican Council, an ecumenical council of the Church held at various periods from 1962 through 1964, issued a document called Gaudium et Spes (On the Church in the Modern World). This document stressed the advantages of property to the human person as

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<sup>26</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 119.



an extension of freedom and as a basis for civil liberties. It noted the importance of individuals' having control over material goods. As did John XXIII, the Council recognized the varied forms which ownership is taking in contemporary society, and maintained that all of these forms of property are a source of security to individuals.<sup>27</sup> The document also stressed the common purpose of material goods and upheld the traditional Catholic principles that, no matter what form ownership takes, these goods should be looked upon as common property and used for the benefit of others. This common purpose of goods gives to private property a social quality and means that such property must be used in a socially acceptable manner as mentioned previously.

Pope Paul VI (1963-1978) recalled the Second Vatican Council's teaching that "created goods," that is, material goods, are intended for the use of all men. The Pontiff reaffirmed his predecessors' position and held to the principle that the use of private property must be subordinated to this common destiny of goods. "All other rights whatsoever, those of property and of free commerce, are to be subordinated to this principle," he wrote. Paul VI elaborated

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<sup>27</sup>Charles A. Reich sounds a more cautious note and sees dangers to human freedom in changing property forms such as a job or profession, business franchises, business organization, unemployment insurance, and driver's licenses. The danger lies in the control which the dispensers of these properties have over the individual. Reich proposes a need to recognize such forms of wealth and to establish new theories to regulate the distribution of these forms. See Charles A. Reich, "The New Property," The Yale Journal 73 (April 1964):733-87.

by saying that "private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditioned right."<sup>28</sup>

It is noticeable that neither the document of the Second Vatican Council nor the encyclical of Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, mentions that private property is a "natural right." But neither document attempts to call that right into question and both documents point out that they are only presenting teaching which has already been proposed by the Church. The tenor of Church social documents did begin to change, however, during the reign of Pope John XXIII. It has correctly been pointed out that "current Catholic social teaching is strongly dynamic in its content and rhetoric."<sup>29</sup> This quote refers to the Church's present stress upon the creative development of the human person in all his potentialities. This new emphasis in Church documents is a response to the radical changes which have taken and are taking place in society. Some of these changes which affect the subject of property are the socialization of society, the separation of management from ownership, the increasing importance of new forms of property or substitutes for property, and the increasing amount of public ownership of goods.

The first mentioned, socialization, is not to be confused with nationalization but represents a "multiplication of social relationships, that is, a daily more complex interdependence of citizens,

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<sup>28</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio (Encyclical Letter on the Development of Peoples, March 26, 1967), in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, nos. 22, 23.

<sup>29</sup>Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, pp. 9-10.

introducing into their lives and activities many and varied forms of association, . . . "30 These relationships are due in part to the increasing intervention of public authorities into more aspects of personal life as well as to a natural human inclination to cooperate in reaching desired objectives. This socialization brings with it definite social advantages: increased educational and training opportunities, more adequate health care, improved housing for lower income groups, and better working conditions and increased opportunities for leisure and recreation. At the same time these increased social relationships bring with them certain dangers, chief of which is the limitation of human freedom as individual initiative is destroyed and the efficacy of personal decisions is weakened.

In response to these changes in society certain teachings of the Church are receiving renewed emphasis and there are new developments of other teachings. One area of renewed emphasis is that of personal initiative. The Church recognizes the increasing role which the state must play in economic and social life. At the same time the Church urges a fostering of personal activity:

. . . it remains true that precautionary activities of public authorities in the economic field . . . should be such that they not only avoid restricting the freedom of private citizens, but also increase it, so long as the basic rights of each individual person are preserved inviolate.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 59.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., no. 55.

In the area of private property Church documents are now emphasizing the necessity of such property, even in productive goods, for man's development and independence. This is seen not as a retraction of the natural law right, but in reality a confirmation of that right in the language of modern psychology. The Church also recognizes that there are modern forms of property which effectively give an individual control over material goods. The Second Vatican Council noted: "Private ownership or some other kind of dominion over material goods provides everyone with a wholly necessary area of independence, and should be regarded as an extension of human freedom."<sup>32</sup> The Council held that modern forms of ownership, such as "the possession of professional skills," are legitimate aids to individual security.<sup>33</sup> The fact that modern forms of ownership may substitute for the "direct" ownership of material goods does not take away the individual's right to the possession of these material goods. This refers also to ownership of productive goods.

Finally, modern Church documents contain a renewed emphasis upon the social aspect of private property. Marx held that the

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<sup>32</sup>Second Vatican Council, The Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter M. Abbott, translation editor Joseph Gallagher (New York: America Press, an Angelus Book, 1966), Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, December 7, 1965), no. 71. All quotations from this Council's documents will be taken from this edition. Unfortunately, the quote in English above is a misleading translation from the official Latin text. The Latin version in its context means that the direct ownership of material goods or some form which equivalently gives such ownership is necessary for man. Forms of material security provided by the state cannot eradicate the individual's right to property. See Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, 5 vols. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), vol. 5: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, pp. 309-10.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71.

capitalist mode of production, based on its property relations, set up a social structure where the desire for additional accumulation was the predominant motive of society. Thorstein Veblen came to a similar conclusion. In describing the process of cultural evolution Veblen noted the role that private ownership plays in that process. He remarked: "Whenever the institution of private property is found, even in a slightly developed form, the economic process bears the character of a struggle between men for the possession of goods."<sup>34</sup> The Church recognizes the danger, which Marx and Veblen describe, that greed for accumulation may be concomitant with, not necessarily a result of, a system of private property. The earlier quote of Pius XII hinted at this danger.<sup>35</sup>

The Church offers two comments on the danger of greed for accumulation. One of these is that property should be widely held by all classes of citizens. Rather than seeing property rights destroyed, the Church wishes to see a wide dissemination of property. The second comment is the Church's emphasis upon the social aspect of private property. The Second Vatican Council made the apropos comment:

If this social quality is overlooked, property often becomes an occasion of greed and of serious disturbance. Thus, to those who attack the concept of private property, a pretext is given for calling the right itself into question.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class (New York: New American Library, Mentor Books, 1953), p. 34.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. page 21.

<sup>36</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71.

The Church holds that property is such a fundamental right that the possible and even likely consequence of material goods' assuming a predominant role in the lives of men cannot do away with the right. The Church sees a remedy for greed in the correct use of private property, a use guided by religious and humanistic motivation.

The following three points summarize the major tenets of the Catholic teaching on property. (1) Earthly goods are meant to be the source of life and development for all men. This is the basic principle of Catholic teaching; this common destiny of material goods is a natural right, one flowing from a law of nature. (2) Private property is also a right which man has by the natural law. Private property is such a right because it is an institution which is essential to man's freedom and personal development. (3) Given the common purpose of the earth's goods and the social nature of man, private property possesses a social character. It derives this social character from the fact that, as an institution, it allows material goods to be enjoyed by all. The Church holds that "The right to property is the technical instrument" to make the common use of property "practicable, that is to say, to regulate it reasonably and peacefully."<sup>37</sup> The social character of property is also evident in that every individual's use of property must take into consideration the common good of society.

It is obvious that the common good is an important element in Catholic thought. The concept of the common good will only be

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<sup>37</sup>Vorgrimler, Commentary on the Documents, vol. 5, p. 306.

introduced here; its importance will be noted in the following section and the concept will be treated more fully in Chapter 8. As social beings men enter into civil societies. The Catholic view sees the function of civil society as providing for the common good. Pope Leo XIII noted: "Civil society exists for the common good," and he saw the primary responsibility of civil rulers to lie in making the laws and institutions of society "such as to produce of themselves public well-being and private prosperity."<sup>38</sup> "Public well-being" and "private prosperity" together constitute the common good. But the common good in Catholic social theory is understood to consist in conditions of society which allow all citizens adequate opportunity for their complete personal development as social beings. The common good thus consists of a correct social structure rather than a totality of individual prosperities. Catholic thought defines the common good as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment."<sup>39</sup> Private property is seen as an institution which is necessary for the common good to be achieved; without it the fulfillment of individual citizens would not be possible.

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<sup>38</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, nos. 37, 26.

<sup>39</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 26. For a thorough treatment of the common good see John G. Vrana, "The Concept of the Common Good in the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church" (S.T.D. "thesis," Catholic University of Louvain, 1974).

### Categories of Comparison

The purpose of this section is to introduce the analytical approach to this study of property rights. This will be done by outlining various categories which will be used as areas for comparing and contrasting the two positions under discussion. In this study these categories of comparison serve two functions. They provide the just-mentioned analytical framework for comparing the two property positions. In addition, they are meant to give a deeper understanding and analysis of each individual position. The following four categories constitute the major areas of analysis and comparison: (1) analysis of the economic process, (2) human nature and its development, (3) property and power in society, and (4) normative society and private property.

#### Analysis of the Economic Process

The function of this category is to provide the economic analyses which are the bases for Marxian and Catholic property doctrines. This category includes two elements. First, there is the basic philosophical perspective from which each system views the necessity and process of economic analysis. Secondly, there is the actual analysis itself, that technical critique of the economic system. Of course this technical critique is totally different in the Marxian analysis from that in the Catholic. But both the philosophical perspectives and the technical critique are meant to give each system's overall view on and method of economic analysis and to place the property question in its correct position in that view.



An illustration from literature might serve to clarify the intended function of this category. If it were desired to contrast the Sophoclean tragedy Antigone with the Shakespearean drama Hamlet, it would be helpful to know what each author was attempting in his work. An adequate understanding of Antigone could not be had without some knowledge of the Greek idea of tragedy, of hubris, and of the working out of fate in human lives. Hamlet would not be fully appreciated unless one realized Shakespeare's philosophy that much of man's suffering comes from the weaknesses of his own character. Other information, such as the function of the Greek chorus and the role of "aside" speeches in Shakespearean dramas, would be helpful in making a meaningful comparison between the two plays. Comparison is facilitated and is truly possible only when each dramatist's literary goals and methodology are known. Conversely, individual elements in the two works could not be adequately understood unless seen in their total context. An effort is made in this category to make the question of private property a true gestalt and to place it within its proper context in a total system of social relations.

Both Marxian and Catholic thought see the economic process, and property in particular, as founded upon the human person and contributory to his development. This is to state, as all economists do, that economics is a social science, and, as was formerly the custom, that it is a moral science. The human person and his development are so central to Marxian and Catholic doctrine that these doctrines are meaningless without some knowledge of how they

view human nature and how that nature develops. This gives rise to the second category of analysis.

#### Human Nature and Its Development

Under this category two elements will be discussed. Since the human personality is central to both doctrines, it is first necessary to understand the view which each "side" has of human nature. Marx saw economics as a science of social relations, one involving all of those relations between men which constitute the economic fabric of society. Erich Fromm was one of the earlier writers in English who, by commenting on Marx's early philosophical work, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, popularized the humanistic basis of the Marxian system.<sup>40</sup> This humanism is almost universally recognized today. Typical of this recognition is the following thesis of J. R. Stanfield: "MST [Marx's system of thought] is founded upon what I like to call the fundamental moral principle of humanism: man is the supreme being, and the expansion of the quality of humanness is the proper and sole ultimate end of man's activity."<sup>41</sup>

The preeminence of man is also apparent in the Catholic system, as would be expected. Pope John XXIII remarked: "The cardinal point of this teaching [regarding the social life and relationships

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<sup>40</sup>See Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, with a translation from Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts by T. B. Bottomore (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961).

<sup>41</sup>J. R. Stanfield, "The Concept of Man in Marx's System of Thought and Behaviorism. Alienation, and Democracy," The Review of Social Theory 3 (September 1975): 13.

of men] is that individual men are necessarily the foundation, cause, and end of all social institutions."<sup>42</sup> Economic analysis in both Marxian and Catholic thought has its foundation in the science of man. This common foundation is one of the many similarities between the two systems; it makes their divergent teachings on property that much more surprising and challenging.

The second element contained in this category concerns the role which private property plays in human development. The Marxian concept of alienation will be presented in this category and related to private property. Marx first described the alienation of man under capitalism in his philosophical works, but he expressed the identical thesis in his economic analysis. The Catholic demand for private property will be shown to stem from man's rational nature, an argument which is based on that Church's understanding of natural law. Both of the above elements in this category are contained in Chapter 5 for the Marxian position, while the corresponding Catholic analysis is contained in Chapter 9.

#### Private Property and Power in Society

"Economic organization, in American doctrine, exists to serve life, not to determine it,"<sup>43</sup> wrote Adolf Berle. This subordination of economic organization to human existence, as was pointed out in the preceding category, was certainly the opinion of Marx and a

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<sup>42</sup> Pope John XXXIII, Mater et Magistra, No. 219.

<sup>43</sup> Berle, Power Without Property, p. 113.

postulate of Catholic social theory. It is the purpose of the present category to determine how the proposed property positions of this study's two protagonists provide for this subordination within society. This purpose can be rephrased in question form. Does private property give to individuals as members of society the power to control their own existence or does it frustrate that power? To what extent and in what manner does property enhance or prevent this control by individual members of society?

This category logically follows from the explanation of property's role in human development. Both positions propose an intimate but contradictory relationship between private property and such development. The property institution is seen as the vehicle by which the individual's power over his own development within the social structure is destroyed in the Marxian case and enhanced in the Catholic position. It is the "theoretical description" of this process which is presented in this category.

The obvious question of the definition of power could call forth extended analysis. This analysis is obviated at this point by accepting the definition of power as given by Max Weber. Weber defined power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests."<sup>44</sup> It is intended to maintain here the comprehensiveness which Weber attributed to the term. A paraphrase of the Weberian

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<sup>44</sup>Max Weber, Social and Economic Organization, p. 152. Cf. footnote no. 24 in Chapter I for publication data.

definition as this study understands power is that the concept refers to the economic and moral capability of carrying out one's own will in a social setting.<sup>45</sup> Further analysis of the concept of power is had in Chapter 6, which contains the Marxian analysis of this category, and in Chapter 10, which exposes the Catholic position.

#### Normative Society and Private Property

Under this category there is presented a description of society as it would exist under a social and economic organization which is most conducive to human development. For Marx such a society is synonymous with the communist structure, understood in the Marxian sense. Communist society is the culmination of an evolutionary process; such a society will naturally arise after the dissolution of the capitalist mode of production. Individual men, classes, and nations may retard its coming, but its ultimate arrival is inevitable. The Catholic position sees no single normative social and economic structure. But it does request that certain institutions be present in this structure and, more importantly, that certain principles guide the activity of society which flows from the structure.

The purpose of this category is to allow the description of these ultimate or normative social structures. But, more precisely,

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<sup>45</sup>For a further discussion of the nature of power see Berle, Power Without Property, pp. 168-70, Richard A. Schermerhorn, Society and Power, Foreword by Charles H. Page (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 1-14, and Commons, Legal Foundations, pp. 47-64.

these descriptions are intimately linked with the presence or absence of private property. In the first category property was placed in its correct position in the economic process. The second category was designed to show the relationship of property to human development. The third category represents an attempt to discern whether the individual in a structured society actually has the power for this development. This final category is an effort to complete the picture and show normative society in its relation to the institution of private property. The Marxian analysis for this category is contained in Chapter 8; the Catholic analysis is in Chapter 11.

It is now possible to begin the more specific Marxian critique of private property.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FUNDAMENTAL MARXIAN INSIGHT

Two chapters are required to treat the Marxian analysis of the economic system. This, the first of those two chapters, deals with the basic Marxian thesis on social development--his economic interpretation of history. This thesis will be presented in two sections. The first section presents the theory and the second attempts a fuller explanation of it. The chapter as a whole shows the importance which Marx gave to the economic system and the influence which he attributed to this system upon all social development. A summary of Marx's technical economic analysis will be given in Chapter 4.

#### The Economic Interpretation of History

Joseph Schumpeter emphasized the role which insight or vision plays in economic analysis. He called this vision a "preanalytic cognitive act"<sup>1</sup> and noted that this creative vision must be present before any analysis is possible. In a similar vein Milton Friedman wrote that the construction of new hypotheses is a creative act of "inspiration, intuition, invention; its essence is the vision of something new in familiar material."<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx's predominant vision was an economic interpretation of history. This theory is

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<sup>1</sup>Schumpeter, History, pp. 41-43.

<sup>2</sup>Milton Friedman, Essays in Positive Economics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 43.

also called historical determinism, historical materialism, dialectical materialism, or a materialistic interpretation of history.

The Hegelian background for Marx's interpretation is well known; it involves Hegel's peculiar idealism developed through a dialectical method. Hegel's idealism saw the world of material nature as a concrete alienation of the one great Idea, that is, God. Hegel saw history as the process by which this material nature, through man's self-consciousness, realizes its spiritual aspect. A state is reached "in which finally man knows himself as spirit, as one with God and possessed of absolute truth."<sup>3</sup> Marx was repulsed by the spiritual, pantheistic basis of the Hegelian position. He wrote, together with Engels: "Hegel's conception of history assumes an Abstract or Absolute Spirit which develops in such a way that mankind is a mere mass bearing it with a varying degree of consciousness or unconsciousness."<sup>4</sup>

While Marx rejected Hegelian idealism, he did not reject the dialectical process. The word "dialectic" refers to a process of reasoning by which contradictory elements are proposed and woven into a proposition in order to arrive at a new aspect of truth. This process usually involves discussion and debate. In Hegelian dialectics the arrived-at proposition is used as a new thesis and the process is iterated in a continuing progression. Thus the dialectical method is frequently referred to as the use of thesis

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<sup>3</sup>The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974 ed., s.v. "Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich," by T. M. K.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Holy Family, trans. R. Dixon (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1956), p. 115.



and antithesis in which a new aspect of truth results from the synthesis of these two contradictories.

Hegelian dialectics involves a much broader process and search after truth than this simple juxtaposition of opposites. In the "Introduction" to his The Phenomenology of Mind, Hegel speaks of the dialectical process as "Experience" and of consciousness as passing through a "series of experiences." Marcuse maintains that "Dialectical analysis ultimately tends to become historical analysis, in which nature itself appears as part and stage in its history and in the history of man."<sup>5</sup> Negativity is important to the dialectical method because, according to Hegel, it describes an important aspect of reality.

The Hegelian dialectic is a process of the mind, a dialectic of concepts. Marx's accomplishment was to invert this process into dialectical materialism or, just as accurately, a materialistic dialectic. For Hegel ideas are obtained by an intellectual process; these ideas play important roles in producing and determining history. For Marx the process is completely the opposite. Ideas in politics, science, art, and religion are superstructures of, that is, are determined by, the economic structure. Marx summarized his theory as follows:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are

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<sup>5</sup>Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, 2nd ed., with a new Preface, "A Note on Dialectic," by the Author (New York: Humanities Press, 1954; Boston: First Beacon Press Paperback ed., 1960), p. x. For a different view of dialectic see Walter Kaufmann, Hegel (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1965). Kaufmann maintained that "Hegel's dialectic is at most a method of exposition; it is not a method of discovery," p. 175.

independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political structure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

The above quotation represents Marx's basic insight. The institutions of civil society have been and are determined by the economic structure, predominantly by the production process. The passage is clear; its explanation is complex. The remainder of this section is a comment on the Marxian proposition in its various parts. The following section explores more deeply the precise meaning of the theory.

Marx was vitally concerned with the process by which human history was made. He held that such historical development was the work of man's own creative activity.<sup>7</sup> But Marx saw this creative activity to be conditioned by elements over which man had only indirect control. He wrote: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past." History here is

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<sup>6</sup>Karl Marx, Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, trans. S. W. Ryazanskaya, ed. and with an Introduction by Maurice Dobb (New York: International Publishers, 1970), pp. 20-21.

<sup>7</sup>It was remarked earlier that Marx saw true human development as able to take place only under a socialist system. As a consequence all past history has been deficient as a product of man's free conscious activity. See Vernon Venable, Human Nature: The Marxian View (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1975), pp. 78-79.

synonymous with culture in a broad sense and includes all of those areas of society's endeavors which distinguish society as a product of man's actions. In the passage above Marx referred to this culture, considered in a dynamic sense, as "the general process of social, political and intellectual life."<sup>8</sup>

In Marx's view the major element which determines man's historical development is "the mode of production of material life." He saw society's entire cultural achievements to be a function of the material conditions of production. The social, political, and intellectual life of society is thus a superstructure erected upon an economic substructure. This economic substructure is not a static foundation, however, but truly affects and determines in a dynamic sense the nature of the social life which is built upon it.

The economic substructure consists of the "totality" of the relations of production. In places Marx calls this totality of production relations the "mode of production," a phrase which will be the usual term used herein to express the entire complexus of these relations.

The mode of production is a complex reality which it is possible to divide into two major categories. The first of these categories is the forces of production. These forces or means of production are not monolithic but include a wide variety of factors. First of all they include the instruments of production--the tools,

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<sup>8</sup>Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, with Explanatory Notes, ed. C. P. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 13.

equipment, and factories which are necessary to enable production to take place. These instruments also involve the technology which determines the nature and combination of the various instruments. Secondly, the forces of production include the raw materials and natural resources which form the objects of the labor process, that is, which are the material upon which man's activity is directed. Finally, human labor itself is a productive force.<sup>9</sup> This labor, as a productive force, must include the skills and technical knowledge which direct it. All of these factors Marx enumerated in summarizing the labor process: "In the labour-process, therefore, man's activity, with the help of the instruments of labour, effects an alteration, designed from the commencement, in the material worked upon."<sup>10</sup>

The second element in the mode of production is comprised of the relations of production. Marx wrote: "The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a twofold relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relation-- . . ." <sup>11</sup> The relations of production are social relations; they are constituted by those

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<sup>9</sup>Marx's analysis of the labor process is contained in Chapter 4, while the importance of this labor activity upon man's development is analyzed in Chapter 5.

<sup>10</sup>Marx, Capital, I: 180.

<sup>11</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, vol. 5: Works, April 1845-April 1847 (mainly, The German Ideology), trans. Clemens Dutt, W. Lough, C. P. Magill (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 43. This volume will hereafter be referred to as The German Ideology.

connections between men which arise from the forces of production. The exact nature of these relations is somewhat ambiguous and a correct understanding of them requires further comment.

A relation is an order or connection that one entity has to another, a reference of one subject to another. Besides the two things or objects, which are at least logically distinct, there must be some foundation or reason why one entity has a reference to the other. The relation of father and son exists because the father has begotten the son; this is the foundation of that relationship. In simplest terms a relation is a "towardness," an expression which comes from Aristotle through scholastic philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

One definition defines a relation of production as "a system of positions assigned to the agents of production in relation to the principal means of production."<sup>13</sup> Another definition sees them as "the ways in which men are related to one another as they operate the 'productive forces,' or the "mode of social organization necessary to utilize"<sup>14</sup> these forces of production.

Other statements of Marx provide an insight into the nature of these social relations. He noted that "money, though a physical object with distinct properties, represents a social relation of

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<sup>12</sup>For a philosophical discussion of relations see R. P. Phillips, Modern Thomistic Philosophy, 2 vols., vol. 2: Metaphysics (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1954), pp. 228-231. The concept discussed in these pages is directly applicable to Marxian thought.

<sup>13</sup>Charles Bettelheim, Economic Calculation and Forms of Property, trans. John Taylor (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 55.

<sup>14</sup>H. B. Acton, The Illusion of the Epoch (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 135, 137.

production."<sup>15</sup> In Capital Marx held that "Magnitude of value expresses a relation of social production, it expresses the connexion that necessarily exists between a certain article and the portion of total labour-time of society required to produce it."<sup>16</sup> In The German Ideology Marx concluded: "In a word, rent of land, profit, etc., these actual forms of existence of private property, are social relations corresponding to a definite stage of production, and they are 'individual' only so long as they have not become fetters on the existing productive forces."<sup>17</sup> In another work he held that "The modern workshop, which depends on the application of machinery, is a social production relation, an economic category."<sup>18</sup>

Relation is to be understood, at least in this context, as a connection between entities as expressed above. Marx defined social as "the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end."<sup>19</sup> Social relations of production represent any connections between or among individuals which result from and which correspond to a particular material method of production.

These social relations constitute a manner of social organization and are understood by Marx primarily as property relations.

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<sup>15</sup>Marx, Critique of Political Economy, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup>Marx, Capital, I: 102.

<sup>17</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 231.

<sup>18</sup>Marx, Poverty of Philosophy, p. 133.

<sup>19</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 43.

The relations of production are those social institutions which establish relations between men regarding the instruments of production. It was noted earlier that Marx found it difficult to define private property. "Thus to define bourgeois property is nothing else than to give an exposition of all the social relations of bourgeois production,"<sup>20</sup> he wrote. The implication of this statement is that the relations of production are concerned with the ownership of productive instruments. In discussing the conflict between the "material productive forces" and the relations of production, Marx defined the latter in legal terms as "property relations."<sup>21</sup>

The identification of the superstructure with the totality of human culture has already received some comment. One author has placed all of the following elements in this superstructure:

1. Institutions: Church, army, school, court, etc.
2. Events: Wars, discoveries, revolutions, colonization, etc.
3. Ideas: Ideas about institutions and events; value systems, attitudes, mores, philosophies, theologies, etc.<sup>22</sup>

The problem is not one of discerning the general content of the superstructure, but of distinguishing those elements within it from similar elements which are social relations. Ollman noted: "Thus, property relations as a system of legal claims comes under the

<sup>20</sup>Marx, Poverty of Philosophy, p. 154.

<sup>21</sup>See Marx, Preface to Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup>Alexander Balinky, Marx's Economics (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1970), p. 29.

heading of superstructure, but they are also a component of the relations of production which 'determines' this superstructure."<sup>23</sup> He also saw a similar inclusion of class struggle in both the economic foundation and in the political life of the superstructure. This problem is fundamentally one of the correct interpretation of the Marxian theory, and it is this interpretation which must be investigated further.

#### Explanation of Marx's Theory

There has been much discussion over the exact meaning of Marx's theory. Most of the arguments have been concerned ultimately with the precise nature of the effect of economic causes upon society's conscious activity and about the interaction between the mode of production and the social structure built around it.

In clarifying Marx's theory the first thing to be noted is the role that production plays within the economic process itself. Marx saw all the phases of this economic process to be part of one unified whole. He wrote: "The conclusion we reach is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity." Marx noted, of course, an interdependence between all the elements of the process, but he held that the predominantly determining element is the mode of production. The mode of production is

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<sup>23</sup>Bertell Ollman, Alienation (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 7. Ollman pointed out that Acton has made the same complaint about law and morals. Cf. Acton, The Illusion of the Epoch, p. 164.



not only the predominantly determining factor of all social activity, but the nature of the entire economic system itself is also determined by the particular mode of production of that system. Marx held: "A definite production thus determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange as well as definite relations between these moments."<sup>24</sup>

In what sense does production determine the historical development of society? It is necessary to reject two possible implications of the theory. First, the Marxian thesis does not mean that human activity is primarily determined by economic considerations. Balinky has remarked that "The economic interpretation of history does not maintain . . . that men are moved, even in the main, by economic motives; . . ." <sup>25</sup> Marx did not claim to have developed, nor is his theory meant to express, a psychological treatise on historical development. Moreover, he did not see man as solely or primarily "economic." It does not seem necessary to elaborate this point, since Marx's entire critique of capitalism relies heavily upon questions of social justice and the creative development of all of man's faculties and not on man's responses to economic stimuli.

The second caution to be noted is that the determination in the Marxian theory does not mean that man has no free will or that this free will has been destroyed. Schumpeter has pointed out that,

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<sup>24</sup>Marx, Introduction to Grundrisse, p. 99.

<sup>25</sup>Balinky, Marx's Economics, p. 40. Balinky also denied that the theory means that a civilization's institutions can be understood in terms of economic motives or that such motives give the major impetus to historical change.

according to Marx, the economic forces which determine history do not determine man's activity. He has rightly contended that the Marxian thesis is methodologically deterministic but not philosophically so. He meant by this that the "physical data" upon and around which man acts are given to man independently of his own free decisions, but that this does not mean an "absence of the individual's moral responsibility for his acts."<sup>26</sup> This is the same as Marx's assertion, noted earlier in this chapter, that "men make their own history," but the conditions under which they do so are not determined by men. Engels made a similar comment on this point: "We make our own history, but in the first place under very definite presuppositions and conditions. Among these the economic ones are finally decisive."<sup>27</sup>

A more positive affirmation of the theory begins with an enumeration of its essential points, and here again it is possible to use Schumpeter's summary. He saw the Marxian interpretation to involve four major points. The first of these points professes that all facets of a society's culture depend upon the class structure of that society. A second element of the theory, Schumpeter noted, is the proposition that a particular class receives its position in society from its contribution to the process of production. In his third point Schumpeter stressed that there is an "immanent evolution within the process of production whereby the process is

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<sup>26</sup> Schumpeter, History, p. 438, footnote 7.

<sup>27</sup> Frederick Engels, "Letter to J(oseph) Bloch, September 21, 1880," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Correspondence, 1846-1895, a Selection with Commentary and Notes, ed. V. Adoratsky (New York: International Publishers, 1934), pp. 475-476.

constantly changing its economic and social structure. Fourthly, he noted that inevitable class struggles provide the mechanisms which propel the economic evolution and consequently social change.<sup>28</sup>

A more dynamic description of the Marxian theory is as follows. Every mode of production, and that includes all historical systems up to and including the capitalist, has produced a structure involving different classes.<sup>29</sup> Although these may have been several classes, Marx always emphasized the class of producers, such as slaves, serfs, and wage earners, and the ruling class, such as slaveholders, lords, and capitalists. The interests of each class are opposed to those of other classes. This is especially true of the interests of the ruling class and the producing class. There is constant conflict, even hostility, between these two classes as the rulers strive to maintain their dominance and the controlled class strives to better its conditions in life.

The ruling class is that class which controls the production process. In the Marxian understanding of history the class which controls the production process also controls the nature of social structures and the direction of social development. This thesis

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<sup>28</sup>Schumpeter, History, pp. 439-440. Schumpeter claimed this theory to be the unique contribution of Marx; cf. p. 439, footnote 11. Engels confessed that he was approaching the theory on his own, but he attributed it "solely and exclusively to Marx" (Frederick Engels, "Preface to the German Edition of 1883," in Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p. 57 and footnote).

<sup>29</sup>It is more correct to note that in the most primitive society which Marx analyzed he saw a communist-type system based on kinship rather than a system of classes.

is not capable of any a priori proof; it is simply an extension of the Marxian insight of the economic interpretation of history. Marx established the validity of the thesis not by syllogistic argument but by insight and by historical analysis. He noted:

Assume particular stages of development in productive forces of man and you will get a particular form of commerce and consumption. Assume particular stages of development in production, commerce and consumption and you will have a corresponding social order, a corresponding organisation of the family and of the ranks and classes, in a word a corresponding civil society.

A little later in the same letter Marx criticized Proudhon:

What he [Proudhon] has not grasped is that these men [producers], according to their powers, also produce the social relations amid which they prepare cloth and linen. Still less has he understood that men, who fashion their social relations in accordance with their material productivity, also fashion ideas and categories, that is to say, the abstract ideal expression of these same social relations.<sup>30</sup>

A more convincing historical argument of the power of the predominant class is had in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. In this work Marx described the events leading up to the beginning of the establishment of a French empire under Louis Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon I. In doing so Marx showed the extent of power the predominant, bourgeois class had been able to exercise in establishing its own hegemony in all areas.

To continue the general description of the Marxian theory, at particular stages of economic development in society new material forces of production come into existence. These forces "can be

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<sup>30</sup>Karl Marx, "Letter to P. V. Annenkov, December 28, 1846," in Correspondence, 1846-1895, pp. 7, 14.

determined with the precision of natural science, . . . <sup>31</sup> At every such stage there develops, in Marxian terms, a conflict between the new material forces of production and the relations of production. Engels described such a conflict in the transition from the feudal society of the Middle Ages to the modern capitalist mode of production:

Into this society [Middle Ages] of individual producers, producers of commodities, the new mode of production thrust itself, setting up, in the midst of the spontaneous planless division of labour which then existed throughout society, the planned division of labour organised in the individual factory; alongside of individual production, social production made its appearance. . . . But the planned organization was stronger than the natural division of labour; . . . Individual production was vanquished on one field after another; social production revolutionised the whole former mode of production.<sup>32</sup>

The revolutionary character of such transitions, although usually expressed by Marx and Engels in terms of conflicts between material forces and social relations, was just as certainly viewed by them as a conflict between men. This conflict involves the rise to prominence of a new class in society. This new class seeks to establish new social relations guaranteeing its control of the new production process and to extend that production process throughout society. Just as involved is the new "lower" class, usually comprised predominantly of the members of the old "subjugated" class, which sees itself being relegated to an inferior position in new social

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<sup>31</sup> Marx, Preface to Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Frederick Engels, Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science, trans. Emile Burns, ed. C. P. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1939), p. 294. This work will be referred to as Anti-Dühring, its commonly given title, in future references.

relations. All of this can be translated into other terms by stating that the material forces of production automatically tend toward the rise of a new class of property holders, and this new class strives to establish and consolidate its claims to such ownership over the other classes of society in new social relationships. Marx called the period in which this process was taking place "an era of social revolution."<sup>33</sup>

This revolution is essentially completed when the new social relations have been developed to such a degree that the new production mode becomes the predominant method of supplying society's needed goods and services. This entire process is the laying of the economic foundation or substructure for future social development. This substructure directs or "conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life,"<sup>34</sup> to repeat a Marxian phrase quoted earlier.

This general description of Marx's theory will be closed by quotes from Engels. These quotes point out more precisely the nature of the determining force of the production process. Engels wrote to Joseph Bloch, and this first lengthy quote from that letter gives a valuable insight into Marx's theory:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the

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<sup>33</sup>Marx, Preface to Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.; cf. p. 62 of this dissertation.

economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure--political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc.--forms of law--and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma--also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (i.e., of things and events, whose inner connection is so remote or so impossible to prove that we regard it as absent and can neglect it) the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.<sup>35</sup>

The Marxian interpretation of history is summarized in the four following points. First, the mode of production is the fundamental and decisive element in establishing or conditioning or bringing about all facets of society's culture. But, secondly, economic considerations interact with and are even partly influenced by the superstructure itself. Engels noted this explicitly: "Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic base."<sup>36</sup> Thirdly, history is a product of the human will. Both Marx and Engels emphasized this proposition. Human decisions, however, depend upon the conditions which have been established by the economic system.

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<sup>35</sup>Engels, "Letter to J(oseph) Bloch, September 21, 1890," in Correspondence, 1846-1895, p. 475.

<sup>36</sup>Frederick Engels, "Letter to H(einz) Starkenburg, January 25, 1894," in Correspondence, 1846-1895, p. 517.

Fourthly, and this point has not yet been stressed in this study, there is a teleology present in all historical development. Society is directing itself toward a definite goal, one that involves providing individual men with the opportunity for complete social development.

Engels accounted for the rise of "great men" in particular periods by the fact that there was an historical necessity for that type of person. He wrote:

That such and such a man and precisely that man arises at that particular time in that given country is of course pure accident. But cut him out and there will be a demand for a substitute, and this substitute will be found, good or bad, but in the long run he will be found.<sup>37</sup>

This evolutionary direction of economic and consequently all social development toward a society allowing for man's free, creative development is implicit in most of Marx's works. His major work, Capital, seeks to confirm that teleological element in nature by showing how capitalist society will eventually yield to a new classless society. "But capitalist production begets," Marx wrote, "with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation."<sup>38</sup> It is possible to have an economic interpretation of history with a different or a haphazard evolutionary direction, but it would not be the Marxian interpretation. The Marxian view of social development will be discussed further in Chapter 7, after it has been possible to look more closely at man in his human nature.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 518.

<sup>38</sup>Marx, Capital, I: 763.



The explanation of the Marxian theory above is itself a comment on an earlier question: What distinguishes social relations as part of the economic foundation from such relations as part of the superstructure? Marx did not attempt to make such precise distinctions because it is difficult or impossible to do so. The social relations which are an integral part of the production process, and these are usually some form of property relation, are obviously a part of the economic foundation. There are other social relations, similar to the above, which grow out of the substructure but serve to substantiate and confirm it.<sup>39</sup>

The interaction of both groups makes it impossible at times to discern whether particular property relations are a necessary part of the substructure or a subsequent social development of it. In one sense even to attempt such precise determinations is contrary to the understanding of the theory. The theory is not meant to be a mathematical function, although it does make emphatic that the economic system is always the major independent variable. The exact dependence of all social development upon the economic system can only be discerned as historical fact after the event. Some social relations will obviously reflect legal or religious or artistic developments of other relations which are obviously an essential part of the production process. Many other human relationships will

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<sup>39</sup>For a similar explanation see Vernon Venable, Human Nature: The Marxian View (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1975), pp. 104-111. Venable has asked a slightly different question, however, one seeking concrete examples of production forces. Venable's explanation of the mode of production is slightly different from the one given in the first part of this chapter.

exist which cannot neatly be put into either category. The economic interpretation does not demand that they be so placed.

One other important observation can be made at this time concerning the relation between Marx's theory of history and philosophical materialism. Philosophical materialism is here understood to be metaphysical, that is, a theory concerned with the ultimate nature of reality. This is distinguished from ethical materialism, reducible in economic terms to utility functions which hold that human actions in some way are determined by the enjoyment of material goods. Philosophical, that is, metaphysical, materialism can be defined as "a philosophical position [which] teaches that all reality can be reduced to matter and to certain powers that are wholly subject to conditions of matter."<sup>40</sup>

It is a corollary of this study that Marx's economic interpretation of history, understood as a theory of historical development, does not rely on or require the acceptance of philosophical materialism. This does not mean that Marx himself did not accept such materialism, nor does it deny that Marx may have constructed his theory of history from this philosophical perspective. What is meant is that an individual can accept the Marxian theory of historical development and at the same time espouse a system of reality composed of immaterial or spiritual elements.

Schumpeter rightly observed that Marx's theory of history "is compatible with any philosophy or creed and should not be linked up

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<sup>40</sup> Philosophical Dictionary, ed. Walter Brugger and Kenneth Baker, 1972, s.v. "Materialism," by W(alter) B(rugger).

with any particular one."<sup>41</sup> Rebecca Cooper held a similar viewpoint concerning the Marxian theory:

Probably in the strict modern sense of the word, this doctrine should not be called materialism; for, though not incompatible with a materialistic view of the fundamental reality, it is entirely compatible also with practically all other metaphysical positions--though not, of course, with the Hegelian.<sup>42</sup>

Any further attempt to substantiate this corollary, that Marx's materialist interpretation does not demand an acceptance of philosophical materialism, would require at this time a too lengthy detour from the proposed path of investigation. On the other hand, it is felt that any attempt to disprove the corollary would also require substantial effort.

Marx's theory of history directed his attention and his study into the area of political economy. Marx himself remarked that his theory of history "became the guiding principle of my studies."<sup>43</sup> If this statement is taken literally, and Marx's later works indicate it should be, then most of these later works become an exposition of or commentary on his theory of history. Shlomo Avineri has noted:

One can indeed show how Marx . . . could construct his materialist view out of the Hegelian system itself.  
. . . The various economic, social, and historical

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<sup>41</sup>Schumpeter, History, p. 438.

<sup>42</sup>Rebecca Cooper, The Logical Influence of Hegel on Marx (Seattle: University of Washington Press, University of Washington Publications in the Social Sciences, October, 1925), p. 107.

<sup>43</sup>Marx, Preface to Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.

studies undertaken by Marx are but a corollary of the conclusions he drew from his immanent critique of Hegel's political philosophy.<sup>44</sup>

Marx's interpretation of history gave direction and purpose to his subsequent writings. This purpose, expressed as the aim of Capital in Chapter II, was "to lay bare the economic law of motion of society."<sup>45</sup> The overall goal of Marx was to formulate a theory of social change. This reflected Marx's conviction that it was necessary for man to understand the world before he could change it.<sup>46</sup>

Marx held no particular predilection for economics; he even seemed to have regretted that he had to give so much time to its study. He held that economic considerations played an essential role in the establishment of a social and cultural structure. Marx was thus "forced" to turn to a study of political economy, since in this science lay the key to the understanding of society's development. Marx saw that the next step in this development would come with the collapse of the capitalist mode of production. The discernment of the law governing this collapse of capitalism required extensive economic analysis. The following chapter deals with Marx's basic economic model.

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<sup>44</sup> Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Marx, Preface of the First German Edition of Capital, 1:10.

<sup>46</sup> See Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," Thesis 11, as well as entire "Preface" referred to in previous footnote.

## CHAPTER IV

### MARXIAN ANALYSIS OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM

#### Introduction

The previous chapter contained Marx's view on the essential role of the economic system in the determination of social structures. Marx also saw the economic system in its other essential role of providing the livelihood of man. Any economic system Marx understood to be a group of producing individuals. The necessity of labor was obvious. Marx wrote:

So far therefore as labour is a creator of use-value, is useful labour, it is a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and Nature, and therefore no life.<sup>1</sup>

But the individual does not labor in isolation. Marx held that historical investigations showed that the further back the course of history is traced "the more does the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole: . . ." Marx held that "Production by an isolated individual outside society" was an "absurdity."<sup>2</sup>

By far the greatest part of Marx's economic analysis was centered around individuals producing in a particular stage of social

<sup>1</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:42-43.

<sup>2</sup>Marx, Introduction to Grundrisse, p. 84.

development, that known as the capitalist mode of production. This study follows Marx's lead and reports primarily upon his critique of the capitalist system. But a more insistent reason for this approach is that Marx's views on property can be more adequately treated and comprehensively systematized by studying Marx's analysis of capitalism. It is most probable that Marx himself arrived at his apotheosis of communism by peeling away what he considered the defects of capitalism. Marxian analysis of the economic process in this study reduces itself to analysis of the capitalist system.

There are numerous studies dealing with the exposition and analysis of Marx's critique of capitalism. It is not the purpose of this chapter to criticize, analyze, or synthesize these commentaries. This chapter does attempt to orient Marx's economic analysis around private property. This does not mean that private property is the pivotal or core idea of the Marxian critique. It simply reflects the study's goal of understanding Marx's views on property, not of using property as a guide to the understanding of Marx. The chapter is divided, after this "Introduction," into two major sections. The first of these deals with the elements of Marx's model and the second section treats the contradictions within the capitalist system.

#### Elements of Marx's Analysis of Capitalism

Marx's economic analysis of property rights relies heavily upon the labor theory of value. Marx's formulation of this theory must be examined. Marx's description of the origin of surplus value is also pivotal to his analysis and will, therefore, be investigated. Other

important elements of the Marxian analysis are commodity, capital, use value, and exchange value. All of these topics will be treated in the various subsections into which this section is divided.

#### Commodity, Use Value, Exchange Value

Schumpeter has remarked that "the problem of Value must always hold the pivotal position, as the chief tool of analysis in any pure theory that works with a rational schema."<sup>3</sup> Marx must have had a similar conviction; the first chapter of Capital begins with an analysis of commodities which is an introduction to his labor theory of value. Marx gave a preliminary definition of a commodity as "an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another." These objects can satisfy man directly insofar as they are means of production. In Marxian and in modern terms commodities possess "utility"; this utility bestows on the commodity a use value. The property of a commodity which gives it a utility or a use value "is independent of the amount of labour required to appropriate its useful qualities."<sup>4</sup>

But commodities not only possess use value, they also are used for purposes of exchange and thus have exchange value. In fact Marx ultimately defined commodity as an object whose major function is to be exchanged rather than to be used. "To become a commodity," he

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<sup>3</sup>Schumpeter, History, p. 588.

<sup>4</sup>Marx, Capital, I: 35, 36.

stated, "a product must be transferred to another, whom it will serve as a use-value, by means of exchange."<sup>5</sup>

Further analysis of commodities attributes to them a mystical character. Marx pondered the origin of this mystical, commodity character. It does not come from the labor which transforms nature and makes nature useful for human purposes. Labor is simply human effort of a specific type, and the products of that effort are use values whose functions are readily understood by consumers.<sup>6</sup> The specific type of human labor is abstracted from in determining the exchange value of a commodity. This means that exchange value comes from the "expenditure of human labour-power,"<sup>7</sup> not from a specific type of labor power. It is the quantity of this abstract labor embodied in a commodity which gives it a precise exchange value.

But a commodity does become mysterious, Marx asserted, precisely because of its commodity form. Marx pointed out that the social relations between workers are transferred to the products of their labor, so that social relations exist between the products themselves.

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour: because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>6</sup>By commodity fetishism Marx did not refer to an attitude toward scientifically complex consumer goods, many of which would not be understood by the ordinary consumer. The "transcendence" of such sophisticated commodities is an entirely different subject.

<sup>7</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:44.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 72.



In the world of commodities the products of men's hands are transferred into beings with social relations. Marx called this condition--the regarding of commodity relations as social relations--"commodity fetishism." This fetishism is a necessary consequence of commodity production.

The importance of commodity fetishism, at least at the present point, is that the social character of a person's work manifests itself only in the act of exchange. This social character is the realization that men act as fellow human beings, as members of one society, and that their labor contributes to the well-being of society. The realization that a person's work has social value thus takes place only when, or more accurately because, one commodity is exchanged for another. Commodities thus possess social relations, while the labor of one worker is related to that of another only in the material relations upon which the production process is organized.

A commodity must be socially useful, Marx pointed out; it must satisfy a social need. But the essential note of a commodity is its possession of exchange value. The producer of a commodity, and eventually society itself, views the labor of the worker predominantly as a value-producing activity. The development of commodity production is a process where human labor is constantly being expressed in terms of objects.

It requires a fully developed production of commodities before, from accumulated experience alone, the scientific conviction springs up, that all the different kinds of private labour, which are carried on independently of each other, and yet as spontaneously developed branches

of the social divisions of labour, are continually being reduced to the quantitative proportions in which society requires them.<sup>9</sup>

The implication of all of this for Marx is that commodity production, at least in its mature form within a capitalist society, rules man instead of being ruled by him. In speaking of producers Marx noted that they are ruled by the value nature of commodities. Marx deplored the capitalists' acceptance of being dominated by their system. "They belong to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him,"<sup>10</sup> he wrote. Commodity production destroys the social relations which should exist between workers and creates new social relations out of the process of exchange and the technical production functions of the various commodities.

#### Labor Theory of Value

It has been pointed out that Marx viewed economics as a science describing the relations between people. This meant that a valid value theory had to be expressed in terms of these social relations. As a consequence Marx rejected use values as a legitimate investigation of "political economy," except insofar as use values are the physical entities which possess exchange value. "Although use-values serve social needs and therefore exist within the social framework, they do not express the social relations of production," Marx wrote

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

in the Critique. "Use-value as such," he continued a few sentences later, "since it is independent of the determinant economic form lies outside the sphere of investigation of political economy."<sup>11</sup>

#### Classical Foundation of Marx's Labor Theory of Value

As all Marx scholars point out, Marx learned his economics primarily from Ricardo. Marx's theory of value depends greatly upon the Ricardian analysis of value, consequently it relies also upon the analysis of Adam Smith. One of Ricardo's contributions to economics was a reformation of Adam Smith's theory of value. The ambiguous nature of Smith's theory is well known. At times Smith seemed to incline toward a labor theory of value, as when he declared: "The real price of every thing, what every thing really costs to the man who wants to acquire it, is the toil and trouble of acquiring it." At other times he seemed to espouse what has been called a cost of production theory, as when he wrote that "Wages, profit, and rent are the three original sources of all revenue as well as of all exchangeable value."<sup>12</sup>

Ricardo neglected the cost of production theory and maintained that Smith really had two labor standards of value. One of these

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<sup>11</sup> Marx, Critique of Political Economy, p. 28. It should be noted that Marx is practicing positive economics in espousing exchange value and rejecting use value. His own normative position, to be treated in Chapter 7, would organize the economic system upon the use values of products.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, 6th ed., ed. Edwin Canaan, 2 vols. (London: Methuen & Co., 1950, University Paperbacks, 1961), 1: 34, 59.

standards was "that all things became more or less valuable in proportion as more or less labour was bestowed on their production"; the other was "the quantity which it [the object] can command in the market."<sup>13</sup> Ricardo pointed out that these two standards are not the same. If they were the same, when a worker increased his productivity, he would increase by that same amount the quantity of goods he received in exchange for his product.

Ricardo rejected Smith's contention that the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of some other commodity which the worker receives in exchange for his labor. Still guided by Smith, however, Ricardo held that the quantity of labor incorporated in a commodity determines the value of that commodity. In the first chapter of his Principles Ricardo headed the very first section:

The value of a commodity, or the quantity of any other commodity for which it will exchange, depends on the relative quantity of labour which is necessary for its production, and not on the greater or less compensation which is paid for that labor.<sup>14</sup>

Ricardo considered the different quantity of labor in different occupations. He accepted Smith's analysis that this quality differential is roughly determined by market practices and that, once established, this quality ratio varies imperceptibly over periods of time. Ricardo also noted that a true evaluation of a commodity must include the labor embodied, to use Marx's term, in the tools or instruments of production.

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<sup>13</sup>David Ricardo, The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo, ed. Piero Sraffa with M. H. Dobb, vol. 1: On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation (Cambridge: University Press, 1962), pp. 13-14.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

Adam Smith saw exchange as a constant propensity of human nature. Commodity production then becomes a universal form of economic life. Smith was looking for the causes which bring about an increase in a nation's wealth. He saw that increased productivity was due to the division of labor; division of labor was thus an effect of man's propensity to exchange. Smith rejected utility as a measure of exchange value and set about to discover what gives any commodity its value. His insight was that labor was this value-determining attribute. But his emphasis upon the universality of exchange led him to formulate value in terms of the quantity of labor a commodity would bring in exchange, not in the labor required for its production.

Ronald L. Meek is inclined to place the origin of Smith's theory in his "concern with the analysis of the particular problem of accumulation under capitalism."<sup>15</sup> Smith generalized this argument in the Wealth of Nations, Meek noted, to any society where there was complete division of labor. This search for the causes of accumulation, however, did not force value to be measured in commandable labor. The major reason for Smith's interpretation, as implied above, seems to lie more in his emphasis upon exchange as a natural expression of human nature. The propensity to barter and exchange, Smith explained, more probably is "the necessary consequence of the faculties of reason and speech."<sup>16</sup> The existence of commodity production, in the Marxian sense of commodity described above, is not questioned by Smith.

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<sup>15</sup>Ronald L. Meek, Studies in the Labor Theory of Value, 2d ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1956), p. 66.

<sup>16</sup>Smith, Wealth of Nations, 1:17.

Ricardo, on the other hand, was concerned with the functional distribution of production among landed proprietors, capitalists, and workers. The major problem of political economy for him was "To determine the laws which regulate this distribution, . . ." <sup>17</sup> Ricardo noticed that there was an apparent change in the national product whenever wages and profits changed. He was forced to investigate the nature of value, as Sraffa indicated, in order to explain how a change in wages would affect relative values and thus affect profits.

Marx attributed great historical significance to the works of both Smith and Ricardo: to Smith for noticing the historical change brought about by capitalist accumulation and to Ricardo for his insight into the determination of value by embodied labor. Smith performed a double job, Marx noted. One of these tasks was to enlighten men as to the inner workings and accurate categories, the "physiology" is the word Marx used, of the capitalist system. The second task Smith performed was to define and describe the external manifestations of the bourgeois system as it appeared to all factions of society. Marx noted that Smith was interested in both of these jobs and mixed their exposition without any relational realizations between the two.

Marx claimed that Ricardo's work was tantamount to the acclamation: "Halt! The basis, the starting point for the physiology of the bourgeois system--for the understanding of its internal organic coherence and life process--is the determination of value by labor

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<sup>17</sup>Ricardo, Preface to Principles, p. 5.

time."<sup>18</sup> Marx credited Ricardo with establishing in a conscious way the basis for an accurate formulation of the laws of motion of capitalist society.

### Marx's Theory of Value

Marx's theory of historical development led him to emphasize the importance of production and to see that distribution, exchange, and consumption combine with it to form one entire economic and social process. At the same time Marx saw the nature of the social relations implied in the capitalist mode of production. His use of exchange value presented a basis for a value theory in terms of social relations, the only true basis for value in the positive economics which Marx was describing.

In a society ruled by tradition the division of labor represents no particular problem. Once commodity production, even in its simplest form, arises, then a new problem faces society. This new problem concerns itself with the allocation of labor to ensure that needed products will be produced and that these products will be sold. The solution to this problem takes place in Marx's view according to a law of value. Under the presence of commodity production this law of value "ultimately determines how much of its disposable working-time society can expend on each particular class of commodities."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Karl Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, ed. S. (W.) Ryazanskaya and Richard Dixon, trans. Emile Burns, Jack Cohen, and S. W. Ryazanskaya, 3 vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963-71), 2:166.

<sup>19</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:356.

Sweezy has likened this law to a "theory of general equilibrium" and stated that one of its primary functions is to produce order where there is no central planning.<sup>20</sup>

In Capital Marx used to a great extent the method of abstraction. He prescinded or abstracted from actual conditions at first and then attempted to broaden his argument to actually existing situations. In Volume 1, especially, he began with commodity production in a general form and extended his argument to commodity production under a capitalist system. Since production is the determining element of society, commodity production must be the determining element under capitalism. The law of value simply says that under commodity production there must be some system whereby labor is allocated according to the needs of society.

In a letter to Kugelmann Marx remarked "That this necessity of distributing social labour in definite proportions cannot be done away with by the particular form of social production, but can only change the form it assumes, is self-evident."<sup>21</sup> Marx even held that some distribution of labor is a natural law. Commodity production relations determine other economic relations precisely through the mechanism of exchange value. What determines exchange value can only be the quantity of labor which is necessary to produce a particular commodity. All of this, beginning with the economic interpretation of history to the labor theory of value, is maintained predominantly

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<sup>20</sup>Cf. Sweezy, Capitalist Development, p. 53.

<sup>21</sup>Karl Marx, "Letter to Kugelmann, July 11, 1868," in Correspondence, 1846-1895, p. 246.



by way of insight. Marx's major task was to show how this entire mechanism operated.

The labor theory of value is involved with private property under the capitalist system of commodity production because private property is an essential institution for such a system. The ownership of the means of production and the purchase of another man's labor power is possible only when property is a legally recognized institution of society. In Chapter 2 note was made of Marx's recognition of a mutual relationship between private property and alienated labor. An understanding of this mutual relationship depends upon an understanding of Marx's theory of value, therefore further comments on this value theory must be offered.

A quantity of one good exchanges for a specific quantity of another good, the exact proportion varying with time and place. Exchange value would thus seem to be a relative thing, not an intrinsic value which a commodity possesses. But Marx attempted to show that this is not the case. An exchange value, Marx held, represents a "mode of expression" for something which is intrinsic to a commodity. He used as an example an equation of exchange which states: "1 quarter corn = x cwt. iron."<sup>22</sup> This equation means that in the corn and in the iron there exists something which is common to both. This something can obviously be neither the corn nor the iron.

Marx held that the element common to both the corn and the iron is not a chemical property nor any natural property whatsoever. Any

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<sup>22</sup>See Marx, Capital, 1:37-38.

natural property affects the use value of a commodity. It is the quality differential which determines different use values. The act of exchange, however, abstracts from use value; its determining characteristic is quantitative. Specific quantities of two commodities are exchanged for each other as they both possess the common ingredient in the same amount.

What is this common ingredient? The only characteristic common to all commodities is that they are the products of labor. But this cannot be labor of a specific kind, for specific labor produces use value. Just as it is necessary to abstract from the use value of a commodity in the determination of its exchange value, so it is necessary to abstract from the specific character of the labor which produced the commodity. It is this abstract or homogeneous labor which gives to commodities their exchange values. Thus Marx arrived at the conclusion that the value of a commodity is measured "by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article," and that "The labour . . . that forms the substance of value, is homogeneous human labour, . . ." <sup>23</sup>

The above analysis represents Marx's expression of value theory in what is usually called qualitative terms. Marx saw commodity production as resulting from a specific set of social relations. It is the exchange value of a commodity which gives it true value. Quality of labor produces different use values, that is, different goods. Use value represents a relation between men and things, while exchange

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<sup>23</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:38, 39.

value expresses a relation between men and men. The qualitative nature of Marx's theory does not refer to the quality of different types of labor but to the fact that value is sought and found in social relations. These social relations are established in commodity production which consists of social labor. This labor is controlled by the capitalist owner of the means of production, who is able "to extract a surplus from the product of labor, natural resources, and technology." This control by the capitalist extends to the entire production process. "This enables the capitalist to 'rationalize' production, to strive for the input combination and work pace which maximizes the surplus."<sup>24</sup> Thus the capitalist controls the work and freedom of the worker.

It is part of the comprehensiveness of Marx that his value theory is not only qualitative, but also exposes the quantitative explanation of value. A theory of value in its simplest form is an expression of how the true worth of commodities is determined, this worth being most frequently expressed by price. Economic goods are produced according to some production function. The determinants of value and the allocation of resources are thus interrelated. Value theory ordinarily means the quantitative determination of exchange value. Sweezy expressed this clearly when he wrote:

Exchange value is thus an aspect of the laws governing the allocation of productive activity in a commodity-producing society. . . . To discover the nature of these laws in quantitative terms is the task of quantitative

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<sup>24</sup>J. Ron Stanfield, "Capitalist Evolution and Soviet Evolution," Review of Social Economy 34 (October 1976):202.

value theory, and it is in this sense that value theory has constituted the traditional starting point of modern political economy.<sup>25</sup>

It has been pointed out that the labor which Marx used as a measure of value is abstract or homogeneous labor. This labor must be expended in a production function which represents the current state of technological development. Current technology ensures that the time necessary to produce a commodity represents an average time and constitutes labor that is "socially necessary." This phrase is Marx's own and he contended "that that which determines the magnitude of the value of any article is the amount of labour socially necessary."<sup>26</sup>

But what about different labor skills? Marx's answer was to use as a basic unit of measurement what he called "simple labor power." This is the average degree of skill which would be prevalent in the labor force. Skilled labor represents some multiple of this simpler labor ability. "Skilled labour counts only as simple labour intensified, or rather, as multiplied simple labour, a given quantity of skilled being considered equal to a greater quantity of simple labour."<sup>27</sup> The method by which skilled labor power is converted into simple labor power was not specified by Marx. He held it to be a "social process" which takes place in some nebulous manner unknown to producers. To simplify matters Marx in his analysis regarded all labor as unskilled simple labor.

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<sup>25</sup>Sweezy, Capitalist Development, p. 41.

<sup>26</sup>Marx, Capital, 1: 39.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

Marx continued in his analysis in the following manner. Assume the value equation, he stated, to be: 20 yards of linen = 1 coat. Marx called the value of the linen relative value and the value of the coat equivalent value. The linen is valued in terms of the coat. Marx affirmed that in the reality expressed by the above equation the labor involved in producing the coat is equal to the labor involved in producing the linen. Although the labor involved in each of the commodities possessed a different quality, the abstract labor of the one equals the abstract labor of the other.

Marx pointed out that human labor itself is not value, but only creates value. "It becomes value only in its congealed state, when embodied in the form of some object,"<sup>28</sup> Marx wrote. The value of the linen is expressed as congealed labor, the labor materialized in the coat, which has an objective existence different from the linen. Regarding the concept of congealed labor and its role in Marx's theory, Schumpeter noted: "The quantity of labor embodied in products did not merely 'regulate' their value. It was (the 'essence' or 'substance' of) their value. They were congealed labor." The point which Schumpeter emphasized is that Marx regarded commodities as having an absolute value. In this he differed from Ricardo, who attempted to explain actual relative prices. Schumpeter maintained that for Ricardo there was no essential dichotomy between prices and values. Schumpeter claimed that Marx, however, always equated value with the labor embodied in a commodity, "and his problem was precisely

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

to show how, in consequence of the mechanism of perfect competition, these absolute values without being altered came to be shifted about in such ways that in the end commodities, while still retaining their values, were not sold at relative prices proportional to these values."<sup>29</sup> Marx himself noted that when a commodity is sold "the price realised may be abnormally above or below the value."<sup>30</sup> In Volume 1 of Capital, however, Marx assumed that over the long run commodity prices tend to reflect commodity values. In Volume 3 he placed more emphasis upon the difference between prices and values.<sup>31</sup>

The analysis so far has been speaking as if commodity production were the only essential note of capitalism. Marx, however, saw another important institution as a vital part of this mode of production. Together with commodity production there must be present a social system which allows the laborer to sell his power in the market place. Marx stated that "The capitalist epoch is therefore characterized by this, that labour power takes in the eyes of the labourer himself the form of a commodity which is his property; his

<sup>29</sup>Schumpeter, History, pp. 596, 597.

<sup>30</sup>Marx, Capital, 1: 108.

<sup>31</sup>There is an apparent discrepancy between Marx's theoretical development of value theory in Volume 1 of Capital and his explanation of actual market conditions as he described them in Volume 3. This has been called the transformation problem, the change of commodity values into market prices. For the classic presentation of this problem see Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, Karl Marx and the Close of His System & Böhm-Bawerk's Criticism of Marx by Rudolf Hilferding. Together with an Appendix consisting of an Article by Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz on the Transformation of Values into Prices of Production in the Marxian System (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1949). For a more recent treatment see Paul A. Samuelson, "Understanding the Marxian Notion of Exploitation: A Summary of the So-Called Transformation Problem Between Marxian Values and Competitive Prices," Journal of Economic Literature 9 (June 1971):399-431.

labour consequently becomes wage-labour."<sup>32</sup> This selling of labor power as a commodity allows for the creation of surplus value. The analysis of surplus value begins with a look at Marx's concept of capital.

#### Capital and Surplus Value

Marx defined capital by the expression  $M-C-M'$ . In this simple formula  $M$  = money,  $C$  = commodity, and  $M' = M + \Delta M$ , the original sum plus some increment of that sum. A similar formula,  $C-M-C$ , represents a state of simple commodity circulation in which money is used but only as a means to purchase commodities as use values. The process  $M-C-M'$  looks to the creation of some surplus value. The original  $M$  as well as the final  $M'$  in the formula can be in the form of money or even in the form of commodities. This simply means that value is the active factor in the formula; money or commodities are regarded as representing value. To use the designation of Marx, money represents the "general mode" of value and commodities represent the "particular" or "disguised mode."<sup>33</sup>

The process of converting money into capital can be called the creation of surplus value. Although price does not necessarily nor always equal value, as was previously mentioned, the creation of surplus value in no way depends upon the selling of commodities above their value nor the buying of them below their value. How, then, does

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<sup>32</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:170.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

the creation of surplus value take place? A view of labor and the labor process will help to clarify this.

The labor process comprises several factors. These factors are: (1) man's personal activity, (2) the subjects<sup>34</sup> of that activity, and (3) the instruments by which that activity is carried on. Marx denoted by "subjects of labor" both raw materials and the immediate elements of nature such as fish, timber, water, and ores. The instruments of labor comprise all tools which the laborer uses in his productive activity. It can be pointed out that man-made instruments of production do not in themselves constitute capital for Marx. Such instruments are necessary in every type of productive society. Productive activity or the labor process "is human action with a view to the production of use-values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements."<sup>35</sup> This definition is valid under all social conditions of production.

Man's personal activity in this process is called labor. The important distinction which Marx made between labor and labor power should be noted, for this distinction enters into the explanation of the production of surplus value. Labor power is defined as a power or capacity of the individual. Marx categorized this labor power as a commodity. Labor, on the other hand, is the actual exercise of that power. In one place Marx used the analogy between labor and digestion. There is the capacity for digestion and the act of

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<sup>34</sup>Marx used the word "subjects" to refer to the objects upon which man directs his productive activity.

<sup>35</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:183.



digestion. Analogously there is a capacity to labor, labor power, and the act of labor or simply "labor." Sweezy commented that "In the strictest sense labor power is the laborer himself."<sup>36</sup> This is true if the prepositional phrase "in the strictest sense" is taken to mean "ultimately" or "reductively."

Since labor power is a commodity, its value is determined by the quantity of labor necessary for its production. The production of labor power, that is, the bringing of labor power into existence is "ultimately" the bringing into existence or the maintaining of the laborer. This bringing of labor into existence requires all the goods and services needed to sustain the worker and his family in a normal manner of living. Food, clothing, and shelter are obvious, necessary costs, both for the worker and his family. But even these costs are historically and culturally determined. The cost of educating the worker and his family must also be considered. The value of labor power for a specified period is measured by the quantity of labor needed to produce all the goods and services required by the worker and his family for that specified period. "The value of labour-power is determined, as in the case of every other commodity, by the labour-time necessary for the production, and consequently also the reproduction of this special article,"<sup>37</sup> Marx wrote.

Under the capitalist system the capitalist purchases the raw materials, the instruments of production, and the labor power; all

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<sup>36</sup>Sweezy, Capitalist Development, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:170-171.

of these are controlled by him. The use value of labor power, which is labor itself, belongs to the capitalist. He consumes the commodity of labor power, as well as the other commodities used in production, in the productive act itself. Since all the resources used in the act of production belong to the capitalist, the final product also belongs to him.

The capitalist has produced, or has had produced, use values, economic goods of some type. These use values, as noted earlier, are the material depositories of exchange value. The capitalist desires the production of a commodity, something which has exchange value. The value of this commodity is determined by the quantity of labor embodied in it. This is simply an application of Marx's labor theory of value.<sup>38</sup> The product has thus become congealed or crystallized labor; it represents definite amounts of labor time. This total labor time determines the value of the product.

It is now possible to compare the value of the commodity "labor power" with the value of the commodity produced by labor. Let it be assumed that the capitalist buys labor power for a specified period, in this case one day. He is, therefore, entitled to the productive activity, and to the product of that activity, of a laborer for one day. He thus possesses a (portion of a) commodity whose value is determined by one day's labor time. What does the capitalist pay for this commodity? The amount of goods and services required by the worker and his family can be provided by less labor time, in this

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<sup>38</sup>The value of the product also includes the labor expended and materialized in the raw materials and the instruments of production. This is an obvious but important consideration which is always valid but, for simplicity's sake, will at times not be expressed.

case half a day's labor time. This is what the capitalist pays. He receives a commodity whose value is twice that of the commodity he bought to produce it; a surplus value has been created. This surplus value can be defined as "the monetary form of that part of the worker's production which he surrenders to the owner of the means of production without receiving anything in return."<sup>39</sup> This definition points out that the concept denotes exploitation of the worker by the capitalist.

What assurance is there that the capitalist will always acquire a surplus value, value in addition to the cost of the commodities used in the production process? The answer is that such a condition is necessary for a capitalist system to operate; it is part of the "eternal laws" of commodity exchange. In the formula,  $M-C-M'$ , the  $M'$  represents  $M + \Delta M$ ; there is some incremental value added to the original value. Without this increment, this surplus value, the capitalist system could not operate. It is possible for the value created by labor to be less than the cost of the labor power, but this would imply one of three things. Either this would be a temporary aberration which would have to be corrected, or it would lead to the failure of a firm, or it would lead to the failure of the capitalist system itself. Thus the production of surplus value is all important.

It was remarked previously that the labor materialized in the raw materials and in the instruments of production enter the value of

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<sup>39</sup> Ernest Mandel, An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), pp. 23-24.

the product. These objects used in the production of a (new) product lose their form and consequently their use value, but they acquire the form of a new use value in the new product. Raw materials are usually changed completely in form in the production process, while instruments of labor more or less retain their original forms but gradually lose their productive power. All of these objects, however, transfer to the new product the value they lose, and only that value, in the production of the new product. These values, as expected, are measured in terms of the labor time employed in the production of the objects used. The laborer preserves old values at the same time that he creates new ones. These old values are the labor which was utilized and materialized in the production of raw materials and in the instruments of production and which are transferred to the new product.

The above process describing the creation of surplus value can be summarized in two steps. The first is  $M \rightarrow C$ , that is, the purchase of commodities (raw materials, tools, and labor) with the capitalist's money. Labor is the important element here; it is purchased as any other commodity and its price is determined by the amount of labor time necessary for its production and reproduction. The second step,  $C \rightarrow M'$ , represents the selling of the new commodity produced by the worker.  $M'$  is greater than the initial  $M$  because the commodity produced now has embodied in it more labor time than was necessary to purchase the worker's labor power. The worker's labor power for one full day was purchased for a wage representing one-half day's labor time.

Marx himself defined surplus value as "the difference between the value of the product and the value of the elements consumed in that product, in other words, of the means of production and the labour-power."<sup>40</sup> He used the terms constant capital and variable capital in his further explanation. The former term, constant capital, represents that portion of capital which does not undergo any quantitative change of value in the production process. It is exemplified in the raw materials and the instruments of production which are consumed in the production process. Variable capital, on the other hand, is that capital represented by labor power which is transformed from one quantity to a greater one.

In the following equations Marx described the process by which surplus value arises and the implication of this.

$$(1) C = c + v,$$

where  $C$  represents the capital advanced by the capitalist,  $c$  is the constant capital, and  $v$  represents variable capital.

$$(2) C' = (c + v) + s$$

represents the value equation after the production process.  $C'$  is the original capital plus its increment, the total value of the commodity;  $c$  and  $v$  are the same variables as in equation (1) and  $s$  represents surplus value. It is this second equation which Sweezy called "the analytic backbone, so to speak, of Marx's economic theory."<sup>41</sup>

For purposes of this study the primary relationship derived from equation (2) is  $s/v$ , the ratio of the surplus value to the variable

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<sup>40</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:208.

<sup>41</sup>Sweezy, Capitalist Development, p. 63.

capital. Marx called this the rate of surplus value and expressed it by  $s'$ .<sup>42</sup> This rate can be expressed in the equation:

$$(3) s' = s/v = \frac{\text{surplus labor}}{\text{necessary labor}},$$

since  $s$  represents surplus labor and  $v$  is necessary labor. Marx pointed out the importance of this ratio. "The rate of surplus-value is therefore an exact expression for the degree of exploitation of labour-power by capital, or of the labourer by the capitalist."<sup>43</sup>

It is this measurement of exploitation which has demanded and justified the technical analysis of Marx's labor theory of value in this chapter. His theory has enabled him to show not only that labor is exploited but also to give an exact mathematical formulation of the degree of that exploitation. This exploitation in economic terms is intimately related to alienation in psychological and legal terms. The possibility for this exploitation comes from the fact that the worker is separated from all property except the property of his own labor, and even this becomes alienated from him in the productive process. More importantly this exploitation is founded upon the socially legalized institution of private property. This is the

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<sup>42</sup>The rate of surplus value,  $s/v$  differs from the rate of profit,  $s/(c+v)$ . The relation between these two rates is explored by Marx in Volume 3 of Capital, Chapter 3. In considering the rate of surplus value Marx saw the surplus value itself to depend only upon the relationship between surplus labor and necessary labor. Consequently the constant capital is deleted (or becomes zero) in the definition of this rate.

<sup>43</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:218. The rate of surplus value depends upon those factors affecting either of the elements in the ratio. The amount of surplus labor depends upon the number of hours worked each day. The necessary labor is a function of the productivity of labor and the real wage.

reason why Marx and Engels summarized Communist theory as the "abolition of private property" in The Communist Manifesto.

Chapter 5 explores the alienation of labor and the Marxian understanding of human nature. Before that is attempted some comment on the forces of contradiction within capitalism is needed to enable a more comprehensive view of the Marxian critique.

#### The Forces of Contradiction Within Capitalism

Marx contended that capitalism is only a temporary form of economic organization. The system will be replaced by socialism and eventually by communism, that is, a complete socialism. Marx depicted the precise dissolution of capitalism. This dissolution will come not from some extraneous military force but from elements within the system itself. These elements are forces of contradiction, forces which bring about, in Marx's view, serious disequilibria in the functioning of the capitalist system. Marx maintained that these disequilibria, together with their concomitant social conditions, will be of such a serious nature that they will eventually lead to the very destruction of the capitalist mode of production.

Marx held that capitalism inevitably encounters a series of crises. These crises in modern terms are recessions and depressions and the contractionary phases of the economy and of the business cycle. There is some ambiguity in Marx's works as to the exact cause of these crises which arise in capitalist society. Some commentators on Marx see the falling rate of profit to be the sole or at least the predominant cause of these crises. Marx held that a falling rate of

profit was a continuing phenomenon of the capitalist structure. He even termed the phenomenon a law and saw this law to be primarily "an expression . . . of the progressive development of the social productivity of labour."<sup>44</sup> This falling rate of profit as a continuing element of capitalist society must be distinguished from a falling rate of profit which results from business contractions. The former is a continuing and integral part of the capitalist process. While it results from the economic structure, it is also a predominant cause of the change of economic structure. The falling rate of profit which results from business contractions is also a frequent occurrence in capitalist society. This latter falling rate results from the failure of the capitalist system, while the falling rate of profit which is a constant phenomenon in the capitalist system is concomitant with the system's success.

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall continually in capitalist society results from the ineluctable drive on the part of capitalists to increase what Marx called the "organic composition" of capital. This organic composition of capital is determined by the amounts of constant and variable capital used in the production process. The actual ratio representing this organic composition can be expressed as  $c/(c + v)$ , where, as before,  $c$  represents constant capital and  $v$  variable capital.

Marx maintained that a falling rate of profit "breeds over-productions, speculation, crises, and surplus-capital alongside

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 3:213.



surplus population."<sup>45</sup> Capitalists are constrained by the very nature of the system to strive to increase the proportion of constant capital in relation to the variable. Capitalists are always looking for a way to increase productivity and lower costs. The increased use of capital provides an increase in productivity and consequently a lowering of costs. This search for lower costs is brought about by competition between or among capitalists as well as the capitalists' desire for greater profit. The employer also seeks to get as much surplus value as he can from the workers, and the rate of surplus value increases as the amount of capital increases.<sup>46</sup> Finally, increased use of capital brings further lowering of costs by a decrease in the amount of wages paid by the employer. Marx wrote:

Like every other increase in the productiveness of labour, machinery is intended to cheapen commodities, and, by shortening that portion of the working-day, in which the labourer works for himself, to lengthen the other portion that he gives, without an equivalent, to the capitalist. In short, it is a means for producing surplus-value.<sup>47</sup>

Marx noted that "The rate of profit is the motive power of capitalist production."<sup>48</sup> This quest for profit is inhibited by certain contradictions which are inherent in the capitalist process. Capitalist

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 3:242.

<sup>46</sup>The fall of the rate of profit is proven under the condition that the rate of surplus value remain constant; cf. Marx, Capital, 3:212. There is some ambiguity as to the validation of the law if the rate of surplus value rises. Even if the rate of surplus value rises, however, a falling rate of profit is still held to prevail. For various comments on this problem see Sweezy, Capitalist Development, pp. 100-108; Balinky, Marx's Economics, pp. 129-133; Murray Wolfson, A Reappraisal of Marxian Economics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 127-133.

<sup>47</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:371.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 3:259.

production automatically brings with it an accumulation of wealth in the hands of the capitalist. This accumulation must be turned into greater wealth and this is done by increasing the organic composition of capital in an effort at greater productivity. The achieved greater productivity produces more accumulation, resulting in an increased use of constant capital and the process continues. On the other hand, the fall in the rate of profit checks this expansionary process and at times brings a lull to productive activity.

A more particular example of this contradiction is connected with this accumulation of capital in the creation of what Marx described as an "industrial reserve army." As production under the capitalist mode continues, the sum of accumulated surplus value increases. This allows for increased investment by the capitalists as they strive to turn their increased accumulation into further profits. This increased investment demands an influx of workers, the increased demand for workers bringing about an increase in wages. The capitalists counteract the increased wages by attempting to make the workers more productive, that is, by changing the organic composition of capital. Thus the capitalists' search for increased productivity and lower wage costs increase investment in capital goods so that many workers are replaced by new machinery. As a consequence the system always produces surplus workers, a reserve industrial army. Marx noted:

But in fact, it is capitalistic accumulation itself that constantly produces, and produces in the direct ratio of its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant population of labourers, i.e., a population of greater extent than suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital, and therefore a surplus-population.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 1:630.

The depreciation of existing capital also disturbs the production process. As production continues under capitalism there is an increased accumulation of capital and at the same time a fall in the rate of profit. This fall in the rate of profit curtails economic activity as capitalists curtail production and decrease or stop the purchase of new capital goods. But the increased accumulation also enables the purchase of new capital goods. The depreciation of the existing capital is accelerated by the accumulation of the new capital. With the depreciation of the existing capital, the rate of profit, the ratio of the surplus labor to the constant and variable capital, rises and tends to create further expansion in production and increased labor force.

Some authors claim that Marx held the predominant cause of capitalist crises to be other than a failing rate of profit. Two other general causes have been proposed as being Marxian: disproportionality and underconsumption. Disproportionality means a lack of equilibrium in several markets. It shows itself in the fact that some markets cannot be cleared at market prices while others show a greater quantity of goods demanded than prevailing prices call forth from suppliers. All crises in effect are crises of disproportionality in that a basic disequilibrium results in the market. Disproportionality as a specific cause of crises must, therefore, be distinguished from disproportionality as an effect. Disproportionality as a crisis cause stems fundamentally from some deficiency in the planning process. It is this type which is referred to in postulating it as a major cause of crises.

Supporters of the disproportionality cause of crises are able to cite passages from Capital which support their thesis and thus claim that "the basic reason for all crises is disproportionality."<sup>50</sup> In Theories of Surplus Value, however, Marx seemed to downplay disproportionality as a cause of crises. He admitted that "partial crises can . . . arise from disproportionate production,"<sup>51</sup> but he attributed this mainly to competitive prices. To proclaim disproportionality as the major cause of crises demands that lack of planning be cited as the real foundation for these crises.

Marx found another cause of crises in the fact that society is not able to purchase the enormous quantities of goods which the capitalist produces. He wrote: "The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as opposed to the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as though only the absolute consuming power of society constituted their limit."<sup>52</sup> Thus "underconsumptionists" see the lack of purchasing power to be the true foundation of crises. The authors of Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism claimed that Marx saw "the poverty and unlimited purchasing power of the masses" to be "the ultimate cause of all economic crises."<sup>53</sup> The opinion of Dobb, Sweezy, and

<sup>50</sup>Paul Craig Roberts and Matthew A. Stephenson, Marx's Theory of Exchange, Alienation and Crisis (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), p. 55.

<sup>51</sup>Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, 2:521.

<sup>52</sup>Marx, Capital, 3:484.

<sup>53</sup>(O. W. Kuusinen et al.), Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, ed. Clemens Dutt (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), p. 287. This work was written by eight Russian authors with the help of other Russian scholars and Communist Party officials. The work is a substantial manual presenting a synthesis of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Schumpeter, however, is that the underconsumption theory provided a minor and supporting role to Marx's views on crises.<sup>54</sup>

There are other contradictions within the capitalist system, according to Marx, which highlight the system's inadequacy and further its dissolution. One of these is the increasing number of the proletariat and the decreasing number of capitalists. Continued capitalist production brings about a "centralization of capital" toward a state of monopoly capitalism. "That which is now to be expropriated," Marx wrote, "is no longer the labourer working for himself, but the capitalist exploiting many labourers."<sup>55</sup> Marx noted that, as the number of capitalists decreased, the misery of the workers increased. The oppression of the workers becomes a virtual state of slavery for them. This increasing misery of the working class is known as the theory of immiserization, and this profound misery of the masses will provide the springboard for the revolution which will overthrow the capitalist system.

The increased number of proletariat and the increased misery of this increased portion of the population are not the causes of crises, but only their semi-permanent manifestation. At the same time they are forces active in the evolutionary process of social and economic change. Other internal contradictions exist within capitalism, such as the socialization of capital as society moves toward larger corporations and structures of financial power. On the side of the proletariat

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<sup>54</sup>See Maurice Dobb, *Political Economy and Capitalism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), p. 115; Schumpeter, *History*, pp. 747-748; Sweezy, *Capitalist Development*, p. 178.

<sup>55</sup>Marx, *Capital*, 1:763.

the existence of large labor unions and cooperation among these groups also places emphasis upon a socialized system. Marx noted that all these contradictory forces of capitalism fluctuate in predominance or even operate side by side.

What is of greater importance to this study is to look at what will have to be called the foundation of the fundamental causes of crises in capital society. This foundation is the determining contradiction of capitalism and is clearly expressed by Marx. It is bound up with the very definition of capital which can be simplified as "money in search of more money." Marx attributed this basic contradiction to the fact that the production of surplus value and accumulation "is the immediate purpose and compelling motive of capitalist production." A few pages later he commented: "The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself."<sup>56</sup>

That element in a capitalist system of production which establishes an inherently contradictory structure "is that capital and its self-expansion appear as the starting and the closing point, the motive and the purpose of production; . . ." <sup>57</sup> Capitalist production becomes an end in itself; its purpose is the self-expansion of capital. The means by which this purpose is achieved, however, is the introduction of new capital and the training of labor in more productive methods. In other words the expansion of capital can only take place by the elimination of existing capital. The development of productive labor

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<sup>56</sup>Marx, Capital, 3:244, 250.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 3:250.

can only be had by destroying the productive labor already in existence. Thus there is a continual conflict between purpose and means.

This inherent contradiction, as just mentioned, comes from the nature of capital, whose primary purpose is self-expansion. Marx's own summary is as follows: "The contradiction of the capitalist mode of production, however, lies precisely in its tendency towards an absolute development of the productive forces, which continually come into conflict with the specific conditions of production in which capital moves, and alone can move."<sup>58</sup> Marx's deeper analysis shows that it is the subordination of production for the welfare of society to the blind forces of capitalist accumulation that lies at the root of the problem. The rate of profit, he remarked, is predominant over "the requirements of socially developed human beings." Accumulation of capital depends upon increased production. How much production should take place? This is determined by "capital itself, the existing level of the conditions of production and the unlimited desire of the capitalists to enrich themselves and to enlarge their capital, but by no means consumption, . . ." <sup>59</sup>

There is also an intimate connection between commodity fetishism and accumulation. The self-expansion of capital comes only from the exchange of commodities. Commodity production becomes the all-important consideration as capitalists search for those commodities and methods of production which will give them greater exchange value. It is the production of these commodities which not only engrosses their efforts

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 3:257.

<sup>59</sup>Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, 2:492.

and time but also commands and directs their efforts. Decisions about the amount and type of commodities needed by society are determined not by the contribution these commodities make to society's welfare but by exchange value. The results of this emphasis are expressed by Marx in "the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation." This law states that "The more extensive . . . the lazarus-layers of the workingclass, and the industrial reserve army, the greater is official pauperism." This law "establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with accumulation of capital."<sup>60</sup>

All of the above considerations are intimately connected with private property in productive goods. The conclusion here need not even involve a moral judgment about the benefit of property, although its impropriety is evident. The conclusion is that private property is an institution which serves the system of capitalism. The foundation of the inherent contradiction of capitalist production--the self-expanding nature of capital--is itself founded in private property of all forms of productive goods. The capitalist mode of production will destroy itself; this destruction means that capital will be destroyed; the destruction of capital is the abolition of private property. Marx himself summarized the process:

Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:644, 645.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 1:763.



## CHAPTER V

### MARX: MAN AND HIS DEVELOPMENT

The capitalist exploits the worker by forcing him to work to a point where the value of his production surpasses "the value of his labour-power" and then by appropriating the surplus labor which the worker expended in the process. As Marx noted, this "forms the general background of the capitalist system." Marx has even given a formula to measure the degree of that exploitation, exploitation being defined by him as "the appropriation of the unpaid labour of others."<sup>1</sup> Marx's views on property can be explained in economic terms, the basis for that justification having been given in the previous two chapters.

Marx's demand that private property be abolished was not derived, however, solely nor even mainly from his economic theory of value. His philosophy of human development was much more comprehensive than a response to one aspect of economic analysis. Private property in capital goods had to be abolished because it completely alienated the worker and seriously hindered human development. This chapter discusses Marx's analysis of these phenomena. The first major section treats Marx's view of human nature, the second major section deals with alienation as a consequence of private property, and the third section shows the relation between property and human development.

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<sup>1</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:509; 3:385.

Marxian View of Human Nature

The components of man's nature, or propositions about man, which reflect Marx's views, are aggregated under two general headings. There is no attempt to separate these components into any philosophical, psychological, or theological categories; Marx made no such distinctions. Nor is there a claim made that this discussion represents a comprehensive Marxian analysis of man. The discussion does contain the elements essential to the understanding of alienation and human development.

Man's Sensuous Nature and Self-Creation Through Activity

Marx understood man's nature to be sensuousness. He stated:

. . . immediate, sensuous nature for man, is immediately, human sensuousness (the expressions are identical)--  
 . . . But nature is the immediate object of the science of man: the first object of man--man--is nature, sensuousness.<sup>2</sup>

The sensuous nature of man is more than a nature possessing the five senses; sensuousness refers to the total activity of man. Marx considered man's senses to be those faculties by which man relates humanly to the world. He enumerated these sense faculties or "human relations to the world" as follows: ". . . seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting, loving--in short all the organs of his [man's] individual being." Marx spoke of these faculties as "physical and mental senses."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, edited with an Introduction by Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 143.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

Man's sensuous nature does not mean that there is not a spiritual aspect to man. Marx spoke of man's "spiritual inorganic nature" and of man's "spiritual nourishment." He also stated: "That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is part of nature."<sup>4</sup> But Marx did not consider man's thoughts or aspirations to be in any way connected with a spiritual principle of being. Ideas are interwoven with the material activity of life and are determined by this activity. Marx did not address himself to the question of whether man's thoughts and aspirations postulate some spiritual faculty to produce them. As has been seen, a materialistic interpretation of history is concomitant with a completely materialistic philosophy. Marx saw no reality other than natural reality.<sup>5</sup>

It is man's sensuous nature which allowed, but did not necessarily motivate, Marx to assert that man's existence is due to himself. Erich Fromm remarked on this point that "It is very important to understand Marx's fundamental idea; man makes his own history; he is his own creator."<sup>6</sup> There are two ideas involved here. One is that man determines his own nature by his activity; the other is that there is no creator, no God, on which man depends.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>5</sup>Erich Fromm maintained "that Marx's philosophy constitutes a spiritual existentialism." Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, with a translation from Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts by T. B. Bottomore, Afterword by Erich Fromm (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), p. 5. There is no evidence, however, that Marx conceived of any basic reality other than matter. Hence the affirmation here that he is a philosophical materialist.

<sup>6</sup>Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, p. 15. Cf. previous footnote for publication data.

A look at Marx's rejection of creation by a supreme being is necessary, if only to contrast it later with Catholic theology. One of Marx's reasons for this rejection was that the existence of a God would destroy man's freedom. Marx stated that "A being only considers himself independent when he stands on his own feet; and he only stands on his own feet when he owes his existence to himself."<sup>7</sup> Marx did not treat the genesis of the universe itself as a scientific question, but he implied that he accepted the theory of generatio aequivoca, a spontaneous generation of the world.

Marx further contended that even to ask the question about creation involved a contradiction. To ask if nature and man were created means that "you" must abstract from nature and man, he stated. You must presuppose them to be non-existent and then prove them to exist. But if nature and man do not exist, then there is no one to posit the question of creation. The abstraction from man's existence makes it meaningless to ask the question about man's existence.

Finally, Marx saw man as going through a continual process of self-creation. Man by his own labor begets himself and determines his nature by this labor. This makes the concept of a being above man and nature a practical impossibility. Atheism denies the existence of God and, by so doing, postulates the existence of man without a God. But the creation of man is the emergence of a nature which is sensuous and perceptible. This process takes place through socialism. Socialism is a process by which the sensuous consciousness of man and of nature emerges; consequently there is no need of a creator-God since the

<sup>7</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 144.

process of creation is accomplished by socialism. Socialism is the positive process of man's emerging self-consciousness. Any question about the unreality of nature and man is impossible. Atheism thus becomes meaningless because it denies this impossibility in its denial of God.

Marx strongly emphasized that man determines his nature by his life activity. This life activity is the essential quality of man. At times Marx made this life activity specific by calling it work. Engels was careful to distinguish work from labor. Labor is an economic term; it is that activity which creates exchange value. Work, on the other hand, is the specific type of activity, tailoring, for example, which creates use value.<sup>8</sup> Though Marx uses the same German word, Arbeit, to express both of these activities, the distinction is useful and shall be kept in this study. Obviously with these definitions it is work which Marx regards as the fulfilling activity of man.

Marx stated that the entire history of the world "is nothing but the creation of man through human labor, nothing but the emergence of nature for man, . . ." <sup>9</sup> This idea was not original to Marx but came to him from Hegel. In his Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic, in fact, Marx claimed the idea to be "The outstanding achievement of Hegel's Phenomenology."<sup>10</sup> Man's self-creation by his own activity is a

<sup>8</sup>This information comes from Bertell Ollman, Alienation (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 100. Chapters 13 and 15 of this work contain excellent comments, some of which are used here, on the Marxian view of man's activity. For Engels' distinction between work and labor see Marx, Capital, 1:47, 186 (footnotes).

<sup>9</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 145. "Labor" here refers to work in the sense of Engels' distinction.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

constant theme in Marx's philosophy. In Capital Marx explained the labor process as one in which man "controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature"; he concluded that "By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature."<sup>11</sup>

The type of life activity which is paramount in Marx's view is productive activity. Philosophically this activity would be called human acts as opposed to acts of man. The latter include any movements of man. These movements can be merely passive or mechanical in man, such as digestion of food or breathing. Human acts are those which proceed from man's intellect and will; they are vital acts which a man posits. Marx saw these human acts as predominantly productive ones. He claimed that "The only labor which Hegel knows and recognizes is abstractly mental labor."<sup>12</sup> For Marx, however, "the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life." He saw "Religion, family, state, law, morality, science, art," to be "only particular modes of production."<sup>13</sup>

Conscious life activity is thus all of man's activity which is freely done and which is guided by his intellect. It is activity, to borrow a phrase from Marx's description of the labor process, in which man "realises a purpose of his own . . ." <sup>14</sup> The laborer, forced to

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<sup>11</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:177.

<sup>12</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 177.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 113, 136.

<sup>14</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:178.

sell his labor power to the capitalist or to labor under the restrictive and detailed regulations of the capitalist, is not engaging in free, purposive activity.<sup>15</sup> This is in fact the essence of the inadequacy of the capitalist system. Whether Marx's analysis is concerned with philosophic and humanistic arguments or with the economic structure as such, the failure of capitalism is that it denies human freedom and human development to the individual. Capitalism guarantees a condition of undeveloped human potential.

#### Man's Consciousness, Species Being, and Social Nature

There are three other elements in Marx's analysis of man which are closely interrelated. These are man's species being, his consciousness, and his social nature. These three elements unite to play an important role in man's alienation under the capitalist system, as shall be seen shortly.

Marx saw man as a species being. This means that an individual man not only recognizes himself as one of the species called man, but he also "treats himself as the actual, living species." This idea was also not original with Marx but came to him from the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach. Feuerbach explained that an animal is not "conscious" of himself as a species but only as an individual. Thus an animal does not have consciousness in the strict sense, for consciousness implies that a being's nature must be an object of thought to it. Man, on the

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<sup>15</sup>Free, conscious life activity is not possible under the capitalist system in Marx's view and this is the basis of alienation. Such activity is Marx's ideal definition of man's nature, although it may be descriptive of man only in certain historical epochs. For further comment on this point see Ollman, Alienation, pp. 111-112.

other hand, has a relation to his species and can make that species an object of thought. It is this concept which Marx accepted and modified. Man sees himself not only as belonging to a species, Marx postulated; he sees himself as the species. An individual thus loses his own individual existence and becomes the species. Conversely, a man realizes his true individuality only by a practical recognition of his species nature. Marx wrote "that man's relation to himself only becomes for him objective and actual through his relation to the other man."<sup>16</sup>

As a result of his species nature man is also a conscious being. This was also an idea which came from Feuerbach. Marx saw life activity as a means to preserve life. An animal is not able to distinguish itself from its life activity, and he makes this life activity an object of his will. Man's life activity is a conscious process and it is this conscious life activity which is the distinguishing note between man and animal. Conscious life activity makes man a species being. "Or rather," Marx stated, "it is only because he is a species being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him."<sup>17</sup> Marx connected man's freedom with his species nature, with the fact that he regards himself as a universal or species being. These ideas on man's freedom will appear again in the section on alienation.

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<sup>16</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 112, 116. Erich Fromm saw species character of man as "that which is universally human." It is realized through man's productive activity. Fromm's definition was made more categorical when he remarked: "What Marx meant by 'species-character' is the essence of man" (Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, p. 34).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 113.



Man's social nature is intimately connected with his species nature. The life of man is always social, even if in external form it bears no visible, communal orientation. A man's very existence is social activity. Marx reminded his readers that "The human essence of nature first exists only for social man; for only here does nature exist for him as a bond with man--as his existence for the other and the other's existence for him--as the life-element of human reality."<sup>18</sup> Social simply means the cooperation between or among different individuals. Animals do not enter into this cooperation or "relations" with one another. "Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all."<sup>19</sup>

Consciousness begins for man as an awareness of the immediate environment, which includes a primitive relationship among men. Man in this stage realizes that he must cooperate with other people among whom he lives. This consciousness develops as society becomes more productive and more populated. Man's consciousness is truly developed, although not completely, when he realizes his species nature. The realization of this nature also implies the realization of social responsibility.

An adequate understanding of man's social nature is helpful for understanding the alienation of the worker. Man is produced by society and society in turn is produced by man. Man as an individual always means man with social responsibilities, social needs, and species consciousness. Human existence has its foundation in social orientation.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>19</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 44.

Marx wrote: "The individual is the social being"; "my own existence is social activity." When man becomes aware of his own species nature, he is simply bringing his conscious awareness into agreement with reality, "and simply repeats his real existence in thought."<sup>20</sup>

Personal freedom can be obtained only in community. "In the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association,"<sup>21</sup> Marx wrote. It is possible, of course, that the nature of a particular community may hinder human freedom and human development. The orientation of a community depends greatly, even predominantly, upon the manner in which it satisfies its material needs, that is, upon the method of production used in that community. The capitalist mode of production has brought about a fundamental change in society, providing a system of production and distribution which has the potential to supply all mankind with the goods and services needed for human living. But the nature of the capitalist mode of production produces a type of community and society in which human development is not possible. The necessary emphasis upon expansion of capital isolates the individual from society and forces him to deny in practical terms his social nature. Marx explained this primarily in his treatment of alienation, which is the subject of the following section.

#### Alienation

This section discusses the meaning of Marxian alienation, its cause, and its relation to private property.

<sup>20</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 137, 138.

<sup>21</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 78.

## Marx's Concept of Alienation

As Marx sought an understanding of private property in The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 he was immediately confronted with the phenomenon of alienation. Marx saw the fundamental position that property played in political economy. Economic studies up to his time had not provided a justification for property in the sense of its being an economic and moral good for society. Marx, therefore, attempted to discover property's real socio-economic function.

He began with the given fact of alienated labor. He took alienation as a given datum, not from his own observation but from the writings of the political economists themselves. He noted that "The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates."<sup>22</sup> Marx referred to the worker as being estranged or alienated. The meaning of this term requires investigation.

Martin Milligan, a translator of Marx's Manuscripts, translated the German word enttäusern by "to alienate." The other ordinary meanings of the word he gave as "to renounce" and "to part with." This German word, he elaborated, has the meaning of "a transference of ownership, which is at the same time a renunciation."<sup>23</sup> "To alienate" is similar in meaning to the infinitive "to estrange," but Milligan used the latter phrase to translate the German word entfremden, which lacks

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<sup>22</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 107.

<sup>23</sup>Dirk J. Struik and Martin Milligan, "Translator's and Editor's Note on Terminology," in Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 58.

the legal-commercial connotation of entäussern. The words "alienated" and "estranged" in some translations and in Marx himself seem to be synonymous. In fact the English word "alienate" has a meaning which seems to approximate Marx's understanding of both of these German words. The English word "alienate" means "to convey or transfer to another," and also "to cause to be estranged: make unfriendly, hostile, or indifferent where attachment formerly existed."<sup>24</sup>

Richard Schacht saw in Marx's use of "alienation" a combination of the two senses in which Hegel used the term and defined the term to mean "separation through surrender."<sup>25</sup> The explanation given by Walter Kaufmann perhaps gives greater insight into Marx's understanding of the term. Kaufmann noted that Marx used the word in different meanings, but held his primary understanding of the term to be the following following:

. . . the phenomenon that concerns him most is the dehumanization of man. Man's loss of independence, his impoverishment, his estrangement from his fellow men, and his involvement in labor that is devoid of any originality, spontaneity, or creativity are so many aspects of man's estrangement from his true nature.<sup>26</sup>

Sidney Hook defined alienation by asking whom Marx would "regard as the unalienated man, the man truly himself?" He found this unalienated

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<sup>24</sup> Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G & C Merriam, 1967), s.v. "alienate."

<sup>25</sup> Richard Schacht, Alienation, with an introductory essay by Walter Kaufmann (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), p. 83. This work presents a summary of alienation as the term has been used by modern philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Kaufmann, "The Inevitability of Alienation," in Schacht, Alienation, p. xxiii. Cf. previous footnote for publication data.

man to be "the man who finds personal fulfillment in uncoerced, creative work."<sup>27</sup> Alienation would thus be the state of that person who could not find such fulfillment. Erich Fromm held Marx's meaning of alienation to be "that man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the world (nature, others, and he himself) remain alien to him."<sup>28</sup> A recent interpretation of alienation, that of Martin Bronfenbrenner, defined the word by way of the proportion: "Alienation:Frustration::Psychosis:Neurosis." Bronfenbrenner admitted that his explanation used "the term in a sense closer to Freud than to Marx, as a generalized frustration which cripples its sufferer for the ordinary conduct of life."<sup>29</sup>

The comments by all of the above authors are meant to show the complexity of the concept of alienation. The ultimate explanation, however, will be that offered by Marx himself. This explanation will be offered below as Marx traced alienation into four components or elements. Each of these components will be taken in turn.

First of all, the worker is alienated in his product.<sup>30</sup> The following quote, although of some length, is given to show this component of alienation and to help in grasping Marx's meaning of the term.

<sup>27</sup> Sidney Hook, Revolution, Reform, and Social Justice (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Bronfenbrenner, "A Harder Look at Alienation," Ethics 83 (July 1973):268.

<sup>30</sup> Commentators, and Marx himself in some places, speak of alienation from the product. The preposition "from" is correct if it is understood that the alienation flows from the separation of the product from man. True Marxian alienation exists within individuals and is comprised of all the feelings of hostility and frustration enumerated

All these consequences result from the fact that the worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object. For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself--his inner world--becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. . . . The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the greater is the worker's lack of objects. Whatever the product of his labor is, he is not. Therefore the greater this product, the less is he himself. The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on his own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.<sup>31</sup>

In a previous section reference was made to Marx's explanation that labor was materialized or crystallized in the product. Labor is realized or "made real" in the object that the worker produces. But this object becomes only a source of alienation to the worker because it is appropriated by the capitalist. The worker sees his labor come into existence as the object and he then sees this object confiscated by another. Increased production only means increased appropriation and increased alienation.

Marx offered another insight into this component of the worker's alienation. It is only possible for the worker to produce objects by working on something given by nature. The given materials of nature, on the other hand, are also the only means the laborer has to provide for his own subsistence. His food and clothing come from nature. The

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by Marx in the passage following the number of this footnote. Physical and legal separation from the product is a causal factor of the true alienation which exists within the individual.

<sup>31</sup> Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 108.

worker's alienation in, or flowing from, his product is accentuated by this double deprivation to the worker. The external, sensuous world, which is the basis of labor, is taken from him; he has no active relation to nature. Secondly, the external world of nature "more and more ceases to be . . . means for the physical subsistence of the worker."<sup>32</sup> As a consequence of this the worker becomes a slave because both work and the means of subsistence have to be "given" to him by another. The basis for this condition of slavery is that private property deprives the laborer of access to the means of production.

The second component of estranged labor is the alienation of the worker "in the act of production, within the producing activity, itself." If the worker is alienated in the product, then the activity itself, the act of production, is alienating. Under the capitalist system the worker is forced to labor at some task which does not flow from his essential being. Thus the worker "does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind."<sup>33</sup> Labor also ceases to be a means of satisfying the direct needs of the worker and acquires only an external relationship to the worker. It becomes an act of mortification and humiliation and something that the worker tries to avoid. In his work man does not belong to himself, he belongs to another.

As a consequence of the above two elements there is an alienation of man from his species or of the species from man. All of nature is

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

man's inorganic body which feeds and perpetuates him. Nature also provides the instruments for man's creative activity. These factors display man's universal, species nature. Since an individual man regards himself as the species, his productive activity should be a species life. Estranged labor confuses species life and individual life; labor becomes a means of satisfying physical, individual existence. Man loses his freedom of production and he loses his creativity. He becomes animal-like in that he is forced into activity in which his intellect plays no part and which is aimed only at satisfying his physical existence. Thus man loses his species life.

Finally, as a consequence of the above alienating factors, Marx postulated a fourth component and stated that man is estranged from man. In confronting himself man confronts every other man, Marx explained. Man is estranged in the product of his labor, in the productive act itself, and from his species being; therefore man is estranged from other men. Marx stated that "every relationship in which man stands to himself, is first realized and expressed in the relationship in which a man stands to other men."<sup>34</sup> Moreover, species nature is the nature of all men. Since each man is estranged from his nature, he must be estranged from every other man. This last point leads to the further conclusion that the alienation of any class of men affects every other class. If the worker is alienated in his labor, this alienation must affect the rest of society. Certainly it affects those other small entrepreneurs who are neither of the proletariat nor of

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-115.



the bourgeoisie, as well as the members of the workers' families. Marx did not make the illation as such, but it also affects the capitalist in his enslavement to capital expansion and in his insensitivity to the impoverishment of his fellowmen. Avineri notes that "not only the workers, but the capitalists as well, are stripped of their personality."<sup>35</sup>

These points show the interrelation between alienation and the commodity fetishism described in the previous chapter. Commodities take on the nature of individuals in that they acquire the social relations which should exist between men. Individuals lose their own identity and become only a means to be used by the capitalists and the capitalist system. "Men are degraded to the status of objects, and objects receive human attributes."<sup>36</sup> Marx himself wrote: "In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality."<sup>37</sup>

Alienation for Marx is a condition of man which results from the process of capitalist production. It is a condition in which not only the result of man's labor is taken from him, but the very activity by which he should be able to develop and express himself is no longer a free and creative activity. This activity is something alien and hostile to him. In addition man loses his true humanity and becomes a stranger to himself and his fellowmen. All of his intellectual and physical effort, which should look to the good of his species, must

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<sup>35</sup>Avineri, Thought of Karl Marx, p. 113.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Marx, Communist Manifesto, p. 98.

now be concentrated on his narrow utilitarian needs. Moreover, the entire production process, and this includes distribution, exchange, and consumption, becomes a hostile force over which the worker has no control. Even the capitalists themselves cannot control it; they are slaves to the law of reproduction of capital.

A recent work by Harry Braverman has updated the Marxian analysis and allowed a further insight into worker alienation. Marxian alienation comes from the social conditions which establish man's work-activity. This economic and social system allows men other than the worker to own the instruments of production. Marx recognized that in all forms of society the social division of labor is necessary. The capitalist system has invented a further division of labor, a detailed or fragmented division. Private property is responsible for this fragmented division in which the production process is broken down into a large number of separate steps. The essential part of this fragmentation, however, is that each productive step or stage is assigned to a particular worker. The specific operation then becomes the worker's occupation. Each worker performs the operation at which he has become "skilled." No worker is allowed, however, to acquire the skill of a true craftsman or artisan who conceptualizes and with his own hands (and tools, of course) performs all the operations necessary to produce a useful and artistic product. The creation of this "lifelong detail worker" is "the contribution of the capitalist,"<sup>38</sup> as Braverman noted; it flows from the capitalist relations of production.

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<sup>38</sup>Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital, p. 78. A quotation from this book was used in Chapter 1, p. 6.

While Braverman's work shows how work has been dehumanized in modern society, the basis of his analysis is completely Marxian. In Volume 1 of Capital Marx has described the effects on the laborer of this detailed division of labor. He noted that in order to increase productivity "each labourer must be made poor in individual productive powers." He cited Adam Smith's observation that in performing such fragmented labor the worker "generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become."<sup>39</sup> Alienation is very much a part of Marx's later economic analysis. Although expressed in different ways in different works of Marx, this alienation centers around and is ultimately linked to the method by which man performs his productive activity.<sup>40</sup>

#### Relationship Between Property and Alienation

It is now necessary and possible to elucidate the connection between private property and alienation. This connection is a causal one, alienation arising from private property in productive goods. This causal relationship receives further comment here because of the confusion and conflicting claims made by various authors regarding the cause of alienation. Typical of these claims is that of Paul Craig Roberts, who "finds the source of alienation in the 'commodity mode of production' by which Marx means the market system."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:361, 362. The quote from Adam Smith is from Wealth of Nations, Bk. V, Chap. 1, Art. ii.

<sup>40</sup>In his later works Marx spoke of alienation in terms closely similar to the terms used in Manuscripts of 1844. See Capital, 3:84-86; Grundrisse, pp. 196-197, 831-833.

<sup>41</sup>Paul Craig Roberts, Alienation and the Soviet Economy (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), p. 2.

It is not the intention in these few pages to argue these claims nor to trace the dynamics of alienation through its various phases and its causative factor(s). The thesis put forth here, in claiming private property to be the cause of alienation, is that alienation will necessarily arise as long as private property in productive goods is a fundamental and prevalent institution in society. Furthermore, this alienation cannot be eliminated until such private property is abolished.

Marx held that "Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production."<sup>42</sup> Such a complex structure cannot be equated with only one of its specific constituents; it must be understood in all its essential elements. But this mode of production is founded upon private property in productive goods. Private property summarizes the entire capitalist mode of production and stands forth as the supporting pillar of this method of production. When Marx and Engels called for the abolition of private property and announced this as the summary of communism in The Communist Manifesto, they were not saying that private property should be abolished and all other facets of commodity production should be retained. They inferred that, if private property were abolished, the capitalist mode of production would not be possible.

Marx made such a conclusion explicit and even extended its theoretical implications when he wrote: "Just as we have derived the concept of private property from the concept of estranged, alienated labor by analysis, so we can develop every category of political economy with the help of these two factors." All other categories, Marx continued,

<sup>42</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, p. 105.

are only "definite and developed expression" of these two elements. An example of such development is had in wage labor. It was pointed out in Chapter 4 that Marx characterized the capitalist era by the fact that labor power itself became a commodity. This labor power was sold by the worker to the capitalist and thus became the latter's property. Labor power as a commodity is based upon private property. Private property and alienated labor serve as the basis for analyzing political economy. And Marx saw private property as "the material, summary expression of alienated labor."<sup>43</sup>

Marx made the relationship between these two factors more explicit. He started from a given fact of the condition of society as described by political economists--alienated labor. From this fact and by means of the previous analysis there resulted private property. "Private property is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence of alienated labor,"<sup>44</sup> Marx wrote. But this is not all. Private property appears not only as the result of alienated labor, it is also the source of such alienation. It is only because of the existence of private property that the worker is forced into a position and state of alienation. A reciprocal relationship has been established. Property results in alienated labor and alienated man; the consequence of such alienation is private property. This relationship was pointed out in Chapter 2 in summarizing Marx's position. His words are repeated here because of their importance in the logical development of his argument. He wrote:

<sup>43</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 118, 119.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

Only at the last culmination of the development of private property does this, its secret, appear again, namely, that on the one hand it is the product of alienated labor, and that on the other it is the means by which labor alienates itself, the realization of this alienation.<sup>45</sup>

Thus private property and alienation form a circular process of mutual causation. The expansion and predominance of such property under capitalism result in a complete and universal alienation.

Marx further established an identity between wages and private property. Wages follow the institution of private property, while private property results, through the medium of alienated labor, in the payment of wages. It becomes somewhat clearer, then, why a capitalist society with an equal distribution of wages and more humanly engineered working conditions cannot be the goal of Marxian society. The only goal possible is a non-alienated worker and non-alienated man, a society in which each man has the opportunity for free and creative self-development. This can only be obtained by the abolition of private property, and this is what Marx demanded. With the eradication of private property will come the emancipation of the worker. This elimination of property frees not only the worker but emancipates all men. This is so because the productive capacity of society, which has expanded under capitalism, can then be controlled by all men instead of by a few.<sup>46</sup> It is so because man is a species being and the slavery of

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>The appropriation of productive goods by the proletariat will differ from previous appropriations in that these former ones were merely confiscations of simple and crude instruments of production, while proletariat appropriation will enable society to control a "mass of instruments of production" (Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 88). Proletariat rule contains two elements: (1) control by all society of (2) the entire complexus of productive power.

one is the slavery of all. It is also true because man is a social being and, in accord with Marx's materialistic interpretation of history, the method of production affects all society.

A closer look at the relationship between the abolition of private property and human development is needed. This is done in the following section.

#### Private Property and Human Development

From the brief analysis in the previous sections it is obvious that "the self-realization of man now requires the abolition of the prevailing mode of labor."<sup>47</sup> This requires the abolition of the private ownership of productive goods. The relationship between alienation and private property introduces the more fundamental question of the relationship between the latter's abolition and human development. The nature of this relationship is essential to Marx's "humanistic" view of property. Previous analysis has shown that the laborer, and the non-laborer also, is alienated when there is private property; this institution must be abolished. How does the abolition of private property aid, indeed become essential to human development?

It will be helpful to mention here that property and the capitalist system play an important role in social and economic development. For Marx capitalism was not just some unfortunate system whose absence in history would have been insignificant. The contribution of capitalism and private property to world development will be emphasized in Chapter 6. The purpose of this section is to explain Marx's view that true

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<sup>47</sup>Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, p. 275.

human development cannot take place until private property in productive goods has been abolished.

Private property establishes a relation of men to material things. It makes this relation the predominant one in man's life. Marx criticized modern society "in which production is the aim of man and wealth the aim of production."<sup>48</sup> This attitude of modern, private-property society sets physical possession of material things as the primary and sole goal of life. As a consequence man's effort is directed toward this physical possession. This elevation of the possession of goods to a position of supremacy in man's life is a complete confusion of values. The effort towards this possession brings with it greed and envy.

Under the system of private property man is forced to labor for another. His freedom is destroyed and he becomes the slave of another. His own talents become submerged as his activity is directed toward the goal of production set by the property owner. Moreover, it is this free, self-creative activity of man which develops man in his nature. The cessation of this free activity means a cessation of human development.

Private property becomes a process of furthering one's individual existence through the possession of goods. This process completely distorts man's social and species nature, a nature which emphasizes the importance of man's relations to his fellowmen and looks toward the

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<sup>48</sup>Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, trans. Jack Cohen, ed. and with an Introduction by E. J. Hobsbawm (New York: International Publishers, 1965), p. 84.



well-being of the species. Private property creates an economic system which fosters a self-centered and selfish individualism. This system rewards such self-seeking activity.

All of these factors mean that private property negates the nature of man. Man loses his species nature because the primary concern of his activity is the possession of goods; he relates to others via objects and not directly. He loses that nature because his individual existence, not the existence of the species, becomes the only important consideration for him. Man also loses his power to develop and perfect his own being. He loses this because he is forced to labor for another instead of for himself. His independence is a myth. There is no free, self-creative activity on his part and with this absence comes the impossibility of human development.

It is necessary to look at human development from a more positive attitude. Marx foresaw that the abolition of property would require two historical stages. These stages he depicted as one of "crude communism" and one of "communism as the positive transcendence of private property." In crude communism there is the absence of private property, but the same attitude toward possessions is present as under the system of property itself. This is the attitude that "the sole purpose of life and existence is direct, physical possession."<sup>49</sup>

The "positive transcendence of private property," on the other hand, involves a complete change in man's attitude toward the acquisition of goods and the importance of material goods. The acquisition of

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<sup>49</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 133.

goods ceases to be a major goal in life, certainly insofar as this acquisition reflects an inner spirit of greed. Material goods assume an entirely subservient role, one which allows man to concentrate upon personal development and human relations. Human achievement, Marx noted, should not "be conceived merely in the sense of immediate, one-sided gratification--merely in the sense of possessing, of having."<sup>50</sup>

In the Manuscripts of 1844 Marx called property the "expression of estranged human life." This estrangement is abolished only when man acquires the correct attitude toward property, when there is the "positive transcendence of private property." This transcendence allows man to return "to his human, i.e., social existence." The transcendence of private property can now be seen as an attitude which recognizes that material and other economic goods are needed only as a means to a more elevated human existence. This attitude causes man to relegate these goods to their role of means. This transcendence of private property allows all men's senses and faculties to become truly human because they become social faculties. "Need or enjoyment have consequently lost their egotistical nature, and nature has lost its mere utility by use becoming human use,"<sup>51</sup> Marx wrote. As was remarked earlier, communism presupposes no diminution of consumption and consequently no lessening of production nor of productivity. It actually demands the opposite--that goods will be so plentiful that they will be easily available to all. Lenin clearly noted these facets when he remarked

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 136, 139.

that communism "presupposes not the present productivity of labour and not the present ordinary run of people, . . . "52

It can be stated that "The supreme goal of communism is to ensure full freedom of development of the human personality, . . . ";53 consequently a more formal analysis of human development will assist in understanding the role private property plays in such development.

The key to Marx's theory of development, as would now be expected, lies in creative activity. This activity includes science and art--all the actions of man by which he intelligently pursues some legitimate cultural and humanistic goal. "Marx conceives of this activity as a series of dynamic relationships between each man, or his particular power and needs, and the real objects in the world, including other men."54 This activity must be free from all compulsion, insofar as it can be. Man must always produce in order to live. But Marx saw freedom taking place "in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; . . . "55 This freedom in development allows "me:" " . . . to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner,

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52V. I. Lenin, Works, Vol. 25, p. 441; also in The State and Revolution (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), p. 155, quoted in Kuusinen et al., Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, p. 364.

53Kuusinen et al., Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, p. 368.

54Ollman, Alienation, p. 127.

55Marx, Capital, 3:320.

just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic."<sup>56</sup>

That which stamps labor as "exclusively human" is that the result of the labor process is something "that already existed in the imagination of the labourer" at the beginning of the labor process. Man conceives in his intellect some good to be produced or service to be rendered. His human activity utilizes some instruments or tools to fashion raw materials into that good or allows the performance of that service. The good or service, insofar as it has been produced by concrete human labor and not abstract labor, has some use value. This entire process "is the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence."<sup>57</sup> It cannot, as just stated above, be avoided by man.

Engels called creative labor "the highest enjoyment known to us."<sup>58</sup> Marx referred to labor as "the most damned seriousness, the most intense exertion," and said that it was "in no way . . . mere fun, mere amusement." Still he held that the overcoming of obstacles in labor was "a liberating activity--and that, further, the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits--hence as self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour."<sup>59</sup> Marx referred here to labor

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<sup>56</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 47.

<sup>57</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:178, 184.

<sup>58</sup>Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, On Britain (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), p. 152, quoted in Kuusinen et al., Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, p. 862.

<sup>59</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, p. 611. Cf. also p. 712.

under a socialist society and noted the repulsiveness of slave, serf, and wage labor.

The entire labor process, which is correctly generalized into the process of creative activity, provides the manner of human development. It is here that Marx's humanism converges with his economic analysis and his interpretation of history. The making of history coincides with the development of human nature. This history, although a result of the free actions of individuals, is determined by the economic conditions of society, particularly the comprehensive process of production. Man expends his labor power in every such activity, and thus this activity modifies and determines human nature. This labor activity, in order to be truly determinative of man's nature, must be guided by man's intellect and must be free.

Thus two elements of the Marxian vision are brought together, each giving insight to the other. Marx's interpretation of history stresses the importance of the mode of production in the ultimate determination of all facets of history. At the same time it is man's creative activity which shapes his own nature and allows him to write his own history. These two elements were not meant by Marx to be contradictory but complementary. Taken together they give the complete, if succinct, Marxian view of historical determination and human development.

The capitalist system, epitomized by the institution of private property, does not allow such free, intellectual, creative activity. This system produces labor which is completely alienated. This alienation is founded upon private property, which appropriates every material claim and destroys every "spiritual" aspiration of the worker. This

alienation results also from a fragmented division of labor, itself the result of private property seeking nothing but its own expansion. This fragmented labor "translated into market terms . . . means that the labor power capable of performing the process may be purchased more cheaply as dissociated elements."<sup>60</sup> Translated into humanistic terms fragmented labor means that no individual worker can develop himself into a craftsman who can take pride and pleasure in a free, self-conceived, scientific or artistic project. Positively it means that a worker is forced into an exclusive, specialized activity and compelled to limit his talents to this procedure. This procedure is made monotonous by its continued repetition and its isolation as only a minute part of the productive process.

Alienation is also directly related to private property. Man's nature-determining activity is estranged from him. It loses its vital role in self-development and becomes a means to enrich others. It forces a man to deny his species nature and concentrate on his own self-preservation. Man thus loses his social orientation. He puts his distorted self-interests, distorted, that is, by commodity fetishism and alienation, above the good of the species. It is important to notice that property under the capitalist mode forces this misdirected individualism.

The development of an individual must look toward man's relations with other individuals and with society. The development of man's talents is a social experience; it is done with the consciousness that man is a species and social being. Individual human needs become

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<sup>60</sup>Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital, p. 81.

social needs. It has been pointed out that Marx considered the individual to be the social being and the individual's life to be "an expression and confirmation of social life." The development of man's faculties requires that they realize a social dimension. Marx called this process the "objectification of the human essence."<sup>61</sup>

All of man's faculties are then emancipated because they are no longer directed to an exaggerated "individual gratification." Man's faculties become truly human when they become social powers. Alienation and commodity fetishism have caused man to view his "essential powers" and the objects created by these powers as objects which themselves are alien to him and useful only for their exchange value. These objects can be political documents, works of art and literature, or products of industry. Man's senses become humanized when he discovers that any such object, the product of his powers, is a social object, "an object made by man for man." All such objects "confirm and realize his individuality." Moreover, man's faculties, his powers, become truly developed and humanized when he realizes that these senses are those of a social man. In other words the development of man's powers to their fullest human capacity can only be had when it is realized that these powers belong not to an individual but to "humanized nature." Thus "the senses of the social man are other than those of the non-social man."<sup>62</sup>

Man cannot begin this true development, Marx averred, until the capitalist system has ended and there is an abolition of private

<sup>61</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 138, 140-141.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. The topic and the several quotes in this paragraph are found in pp. 139-142.

property. The following passage of Marx and Engels provides an adequate summary of this thesis:

We have also shown that the abolition of division of labour is determined by the development of intercourse and productive forces to such a degree of universality that private property and division of labour become fetters on them. We have further shown that private property can be abolished only on condition of an all-round development of individuals, because . . . only individuals that are developing in an all-round fashion . . . can turn them [the existing form of intercourse and the existing productive forces] into free manifestations of their lives. We have shown that at the present time individuals must abolish private property, because the productive forces and forms of intercourse have developed so far that, under the domination of private property, they have become destructive forces, . . . Finally, we have shown that the abolition of private property and of the division of labour is itself the union of individuals on the basis created by modern productive forces and world intercourse.<sup>63</sup>

Private property prevents human development, that development of man in his social nature. Property also affects the position of classes in society. The most obvious effect is an economic one--wealth begets wealth; the owners of private property are able to garner more property. But as a result of their property the capitalist class is able to assume a unique position in society. This position is one of dominance over the working class and dominance of all social and economic institutions. The following chapter analyzes the historical position of capitalism and, more especially, private property as a power-conferring institution.

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<sup>63</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 433-439.



## CHAPTER VI

### PRIVATE PROPERTY--ABUSE OF POWER

The major function of this chapter is to provide a commentary on the relationship between private property and power in society. As background to that commentary it will be helpful to take notice of the role the capitalist mode of production plays in economic and social development.

#### Historical Necessity of Capitalism

Marx saw capitalist production fulfilling an important and essential role in human history. In speaking of the process of man's liberation Marx wrote: "'Liberation' is a historical and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions, the [level] of industry, com[merce], [agri]culture, [intercourse . . .]." <sup>1</sup> The historical conditions of capitalist production provided, in Marx's view, an important stage in man's search for liberation. The Communist Manifesto observed that "the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the mode of production and of exchange."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 38. The bracketed portions are in the text used; the manuscript itself is damaged at this point.

<sup>2</sup>Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p. 81.

The role of capitalism can be summarized in two broad, overlapping contributions. The first of these is the achievements of the system, both those beneficial effects upon society and those achievements detrimental to society. Secondly, capitalism has provided the foundation for and will even provide the impetus to the coming socialist society.

Several "achievements" of capitalism have already been noted: wage labor, alienation, and fragmented division of labor. These, along with many other capitalist achievements, can be looked at as resulting from three characteristics of the system: "the rationalization of the world, the rationalization of human action and the universalization of inter-human contact."<sup>3</sup> Two of these achievements deserve further mention. One is that capitalism has, actually for many persons and potentially for the world, provided a system whereby material and other economic goods can be made available. The Manifesto noted: "The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal production forces than have all preceding generations together." For Marx capitalist production has given to the world a glimpse of the possibilities of human achievement:

It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades.<sup>4</sup>

One other achievement of capitalism is important to this work. This achievement belongs rather to the classical school of Smith and

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<sup>3</sup>Avineri, Thought of Karl Marx, p. 162. This work has an excellent section dealing with the world-wide importance of capitalism; some of the author's insights are noted in this text. Cf. pp. 162-174.

<sup>4</sup>Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, pp. 85, 83.

Ricardo and is theoretical in nature. To this school can be attributed the discovery that the true essence or nature of private property lies in labor. Marx wrote:

To this enlightened political economy, which has discovered within private property the subjective essence of wealth, the adherents of the money and mercantile system, who look upon private property only as an objective substance confronting men, seem therefore to be fetishists, Catholics.

The section of the Manuscripts of 1844 dealing with this subject of labor as private property hints at far more than is usually recognized in economic treatises on value theory. Marx was saying that true wealth lies not in goods as objects, but in human labor. It is the activity of man which is value-creating activity. This means, of course, that objects have value because they are produced by human labor. It means, more importantly, that human activity is the one, actual source of value; it means that man "has himself become this essence of private property."<sup>5</sup> True wealth is represented by human activity.

The other general contribution of capitalism is that it will make possible the next evolutionary movement toward socialism. This was explained in Chapter 4, which noted that the contradictions within the capitalist system will bring about the system's own destruction. Marx noted capitalism's own revolt against itself, a "revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule." He concluded: "What the bourgeoisie,

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<sup>5</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 128, 129.

therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."<sup>6</sup>

The socialist society to be established after the collapse of capitalism will be investigated in Chapter 7. The question faced in the following section is one of power, and an effort is made to show how, in Marx's view, private property in productive goods leads to the greatest abuse of power.

### Property and Power

In Chapter 2 a Weberian definition of power was adopted.<sup>7</sup> This definition centers around the ability of a person "within a social relationship" of carrying out his own will even in the face of resistance against that will. Power is that control which individuals possess over goods, materials, institutions, and relations, and over other individuals. The specific Marxian thesis proposed in this chapter is that power in a capitalist society flows from the institution of private property.

Marx saw property as a necessary basis of production. He asserted: "But that there can be no production and hence no society where some form of property does not exist is a tautology."<sup>8</sup> The private property of the capitalist system, however, has produced a condition where one class controls another class of individuals. The Communist Manifesto urges the members of the controlled class, the workers, to unite to throw off the chains that bind them.

<sup>6</sup>Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p. 94.

<sup>7</sup>See Chapter 2, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, p. 88.

In Chapter 4 reference was made to Marx's claim that the existence of labor power as a commodity was the determining characteristic of capitalist production. In Volume 3 of Capital Marx expanded this analysis and proposed two major features for the system. The first is, again, that the products of capitalist production are commodities. The major implication of this is that the worker himself becomes a commodity and his labor becomes wage labor. The agents in the buying and selling of this labor, the capitalists and the worker, are simply "personifications of capital and wage-labour."<sup>9</sup>

The second feature in the capitalist production system "is the production of surplus-value as the direct aim and determining motive of production." The amount of surplus value can be increased by prolonging the working day or by increasing the productivity of labor. The capitalist's efforts to reduce the cost of his commodity, that is, his product, forces him to search for methods which increase the productivity of labor. In the production process the capitalist in his capacity as manager exerts a certain power or authority over the worker. The capitalist, as just noted, is only personified capital. He does not make a free decision to exploit his workers; he is at the mercy of the system. Marx observed that among "the capitalists themselves, who confront one another only as commodity-owners, there reigns complete anarchy within which the social interrelations of production assert themselves only as an overwhelming natural law in relation to individual free will." This system of production does not exist to satisfy the

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<sup>9</sup>Marx, Capital, 3:880.

needs of man but only to provide for the self-expansion of capital. It is a system where man "is governed by the products of his own hand."<sup>10</sup>

Once the primitive or original accumulation of capital has taken place and the process of capitalist production has begun, the development of that process continues in an accelerating pace. The productivity of labor is increased by new methods of technology and an increased amount of capital goods. This produces an industrial reserve army which supplies labor to the continuing process of accumulation. The standard of living of the workers, because of the existence of this army of excess workers, is kept low while the wealth of the capitalists increases. The discrepancy between the two classes and continuing alienation increases the misery of the workers. It is not just the material standard of the workers which is affected. The following are some of the further effects of all the means used to increase productivity:

. . . they mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour-process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour-process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of capital.<sup>11</sup>

The products of man's activity and social power--that is, "the multiplied productive force" which is that activity--transform

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 3:880, 881; 1:621.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1:645.

themselves into an "alien power" which confronts man and over which he has no control. It is division of labor and private property which have allowed the creation of this objective power. In one passage Marx even equated division of labor with private property, observing that "in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity."<sup>12</sup> But private property is the institution which allows and even postulates division of labor. Private property is the institution which makes the worker completely free in the sense of making him completely poor, of having no other means of subsistence but the sale of his own labor power. Private property is the institution which subjects the worker to a system which itself controls society and brings to the worker only the realization of his own helplessness and misery.

The capitalist method of production seems, at this point, to be a system which is not controlled by man, but by the system itself. But the capitalist system is a stage in the prehistory of man's development. Consequently it is also a stage which involves a struggle between classes. As long as society exists in such a prehistoric condition, that is, a condition where class conflicts prevail, some form of state control is inevitable. In a capitalist society this control rests in the hands of the owners of capital. Lenin noted the inevitable nature of this control: "In reality, as long as there is private property, your state, even if it is a democratic republic, is nothing but a machine used by the capitalists to suppress the workers, and the freer

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<sup>12</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 48, 47, 46.

the state, the more clearly is this expressed."<sup>13</sup> Engels noted that the ruling force of civilized society is the state and that this state consists essentially in a ruling class controlling an exploited one.<sup>14</sup> The Communist Manifesto noted that "Political power . . . is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another."<sup>15</sup>

Marx saw political and social power, power over the political and social institutions of society, to be founded in economic power. In a society where developed commodity production is the norm, that political and social power rests in the hands of the owners of capital. It is the capitalists as a class who control economic society. Since economic society determines social, political, and intellectual life, the source of all power rests with the capitalists.

In line with the economic interpretation of history Marx explained that "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force."<sup>16</sup> The controllers of the means of production also control the production and dissemination of ideas. These ideas become the controlling forces in the epoch that produced them and even take on the semblance of eternal law. These ideas, which are created by the ruling class or which the ruling class pays to have created, become a deposit of forces which determine the

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<sup>13</sup>V. I. Lenin, The State, July 11, 1919, in Selected Works, Vol. 16, p. 655, quoted in Lenin Reader, Selected and edited by Stefan T. Possony (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966), p. 163.

<sup>14</sup>See Frederick Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 657.

<sup>15</sup>Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p. 105.

<sup>16</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 59.



various aspects of a society's culture. The owners of capital are thus ultimately responsible for the complexus of legal and social institutions which continue their control over the workers. These same owners promote the artistic and literary works which depict or embody ideas fostering their continued control.

The capitalist mode of production seeks an accumulation and expansion of capital, in other words, an accumulation of private property. This accumulation both relies upon and perpetuates the institution of property. But it also has for its "fundamental condition the annihilation of self-earned private property; in other words, the expropriation of the labourer."<sup>17</sup> In terms of this chapter this means that the genesis of the capitalist involves control of the workers' property, and the existence of the capitalist enables him to control the workers' very lives. This control comes by expropriating the workers' property. The capitalists as a class ultimately force the workers to sell their labor power, expropriate some of this labor power as surplus value, and leave to the workers only sufficient means to ensure the survival of this labor power. This alienating process destroys the individual.

According to his interpretation of history, production, for Marx, is the predominant force in society. Production, however, forms a part of an entire social and economic process, a process completed by distribution, exchange, and consumption. A further analysis of the nature of the exchange element in this process elucidates the relationship between power and private property.

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<sup>17</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:774.

Commodity production is one of the essential elements in the capitalist system. A commodity, however, involves a transfer of a product by means of exchange. This means that the commodity must possess some exchange value. Of course the commodity has a use value, but it is brought to the market only because the use value is superseded by its exchange value to the owner. In order that exchange take place the owners must be simply that, that is, private owners of the specific commodities to be traded. This means that common property as an institution has given way to private property.

It is the owners of the exchange values or commodities who exercise control over them. Not only do these owners control the products, but they also control the activity of those who fashion the products. Marx saw that "the power which each individual exercises over the activity of others or over social wealth exists in him as the owner of exchange values, . . ." <sup>18</sup> As Marx pointed out so frequently, the activity of the workers and the product of that activity appear to them as a hostile and alien force confronting the workers.

The important point here is that the exchange value in the commodity gives to the owner economic power, "which is simply power to withhold from others what they need." The origin of this power corresponds to the change in the legal concept of property. Commons observed that "the change in the concept of property from physical things to the exchange-value of things is a change from a concept of holding things for one's own use to withholding things from others' use, . . ." This "economic attribute of property," the fact that "holding for self

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<sup>18</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, p. 157.

becomes withholding from others,"<sup>19</sup> manifested itself clearly only when the developed form of commodity production became prevalent.

This economic power, flowing from property, means that the owner can demand something in exchange for his possession. He can withhold that possession from the exchange process until he receives his desired recompense. Of course modern society ordinarily uses money, that "crystal formed of necessity,"<sup>20</sup> in such transactions; this fact should cause no complication to the analysis. Commons pointed out that holding something for one's own use is "economy," but that "withholding is economic power."<sup>21</sup>

In Volume I of Capital Marx explained the process of expropriation, principally in England, by which the individual worker was separated from his means of production. As this process took place various laws were passed which legitimated the growing wealth of the new capitalist class and turned it into their legal private property. Having been divested of their means of production, the "peasants" had no other alternative but to sell themselves in the form of their labor power. They became wage labor. Marx noted that "the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire."<sup>22</sup>

The important factor of this analysis, however, is not the violent and ruthless manner of this expropriation, but the forced consequence

<sup>19</sup> Commons, Legal Foundations, pp. 52, 53.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, Capital, 1:86.

<sup>21</sup> Commons, Legal Foundations, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> Marx, Capital, 1:715.

of the process. Wage labor came into existence and was to be sold as any other commodity was sold. This labor has an exchange value. In the case of all other commodities the possessor of them maintains an economic power and may withhold them until he obtains his desired reward. But in the case of wage labor this is not possible. The laborer has no choice in the selling of his labor power because this power is the only means he has to provide for himself and his family. His very survival demands that this labor power be sold and that it be sold at the wage which will be just sufficient to guarantee the survival of the worker and the propagation of new workers. The "holder" of labor power, the worker himself, cannot withhold his labor power and consequently has no economic or social power. It is, of course, possible for the worker to quit one job and look for another. "But," as Marx pointed out, "the worker, whose sole source of livelihood is the sale of labour power, cannot leave the whole class of purchasers, i.e., the capitalist class without renouncing his existence."<sup>23</sup>

Is it not possible for the condition of the workers to improve with the accumulation of capital and the increased productivity of workers? Can the wages to the workers not be increased so that the workers can acquire some wealth and at least approach the status of the capitalists? Marx explained that such a procedure is not possible. Wages do not represent the workers' share in the product. They are simply the price of a particular commodity, labor power, a commodity which resides in the human person.

<sup>23</sup>Karl Marx, Wage-Labour and Capital, in Karl Marx, Selected Works, 2 vols., ed. V. Adoratsky, English Edition ed. C. P. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, n.d.), 1:257.

If there is an increase in productive capital, then the result will be an increase in the demand for labor. But this increased demand for labor is offset by the increased productivity of the worker as productive methods and instruments are improved. Consequently there is a reserve, industrial army and competition for jobs among the members of this army forces wages down. Moreover, if there is a rise in wages, there will result a concomitant increase in economic and social needs for the workers. The needs of men are relative, not absolute, Marx pointed out; they are determined by conditions of society. He wrote: "Our needs and enjoyments spring from society; we measure them, therefore, by society and not by the objects of their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature."<sup>24</sup> Increased wages mean that those wants which before were luxuries now appear as necessities, and other new needs arise to present themselves as necessary for a complete life in society.

In addition to the distinction between nominal and real wages Marx divided wages into real and relative wages. Real wages represent the amount of buying power of the nominal wages. The labor of the workers produces a value added to the value of the raw materials and depreciated machinery which is used in production. This newly created value, added to by the labor of the workers, is divided between the workers and the capitalist. Part of it becomes wages and part of it becomes profit. Marx stated that relative wages "express the share of direct labour in the new value it has created in relation to the share which

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 1:269.

falls to accumulated labour, to capital."<sup>25</sup> In other words a relative wage is the ratio of that portion of the value added which goes to the workers to the portion which goes to capital. If workers add \$1000 to the value of raw materials and machinery used up in production, this sum is divided into wages and profit. If the workers receive \$600 and the capitalist \$400, the relative wage is three-halves. If the sums are reversed, the relative wage is two-thirds. Marx showed that relative wages are always decreasing under the capitalist system.<sup>26</sup>

This can be put in more ordinary Marxian terms to the effect that the rate of surplus value is always increasing.<sup>27</sup> There are two general conclusions which follow from this. The first is that the gap between the workers and the owners is always widening. Even if there were some increase in nominal and real wages the disparity between the returns to the two classes would grow larger. Any such increased wage has little effect on the workers, who see the affluence and luxury of the rich. Such an observation is borne out at the present time. To look only at the United States, the lower economic class enjoys a standard of living and opportunities for education and even recreation which

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 1:270.

<sup>26</sup>See *ibid.*, 1:271-280.

<sup>27</sup>The wages received by the workers are necessary or variable labor; the profits of the capitalist are surplus labor. Let  $v$  and  $s$  represent these values, respectively. Then relative wages become  $v/s$ . This is the inverse of the rate of surplus value explained in Chapter 4. Thus the statement "relative wages are always decreasing" is equivalent to the statement "the rate of surplus value is always increasing." The rate of surplus value always increases even though the rate of profit falls. Marx noted that Bastiat and Proudhon were confused on this matter. Marx wrote that Bastiat felt "that because the rate of profit of the larger and more productive total capital is smaller, it follows that the worker's share has grown larger, whereas precisely the opposite is the case; his surplus labour has grown larger" (Marx, Grundrisse, p. 385).

are superior to those which the middle class enjoyed in former periods. This does not alleviate the material deprivation of the people in this class. It does little good to say that relatively speaking these people should be satisfied both in their material status and in their aspirations for their own development. It was of such a situation that Marx wrote: "The power of the capitalist class over the working class has grown, the social position of the worker has deteriorated, has been depressed one stage further below that of the capitalist."<sup>28</sup>

The second conclusion to be derived from the conflict between wages and profits is that the "interests of capital and the interests of wage labour are diametrically opposed."<sup>29</sup> This is the more important conclusion as far as economic and social power is concerned. The falling rate of profit compels the capitalist to search for ways which can lower his costs, increase the productivity of labor, and bring him a greater surplus value. This means that the capitalist must be able to control all aspects of the economic process. The very survival of the capitalist demands that he control ever larger amounts of capital and that the workers control none. There must be available workers to operate the increased capital. These workers are supplied by the increased productivity of the new capital and more efficient ways of production. This allows the capitalist a greater control over wages. Finally, the social power of the capitalist must allow him to reinforce his economic position.

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<sup>28</sup> Marx, Wage-Labour and Capital, in Karl Marx, Selected Works, 1:271.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 1:273.

Private property is essential to the economic and social power of the capitalist. In Chapter 1 it was noted that Marx's general definition of property revolved around the relation of the producer to the instruments of production. "Property, then, originally means . . . the relation of the working . . . subject to the conditions of his production or reproduction as his own," Marx wrote. Labor power is an essential means of production and, in the labor process, becomes the property of the capitalist. In order for this to happen the workers must be divorced from all their property. Private property in capital goods is at the same time a system of complete lack of property for the worker. The historic process by which labor power became a commodity was one which resulted in the laborer becoming completely propertyless. The laborers face all the elements of production "as alien property, as their own not-property, . . ." <sup>30</sup>

It is only in exchange, however, that the full meaning of this situation is realized. The capitalist system did not develop by some few wealthy men gradually accumulating machinery and raw materials which they offered to workers who had no such means of production. How did the primitive accumulation of the capitalists take place? The process was rather one where land and tools of the workers were forcibly separated from them so that they were left with no means of survival except to sell their labor power. Marx wrote of the origin of this primitive accumulation: "In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great

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<sup>30</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 495, 502.



part."<sup>31</sup> The goods produced by the workers of the capitalist system became not only use values, but they acquired and finally became exchange values. Finally, labor power itself was forced into the category of a commodity.

By this process capitalists as a class usurped complete power in society. They established labor power as an economic category and by controlling this category acquired complete economic power. The worker became propertyless. There was only one commodity which he possessed. But this commodity was one which he could not sell freely--at his own will and disposition. The selling of his labor power became a forced and, in one sense, unilateral contract. The property of the capitalists enabled them to withhold from the workers all means of livelihood unless these workers accepted the conditions of employment imposed by the capitalists. These conditions included the type of product to be produced, the method of production,<sup>32</sup> and the wage to be received. This economic control of the capitalists was easily parlayed into complete social and political control. As Heilbroner pointed out, in pre-market society wealth was a consequence of political, military, or religious power. But in the market society power follows wealth.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:714.

<sup>32</sup>This control over the labor process and its effect upon the worker in modern society is the theme of Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital referred to earlier. This work maintains that fragmented division of labor and control of the work process by management has produced in modern society a worker with no integrated skills, no control over the labor process, and consequently no pride in his own achievements.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Robert L. Heilbroner, The Making of Economic Society, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), pp. 29-30.

The economic wealth of the capitalists constitutes them as holders of power. This control they cannot relinquish. The very survival of the capitalists means a constant effort on their part to maintain their control over the economic system.

The writings of Marx contain no formal treatment of communist society. His works are mainly critiques of the development and workings of the capitalist mode of production. A complete view of Marxian theory, however, demands some comment on the type of social and economic system Marx envisioned as appropriate for man or, more accurately, toward which society is tending. This is the topic addressed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### COMMUNIST SOCIETY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Abolition of private property has, up to this point, been given as Marx's major thesis. This is obviously a negative prescription, and most of the analysis has been concerned with the deleterious effects of property. The section on human development of Chapter 5 saw Marx's emphasis upon creative activity as the medium of development. This chapter attempts a similar positive description of communist society. The chapter is concerned with Marx's view of the type of economic organization that will best promote the welfare of society and with the condition of society resulting from such organization.

But even this formulation of the topic is misleading. Marx saw himself, not as inventing a Utopian society, but as describing an historical and evolutionary process. The Communist Manifesto noted that the "theoretical conclusions of the communists" are not some carefully contrived invention, but "merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes."<sup>1</sup> Thus Marx's ideas on communist society are predictive rather than prescriptive.

This does not prevent Marx from prescribing for the ills of society. The Manifesto itself includes a ten point program for promoting the advance of communism. This chapter is not concerned explicitly

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<sup>1</sup>Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, pp. 95, 96.

with the process and the programs by which society becomes communistic. It deals with the questions indicated above: What will be the nature of communist society and what will be the effect of this organization upon the welfare of society? These two questions will be treated jointly, not separately, since their relationship is one of cause and effect.

The first point to be noted is that under communism "men once more gain control of exchange, production and the way they behave to one another."<sup>2</sup> The goal of all social and economic organization for Marx was that such organizations allow for the free development of individuals. The welfare of society is best achieved when the organization of society allows this free and full development. Economic organization in its ultimate form should not be directed to a redistribution of income nor an improvement of working conditions. Attempts in these areas are diversionary, leading men away from true economic reform.

The negative prescription of private property's abolition is changed into the positive one of men once again assuming control of their economic and social relations. Marx insisted that "individuals must appropriate the existing totality of productive forces . . ." These forces can be summarized as raw materials, the instruments of production, and human labor. Under the capitalist system these are forces of private property. The bringing of these forces under individual control means "the development of the individual capacities corresponding to the material instruments of production." Since material production is the determining element in society, this appropriation

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<sup>2</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 48.

means "the development of a totality of capacities in the individuals themselves."<sup>3</sup> This appropriation simply brings an end to private property. It brings an end also to that division of labor which plays such a strong part in human alienation. The close relationship between the division of labor and private property has already been noted. Marx maintained that man can never become truly human as long as he is forced into such fragmented labor. Only with the control of productive forces does labor become true self-activity.

This acquiring of control over the production process is the central tenet of Marx's entire positive prescriptions and is the aim of all negative admonitions. The production process includes, of course, all phases of material life: production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. Control must be had by all individuals, not by just a few or by a privileged class.

The practical effect of such control is that the market system will cease to exist. This means that commodities will lose their mystical character, indeed, commodity production will cease. Goods will be produced for their use value, not their exchange value. The search for profit will cease to be the motivating force of the economic system. ". . . Of many differences between capitalism and socialism, . . . one of the most important and far-reaching,"<sup>4</sup> claimed Paul Sweezy, is the elimination of profit as an economic category. The major implication which Sweezy drew from profit's elimination is that

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>4</sup>Paul M. Sweezy, "A Crucial Difference Between Capitalism and Socialism," in David Horowitz, ed., Marx and Modern Economics (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968; reprinted from The Present as History, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1953), p. 324.

it eliminates the possible contradictions between the welfare of capitalists and the welfare of society. Under capitalism a fall in profits can produce depression and unemployment, and a search for profits can mean many consumers will be priced out of the market.

There is another implication to the loss of profit as a motivational force. The eradication of a search for profit means, of course, the end of the market system. As Polanyi remarked: "The self-regulating market system was uniquely derived from this principle [i.e., gain]."<sup>5</sup> An end to the unceasing search for profit means the end of the market system's motive power. Looked at conversely, an end of the market system means that man will be able to develop a more truly socialized personality, one where greed gives place to social concern. Lenin's remark about the need for a new type of person under communism was noted earlier. This remark was simply a reflection of Marx's understanding of the need and possibility for such an evolution of human nature. Marx wrote: "Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, . . ." <sup>6</sup>

The abolition of the market system means the introduction of central planning. Roberts and Stephenson claim "Public ownership of property is not the defining characteristic of Marxian socialism; central planning is."<sup>7</sup> Dobb argued forcefully that the economic laws of a

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<sup>5</sup>Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation, Foreword by Robert M. McIver (Boston: Beacon Press, First Beacon Paperback, 1957), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 52-53.

<sup>7</sup>Roberts and Stephenson, Marx's Theory of Exchange, p. 94. This is a helpful insight, but is perhaps too limited in its thesis. These authors, in the work cited, mentioned Marx's emphasis upon control over

socialist society will differ from those of a capitalist society. Dobb's discussion focused on central planning, and he commented on the thesis that a socialist economy must imitate the capitalist form if it is to be successful:

What this view seems to overlook is the full significance of the difference between socialism and capitalism, and in particular to fail to appreciate the crucial significance of a planned economy as consisting in the unification of all the major decisions which rule investment and production, by contrast with their atomistic diffusion.<sup>8</sup>

Dobb, in rejecting capitalist economic laws for a socialist society, followed the lead of Marx. The latter noted that the exploitation and alienation of labor was an historical process. Marx held that the social relations, particularly those of labor, connected with the capitalist system were by no means as essential as bourgeois economists believed them to be. The abolition of those social relations founded in private property would enable workers to lose their sense of alienation. With the control of production in their own hands, they would then be able to function as social individuals.<sup>9</sup>

The historical importance of capitalism was not denied by Marx. Under the capitalist system an effort at increased productivity of labor is constantly taking place. Capital in the personified sense is production. At times they seemed to equate this with central planning. Such planning, however, is only one element of this control. Other elements include at least: communal ownership of the means of production, a labor process which allows for individual initiative and creativity, and elimination of commodity production and of wage labor.

<sup>8</sup>Dobb, Political Economy and Capitalism, p. 273.

<sup>9</sup>On the evolutionary nature of production relations see The Communist Manifesto, p. 100; Grundrisse, pp. 163, 831-833; Capital, 3:878.

moving to reduce the labor time necessary for production. Human intelligence has been the great ally in this process. The process achieves a snowball effect, according to Marx, in that a larger part of productive effort can be concentrated on productive goods as productivity increases. This is part of the Marxian analysis of the system, capital itself furthering the increased productivity. Marx saw the capitalist system as a necessary step in man's search for the satisfaction of material needs, as was pointed out in the previous chapter. The capitalist mode of production enabled society to make the transition to an industrialized system possible. This industrialized, capitalist system has begun the process whereby man is able to develop science and utilize technology so that these forces can be applied to supply his material needs.

Marx did not hesitate, as was also pointed out, to praise the capitalist system for its production capabilities. He noted that the system "contains in itself, in a still only inverted form . . . the dissolution of all limited presuppositions of production."<sup>10</sup> This capitalist system by its very nature prevents the complete development of man's potential. Marx held that communism would allow this development and would thus increase man's ability to produce:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of

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<sup>10</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, p. 515. See also p. 276.



cooperative wealth flow more abundantly--only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!<sup>11</sup>

The transition to the Marxian communist society involves two stages. The first stage is a negative one and comprises the elimination of private property in productive goods. Man's nature cannot be changed immediately, however, and he will still retain attitudes toward material wealth which he had under the bourgeois system. This developing society, a crude communism, "is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges." There is an equality in this stage of society because every person is a worker. But there will also be an inequality because of differences in personality and family conditions. The worker will receive a paper certifying the amount of work he has performed. He will be able to receive from "the social stock of means of consumption as much as the same amount of labor costs."<sup>12</sup> A person who can work longer will thus receive more; a larger family will mean that each individual in that family may have less than members of smaller families. Since men still possess bourgeois mentalities, a strong central state will be necessary to provide order and to direct the evolutionary process to the higher phase of communism.

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<sup>11</sup> Karl Marx, Marginal Notes to the Program of the German Workers' Party, in Karl Marx, On Revolution, The Karl Marx Library, vol. 1, arranged and edited, with an Introduction and new translations by Saul K. Padover (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), p. 496. This work is frequently titled Critique of the Gotha Program.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 494, 495.

At some undetermined time society will be able to enter this higher phase of communism. In this higher phase there will be an abundance of goods and no necessary lessening of consumption.<sup>13</sup> There will be at the same time a development of the capability to consume. This development should be understood in a qualitative sense. The development of this capability to consume is concomitant with the availability of leisure time, this latter being an important condition of human development. The increased leisure is followed by the development of the artistic and scientific talents of individuals, which development itself further increases human productivity.

The increased leisure time comes from the tremendous production capabilities which a true communist society permits. With an abundance of capital goods, no unemployment, central planning which eliminates all unnecessary labor, and the high productivity of fully developed, unalienated workers, communist society will be able to produce a plethora of goods. The amount of labor necessary to produce these goods will be minimized and leisure time increased. Moreover, the culturally and artistically developed nature of man will eliminate all useless production. The social orientation of man's developed nature will see to it that only goods with some social value will be produced.

Labor itself will still be necessary, but there will be a change in man's attitude to it. "Labour cannot become play," Marx noted, but leisure time allows an individual to evolve "into a different subject,

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<sup>13</sup>Marx was always realistic about the need for material development. He saw the need for improved agricultural and industrial development to satisfy human needs and noted: ". . . people cannot be liberated as long as they are unable to obtain food and drink, housing and clothing in adequate quality and quantity" (Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 38).

and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject."<sup>14</sup> Marx saw this process as both disciplinary and creative. It is disciplinary in that it demands that man be transformed and nature mastered to the extent that the needs of life are abundantly and easily supplied for all. It is also disciplinary in that man must be transformed so that he finds satisfaction in supplying the needs of others. The process is creative in that it provides for man the opportunity to develop himself freely and completely. The extent of that development is unlimited.

The presence of this dynamic process in society can be considered to be Marx's concept of "social welfare"; it is a process in which individuals "renew themselves even as they renew the world of wealth they create."<sup>15</sup> The goal of the process is always human development through self-creative activity. Human activity, in the Marxian system, "should aim . . . at the transformation of human nature. It should make man dignified, integrated, complete, and free, . . ."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, p. 712. See also p. 611. In Volume 1 of Capital Marx seemed to cast some doubt on the amount of leisure time that communism will provide; see Capital, 1:530. In this passage he saw much of the surplus labor becoming necessary as society increased its consumption and a reserve fund was acquired. However, in considering this and other passages where Marx spoke of human development, it is clear that he definitely expects considerable leisure time to be available to all members of society. This conclusion is strengthened when Marx's optimistic view of man's evolutionary potential and consequent labor productivity is recalled. For further comment on this point see Avineri, Thought of Karl Marx, pp. 234-235.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. This concept, social welfare, Marx called the "totality of private interests, the general interest" (Marx, Grundrisse, p. 156). "The general interest" is also translated as "the common interest." See also Marx, The German Ideology, pp. 44-45. The "general interest" receives special significance in Catholic social doctrine under the term "common good."

<sup>16</sup>Venable, Human Nature: The Marxian View, p. 151.

It must not be thought that this human development, which takes place under communism, seeks an end in the communist state. Communism is not "a state of affairs," Marx wrote, but "the real movement which abolishes the present state of things."<sup>17</sup> It is "the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being." Marx emphasized not the ambiguous communist state, but the "structure of human society"<sup>18</sup> which allows man's true development. "Freedom," Marx noted, "consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinated to it, . . ." <sup>19</sup>

In the stage of crude communism property passes into the hands of the community as a whole. The state, of course, as a political institution will exercise control over this property, but in essence it will belong to the community. Marx called such a condition "universal private property." With the abolition of private property will come the abolition of the capitalist. There will no longer be classes but only one class--the workers. Other than the fact that this will be a necessary transitional stage, Marx found little to praise in what he predicted would be society's attitude toward property in this stage. He glumly forecast that the community would become the "universal capitalist."

Marx compared the transition from the capitalist stage to the stage of crude communism to the hypothetical transition from a

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<sup>17</sup> Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 135, 146.

<sup>19</sup> Marx, Program of the German Workers' Party, p. 502.

monogamous society to one where there would be a community of women. He made the analogy: "Just as one woman passes from marriage to general prostitution, so the entire world of wealth . . . passes from the relationship of exclusive marriage with the owner of private property to a state of universal prostitution with the community." Crude communism is nothing but the prostitution of the worker. The worker prostitutes himself by his desire for and his effort at acquiring material possessions. The worker is motivated solely by greed for the physical possession of goods. Thus this stage of communism is "merely one form in which the vileness of private property . . . comes to the surface."<sup>20</sup>

This analysis points out why it was indicated in Chapter 5 that the acquisition of material goods should not be a factor in human development. It is not that such goods are not necessary for development; Marx demanded for society a high level of consumption. It is that efforts to acquire wealth and private property are manifestations of and incitements to greed and to a negation of man's social nature. It is only when society is able to provide man's material needs in abundance and under a system which allows for man's creative activity that he begins to make progress in his development.

This brings up the question of property other than in capital goods. Should a person be allowed to own personal items such as clothing, a home, a farm, or an automobile (to speak anachronistically for Marx)? Marx seldom addressed himself to such specific cases. In The Communist Manifesto he did ask the question whether the property of the small peasant or artisan should be abolished. He seemed to be

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<sup>20</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 133, 135.

referring to a small plot of ground or a small shop and the simple tools needed by a "petty artisan." Marx answered his own question inconclusively by citing the practice of the capitalists: "There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it daily."<sup>21</sup> Marx never objected to these individual possessions except insofar as their extravagant possession by capitalists established a chasm between that class and the class of workers. The problem is complicated for modern society in that such possessions, often held by members of the lower classes, are necessitated by the class structure and the capitalist system. It does not seem that such "ownership" of even extensive personal possessions would be inimical to the Marxian vision and, in many ways, is supported by that vision. This ownership would have to be understood with its social responsibilities. A look at Marx's higher phase of communism will highlight these responsibilities.

If any one phase could sum up the effect on man of this higher phase of communism, certainly in relation to property, it is that communism allows man to transcend private property. To transcend means "to rise above or beyond the limits or powers of."<sup>22</sup> In the phrase "to transcend private property" the verb has a more comprehensive meaning than its dictionary definition. Marx seemed to use the German word, Aufheben, as Hegel did, and meant it "to describe the positive-negative action by which a higher logical category or form of nature or spirit, in superseding a lower, both 'annuls' it and 'incorporates its truth.'"<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1959 ed., s.v. "transcend."

<sup>23</sup>Milligan and Struik, "Translator's and Editor's Note on Terminology," in Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 57-58.

The phrase "to transcend private property" is used in this study to understand a negative element, the abolition of property, but more emphatically to connote a positive element. This positive element is the attitude which replaces the attitude that wealth consists in the accumulation of private possessions. This new attitude sees property as something to be utilized by society or by man as a social being. The transcendence of private property means that man has freed himself from greed and a desire for self-enrichment and sees economic goods solely as a means of building up the species, man. It is a spiritual attitude toward material goods and wealth. It is an attitude which gives freedom to man in that it frees him from the lure of riches and enables him to use his faculties in a truly human way.

In the Manuscripts of 1844 Marx spoke intensively of this transcendence. He noted: "Communism [is] the positive transcendence of private property;" "communism [is] therefore . . . the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being." Marx observed that this transcendence involves both man's consciousness and his real life. He meant by this that man loses his alienation and is able to discover his true self both in his conscious, mental activity and in his physically active life--his entire life of activity. Man comprises both activities, and his ability to transcend private property means that such activities can expand to fulfill their social, not narrow and individual, functions. Marx claimed that "the transcendence of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and qualities." This freedom is acquired because, as noted previously, man's senses "have become, subjectively and objectively, human."<sup>24</sup> The

<sup>24</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 135, 139.

senses themselves are the powers of a human subject--socially oriented man--and the objects of these senses are material objects with a social purpose.

Both the predictive and the prescriptive nature of Marx's doctrine are evident here. He is saying both "this is what man should be," and "this is what man will someday be." While Marx in his later works may have ceased to speak in the philosophical language he used in the Manuscripts, he did not abandon this insight into man's proper attitude toward wealth. In The German Ideology Marx and Engels noted that as long as the division of labor, and this means also its correlative, property, exists, then there will be a conflict between personal interests and the common good, and "man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him."<sup>25</sup> In the Grundrisse Marx, in condemning wealth as the aim of capitalist production, gave his description of wealth:

. . . what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, . . . The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature. The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities . . . which makes the totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, . . . <sup>26</sup>

Communist society is one where universal "ownership" of property prevails.<sup>27</sup> It is only such universal ownership which allows man to

<sup>25</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, p. 488.

<sup>27</sup>There is an interesting variation on the theme of communal ownership in Volume 3 of Capital. Marx implied that there was not even communal ownership in the strict sense insofar as "a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together,



transcend material goods and use them productively, fully, socially, in short, in a way which frees man and allows him to live that social life which is properly his. This is the economic form of life which fosters human development. It is the only economic form which permits any true development.

In this communist form the means of production are owned by all. The universal ownership of these production instruments destroys the class system of society. All culture and social institutions are molded by this method of production. Marx never forsook his economic interpretation of history. The destruction of the class system destroys class struggles. There is no further need for one class to achieve dominance over another. There is no possibility of this because all men belong to the same class. This membership in a universal class brings about the realization that individual development is social development. Social goals preempt any desires for individual self-gratification. Man realizes that any such attempts at personal self-aggrandizement is counterproductive. Such attempts would not fulfill man but destroy his true social nature.

Up to this point the study has concentrated on an analysis of the Marxian system. This analysis has been restricted in that it has attempted to limit itself to major elements of Marx's system which justify his views on private property. A similar procedure must be done for the Catholic position. The study now turns to this task.

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are not the owners of the globe." Men are only the "usufructuaries" of the world. They have the obligation of caring for and even making the earth better so that it may be passed on "to succeeding generations in an improved condition" (Marx, Capital, 3:776).

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ECONOMIC ORDER

In Chapter 2 three points were given which summarized up to that point Catholic teaching on property.<sup>1</sup> This present chapter begins the fuller commentary on those points and has a twofold purpose. The first purpose is to provide the basic philosophical tenet of the Catholic Church on the use of material goods. The word philosophical is used because this tenet is the underlying principle of the Church's entire doctrine on property. In this sense the philosophical tenet is also a theological and an economic one. The development of the Church's property teaching from this basic tenet will also be shown. Both of these expositions are presented in the first section.

The second function of this chapter is to provide the theoretical criteria which the Church uses in its judgments of economic and social systems. These criteria are presented in the second section. The third section attempts to make these criteria more real by showing how the Church applies them to the socialist and capitalist systems. In doing this the fundamental role of private property is reaffirmed.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Chapter 2, p. 50. Church documents use the expressions "created goods," and "physical possessions." At times these phrases are to be interpreted literally, created goods having the same meaning as material goods with an obvious theological underpinning. At times they are used as concrete expressions for property in general, including even intangible property. If the context is not clear which meaning is meant, a clarification will be made.

By way of comparison this chapter attempts to provide for the Catholic system what Chapters 3 and 4 did for the Marxian.

#### Importance of Material Goods

For the Catholic Church the basic position on the use of material goods, and ultimately of property, goes back to the Old Testament. In the Book of Genesis God commanded man that he should "fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all living animals on the earth."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, all the plants and the fruits of the trees were given to man for his food.

The first two chapters of Genesis contain several ideas important to the Catholic position. The first idea is that man needs the material things of this world in order to live a life in keeping with his human dignity. He cannot live except by utilizing nature's resources and fashioning instruments from them to provide himself with the food, clothing, shelter, education, and recreation he needs. Man can find the continuous support he needs "only in the inexhaustible fertility of the earth."<sup>3</sup> Such an observation is not new nor does it need comment at this time.

Secondly, the Church emphasizes that nature's resources are destined for the use of all men of all ages. Since man has need of physical goods and since the earth (and its obvious expansion in a space age) is the only source of such goods, then all generations of men

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<sup>2</sup>Genesis, 2:28. All scriptural quotations are taken from The Jerusalem Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).

<sup>3</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 6.

have a claim upon these resources. "God has granted the earth to mankind in general," wrote Leo XIII; it has been given to the "universal human race."<sup>4</sup> The Second Vatican Council reemphasized this position. "God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being and people,"<sup>5</sup> it wrote.

A third idea which the Church sees justified in Genesis is that man has the right and the obligation to control the earth and all its resources. This conclusion is perhaps obvious from the fact that man has need of the earth's resources. It is made explicit in the scripture however, which commands man to conquer the earth. Man is the preeminent creature of the earth. Genesis noted that man is made in the image and likeness of God. For the authors of Genesis man's likeness to God most probably consisted in man's control over the earth:

" . . . just as God is sovereign over all, man was intended to share in this dominion by God's will."<sup>6</sup>

The important questions about man's nature and his destiny, the entire meaning of human existence, will be treated in the following chapter. What is important here is man's preeminence in the hierarchy of beings. It is necessary at this point to clarify that preeminence by noting the ultimate goal of man as the Church sees it. Here it is necessary to leave Old Testament times and consider the Church's entire theological tradition. The authors of Genesis probably had no consistent theories about life after death. Even in the book of Psalms, a

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., no. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 69.

<sup>6</sup>Bruce Vawter, A Path Through Genesis (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), p. 45.

later work at least in its literary foundations than Genesis, there is evidence of great ambiguity about the nature of an afterlife. The Church, however, sees man not only as made in the image and likeness of God, but also destined to share a life with God after this earthly life. Jesus told his Apostles: "I am going to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared a place, I shall return to take you with me; . . ." St. Paul declared that he taught about "all that God has prepared for those who love him."<sup>7</sup> A recent Catholic catechism expresses God's plan for man as follows:

He made man according to his image so that the personal consciousness which we received from his love should never be lost, but should continually develop, among our family today, in the instruction of our children, in our tasks, in our joy, throughout our suffering and through death into life.<sup>8</sup>

Another important point is that this earthly existence provides the probationary period by which man passes "through death into life." Catholic dogma expresses this in terms such as the following: "The souls of the just which in the moment of death are free from all guilt of sin and punishment for sin, enter into heaven." Those who will die unrepentant of personal, grievous sin, on the other hand, "enter Hell."<sup>9</sup> A more positive Catholic exposition sees personal salvation not as "a blessed solitude of existence nor a blissful absorption into an impersonal essence, but loving community with the living God."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>John 14:3; I Cor. 2:9.

<sup>8</sup>Higher Catechetical Institute at Nijmegen (Holland), *A New Catechism*, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 500.

<sup>9</sup>Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, ed. James Canon Bastible, trans. Patrick Lynch (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1957), pp. 476, 479.

<sup>10</sup>Bernard Haring, *The Law of Christ*, trans. Edwin G. Kaiser, 3 vols. (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1964), 1:40.

This community demands a life of faith and good works from the individual. In order for this community to be achieved man must possess adequate material goods. Man must have a certain amount of material possessions in order to live a virtuous life. Moreover, the Church holds that the degree by which a person will participate in his eternal happiness is also a function of man's earthly life. In theological terms "The degree of perfection of the beatific vision granted to the just is proportioned to each one's merits."<sup>11</sup>

The preeminence and destiny of man and his need for the material things of the earth to live a life in keeping with his dignity provided the background for the Church's major thesis on material goods. This thesis is simply a formulation of the idea mentioned by Leo XIII above that the earth was given to the entire human race. Pope Pius XII, in speaking of private property, exchange, and their control by the state, emphasized that "all this remains subordinated to the natural scope of material goods and cannot emancipate itself from the first and fundamental right which concedes their use to all men; . . ." <sup>12</sup>

In the early centuries of the Church it was this thesis which received major emphasis. At times there was an implicit acceptance of property in religious writings as the rich were urged to share their wealth. A work of the mid-second century contains the admission:

. . . to not partake of God's creatures superabundantly by yourselves, but give a share also to those who have

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<sup>11</sup>Ott, Catholic Dogma, p. 479. "Beatific vision" is the face-to-face viewing of God which Catholic theology sees as constitutive of eternal happiness.

<sup>12</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Radio Address of June 1, 1941," in Yzermans, The Unwearied Advocate, 1:214.

less. . . Now then, you who pride yourselves on your wealth take care, lest the indigent groan at any time, and their groan mount up to the Lord, and you and your goods be shut out from the door of the tower [of the just].<sup>13</sup>

At other times the common use of goods is unusually stressed. Clement of Alexandria wrote:

God brought our race into communion by first imparting what was His own when He gave His own Word, common to all, and made all things for all. All things therefore are common, and not for the rich to appropriate to undue share.<sup>14</sup>

The early church had no definite theory of property beyond this recognition that all men should have the use of this world's goods. This recognition occasionally turned itself into a criticism of the rich who refused to share their goods with the poor. Such criticism merely echoed the warning of Jesus that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."<sup>15</sup> The attitude of the early Church can be summed up as follows: ". . . primitive Christianity contains a radical criticism of riches, a demand for detachment from the goods of this

<sup>13</sup>(The Apostolic Father Hermas), "The Shepherd of Hermas," in The Fathers of the Church, 72 vols. (New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1947), vol. 1: The Apostolic Fathers, trans. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M-F. Marique, and Gerald G. Walsh, p. 250 (Third Vision, sec. 9). "Father of the Church" is a technical title, the group of Fathers comprising "those ecclesiastical writers of Christian antiquity who are distinguished for orthodoxy of doctrine and holiness of life and have therefore been approved by the Church as witnesses to its faith." Hermas is classed as an Apostolic Father, that is, one who "had personal contact with the Apostles or were instructed by their disciples" (New Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v. "Fathers of the Church," by W. J. Burghardt).

<sup>14</sup>Clement of Alexandria, "The Instructor" (Paedagogus), in Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1871), vol. 4: Clement of Alexandria, 2 vols., trans. William Wilson, 1:267 (Book 2, Chap. 13 of "The Instructor").

<sup>15</sup>Matt. 19:24.

world and a conquest of the barriers between rich and poor through the fellowship of agape [that is, love].<sup>16</sup>

It is this doctrine that the earth's resources are for the common use of mankind that forms the basis of the Church's position on property. The Second Vatican Council commented on the right of all to a share in the earth's goods in referring to forms of ownership: ". . . attention must always be paid to the universal purpose for which created goods are meant." The Council elaborated on this view with a repetition of some general moral principles. One of these principles is that men have the obligation of helping others materially. The Council explained, by quoting Pope John XXIII, that this obligation is not limited to giving what is merely superfluous to the giver's needs. The obligation to give is measured by "the needs of others." The Council further reminded the "whole of humanity": "In extreme necessity all goods are common, that is, all goods are to be shared." This obligation of sharing is also extended to governments: "According to their ability, let us all individuals and governments undertake a genuine sharing of their goods."<sup>17</sup>

The argument of the Church up to this point is summarized as follows. Man is God's preeminent creature, a creature whose ultimate destiny is some special share in God's happiness. The admittance of man to this happiness depends upon the manner of his human existence. This human existence requires that individuals have access to the

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<sup>16</sup>Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 84.

<sup>17</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 69.



earth's resources. These resources are the only means which man has to provide for himself those material goods which he needs. Only by a reasonable use of these resources can man develop his human potential and live a life in keeping with his dignity and his destiny. The conclusion which is drawn from all this, and which has been made explicit above, is that the earth's resources must serve the needs of all. This is the first major tenet, and the predominant one, of Catholic doctrine on property.

It is at this point, logically, of course, not historically, that the question arises as to what type of control of material goods will best allow these goods to serve the needs of all.<sup>18</sup> The answer which the Catholic Church gives is that the system of private property is the system which will best allow "created goods" to fulfill their function of satisfying the needs of man. This private property refers to the ownership of all types of goods, "not only things which perish in the using, but also those which, though used, remain for use in the future."<sup>19</sup> Private ownership of goods, even capital goods, becomes the second major tenet of Catholic doctrine.

The Church arrived at this conclusion primarily by examining the nature of man. This human nature, the Church insists, is such that it

<sup>18</sup>The common use of material goods has been called the basic principle of the Church's property doctrine. In the 1920's there was a controversy in the Church over the primary position of this principle. The controversy revolved around the question whether private property's function was to promote the common good or whether this function also included the good of the individual owner. See Miller, Forty Years After, pp. 76-79 (sec. 45, nos. 1-12).

<sup>19</sup>Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 5. See also Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 108. In this latter passage John XXIII reaffirmed "the principle whereby it is established that men have from nature a right of privately owning goods, including those of a productive kind."

can only develop itself properly and fully and function adequately in a social setting. Furthermore, man's nature demands that property must be owned privately, that is, by individuals and groups of individuals. The Church maintains that man has a natural law right to private property. This means that man's nature has established a law justifying private property as an institution and that this natural law would be transgressed by the abolition of private property.

The functional nature of private property is immediately evident in such a view. The Catholic interpretation of natural law places this functionalism, however, in the very explanation of natural law. In other words, if man is made so that he should perform in a certain manner, then the mode of his proper functioning is part of the process constituting the law. Obviously the nature of man and the natural law are two essential concepts which must be investigated in their Catholic explanation. This explanation will be given in Chapter 9. The following section elaborates the Catholic view on the economic system in general by studying the criteria which the Church uses to evaluate any social system.

#### Criteria of Economic and Social Activity

This section presents those principles which the Church uses as norms for judging the social order. The principles are general in nature and govern all aspects of social organization such as the juridical and economic orders, social institutions, and even customs. The discussion in this section and the following will apply them principally to the economic system.

## The Nature of Man as Norm

Pope Pius XII wrote that "The origin and the primary scope of social life is the conservation, development and perfection of the human person, . . . "<sup>20</sup> This search for human perfection is guided by three basic norms according to which all social institutions and activity must be judged. If the perfection and development of man is fundamental, then the fundamental norm is that the social order must be in accord with the nature of man and further his existential ends. In slightly more technical language the social order must not violate the natural law. In more positive language this order must enhance and promote the natural law. Concerning the economic order itself, Archbishop Guerry has partially explained this criterion as one which promotes "a human economy":

According to Pope Pius XII, the most important social problem is that of the organization of a social economy which would be directed towards satisfying man's needs; an economy which would respect man's nature and dignity and provide the material conditions in which he can live as a man should.<sup>21</sup>

This principle--that society must be organized to promote the natural law--represents a search for some permanent or quasi-permanent criterion according to which social organization can be judged. Such permanency requires in man and the world of nature some ontological basis which does not change with every change of circumstances. Marx

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<sup>20</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Radio Address of December 24, 1942," in Yzermans, The Unwearying Advocate, 1:30. For similar statements see Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 218-219, and the Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 63.

<sup>21</sup>Emile Guerry (Archbishop of Cambrai), The Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, trans. Miriam Hederman (New York: Alba House, 1961), p. 113.

himself found such a permanent basis in his view of man, which saw, even in a changing human nature, a social and species man where equality of individuals was a primary goal.<sup>22</sup>

The Church's own humanism is based, both in the natural and the supernatural orders, upon an examination of the nature of man. The Church has always held to this natural law philosophy because "in this 'nature,' individuals and peoples all have a common denominator, a 'common good of man,' which is neither a simple label nor a mere compromise but a basic and existential reality."<sup>23</sup> The natural law will not be investigated further here because it is treated at some length in the following chapter. This present brief exposition should not be allowed to obscure the primary importance of the natural law principle for the Church.

#### Principle of the Common Good

The concept of the common good was introduced in Chapter 2. It was defined there as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment."<sup>24</sup> John XXIII had defined the concept in similar terms, holding that it "embraces the sum total of those conditions of social living whereby men are enabled more

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<sup>22</sup>For a slightly different treatment of this entire subject see Johannes Messner, Social Ethics, rev. ed., trans. J. J. Doherty (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1965), pp. 151-205.

<sup>23</sup>Cardinal Maurice Roy, "Reflections by Cardinal Maurice Roy on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Encyclical 'Pacem in Terris' of Pope John XXIII (April 11, 1973)," in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, no. 129.

<sup>24</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 26.

fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection."<sup>25</sup> Thus the common good is not the sum of individual goods of all members of society and is certainly not measurable by the amount of goods and services available for consumption by the totality of society. Such an abundance is important, however, for the economic basis of the common good of a people rests "in the fact that such an abundance represents and offers really and effectively the material basis sufficient for the proper personal development of its members."<sup>26</sup>

The "sum total of those conditions of social living" include two categories. First of all, they include all of the institutions and the very mode of organization of society. As a specific case these institutions and organizations include such things as private property, an economic system of highly productive factories and fields, a legal system, educational facilities, police and fire protection, an adequate system of government, and forces for national defense. Such institutions are essential means for attaining the other category of the common good. This other category consists of those immaterial goods and values which accrue to individuals as members of a society:

. . . law and order in society, the guaranteed freedom of its members, the opportunity for all to pursue their essential tasks in life on their own responsibility and by their own efforts, a sound state of health in society as a whole, the insuring of the foundations of economic life for the immediate future and for the coming generations.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 65.

<sup>26</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Radio Message of June 1, 1941," in Yzermans, The Unwearied Advocate, 1:215.

<sup>27</sup>Messner, Social Ethics, p. 128.

It is these immaterial "goods" and values which ultimately constitute the common good. They enable individuals, by the exercise of their own will and responsible actions, to strive for the perfection of their human personalities. The common good "is the very working together and production of a common source of strength and support by the whole for each part . . ."28

A hypothetical example can serve to illustrate the importance of these immaterial goods and values. Suppose a market system which provided material goods in abundance to all members of society, but at the same time promoted values contrary to the good of society. Such values would be, in the Church's eyes, greed for gain, the placing of material possessions as the ultimate goal in life, and a lack of concern for the welfare of others except insofar as this welfare brought personal enrichment. The institution of the market would in this case function perfectly, but, according to the Church, the common good would not be served. The vitiating of the common good is seen in the instilling of values in individuals which destroy their human dignity and block their personal development.

The principle of the common good maintains that the end of a social activity must be the striving for, promotion of, and maintenance of the common good. Social cooperation must promote those conditions which allow and promote individuals freely to achieve their destiny. For the Church this destiny is ultimately the "possession" of God in

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<sup>28</sup>John G. Vrana, "The Concept of the Common Good in the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church" (S. T. D. "thesis," Catholic University of Louvain, 1974), p. 187.

an eternal happiness. Immediately this destiny is man's development as a free and rational "child" of God, brother to his fellowmen.

Pope Leo XII called the common good "the supreme end which gives human society its origin." The common good is, he continued, "after God the first and last law in human society."<sup>29</sup> Pope Pius XI insisted that all of a country's public institutions should promote "the common good, that is, the norm of social justice."<sup>30</sup> Pope Pius XII spoke of the "most noble function"<sup>31</sup> of the state of directing all of man's activities to the common good. Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, as well as the Second Vatican Council, have maintained the primacy of the common good as an ultimate criterion of the propriety of social activity.<sup>32</sup>

#### Principle of Subsidiarity

##### Explanation of the principle

There is another principle, closely connected with that of the common good, which the Church utilizes in judging man's activities in the social sphere. This is the principle of subsidiarity. This principle was best formulated by Pius XI. In Quadragesimo Anno he called subsidiarity an immutable principle of social philosophy and described it thus:

<sup>29</sup>Pope Leo XIII, "Au Milieu des Sollicitudes (Encyclical Letter to the Clergy and Catholics of France)," Acta Sanctae Sedis, 24 (1891-1892): 525, 536. Translation is from the French and Latin versions of this document by the author.

<sup>30</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 110.

<sup>31</sup>Pope Pius XII, Summi Pontificatus (Pontifical Letter at the Beginning of World War II), trans. the author, Acta Apostolicae Sedis, ser. 2, 6 (1939), p. 433.

<sup>32</sup>See Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 65; Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, nos. 23, 24; Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 26.

. . . it is a fundamental principle of social philosophy . . . that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry. So, too, it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies. Inasmuch as every social activity should, by its very nature, prove a help to members of the body social, it should never destroy or absorb them.<sup>33</sup>

Private initiative is to be preferred, whenever possible, to the activity of the community. The activities of large organizations should be initiated and carried out by the smallest subordinate bodies in that organization that can adequately perform these activities. The most obvious advantage of this principle is that it provides freedom for an individual and allows individual development by one's own responsible activity.

The Church sees the human development of the individual coming from free, responsible activity. Salvation is a gift of God in the Church's eyes, but this salvation must be freely accepted by man. Man accepts his salvation by his belief in God and in Jesus Christ and then works out that salvation by acting according to these beliefs. Human development in all forms of social, cultural, and intellectual activities is part of man's salvation. If these activities are not free and self-directed, then they do not foster man's salvation; they do not allow him to merit. The activities of man in the social, economic, and political spheres have religious significance.

The principle of subsidiarity has been constantly reaffirmed in Church documents. Pope John XXIII noted further effects of a disregard

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<sup>33</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 79.



for this principle. Subsidiarity promotes private initiative. Where this private initiative is lacking, the Pontiff claimed, "political tyranny prevails." In the economic sphere a lack of initiative is responsible for stagnation "in various sectors of the economy" and leaves consumers without necessary goods and services. While insisting upon this principle, Pope John recognized the need in modern society for widespread involvement of the community and public authorities in economic matters. This intervention should have as its goal not only the correction of economic imbalances in the system but also the aim of granting greater freedom to individuals.<sup>34</sup>

The relationship of this principle of subsidiarity to the principle of the common good should be noted. The common good is that complex of conditions which allow all members of society to develop themselves by their free and responsible activity. If social activity is to be free and responsible, it must be the activity of individuals, either alone or in groups. If an important area of individual responsibility is superseded by the community, then the individual has lost an important right--an opportunity for his own personal development. A similar loss occurs when the activity proper to smaller groups is preempted by larger groups.

#### Specific criteria for the principle of subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity can be made more practical by the formulation of specific norms for judging social organizations. Three

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<sup>34</sup>See Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, nos. 51-58. The phrases quoted in the paragraph are from this passage.

such criteria will be given.<sup>35</sup> First, the propriety of a social system can be judged by the extent to which it furthers the common good while still allowing individuals the greatest freedom in pursuing their own interests. The phrasing of this criterion, while helpful for clarity, is almost redundant. The common good is not achieved unless individuals can freely and responsibly strive for their own interests. At the same time it is this freedom and responsibility of all citizens which constitute the common good. A simple, practical example which would employ this principle is the personal income tax. If a nation imposes such a tax and relies on it for an important part of its revenues, the effect of this tax on the citizens would obviously require investigation. If a large number of people were to be impoverished by the tax or their initiative for achievement seriously curtailed, this would threaten the common good. The structure of the tax would have to be of such a nature that, given the necessity of the tax, it allows individuals opportunity for economic well-being and freedom.

To pursue one's own interests means both personal fulfillment and social responsibility. The Catholic view of man's social nature has not yet been stressed. A brief summary of this view was enunciated by the Second Vatican Council, which wrote: "For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential."<sup>36</sup> Thus to pursue one's own interests means also to acquire a sense of responsibility toward and

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<sup>35</sup>The formulation of these criteria is adapted from Messner, Social Ethics, pp. 216-217.

<sup>36</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 12.

charity for one's neighbor. In Catholic theological terms man's goal in life can be said to be his own salvation. This salvation is theocentric; it is centered around that "loving community with the living God" mentioned earlier. This community by its very nature extends itself to a concern for one's fellowman. "This means that concern for one's salvation may not be centered in self-perfection,"<sup>37</sup> but must be oriented to the glory of God and the help of one's neighbor.

The second criterion for judging a social system is the degree to which subordinate bodies control those activities which they can perform satisfactorily. Social organization is imperfect or faulty if it hinders these subordinate groups in their performance of such activities and is certainly wrong if it prevents such control altogether. Thus this criterion is a form of decentralization and its purpose is to allow these groups as much freedom and responsibility as is consonant with satisfactory performance of their pertinent tasks. Apropos of this criterion is the above mentioned comment of John XXIII that, when public authority does intervene, it should do so in a way which will further the responsibility of smaller groups and not supersede this responsibility. In the face of increasing social relationships in society the Pope urged that there be maintained "the freedom of individual citizens and groups of citizens to act autonomously, while cooperating one with the other; . . ."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup>Haring, The Law of Christ, 1:40. For a representative teaching of Catholic ascetical theology on holiness see Adolphe Tanqueray, The Spiritual Life, 2d ed., trans. Herman Branderis (Westminster, Md.: Newman Bookshop, 1948), esp. pp. 156-163.

<sup>38</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 66.

The third criterion for judging social organization under subsidiarity is closely allied to the other two. It holds that the number of legal prescriptions and the degree to which these prescriptions interfere in the lives of citizens *must be kept to a minimum*. In order to reach the ideal of freedom for the individual "the fewer the legal precepts with which a community can succeed in attaining public order and the common utility, the closer it comes to this ideal."<sup>39</sup> This criterion may seem simple, but there is an inclination in society today to seek redress of many social ills by recourse to various forms of government activity and regulation. The Church holds that excessive control, even in legitimate areas, may prove to be an excessive burden to society.

The following section mentions several specific criticisms by the Church of the economic systems known as socialism and capitalism. The purpose of this section is to indicate how the Church applies the above criteria to the institution of private property.

### Church Opinion of Socialism and Capitalism

#### View of Socialism

Leo XIII was unequivocal in his rejection of socialism. His arguments will be looked at here because they formed the first systematic rejection of socialism by the Church and because they were reaffirmed by later pontiffs. Leo wrote of socialism: "Thus it is clear that the main tenet of Socialism, the community of goods, must be utterly

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<sup>39</sup>Messner, Social Ethics, pp. 216-217.

rejected; for it would injure those whom it is intended to benefit, it would be contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and it would introduce confusion, and disorder into the commonwealth." A substantial portion of Quadragesimo Anno offered a defense of private property. It was the proposal of the socialists to abolish private property which was the major point attacked by Leo. The evils in the quote just given would follow from this abolition. Leo saw the "first and most fundamental principle" to be "the inviolability of private property."<sup>40</sup>

The arguments of Leo XIII against socialism can be grouped under three headings. Leo held that the transfer of goods from private to community hands violated the rights of the individual, perverted the function of the state, and brought dissension and lack of motivation to the economic sphere. The abolition of private property means the abolition of the worker's freedom to acquire and dispose of the fruits of his labor. Leo XIII did not hold the wage system itself to be unjust but maintained that the worker has a right to his wage. A man's labor is the only means he has of obtaining a livelihood, thus the worker has "a full and real right" to demand this wage. Not only may the worker demand this wage, he may also dispose of it as he sees fit since this is the logical consequence of his right to the wage. The right to dispose of this wage means the right to private property, which is his wage "in another form."<sup>41</sup> Thus the abolition of private property would mean the destruction of an individual's freedom to acquire and dispose of a return for his labor and with this any hope of bettering his life in a material way.

<sup>40</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 12.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., no. 4.

In an extenuation of this argument, however, Leo cited the major reason for the institution of private property to be the fact that "every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own." This is the argument from natural law. This argument is founded upon the fact that man has a rational nature. He has the ability and the duty to plan for his own future. Man "governs himself by the foresight of his counsel, . . ." <sup>42</sup> It is man's intellect which places him at the pinnacle of God's creatures. A man's development depends greatly upon the development of this decision making faculty--the intellect. <sup>43</sup> The support which man needs as a human being, it was noted earlier, comes only from the earth. Man must be able to control the earth's resources, even in their primary state, in order to provide continued support for himself and his family. Man's ability and need to maintain and develop himself in a human way demands the institution of private property.

Pope Leo also maintained that the individual and the family had a right to own property which preceded, both historically and logically, the right of the state. The argument can be put this way: If the state has a right to control property, then a priori the individual and the family have the right to such control. Leo centered his arguments around the nature of the family. The family is, like the state, a society. But because the family "is anterior both in idea and in fact

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., no. 6.

<sup>43</sup>Intellect is used here synonymously with mind or reason. The decision-making faculty or power of man is often technically called the intellect. Reasoning is the process of arriving at more elaborate truths from basic intuitions and other truths. Hence the intellect is often referred to as the reason.

to the gathering of men into a commonwealth, the former must necessarily have rights and duties which are prior to those of the latter, and which rest more immediately on nature."<sup>44</sup>

The state "is not a man or a body of men; it is a set of institutions . . ." <sup>45</sup> The purpose of these institutions is to provide for the common good. That common good consists in providing for the free and responsible activity of the citizens of the state. Absolute state ownership of property usurps rights which belong to those citizens in the Church's view. That is why Leo said that common ownership brings "the State into a sphere that is not its own, . . ." <sup>46</sup>

Finally, Leo maintained that state ownership would fail to provide society with the goods and services it needs. It would do this by its failure to provide sufficient incentives for man to employ his skills and talents. Leo held that the motive of a material reward is a powerful force acting in society. In fact, without it, Leo held, "the

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<sup>44</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 10.

<sup>45</sup>Jacques Maritain, Man and the State (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1951), p. 12.

<sup>46</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 3. A similar argument would hold if property were owned by the community as a whole and not the state as a political organization. Community can be considered as a group of people having some natural bonds such as the inhabitation of a common territory. This in no way gives that community a right to ownership superseding the individual or family right. Community may be considered as synonymous with society, in which case it is a work of reason. "But in a society the object is a task to be done or an end to be aimed at, which depends on the determinations of human intelligence and will . . ." (Maritain, Man and the State, p. 3). The coercive force of society is law. There can be no just law which abrogates the fundamental right of individuals and allows the law-making body to assume that right.

sources of wealth would themselves run dry."<sup>47</sup> Instead of providing for a sharing of wealth, socialism would mean only a sharing of poverty. From the fact that all would share in the products produced by labor without regard to individual effort, envy and disorder would result in society.

### Capitalism

The right of private property has been reaffirmed in many papal documents. Pope John XXIII made such a reaffirmation and held the right to be "permanently valid." He wrote of this right: "Indeed, it is rooted in the very nature of things, whereby we learn that individual men are prior to civil society, and hence, that civil society is to be directed toward men as its end."<sup>48</sup>

The Catholic Church's insistence upon private property is not a justification of the capitalistic system as this system exists in many countries. The Church's stress on the common purpose of material goods noted in the previous section should be sufficient evidence of that position. Pope Paul VI wrote: "But it is unfortunate that . . . a system has been constructed which considers profit as the key motive for economic progress, competition as the supreme law of economics, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right that has no limits and carries no corresponding social obligations."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., no. 12. Many critics hold that history has proved this argument wrong.

<sup>48</sup> Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 109.

<sup>49</sup> Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 26.



The Church has an explicit twofold criticism of existing private property consequences. This criticism is closely allied to that of Marx. First of all material prosperity is concentrated in the hands of a few. This concentration is both that of a few nations in comparison to the world of nations and of a few individuals or a class in relation to a whole country. Almost all social documents of the Church argue that the poorer classes and the poorer countries must be able to share in the riches that a just economic order can provide. The Catholic bishops maintained that "it is impossible to conceive true progress without recognizing the necessity . . . of a development composed both of economic growth and participation; and the necessity too of an increase in wealth implying as well social progress by the entire community as it overcomes regional imbalance and islands of prosperity."<sup>50</sup>

The Church sees private property to be necessary as a social institution. But the dignity of the human person demands some modest degree of material prosperity. Consequently the Church wishes the actual ownership of goods to be distributed as widely as possible. The Church holds that an equitable distribution of goods will necessarily involve a certain inequality in this distribution. Many people will own few possessions and many will own no reproductive goods whatsoever. The ideal society will be one which will allow that ownership of all types of goods which will provide for the development of all citizens. Pius XI wrote: "Wealth therefore, which is constantly being augmented by social and economic progress, must be so distributed amongst the

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<sup>50</sup>Synod of Bishops, Second General Assembly (November 30, 1971), Justice in the World, in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, no. 18.

various individuals and classes of society that the common good of all, of which Leo XIII spoke, be thereby promoted."<sup>51</sup> The attainment of the common good does not demand equality of ownership, in the Church's eyes.

The second area of criticism of modern capitalistic society is that it tends to make the possession of material goods the absolute end of the economic and social order. Pope Paul VI cautioned against such an attitude: "For these [wealthy] nations all too often set an example of success in a highly technical and culturally developed civilization; they also provide the model for a way of acting that is principally aimed at the conquest of material prosperity." The Pontiff recognized the need for material development for man, but he also held that such development "imprisons man if he considers it the supreme good, and it restricts his vision."<sup>52</sup>

In summary the Church sees the economic order as a set of institutions which enable men to provide the material goods for themselves which they need. The economic order also presents individuals an opportunity for development in line with their God-given dignity and destiny. In judging the propriety of an economic order the Church looks to several criteria. Basic to all criteria is that there is a social nature to material goods; they are to be used for the benefit of all society. An economic order must secure this universal destiny of goods.

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<sup>51</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 57.

<sup>52</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, nos. 41, 19.

The social and economic orders must also serve three fundamental criteria: promotion of the natural law and adherence to the principle of the common good and to the principle of subsidiarity. These latter two principles ensure a minimum of interference from the state as well as a social structure which will give to individuals the power to make decisions and the opportunity to carry out those decisions. Since the natural law argument plays such an important part in the Church's position, a better understanding of natural law and of the nature of man is needed in order to clarify the Catholic position. The following chapter will comment on these points.

## CHAPTER IX

### MAN'S NATURAL LAW RIGHT TO PRIVATE PROPERTY

The previous chapter has indicated that the Catholic Church's support of private property is radically dependent upon its view of man. It is the purpose of the present chapter to explain the Catholic view of human nature and to show why property is a necessary postulate resulting from that nature. The Chapter has three major sections. The first section exposes the Church's view of man. The second section explains the role which property plays in human development. The third section of the chapter gives the Catholic natural law doctrine and its application to private property.

#### The Nature of Man

There is no single Church document which gives a comprehensive treatment of human nature. This section attempts no such comprehensive work but presents those Catholic teachings about man which are pertinent to the present study. These tenets have a theological orientation, but, as in the case of the Marxian description of man, they are also philosophical and psychological. In the realm of these latter two sciences, and even in theology proper, there are often different schools of thought within the Church. The explanations given here are those which seem best adapted for explaining the Church's view on property as put forth in its official documents.

## Man's Relationship to God

Fundamental to the Catholic position is that man is a creature of God and depends completely upon God for his life and being. This observation might seem trivial because it is so evident. But in Catholic thought, as indeed in all Christian theology, man's importance stems from his relationship to God. A contemporary theologian has written: "When we have said everything about ourselves that can be described and defined, we have still said nothing about ourselves, unless we have included or implied the fact that we are beings who are referred to the incomprehensible God."<sup>1</sup> Man is a creature of God in the technical sense that he was made out of nothing. Obviously this is creation in an ultimate sense and does not denigrate in any way the role of parents. In the Catholic view, however, man is a being composed of body and soul, as shall be noted later. The soul, the spiritual principle of man, is held to be immediately created by God, so that God cooperates most directly in producing a new human being.

The Catholic view sees God not only as the ultimate creator of the universe and the immediate creator of the soul, but this view also postulates the continual activity of God in keeping the world in existence. This view says that "God's conserving activity is a constant causal intervention through which He preserves things in existence."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, vol. 4: More Recent Writings, trans. Kevin Smyth (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, ed. James Canon Bastible, trans. Patrick Lynch (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1957), p. 87.

But man is not only God's creature, he also has been created in the image and likeness of God. As has been seen, this view has its written foundation in the book of Genesis and has been a constant teaching of Judeo-Christian theology. It was earlier pointed out that this likeness to God consists in the fact that man has dominion over all other creatures in the world. Catholic teaching also holds that man is like to God in that man has a spiritual soul and can posit actions of knowing and willing analogous to the actions of God. It is this fact, that man has a spiritual principle of being, which raises him above all other creatures. This is the metaphysical foundation of man's specific difference which separates him from every other being in the universe.

The preeminence of man does not stop with these natural attributes. Man can, by a special help from God called grace, reach a new perfection of being which makes him even more like to God. This gift of God, which the Church sees as essentially a new union with God, allows man to place supernatural acts, acts beyond man's natural powers. Examples of these supernatural acts are acts of faith and love which enable man to share in the knowledge and love proper to God himself.

The ultimate destiny of man is his eternal happiness in heaven after his life upon this earth. This eternal happiness consists essentially in the vision of God himself. In this heavenly happiness there will be an absence of suffering and death. It must not be thought, however, that human life thus becomes unimportant in Catholic thought or that this life is just a marking of time until a new life arrives. It is by man's actions in this earthly life that man prepares himself

to enter into this new life. By his free decisions in this life man works out his salvation. A recent catechism restated the traditional teaching of the Church: "Each individual is at the moment of his death all that he has made himself by his free acceptance or free rejection of the divine call and gifts."<sup>3</sup>

Even if it were possible, man morally may not remain indifferent to his own eternal happiness nor to the means he may use to achieve that happiness. Man has an obligation to develop himself in love and freedom as he works toward that ultimate goal of the vision of God. Thus the Church sees the possibility of man's happiness as a reality and it defines that happiness, in its fullest extent, as attainable only in a life after this earthly life. The Church teaches its members that they have an obligation to reach for that happiness:

This salvation is offered and assigned to all men, insofar as they do not culpably close their hearts to the offer. Hence the constitutives of all human existence include both the obligation to the supernatural goal of direct union with the absolute God at the consummation, and the real subjective possibility of attaining this goal by accepting the self-communication of God in grace and glory. . . . Thus offer and possibility of salvation are coextensive with the history of human freedom.<sup>4</sup>

#### Existential Man

This subsection may seem like an esoteric excursion into philosophy and Catholic theology, but the matter covered here has an effect upon

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<sup>3</sup>Ronald Lawler, Donald W. Wuerl, and Thomas Comerford Lawler, eds., The Teaching of Christ (Huntington, In.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1976), p. 526.

<sup>4</sup>Sacramentum Mundi, An Encyclopedia of Theology, 1970 ed., s.v. "Salvation; III. History of Salvation, 2. Theological Explanation," by Adolf Darlap.

Catholic property doctrine. Catholic theology and Catholic philosophy, if the latter term has any meaning, hold that man is a composite being, as just described. This means that there are two principles of being which constitute a man, a material principle that is called the body and a spiritual principle that is called the soul. These principles of being are customarily explained in scholastic philosophy as matter and form. The soul, being a spiritual principle, is held to be immortal. Every man must face death, which is a separation of body from soul. The body decays, but "the soul continues to exist as a spiritual reality after a person's death; . . ." <sup>5</sup> After a certain point of time the soul will again be reunited with a resurrected body, according to Catholic teaching.

Those actions of man which make him most God-like, his knowing and willing, are said to flow from man's soul-principle of life. While Catholic theology teaches a spiritual principle of being, that is, a soul, "Catholic" philosophy argues rationally for such a principle. One argument is that much of man's intellectual knowledge is the knowledge not of individual objects, but of universal ideas. A man can understand what it meant by a true statement or a just act. Truth, for example, is held to be the conformity of a proposition to some objective reality. To recognize a particular true statement means that one has implicitly understood what truth is universally. The concept of truth abstracts from individual circumstances. The faculty which posits such an "immaterial" act, that is, the act of knowing a universal or immaterial idea, is held to be an immaterial or spiritual faculty.

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<sup>5</sup>Lawler, Wuerl, and Lawler, The Teaching of Christ, p. 70.



Man's reason is seen by Catholic thought as a governing power. It is the essential power of man; it distinguishes him from brute animals. A philosophical explanation of the will sees this faculty as following and depending upon the intellect. In other words the will is the primary appetite of man, but is still only an appetite which is man's because man has an intellect. "The will is a rational appetite,"<sup>6</sup> wrote St. Thomas Aquinas. Thus every rational creature, according to Thomas, must have a will which is the appetitive aspect of that reasoning faculty. Man makes a judgment by his intellect. If the intellect judges something as good for the individual, such as the gaining of knowledge, then the will chooses that good. If there is more than one good, then the will makes a choice, which is a free choice, between or among alternative goods.

Although man's intellect and will constitute him like to God, Catholic theology sees these faculties to be deficient in many ways. They have been vitiated by original sin, a doctrine which Marx, not surprisingly, acidly derides.<sup>7</sup> Original sin can be defined in Catholic thought as "The hereditary sin incurred at conception by every human being as a result of the original sinful choice of the first man, Adam."<sup>8</sup> The theological explanation of original sin is still being debated in Catholic thought today. The traditional Catholic understanding of the doctrine is frequently, but not necessarily, a

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<sup>6</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 3 vols. (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), I-II, q. 8, art. 1.

<sup>7</sup>See Marx, *Capital*, 1:713-714.

<sup>8</sup>*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v., "Original Sin, In the Bible," by I. Hunt.

monogenistic one and involves a rejection of God's will by the head of the human race and the effects upon man of this rejection. These effects are held to be passed on to all men. The following existential description of man emphasizes these effects:

Work can be hard, monotonous and depressing. The body of man, the radiance of the whole personality, can be de-graded so that lust replaces joy. There is fatigue and sickness. . . .

Even consciousness and freedom, man's crown that places him above the animals, are weak and obscured and limited. What do we really know? How free are we really under our impulses? And sadder still, we can knowingly and willingly do what our true knowledge and real will forbid.<sup>9</sup>

This doctrine is a theological explanation for the misery, suffering, and death of man. The doctrine is used to explain the passions and evil impulses which afflict man; it tries to account for the fact that man can be full of hate as well as of good will and that his wisdom is often mixed with confusion and ignorance. As a consequence of original sin St. Thomas noted: ". . . the reason is deprived of its order to the true, . . . the will is deprived of its order to the good, . . . the irascible is deprived of its order to the delectable, . . ." <sup>10</sup> The Catholic view of human nature, which differs somewhat from most Protestant explanations, sees man as weakened in his efforts at developing himself in keeping with the dignity which the Church

<sup>9</sup>Higher Cathetical Institute at Nijmegen, A New Catechism, p. 7. For a brief yet accurate summary of the Church's theological explanation of original sin see Karl Rahner and Herbert Vogrimer, Theological Dictionary, ed. Cornelius Ernst, trans. Richard Strachan (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), s.v. "Original Sin." A more comprehensive but still brief treatment may be found in Sacramentum Mundi, s.v. "Original Sin," by Karl Rahner. The New Catholic Encyclopedia, under the same heading, also has an excellent short treatment of the subject by C. J. Pater.

<sup>10</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 95, art. 3.

feels to be his. It is important to note that this weakness is a permanent condition of man's nature.

#### Man and Man

Man, as a creature of God and as dependent upon Him, has certain obligations to this supreme being. These obligations are sometimes divided into two categories. The first category considers those acts which are directly related to God, the second considers man in his relationships with his fellowmen. The Church interprets obligations in the former category, such as reverence and worship of God, both in liturgical services and in private devotions. The second category comprises all of those actions which could possibly bring harm to another or by which one helps or fails to help another live a life of dignity and virtue. As would be expected the Church emphasizes man's social nature in its interpretation of moral obligations. These obligations center around protecting and fostering the reputation, property, and personal integrity of others, and giving to others the material and spiritual help which they need in daily living.

On a different theoretical level the social obligations of man rest upon that dignity which is part of every individual. This dignity comes not from a man's achievements nor his personal talents, but from his existence as a man. "A man is more precious for what he is than for what he has."<sup>11</sup> The primary reason for this dignity is that man has been made in the likeness of God. An explanation of that likeness has already been given. But a man's knowing and willing are not the

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<sup>11</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 35.

limits of that likeness. The Catholic position, as noted earlier, sees God as going further than that and giving man a greater dignity by allowing him to share in God's own nature. The Catholic explanation of this statement is certainly not pantheistic nor a deification of man in any strict sense. Man shares God's nature through grace. The concept of grace is an involved one, but it can be understood "that God's grace primarily and basically means that the living God, giving himself in Christ through the power of his spirit, is present in the world, in its history, and therefore in us, both in our body and in our spiritual core, both in our own heart and in the community."<sup>12</sup>

Catholic teaching holds that God communicates himself to man in such a special way that the person becomes like to God and shares God's nature. The process is sometimes likened to adoption, with the analogy being deficient in that adopting human parents take as their own, children who are humans. God, however, by communicating his grace is said to communicate a higher, supernatural life to creatures which did not before possess this nature. The following quote will help to show how the Church sees this process affecting man's dignity:

Furthermore, man is a son of God. That is, if we may bring theology into this examination of the analogy of the individuality, God his creator values him so highly as a unique individual, that he has given him the power to enter the community of the most perfect individuality, by grace he can become the beloved child of the Father together with his only-begotten Son, and with the Son call the Father his Father; and with the Holy Ghost he can lovingly embrace

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<sup>12</sup>Piet Fransen, "The Anthropological Dimensions of Grace," Theology Digest 23 (Autumn 1975): 217. This article is a revision of a paper presented under the sponsorship of the Catholic Theological Society of America at the International Congress of Learned Societies at Los Angeles, September, 1972.

both Father and Son, and thus receive an individuality in grace and glory which is a supernatural sharing in the individuality of the Trinity.<sup>13</sup>

Another reason giving man a special dignity is the destiny of man. This has already been mentioned as the beatific vision, the face-to-face vision which is a sharing in God's happiness. This happiness of man is an eternal and irrevocable position; it admits of no diminution and allows no cessation. "For God has called man and still calls him so that with his entire being he might be joined to Him in an endless sharing of a divine life beyond all corruption."<sup>14</sup>

If this section seems to treat man's relationship to God rather than to other men, it is because, for the Church, a man's responsibility to his fellowmen rests ultimately upon the dignity and destiny which every individual receives from God.<sup>15</sup> The social nature of man, in the Catholic view, does not consist solely in the fact that all men are the same biological species. Nor does it rest on that higher level where men in knowledge and love can reach a perfection of being which is the essence of humanism. The Catholic view sees all men as possessing or as capable of possessing a nature which is beyond the power of their own nature to achieve, a supernatural and not just a preternatural mode of existence.

Furthermore, man is a social being in that his actions help or hinder other men in their striving for their own development and consequently in their striving for that happiness which the Church calls

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<sup>13</sup>Karl Rahner, Nature and Grace (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 18.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 12.

beatitude or salvation. Man is social because he cannot do without other men.<sup>16</sup> Just as an infant cannot survive without the help of others, so the human and spiritual development of men depend upon the actions of others. This dependence, at least in the spiritual realm, is not a metaphysical one in the sense that it could not be done without others. But, in what Catholic theology likes to call the providence of God, God has established in nature such an order that a man's physical and mental and spiritual development depend upon other men.

It is possible to go one step further and discern that a man's own development depends upon his response to other men. In other words man is a social being in that his own perfection depends upon his actions toward his neighbor. A man does not develop himself in isolation; he cannot do so. The Second Vatican Council noted that "man . . . cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."<sup>17</sup> A man must realize that, just as he possesses the dignity of a son of God, as the Church puts it, so does every other man. It is possible for an individual to achieve his goal of happiness with God only if he is concerned about every other individual's reaching that goal. A current Catholic treatise on moral theology states:

Discovery of the Thou in love is essential. If we fail to discover and recognize the Thou in love, we shall not discover the essential level of our own person, the I in ourselves which manifests itself essentially only in

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<sup>16</sup>Man's social nature as a psychological reality--the need for companionship and social relationships--is explained by the secular science of psychology. The Church has not developed a comprehensive treatment of this discipline, but relies upon scholars in the field. Obviously the Church accepts those findings which it sees to be most consistent with its own theological (and philosophical) tenets.

<sup>17</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 24.

word and love. . . . If love does not draw its warmth from the Thou, or if the sinister fire of passion and self-seeking envelop and exploit one's fellow man, then the I is not firmly fixed in itself as lived being. It is not the person in lived being, but is rather like an undeveloped situation or a burnt out shell.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the Church sees man's development, while a product of his own will and judgment, to be a function of his cultural milieu and social structures. "Endowed with intelligence and freedom, he [man] is responsible for his fulfillment as he is for his salvation."<sup>19</sup> wrote Pope Paul VI. But human development also depends upon society, as the Second Vatican Council noted: "Man's social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on each other." The Council further declared: "It is a fact bearing on the very person of man that he can come to an authentic and full humanity only through culture, that is, through the cultivation of natural goods and values."<sup>20</sup> As a corollary of the fact that man's perfection is dependent upon social and cultural institutions, it follows that man, who has the obligation to perfect himself, must strive to bring about in society those conditions which will best promote his development. Paul VI noted that "authentic development" was "for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human." Among the less human conditions the Pontiff noted "the lack of material necessities" and "oppressive social structures." The more human conditions include, among others, "the passage from misery

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<sup>18</sup>Haring, The Law of Christ, 2:351.

<sup>19</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 15.

<sup>20</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, nos. 25, 53.

towards the possession of necessities, victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture."<sup>21</sup>

All of the above analysis represents at least a partial view of the Catholic Church on the nature of man and the direction of his development. It is now necessary to make the nature of that development more explicit by explaining the role which private property plays in such development.

#### Private Property and Human Development

This section comments on two important areas. It continues the discussion on the nature of human development. This present part of the discussion rests more on philosophical arguments rather than the theological ones used in the previous section. Secondly, the role which private property plays in human development is more finely traced.

#### Further Notes on Human Development

The fact that a person is ultimately responsible for his own development has already been pointed out. The social aspect of that development has also been emphasized. Development in general can be considered that preparation of the individual in all of his powers which will best lead him to the ultimate goal of life. Development can be considered education in a comprehensive sense, a process which Pope Pius XI defined as consisting "essentially in preparing a man for what

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<sup>21</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, nos. 20, 21.



must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, . . . "22

The Church thinks of this development as "new" or "transcendent" humanism, one involving "all economic, social, cultural, and spiritual aspects." As just noted in the previous section this "authentic development" of man demands for him the basic necessities of life and involves growth in knowledge and the acquisition of culture. This truly human existence also consists in "increased esteem for the dignity of others, . . . cooperation for the common good, the will and desire for peace, . . . the acknowledgement by man of supreme values,"<sup>23</sup> and faith in God. The intellectual nature of man is perfected by knowledge and especially by wisdom, "For Wisdom gently attracts the mind of man to a quest and a love for what is true and good."<sup>24</sup> Wisdom is classed as an intellectual virtue or power by Aristotle and St. Thomas, but, as it is personified by scripture, it guides man to select that course of action which will best lead him to his goal in life.<sup>25</sup>

The essential condition for man's development is freedom, for "Only in freedom can man direct himself toward goodness."<sup>26</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>22</sup>Pope Pius XI, Divini Illius Magistri (Encyclical Letter on the Christian Education of Youth, December 31, 1929), in Seven Great Encyclicals, p. 39 (no paragraph numbers given).

<sup>23</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, nos. 13, 16, 20, 21.

<sup>24</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 15.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, bk. 6; St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 57, art. 2; Wisdom of Solomon, esp. chap. 9. Protestant sects consider the book of Wisdom to be part of the Apocrypha.

<sup>26</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 17.

"human society is realized in freedom,"<sup>27</sup> that is, human society can reach its perfection only by the free actions of individuals. Freedom traditionally in the Church has meant the ability to place an action or to refrain from acting, but in more recent documents (since Pope John XXIII) there has been "a transition from freedom understood as non-domination to freedom understood as a greater degree of being."<sup>28</sup> Human freedom must also be fostered, the Church teaches, because a man's salvation and spiritual development depend upon it. The Church holds that a work or action is meritorious, that is, helpful toward union with God, only if it is "Free from external coercion and internal necessity."<sup>29</sup> Man's spiritual development, on the other hand, is connected with man's freedom from material want and is intimately linked with psychological freedom.

#### Private Property's Role in Human Development

The Church's fundamental thesis on property, that the goods of the earth must be made available to all men, has already been established. The essential role which these goods play in human development has also been emphasized. If material goods must be used by all men, then there must be some social institution which guarantees that men will be able to use these goods. Consequently, Pope Pius XII, following the teaching of his predecessors, maintained that the right to the

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<sup>27</sup>Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris (Encyclical Letter on Peace on Earth, April 11, 1963), in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, no. 35.

<sup>28</sup>Cardinal Maurice Roy, "Reflections on 'Pacem in Terris,'" in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, no. 115.

<sup>29</sup>Ott, Catholic Dogma, p. 265.

use of material goods established a correlative obligation "to grant private ownership of property, if possible, to all."<sup>30</sup> Pius XII called this a fundamental or serious obligation.

The Church has reached this conclusion about the need for private property by looking at the nature of man. There are two fundamental qualities of man which lead to this conclusion: man's freedom and his intellectual capability. How does private property affect man in these fundamental areas?

The Church reasons (1) that freedom of action is a necessary condition for human development, and (2) that human development consists in the wisdom and prudence of rational decisions. The Church maintains that private property contributes in an essential way to both freedom and rational responsibility. These will be commented on in inverse order.

Man's rational nature, which is a faculty of man's spiritual soul, is what sets man apart from all other creatures. Man's greatest ability in the natural order is his intellectual ability. Man governs himself through his intellect or reason. He reaches a degree of perfection of his being in the wisdom of his rational decisions. It is through these decisions that a man provides for himself and his family. This provision entails a modest supply of material goods without which human life cannot be lived in dignity and peace. A certain accumulation of property which can be assured to an individual throughout his lifetime, and if possible can be passed on to his children, is necessary in order

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<sup>30</sup>Pope Pius XIII, "Radio Message of December 24, 1942," in Yzermans, The Unwearing Advocate, 1:35.

to allow him to plan wisely and freely for himself and his family. Moreover, some material prosperity is needed in order to allow man to become proficient in and appreciate and participate in artistic and cultural achievements. In short, man has a need for material goods, and private property allows him to judge how best to supply these goods.

Human development can only take place in freedom. The Second Vatican Council wrote: "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint." This freedom is provided by private property, as the Council noted later in this document: "Private ownership . . . should be regarded as an extension of human freedom."<sup>31</sup> The Church sees freedom of decision and of action as being greatly hampered if the individual is not allowed to own those material and economic possessions which guarantee his well-being and his opportunity for achievement. Furthermore, it would be an act analogous to slavery if a man were not allowed to keep those objects upon which he has poured forth his own human labor. Leo XIII wrote:

Now, when man thus spends the industry of his mind and the strength of his body in procuring the fruits of nature, by that act he makes his own that portion of nature's field which he cultivates--that portion on which he leaves as it were, the impress of his own personality; and it cannot but be just that he should possess that portion as his own, and should have a right to keep it without molestation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 17, 71.

<sup>32</sup>Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, no. 7. The Pontiff is not espousing a Lockean interpretation of natural law, but asserting labor as a title to property. This point is taken up in Chapter 10.

But could not state or community ownership provide man's material needs just as profusely as private property? The Church holds that community ownership would destroy the motivation which leads man to achievement in the economic sphere. Even if it were granted that community ownership could provide men an abundance of the goods they need, such ownership would still be suspect. If civil society arrogates to itself the ownership of property, it is, except in certain legitimate cases, subverting the natural order. Man possesses certain rights, in the Church's view, which are prior to and take precedence over those of the state. Moreover, the principle of subsidiarity, which looks toward human development, asserts that it is destructive of man to allow the community to take over functions and duties which can be performed by lesser groups or individuals themselves. This principle of subsidiarity is a version of St. Thomas's argument that private property furthers individual initiative. But the principle also adds to man that freedom which is a necessary part of human development. Subsidiarity is not limited to property but refers to all social actions. Pope John XXIII reaffirmed this principle and stated that in economic matters primary emphasis must "be given to the private initiative of individual men." The action of civil authorities should be such as to encourage this private initiative. The reservation of property ownership to the state destroys a freedom which belongs to man. John XXIII continued later in the same encyclical:

Moreover, experience and history testify that where political regimes do not allow to private individuals the possession also of productive goods, the exercise of human liberty is violated or completely destroyed in matters of

primary importance. Thus it becomes clear that in the right of property, the exercise of liberty finds both a safeguard and a stimulus.<sup>33</sup>

This last quote opens up another area or reason why the Church demands the institution of property. This area is more directly concerned with the political and social order, but it indirectly involves human development. The argument of the Church, which comes from St. Thomas and Aristotle, is that private property provides order and peace in society. Recent Church documents have enlarged this argument, as just noted by the quote of John XXIII, to see in property a safeguard for human rights and civil liberties. The Church holds that private property "constitutes a kind of prerequisite for civil liberties."<sup>34</sup> It bestows this benefit by giving citizens the motivation and sense of responsibility needed to perform their duties as members of society.

The above arguments may be synthesized into two major areas: private property helps to develop man as an individual and as a member of society. A more adequate expression of the first category is that "Private ownership is the extension of the human person into the material world for the purpose of fulfilling his existential ends." The second area says that "The nature of society and its end demand the institution of private ownership . . ." <sup>35</sup> The effect of private property upon the social structure will be studied further in Chapter 10. The remaining section of this chapter treats the natural law, the very foundation of the Church's position on private property.

<sup>33</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 51, 109.

<sup>34</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71.

<sup>35</sup>Messner, Social Ethics, p. 823.

The Natural Law

The natural right of man to property claimed by Catholic teaching is formally identified as a natural law right. Obviously an understanding of the concept of natural law is essential to a grasp of the Catholic position. This section attempts to supply the necessary commentary on natural law as understood by Catholic philosophers and theologians.

## Background to Natural Law

The origin of the concept of the natural law is traceable, as one might expect, back to Greek philosophers--the Sophists and Plato and Aristotle. Its more complete development is due to the scholastic doctors of the Middle Ages through the sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> The synthesis used here will be developed from the teachings of the scholastics, especially St. Thomas Aquinas. St. Thomas's teaching does not represent the culmination of natural law theory in the Church; work is still being done on the subject today. His doctrine does present an adequate background in this area. Moreover, his teaching on property has influenced Church documents in this matter.

One definition of law states: "That which must be obeyed and followed by citizens, subject to sanctions or legal consequences, is

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<sup>36</sup>Scholastic doctors refer to those teachers and writers, principally of the Middle Ages, who examined all branches of learning by the scientific method of their day. The most important tool of this method was philosophy. A major emphasis of the scholastic movement, and the popular understanding of the term, was an investigation and explanation of Christian faith by precise intellectual and philosophical methods.

a 'law.'<sup>37</sup> St. Thomas similarly defined law as "a rule and measure of acts, whereby man is induced to act or is restrained from acting." Again he stated that law "is nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated."<sup>38</sup> Thomas established law under four different categories: eternal law, natural law, divine law, and human positive law. The first two categories deserve most attention here.<sup>39</sup>

In a section previous to his treatment of law, Thomas had commented that the universe is governed by divine reason. This government by God has the nature of a law and is eternal. Thus eternal law may be defined as "the eternal decrees of God concerning the government of the universe." Thomas's concept of eternal law holds, he said, "granted that the world is ruled by Divine Providence,"<sup>40</sup> a thesis he had treated earlier.

Eternal law demands that there be a God who rules the world by his intelligence. The plan which God has for the world is called a law: ". . . it is an ordinance of reason" for the common good; it is "promulgated by being embedded in the natures of the creatures governed

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<sup>37</sup>Black's Law Dictionary, 1968 ed., s.v. "Law."

<sup>38</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 90, arts. 1, 4.

<sup>39</sup>The divine law refers to God's positive law as contained in scripture and does not concern this study, except insofar as Catholic social philosophy builds upon such law. Human positive laws are rules or ordinances made by men exercising legitimate authority. These rules make specific the general precepts of the natural law or they determine a specific manner in which the natural law must be carried out. In the eyes of the Church positive laws, in order to be valid, cannot be contrary to natural law.

<sup>40</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 91, art. 1.



by it,"<sup>41</sup> and it comes from God as the supreme authority. Eternal law applies to all creation. It includes physical laws which are manifest in the physical world as well as moral laws which are obligations imposed on creatures with a free will. Since God is eternal, this law, this plan for his creatures, is also eternal; hence the name eternal law. This is Thomas's explanation of eternal law, a concept formulated in the Church in the time of St. Augustine, and it is still seen as a valid explanation.

Three categories of eternal law are discerned. The first category comprises the laws of the natural sciences, those modes of action which describe the physical, non-living universe. A second category describes the actions of all living creatures, plants and animals, and the laws of growth and instinct by which these beings live, grow, and develop. The third category contains the laws proper to man as a free, rational being, the laws of operation according to which a man judges and acts.

Eternal law was seen by Thomas as God's decrees from the viewpoint of a supreme lawgiver. These same decrees, insofar as they affect man, are perceived by him and rooted in his nature, are called the natural law. St. Thomas defined natural law as "nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law." All creatures were seen by Thomas as being subject to eternal law, since they are ruled by a divine providence which "is nothing other than the notion of the order of things toward an end."

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<sup>41</sup>Austin Fagothey, Right and Reason, 6th ed. (St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Co., 1976), p. 123.

<sup>42</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 91, art. 2; I, q. 22, art. 2.

A man, being a rational creature, must provide for himself. Since man is rational and thus has a free will, he must discern and direct himself toward his own goal and destiny. This direction is not precisely determined as the actions of minerals or plants are determined. This direction comes from man's intellect and will and is determined by man's nature. Since man must act according to his nature, the direction of his action is seen to be a law, an ordinance imposed in this case by God because God decreed man's nature. Although the ordinances of the natural law come ultimately from God, they come immediately from man himself. This is the reason why St. Thomas saw the natural law as a participation of the rational creature in the eternal law. The natural law is found in the rational creature's judging by his reason those precepts which are justified and demanded by his own nature.<sup>43</sup> A summary definition of natural law can be given as "those moral obligations which man should impose upon himself by the use of his intellectual powers because these actions are in conformity with man's nature and his destiny." A similar definition of natural law sees it as those actions which a man ought to will in order to achieve "the perfecting or fulfillment of the potentialities of his being which God has put into his nature, as he perceives them in virtue of his reason and becomes conscious of them."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>A recent article has claimed that natural law theory helps to harmonize essentialist and existentialist doctrines: "This traditional, natural-law way of reasoning has begun to offer a solution to the central, philosophical problem of reconciling the theory of non-changing being with the practice of the changing world of action" (Josef Solterer, "Natural Law and Economics: Reflections on Desan, Rahner and Schumpeter," Review of Social Economy 34 [April 1976], p. 53).

<sup>44</sup>Heinrich A. Rommen, The Natural Law (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1947), p. 46. The previous definition was formulated by the author.

The auxiliary verbs "should" and "ought" in these definitions may cause confusion, but they are necessary because every man is not able to arrive at a valid interpretation of his obligations. What is more important, not even the intellectual consensus of each society or each age is automatically or necessarily able to arrive at the more specific tenets of the natural law. This important point will receive further comments shortly. Law, since it is a norm or rule of action by which a man's activity is to be judged, implies some kind of obligation to perform that activity. This study is not interested specifically in the type of obligation which natural law imposes; this endeavor is more properly the work of the discipline of ethics. A word, however, about the actions which the natural law imposes, according to proponents of a natural law system, might bring a better understanding of the concept.

The general norm of the natural law is:

Act in conformity with your rational nature. For rational nature, known through self-consciousness or reflex thinking, constitutes the ontological criterion of man's oughtness. Through its free realization he becomes a man, a free rational being, God's wisdom and knowledge as well as His will stand revealed in the essential of man.<sup>45</sup>

This general norm, "act in conformity with your rational nature," must be translated into specific actions. The first precept of the natural law, according to St. Thomas and all natural law proponents, is "that good is to be done and promoted, and evil is to be avoided."<sup>46</sup> Thomas saw this imperative as the basis of all other precepts of the

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>46</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 94, art. 2.

natural law. These other precepts are specifications of that general precept and they must be in accord with man's nature.

The precepts of the natural law are divided into different categories, according to different authors, but the division usually mentioned is into primary and secondary precepts. The first category, that of primary precepts, includes those principles which are certainly known "to persons of normal intelligence who have arrived at mental maturity and who have received an adequate moral education."<sup>47</sup> Such a precept is exemplified by the prohibition that "direct killing of the innocent is wrong." The cases which fall under these precepts usually do not involve elaborate reasoning processes because the situations are such as to make the force of the precepts evident. To kill an innocent person is obviously wrong.

But when these ordinary situations are affected by extenuating circumstances, then a second category of precepts is involved. If a person has a terminal cancer and the condition involves considerable suffering, is it proper for a doctor to end this person's life? Is such mercy killing prohibited by the general precept that "direct killing of the innocent is wrong"? These more involved situations are governed by what are usually termed secondary precepts of the natural law. In reality the same precepts are involved, but they must now be applied to more complicated real-life situations.

All categories of precepts, however, are based upon man's nature. St. Thomas, in a method not usually followed by modern commentators, saw the precepts of the natural law following a specific order. The

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<sup>47</sup>Fagothey, Right and Reason, p. 119.

first category involves the inclination which man has with all other substances of preserving his own being; hence man sees an obligation to preserve human life. The second category inclines man to actions which are common to other animals, "such as sexual intercourse, the education of offspring and so forth."<sup>48</sup> The third type of inclinations governs actions which are proper to man. This type leads man to avoid ignorance and not to offend fellow members of society. All of the precepts regarding these several categories St. Thomas saw as belonging to the natural law.

The philosopher Jacques Maritain praised St. Thomas for the consistency of his natural law doctrine, but lamented the fact that Thomas's vocabulary lacked clarity and consistency. Maritain wrote that the natural law means "that there is, by very virtue of human nature, an order or a disposition which human reason can discover and according to which the human will must act in order to attune itself to the essential and necessary ends of the human being."<sup>49</sup>

Maritain discerned two elements in the natural law, the ontological and the gnoseological. He defined the ontological element as "the normality of functioning which is grounded on the essence of that being: man."<sup>50</sup> Maritain saw everything as possessing an ontological structure, a structure or nature of being, according to which it should operate. A musical instrument is designed to produce sounds in a

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<sup>48</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 94, art. 3.

<sup>49</sup>Jacques Maritain, The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain, ed. Joseph W. Evans and Leo R. Ward (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), p. 43.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

certain manner; a dog or a horse should act in a manner according to its specific nature. A piano can be out of tune and thus be deficient. It remains a piano but it does not operate according to its nature. A horse remains a horse but it can fail to perform according to the norms of horsebreeders. To achieve the fullness of their beings, pianos and horses should act in specific ways. It is the same with man, only in this case the "should" acquires a moral connotation. What Maritain was saying was that man has a specific nature and consequently a moral obligation to act according to that nature.

Maritain's gnoseological element referred to the natural law as it is known by man. He maintained that the only practical knowledge which all men have of the natural law "is that we must do good and avoid evil."<sup>51</sup> This he saw as the principle of the law but not the law itself. This does not lessen the force or validity of natural law. The difficulty for individuals and even for society of arriving at some of the precise tenets of the natural law was pointed out earlier. In this regard Maritain noticed Montaigne's remark that some people consider incest and thievery to be virtuous acts. Maritain commented: "All this proves nothing against natural law, any more than a mistake in addition proves anything against arithmetic, or the mistakes of certain primitive peoples, for whom the stars were holes in the tent which covered the world, prove anything against astronomy."<sup>52</sup>

Maritain stressed that man does not discern the precepts of the natural law by abstract and theoretical reasoning but rather by inclination. He believed this to be St. Thomas's teaching, as was

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

mentioned above, and even thought such an explanation essential for Thomas's doctrine to be perfectly consistent. This inclination is man's leaning to or tendency toward a certain action as being appropriate and becoming for him. The precepts of the natural law are not reasoned to by man by a systematic, conceptual process such as might be used to establish a mathematical theorem. Maritain further saw these natural inclinations of man, which result in natural law precepts, as being first concretized "in social patterns rather than in personal judgments."<sup>53</sup> These social patterns have allowed certain eras to concentrate on the obligations of man resulting from the natural law, while other periods, the eighteenth century for example, emphasized the rights which the natural law gives. Maritain's observation would, to natural law proponents, in part account for the inability of man to admit private property as a natural law right.<sup>54</sup>

St. Thomas's theory of the natural law is called an intellectualist theory because its formal foundation is the intellect of God rather than the will of God. Without delving too deeply into the fields of philosophy and theology, some advertence to the intellectualist aspect of Thomas's doctrine will help to clarify the concept of natural law. The problem is approached by asking if it is possible for the natural law to change. St. Thomas's answer to that question is both "yes" and "no." The natural law can change, but only to the extent that human nature and, to some extent, social conditions can change. Consequently

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>54</sup>See below, p. 248, footnote 74, for comment on ambiguity within the Church concerning private property's natural law foundation.

the natural law is both absolute and relative, the degree of relativity depending upon the ability of human nature to evolve and the extent to which society changes.

The Catholic position, following St. Thomas, stresses that human nature cannot change essentially. In philosophical terms man always remains a rational animal; that is his essence, his nature. Thus the moral obligations which impose themselves on man in his fundamental nature cannot change. "Do good and avoid evil" remains a perpetual commandment to man's reason. "Direct killing of the innocent" is always valid as a dictate of man's conscience. The more remote principles of the natural law, the secondary principles, are subject to change but only insofar as they reflect man's condition in a certain historical stage of cultural development. A more "sophisticated" age has institutions of justice, for example, which must be utilized by individuals living in that society. In a primitive and "undeveloped" society, justice could be administered in a more individual way. While not using this example, St. Thomas accepted the theory involved in it: ". . . human nature is not unchangeable. . . . Hence things that are of natural law vary according to the various stages and conditions of man."<sup>55</sup>

What is of concern here are not those few remote principles of the natural law which may vary with man's development. Catholic teaching sees the primary principles and most of the secondary principles of

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<sup>55</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Supplement, q. 41, art. 1, ad 3. The italicized quote is from Aristotle, Ethics, 7.



the natural law as immutable.<sup>56</sup> The pertinent question is why this natural law may not change. By way of commentary it can be said that the immutability of the natural law cannot even be changed by God himself. An insight into this statement displays the core of traditional Catholic teaching on natural law. An adequate commentary on it, which is certainly beyond the scope of this study, would help to explain some of Protestant-Catholic differences on man's relation to God as well as on the subject of the natural law.

The immutability of the natural law does not mean that God could not, according to Catholic thought, create other intellectual beings with a different natural law. It means that, given the creature man with his particular nature, the law flowing from that nature cannot change. Man cannot be man and have a nature different from the one he now has. Thomistic thought, and the traditional Catholic explanation of natural law, lays the foundation for this law in the intellectual activity of God. The consequence of this is that created objects are seen as reflections of the essence of God. God sees some aspect of his being as capable of being represented in some creature. God's creative activity is always an intellectual act and reflects, in some minute way, God's essence. Consequently man is a reflection of God's own understanding of himself; man is created according to or in agreement with the intellect of God. Josef Fuchs, a Catholic theologian, has

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<sup>56</sup>It will be helpful to note, if it is not obvious, that the phrase, "secondary precepts" in this study is comprehensive in extent and also includes those precepts which are arrived at only after long periods of time or which involve intricate argumentation. Laws against polygamy represent an example of these more remote precepts. Cf. Fagothey, Right and Reason, p. 119.

remarked: "The doctrine of the natural law does not consider man as separate from God but as the work and therefore the word of God."<sup>57</sup>

Catholic theology, as has been pointed out, postulates that man is created in God's image. The implication of this is that the force of natural law comes from man's nature insofar as this nature reflects God's own being. A clearer understanding of this implication may be obtained if the intellectualist explanation of natural law is contrasted with the voluntarist explanation.

St. Thomas Aquinas lived from 1225 to 1274. In the fourteenth century the doctrine of Thomas was challenged by William of Ockham. Ockham was a Franciscan monk, a member of a religious order which placed special emphasis upon poverty as an important element in the Christian life of the order's members. Ockham's theory of natural law was part of a large body of writing dealing with spiritual and temporal authority in society.

The gist of Ockham's doctrine was that there was no moral obligation which was founded on the nature of things, but that all obligation was founded on the will of God. Natural law in this explanation represents a divine positive law which gets its force from the divine will. In other words, there is no intrinsic evil to any offense against God's law. An action is morally evil, not because it contradicts the nature of things, but because it has an extrinsic though fundamental relationship to God's will. This theory is called the

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<sup>57</sup> Josef Fuchs, Natural Law, trans. Helmut Reckter and John A. Dowling (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), p. 67.

voluntarist theory of natural law because it sees the obligation of the natural law as coming only from God's will.

Theologians saw Ockham's doctrine as leading to moral positivism. This means that it would not be possible to know the natural law by a rational examination of man's nature, since the natural law, in Ockham's doctrine, was not founded in human nature. Such an explanation makes it possible to discover the law only by knowing the mind of the lawgiver or by some innate moral code written in men's hearts. The traditional Catholic explanation, on the other hand, states:

Reason reads the natural law in the nature of all things and particularly in the nature of man. To say that reason is able to read the law written in the heart of man means simply that reason is able to grasp the law of nature from the ontological reality of man and of all things.<sup>58</sup>

Before applying natural law theory to private property, one further observation must be made. The traditional explanation of natural law in the Catholic Church has been under examination since the time of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council. This examination is symbolic of the general aggiornamento or modernization in the Church which began at that time. It is felt by many Church scholars that traditional natural law theory is too static, too essentialist in content, so that the dynamic element of man's personality is neglected. Cardinal Roy, a decade after the publication of Pope John's encyclical Pacem in Terris, commented:

For today, this idea of nature is very much questioned, if not rejected. There is argument concerning the word itself, which could lead one to suppose that there is a strict

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<sup>58</sup>Fuchs, Natural Law, p. 3.

parallel between man and his morality and biological laws and behaviour. There is argument about its content, negative (what nature forbids) or positive (what nature permits). This concept seems too "essentialist" to the people of our time, who challenge, as being a relic of Greek philosophy, the term "Natural Law," which they consider anachronistic, conservative and defensive.<sup>59</sup>

The answer to this present confusion, seemingly for the Church and certainly for this study, is also given by Cardinal Roy. He noted that the reality signified by the word "nature" has not lost its position in Church doctrine, although the word has often been replaced by modern synonyms. "Such synonyms are: man, human being, human person, dignity, the rights of man or the rights of peoples, conscience, humaneness (in conduct), the struggle for justice, and, more recently, 'the duty of being,' the 'quality of life.'" The Cardinal summarized all these terms "in the concept of 'values.'"<sup>60</sup>

It is left to Catholic doctrine to continue its own investigation of the exact meaning of nature and natural law. This present study attempts to coordinate traditional Catholic teaching on the subject with the current emphasis upon the dynamic aspects of man's development. Although the Church is attempting to apply its teachings to contemporary conditions, it holds to the validity of its previous doctrine. Pope John XXIII wrote: "What the Catholic Church teaches and declares regarding the social life and relationships of men is beyond question for all time valid." The Pontiff made the same point on the subject of private property: "For the right of private property, including that pertaining to goods devoted to productive enterprises,

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<sup>59</sup> Cardinal Roy, "Reflections on 'Pacem in Terris,' in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, no. 129.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 557, no. 129.

is permanently valid."<sup>61</sup> The natural law foundation for private property can now be more fully noted.

#### Private Property Founded on Natural Law

The Church's argument can now be better understood: "For every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own."<sup>62</sup> The argument can be put into more modern terms: "Given man's existential nature, his own personal development and the welfare of society cannot be realized without the social institution of private property. The right of ownership must include capital goods as well as consumer goods." What is there in man's nature which demands the institution of private property? The answer of the Church is not a profoundly reasoned one. It is simply this: the fact that man has the faculties of reasoning and of acting by free choice demand that private property be an institution of society. This argument rests, of course, upon a metaphysical basis. This basis is that man is himself composed of a material principle and a spiritual principle of being.

The previous section of this chapter explained the Church's view on property's role in human development. It showed that the perfection of man's rational nature demanded property and that private property promoted the common good of society as the Church understands that term. The purpose of the present argument is simply to emphasize the essential connection which the Church sees between human nature and

<sup>61</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 218, 109.

<sup>62</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 5.

private property. The commentary begins with St. Thomas, although this is mainly for the purpose of exposition and does not denote the historical origin of the argument.

It is clear that St. Thomas founded the right to private property upon man's intellectual and volitional nature. Thomas asked whether it was natural for man to possess goods and gave as the reply:

" . . . man has a natural dominion over things, because, by his reason and will, he is able to use them for his own profit, as they were made on his account: . . . "<sup>63</sup> Man has an obligation of supporting himself, according to Thomas, and that support means an adequate use of material goods. Moreover, the fact that man has been made in the image of God also demands that he have control over material goods.

Thomas then asked a further question: "Whether It Is Lawful for a Man to Possess a Thing as His Own?"<sup>64</sup> This question is an elaboration and specification of the previous question. What concerned Thomas was that the material goods of the world must be used by all men, and it was clearly evident that specific lands and all other material goods did not naturally belong to specific individuals. Was it right, therefore, that such goods should be privately owned? It was not only right, Thomas said, but it was necessary.

Thomas gave three reasons, closely allied, which justified private property. He saw property as necessary in order to have an efficient society, an orderly society, and a peaceful society. The arguments are found in several of St. Thomas's works and are usually

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<sup>63</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-II, q. 66, art. 1.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., art. 2, heading.

put in such a succinct manner that the subject seems to have been almost trivial for him. As a matter of fact, in his Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle Thomas mentioned, following Aristotle, only two benefits. One benefit was the avoidance of quarrels which arise when many people have charge of a large project. The second was that private ownership will make an individual work more energetically and he will more readily increase his own possessions.<sup>65</sup> In his Summa, however, Thomas elaborated these two arguments into three, adding the arguments from order mentioned above. The passage from the Summa is given in full, although it is of some length.

. . . Two things are competent to man in respect of exterior things. One is the power to procure and dispense them, and in this regard it is lawful for man to possess property. Moreover this is necessary to human life for three reasons. First because every man is more careful to procure what us for himself alone than that which is common to many or to all: since each one would shirk the labor and leave to another that which concerns the community, as happens where there is a great number of servants. Secondly, because human affairs are conducted in more orderly fashion if each man is charged with taking care of some particular thing himself, whereas there would be confusion if everyone had to look after any one thing indeterminately. Thirdly, because a more peaceful state is ensured to man if each one is contented with his own. Hence it is to be observed that quarrels arise more frequently where there is no division of the things possessed.<sup>66</sup>

The argument as presented by St. Thomas permits a theoretical ambiguity which shall be noted here. A discussion of this ambiguity is meant to clarify the Church's doctrine, while it must at the same time add some little note of obfuscation. There has been a conclusion written from Thomas's argument:

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<sup>65</sup>St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle, bk. 2, lesson 4.

<sup>66</sup>Idem, Summa Theologica, II-II, q. 66, art. 2.

All three reasons given for the justification of private ownership of goods are rooted on last analysis in the imperfection of man. Individual possession of goods is indeed necessary for man, but only because man is not more perfect.<sup>67</sup>

Such a conclusion means that man has a natural right to property which is founded in man's rational nature, but that the imperfection of that nature plays a determining part in giving man the property right. In other words private property is founded not just upon man's rational nature but predominantly upon man's sinful, that is, weak and imperfect, rational nature. A contemporary Catholic theologian, among other Catholic commentators, has applied this above understanding to private property:

. . . if one considers the right to private property as a right of the time after the Fall, one confirms that the right of private property is an actual application and therefore a value in the sense of an institution of the natural law but solely for the historical situation following original sin. At the same time one firmly holds to the principle that this right is a true right and is true in an intrinsic and immutable way. It is true because it is derived from human nature and therefore in the situation following original sin the institution of private property is obligatory.<sup>68</sup>

There are three points to be made concerning the above argument which holds that the foundation of man's property right resides in the

<sup>67</sup>Virgil Michel, St. Thomas and Today--Comments on the Economic Views of Aquinas, rev. ed. (St. Paul: Wanderer Printing Co., 1936), p. 17.

<sup>68</sup>Fuchs, Natural Law, p. 93. A. M. Crofts has a similar statement: "Owing to the corruption of human nature man needs the incentive of private ownership and the protection of law in his property. . . ." (A. M. Crofts, Property and Poverty, with Introduction by Vincent McNabb [Dublin: Irish Rosary Office, 1948], p. 135). Cf. also Bede Jarrett, Social Theories of the Middle Ages (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1926; reprint ed., 1966), p. 127.



imperfection of human nature. First of all, modern Church documents, as opposed to interpretations and comments on them by various authors, stress that private property is rooted in man's rational nature insofar as that nature is a perfection of man, not insofar as it is an imperfect nature. Secondly, the argument has no practical bearing upon the results of this study. Whether private property is due to man's rational nature because man's rationality and freedom represent a perfection or because they exist imperfectly in man will not change, in the mind of the Church, the universal and perpetual need for property as an institution of society. This is so because man's propensity to sin, which is explained theologically by the Church's doctrine on original sin, is seen by the Church as a permanent and ineradicable orientation of man. Thirdly, it is possible, at least on a superficial level, to circumvent the ambiguity involved by stating that man's existential condition, his rational and free nature as it now exists, demands private property. This method of speaking accords with Church interpretation and leaves to scholars in the field further specification of that interpretation. Such language is also appropriate to some Catholic social philosophers who stress that natural law is existential as well as essential.<sup>69</sup> This study, however, stresses Church doctrine's reliance upon rationality and freedom as a perfection of man; further comment on this thesis is as follows.

Church documents maintain that man, as a rational and free being, has the right to dominate and to possess the material goods of the

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<sup>69</sup>Cf. Messner, Social Ethics, pp. 17-24; Gremillion, Peace and Justice, pp. 7-10.

world. In the words of Pope Pius XII: "Every man, as a living being gifted with reason, has in fact from nature the fundamental right to make use of the material goods of the earth, . . ." <sup>70</sup> Similar language, as already shown, is present in many Church documents from Rerum Novarum (1891) of Leo XIII to Populorum Progressio (1967) of Paul VI. <sup>71</sup> The Church argument emphasizes both the needs of man as a material being and the rights flowing from man as a creature made in the image of God.

There is a special relationship between man and the things of nature. Man, himself material, needs other material goods to sustain and develop his life. But man, also spiritual and therefore intellectual and free, has the power and the right and even the obligation to "dominate" and possess material goods, a possession which in society becomes the institution of private property.

The answer given by St. Thomas to the two questions asked above may seem too mundane and practical to be classified as natural law arguments. But Thomas's arguments, elaborated today in Church documents which stress the right and the obligation of human development, are precisely that. The Church holds that private property gives to society a peace, order, and efficiency in the use of material goods which the absence of such property does not give. In addition to this, it provides to individuals human dignity, and freedom in the management of their lives according to that dignity. The Church sees this freedom and dignity as predominant goals of the social order:

<sup>70</sup> Pope Pius XII, "Address of June 1, 1941," in Yzermans, Unwearing Advocate, 1:214.

<sup>71</sup> In this document Paul VI emphasized the social obligation of private property; cf. nos. 22-23.

It is, therefore, always in defence of personal human liberty and never for the protection of the acquired rights of security holders that the Church . . . insists both on the right of property and on its institutions. The objection which the Church has to all doctrines which have little respect for property is that they . . . tend in principle to reduce the person to the level of an animal, capable, like it, of only a limited and determinate simple use of the things of the material world.<sup>72</sup>

The primary ordinances of the natural law are those precepts referred to earlier which are certainly known to normally intelligent people with an adequate moral education. An example of such a primary ordinance, one which is universally applicable, is that man should worship God. There is no primary ordinance that man should own property, according to St. Thomas. On the contrary, goods are common to all men in that all of mankind has a right to use the earth's resources. But this does not mean that the possession of goods should be common, only that their use should be.

Man, according to the prescription of Genesis, was to have domination over all created goods. What type of dominion would best serve man in his nature as he directs himself towards his final goal?<sup>73</sup> This was the question which faced Thomas. Guided by the thought of Aristotle

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<sup>72</sup>Calvez and Perrin, The Church and Social Justice, p. 194.

<sup>73</sup>The functional nature of private property in Catholic thought should be noted. But this functional concept serves to establish the natural law right and provides an insight into the natural law itself. Private property is seen as a necessary institution of society because it fulfills a function which cannot be performed by any other means; it alone can satisfy certain needs of human nature and of society. Since these needs are essential for man's life and for helping him reach the goal of that life, then man naturally has a right to private property. This is a simplified but accurate exposition of the natural law right to private property.

and looking at man in his existential situation, Thomas held that private property was a necessary institution for man in his individual person and for the common good of society. Private property is an institution established by positive law and in this sense is not a primary precept of the natural law. But it was legally established because men realized that it was necessary for a peaceful and orderly society and for human dignity and development. Property thus was seen by St. Thomas, although this is not made explicit by him and some today dispute this conclusion, as a secondary precept of the natural law.<sup>74</sup>

The basic property tenet of the natural law--that the earth's resources are to be available to all mankind--is accomplished by private property, and this in two ways. First of all, private property as an institution provides for the wide and stable possession of goods which this principle requires. Obviously nations which have legally established private property and have definite economic classes resulting

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<sup>74</sup>Some authors hold that St. Thomas did not hold private property to be a natural law right. Austin Fagothey, for instance, was of this opinion and concluded: "St. Thomas, while approving the system of private ownership, bases it on the law of nations, or jus gentium" (Fagothey, Right and Reason, p. 328). (The jus gentium refers to a body of laws, similar in content, established by various nations.) Other authors admit the jus gentium foundation of private property, but maintain that such positive, human laws, flowing from man's nature, are precisely the secondary precepts of the natural law referred to earlier. This does not, of course, refer to the whole body of jus gentium. See Walter Farrell, A Companion to the Summa, 4 vols. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1941), 3:205-206. Bernard Dempsey also followed this explanation, which is the one just given in the text above, and concluded: "The right of private property, then, is said with perfect propriety and without qualification to be of natural law" (Bernard W. Dempsey, The Functional Economy [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1958], p. 167). This study obviously inclines to this latter opinion, but the controversy does not affect any conclusions of the study. All Church documents since Leo XIII's time which have commented on the subject hold that private property is a natural law right. This has become the official teaching of the Church.

from an uneven distribution of property are not adequate systems in this regard. But, in the Church's eyes, this is due primarily to man's greed and an undeveloped social conscience. It is true that, in some cases, man's greed is allowed freer room to operate under private property than in systems where goods are socially owned. But the Church sees man's greed as capable of being modified by altruistic motives, while society's ownership of goods destroys freedoms which cannot be restored by any means. At any rate, the Church's espousal of private property does not by that very fact sanction capitalist systems which allow such unequal distribution. But private property, properly used, is an adequate system for distributing goods.

The second way that private property satisfied the common use of goods lies in man's responsible use of his own property. Property is never so private that it can be used to injure society or that it can be used in a way which injures the common good. More positively, private property must be used in a way that will benefit society. This means that parents should use their wealth for their own welfare and to provide for and educate their children. It means that wealth or ownership of productive goods brings also the obligation of providing jobs for other workers. It means also that individuals must give of their wealth to help those who are less endowed than they are. On this matter Pope Paul VI quoted St. Ambrose: "You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>St. Ambrose, De Nabuthe, c. 12, n. 53, quoted in Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 23.

If private property is a natural law right, why is it that some nations and many learned persons wish to abolish or restrict severely this right? Or why is this right not recognized as something essential to man? One reason for this difficulty was mentioned earlier. This is Maritain's assertion, interpreting St. Thomas, that specific ordinances of the natural law are difficult to reach by reasoned argument. The natural law more clearly establishes itself by social patterns of acting. Sometimes, as in the case of slavery, these patterns take hundreds of year to develop into just and acceptable standards. It is especially difficult to reason to private property, since, as all Catholic proponents of its natural law foundation maintain, it is a secondary precept of the natural law. This means that the essentiality of private property is not immediately evident to men and that any process of reasoning to its necessity requires certain educational biases.

In what can be interpreted as a condescending passage Fuchs noted:

The mighty power of the senses, of imagination, concupiscence and the prejudices formed through education and habit, together with the corresponding negative dispositions of will and intellect, are all realities. They prevent only too easily a correct activation of our real native ability to come to a true moral knowledge.<sup>76</sup>

Just as important, perhaps, are that the evils which are inherent in systems which allow private property lead to a demand for its abolition. Pope Paul VI's condemnation of such systems was noted earlier. It is only logical to counter these evils by an almost total eradication of private property. Is it not true, then, as Marx proclaimed, that private property gives to the ownership class a strong

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<sup>76</sup>Fuchs, Natural Law, p. 152. See also St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 94, arts. 4, 6.

and peculiar power over the mass of workers? What relationship does Catholic thought see between private property and political and social power? The following chapter will consider these questions.

## CHAPTER X

### PRIVATE PROPERTY--SOURCE OF POWER

In Chapter 6 it was pointed out that Marx held that private property conferred power upon a particular class of citizens in society over another far larger class of citizens. This was shown to be one of Marx's fundamental criticisms of the capitalist system. The thesis to be presented in this chapter is the Catholic claim that private property gives to the individual a necessary control over his own destiny, a control without which the individual cannot reach a full development of his human potential.

The chapter is divided into three major sections with a brief conclusion. The first section treats the relationship between private property and the power of the state. The second section is concerned with human labor as the chief source of property and the capacity to labor as a form of property. In the third section there is the Catholic response to the Marxian thesis that private property allows some individuals to withhold from others the means of production which are essential to the welfare of the deprived group.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion simply summarizes the arguments of the Church in this particular area.

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter 3, esp. pp. 8-12.



Individual Versus State Power

Any political entity must possess some degree of power if it is to accomplish its intended purpose. A sovereign political state must possess this power to the extent that it can peacefully direct the actions of its citizens from within and protect them from hostile and unjust aggressors from without. The state, consequently, depending upon the nature of its political organization, possesses the capability for a high degree of control over the lives of its individual citizens.

But the political power of the state "never exists except in a form partly contrary to the common good. . . . Political power, instead of serving the general weal, is to some degree always made to serve group interests."<sup>2</sup> The state as a political entity must be controlled by some individual or group of individuals. Those in control of the state accordingly gain control over the individual citizens of the state. Adam Smith clearly realized that a strong government represented a potential position of strength and consequent abuse of that strength for some individual or group. Warren Samuels has noted: "Smith understood the economy as a system of mutual coercion with the state as both a dependent and independent variable insofar as power players and economics are concerned." For Smith the logical way of handling such potential conflicts was to give to each individual some degree of economic power so that "market forces and the invisible hand work out only in the context of interacting social powers operating through the market."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Messner, Social Ethics, p. 547.

<sup>3</sup>Warren J. Samuels, "Adam Smith and the Economy as a System of Power," Review of Social Economy 31 (October 1973), p. 125.

This is not to claim that political power and economic power are synonymous, but that even in Smith's eighteenth century world the two were so intertwined that economic forces greatly influenced the entire power structure of the state.

The solution of Marx to the question of who should have control of the power of the state was ultimately to abolish the state as a political entity. Consequently, all power was to reside in the citizenry of the state. This power was not seen by Marx as some force quasi-external to the will of the citizens. Rather the power was viewed as the self-creative activity of social individuals working toward goals which would benefit all of society. In this sense, therefore, Church arguments against state ownership of goods are not completely applicable. A contemporary author has recently made an apropos comment to this situation that "capitalist or democratic ideals were being compared with communist practice."<sup>4</sup>

Still it is necessary to notice Church arguments in this area. Such arguments against state ownership apply to those "Marxists" who rest content with state control of political and economic life. More importantly the arguments obviously allow a fuller understanding of the Church's position on property. Church arguments also show that the Church opposes Marxian doctrine even as a means to an end. This means that the Church sees complete state ownership of productive goods as an inappropriate and unjust form of economic organization, even if such organization is only for a period of time and even if it leads to a more

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<sup>4</sup>J. Philip Wogaman, The Great Economic Debate, An Ethical Analysis (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 56.

"idealized" form of social and economic organization. In another sense, however, Church arguments against state ownership are considered to be completely applicable to the Marxian position, since community ownership is ultimately reducible to some form of state control. Community ownership in the Marxian sense does not mean ownership by a tribe or a clan but by a society. It means that the ownership right must be managed by at least a quasi-political organization.

Power has been defined previously as the ability of an individual to carry out his own will in a social setting regardless of the obstacles facing him in the fulfillment of that will. What the Church has in mind for man is expressed by a contemporary social philosopher, Robert Nozick. He wrote:

But haven't we been unfair in treating rationality, free will, and moral agency individually and separately? In conjunction, don't they add up to something whose significance is clear: a being able to formulate long-term plans for its life, able to consider and decide on the basis of abstract principles or considerations it formulates to itself and hence not merely the plaything of immediate stimuli, a being that limits its own behavior in accordance with some principles or picture it has of what an appropriate life is for itself and others, and so on.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 49. Nozick considers himself a libertarian. He bases his arguments on Locke's state of nature and argues that "a minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts is justified" and "inspiring" (p. ix). John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*, although emphasizing liberty, would allow some restrictions on liberty in order to achieve a more equal distribution of social and economic goods. For Rawls an unequal distribution of goods necessarily destroys freedom. (Cf. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971], p. 226.) One Catholic commentator fears that the "strict egalitarianism" of Rawls would produce a "loss of liberty" and an unwanted "centralization of power." On the other hand Nozick's insistence on liberty should not allow the "rights of some" to be "absolutized at the expense of the needs of others." These are admonitions

To put the Church's thesis negatively, state ownership of goods hinders the individual and the family in their ability to plan and execute those decisions which seem to them best suited for their own welfare and the welfare of society.

In emphasizing family welfare Pope Leo XIII saw the legitimate need for the state to provide financial aid in some cases. Leo saw a similar need for state intervention if individual rights were being violated in a household. But the ordinary care of and providing for children was the duty and right of parents. Leo wrote: "The Socialists, therefore, in setting aside the parent and introducing the providence of the State, act against natural justice, and threaten the very existence of family life."<sup>6</sup> One of the major intrusions which Leo had in mind here was state ownership of property.

It is true, in Catholic thought, that the state has the right to limit private possessions, but it cannot abolish the right to acquire them. Leo XIII remarked: ". . . the limits of private possession have been left to be fixed by man's own industry and the laws of individual peoples."<sup>7</sup> Pius XI repeated this opinion and affirmed: ". . . the public authority, in view of the common good, may specify more accurately what is licit and what is illicit for property owners in the use of their possessions." This means that the state may not only set up legal prescriptions which must be adhered to in establishing ownership claims, but it may also establish limits to wealth by its taxation policies and in an otherwise laudatory critique of Rawl's and Nozick's works by John P. Langan, "Social Justice: Rawls and Nozick," Theological Studies 38 (June 1977): 352, 358.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., no. 7.

other laws. The guiding criterion in this matter is the principle of the common good, although the precise limits to wealth and forms of property are obviously difficult judgments. Pius XI cautioned against an arbitrary use of this power by the state and declared: "Man's natural right of possessing and transmitting property by inheritance must be kept intact and cannot be taken away by the State from man."<sup>8</sup>

Obviously the state must be able to levy taxes in various forms in order to raise the revenue needed to promote the common good. Pope Paul VI mentioned in this regard such obvious examples as the need for "such essential services as the building of roads, transportation, communications, water supply, housing, public health, education, facilitation of the practice of religion, and recreational facilities."<sup>9</sup> Paul VI also noted the government's obligation to help provide employment for workers and the ensuring of a just wage for the worker. The providing of employment will entail either direct spending by the government and thus some form of taxation or some adjustment of tax laws to entice private investment.

The Church recognizes that it is characteristic in contemporary society "to vest more and more ownership of goods in the State and in other public bodies. It sees the necessity of this trend, since "the common good required public authorities to exercise ever greater responsibilities." At the same time, and because of this increasing state involvement, the Church insists upon the need for individual rights and responsibilities. Pope John XXIII stated that those who engage in

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<sup>8</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 49.

<sup>9</sup>Pope Paul VI, Pacem in Terris, no. 64.

productive activity have an "innate need to assume responsibility and to perfect themselves by their efforts."<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the principle of subsidiarity always defends the right of individuals to make decisions affecting their own lives and the nature of society.

It is recalled here that Pope John XXIII noted this more frequent association of individuals in various organizations to be a characteristic of modern society. This characteristic has been referred to as "the principle of socialization, which modifies substantially the principle of subsidiarity."<sup>11</sup> Another author sees the phenomenon as "a ubiquitous sociocultural process," which is "the natural consequence of a technological and scientific evolution."<sup>12</sup> Pope John described the characteristic as a process which results from "human and natural inclination." He did not see it as resulting from a blind natural force but as "the creation of free men." It does not seem, however, to have the same characteristic of a principle governing man's social activity like the principles of subsidiarity and the common good, except insofar as such social organizations are necessary to achieve the common good. John further warned that "the activity of the State whereby the undertakings of private individuals and groups are suitably regulated and fostered" must be kept in balance with "the freedom of individual citizens and groups of citizens to act autonomously, . . ." <sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 117, 83.

<sup>11</sup>Frank Petrella, "The Liberalization of the Scholastic Theory of Socio-Economic Policy," Review of Social Economy 30 (September 1972), p. 361.

<sup>12</sup>Jean-Yves Calvez, The Social Thought of John XXIII, trans. George J. M. McKenzie (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1964), pp. 4, 5.

<sup>13</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 60, 63, 66.

Thus in a society where government is growing larger and its role in society is becoming more involved, private property stands out as an institution ensuring to the individual that freedom which is his fundamental right. The Second Vatican Council emphasized the independence which private property brings to individuals. It wrote: "Ownership and other forms of private control over material goods contribute to the expression of personality. Moreover, they furnish men with an occasion for exercising their role in society and in the economy."<sup>14</sup> Private property is seen by the Church as a necessary source of power for the individual. Without some stable form of property the individual is in danger of being engulfed and swallowed up by the complexities of government organizations. Private property protects the individual from the state and ensures him that he is a responsible individual with a personal freedom and dignity.

Several previous quotes from Church documents have already indicated the Church's view that private property is also the foundation for civil liberties. The concept of civil liberties is a general term comprising many aspects of liberty. They include both positive and negative rights, but even this at times seems an arbitrary division. One distinction sees civil liberties as "those freedoms that may be asserted against the exercise of governmental power," while civil rights comprise "those freedoms that may be asserted against individuals or groups." Another distinction sees civil liberties as the rights of individuals, while

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<sup>14</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71.

<sup>15</sup>New Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., "Civil Rights," by J. F. Pohlhaus.

civil rights "refers to the constitutional and legal status and treatment of minority groups that are marked off from the majority by race, religion, or national origin."<sup>16</sup> Another type of division distinguishes civil liberties from human rights. The former rights accrue to individuals as members of a civil and political society, while human rights are those rights due to every individual as a member of the human race.

Church documents are not explicit about the nature of civil liberties. Pius XII, as will be seen shortly, referred to property's role in establishing "political, cultural, and religious" freedom. While the Second Vatican Council was explicit in mentioning civil liberties, some of the documents to which it refers in support of its thesis seem to include within this category what might more properly be called human rights.<sup>17</sup> In order to clarify the Church's argument, civil liberties will be understood here in the sense of the distinction mentioned above, that is, as the rights of individuals insofar as they are members of a civil and political society. A suggestive list of these rights includes: ". . . basic political rights as citizens, protection of his rights of life and freedom, the right to correct information regarding all questions of life which concern him, the right of peaceful assembly and association."<sup>18</sup>

The argument of the Church is as follows. Private property allows a certain amount of material prosperity. Just as important is the fact

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<sup>16</sup>International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968 ed., s.v. "Constitutional Law: Civil Rights," by Milton R. Konvitz.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71, footnote no. 150.

<sup>18</sup>Haring, The Law of Christ, 3:149.



that property gives to individuals who possess it a sense of responsibility and a concern for a well-ordered and peaceful society. This material well-being, order, and tranquility are necessary conditions for civil liberties. These conditions must be present in order to allow to every citizen those rights which are due to him as a member of that society.

Pope Pius XII spoke of man's right to the use of material goods and of an implied right to property when he stated: "The safe guardianship of this right will ensure the personal dignity of man, and will facilitate for him the attention to and fulfillment of that sum of stable duties and decisions for which he is directly responsible to his Creator."<sup>19</sup> The Second Vatican Council spoke in a similar way, mentioning that private property "adds incentives for carrying on one's function and duty, . . ." <sup>20</sup> The Church is saying that only in a well-ordered and peaceful society, one with a certain amount of economic prosperity, will the citizens be able to enjoy their civil liberties. Furthermore, these rights demand from other citizens a sense of responsibility toward the welfare of society and the other members of society. It is thus that an adequately distributed private property brings with it political and even cultural freedom.

These civil liberties which are connected with society's structure represent a type of power. These liberties are properly considered rights due to citizens. As rights they bring correlative duties, for any right of a citizen connotes a duty for every other citizen. The

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<sup>19</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Radio Address of December 24, 1942," in Yzermans, The Unwearing Advocate, 1:214.

<sup>20</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71.

Church says that duties will not be performed by citizens unless they are materially capable, psychologically developed, and religiously motivated to perform these duties. Private property provides material prosperity, aids psychological development, and even helps to instill religious motivation.<sup>21</sup> Civil liberties produce individual freedom and consequently individual power. They provide each individual the power to function as a responsible and free agent within society, without harrassment from the state or from other individuals. The Church sees this as another way that property provides personal freedom and power.

#### Human Labor and Private Property

This section analyzes from a different viewpoint the relationship between private property and power. In contemporary society is property in reality a source of power to the individuals holding that property? The situation which prompts this question is the corporate organization of business activity in which control has passed from the stockholders to the managers. Adolf Berle, a forerunner in the study of U.S. corporate power, noted a few years ago: "Nominal power still resides in the stockholders; actual power in the board of directors."<sup>22</sup> Paul Harbrecht has claimed that in modern industrial society there has been a separation of ownership of productive property from the control of that property. He has referred to this as a "paraproprietal society" and claimed:

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<sup>21</sup>Religious motivation is understood here in a broader (or, technically speaking, narrower) concept of man's duties to his fellowman.

<sup>22</sup>Berle, Power Without Property, p. 74.

Institutions that determine a man's relationship to productive property and to other men are the structuring elements of today's society insofar as it is given form by economic relationships. Thus we conclude that a man's relationship to things--material wealth--no longer determines his place in society . . . but his place in society now determines his relationship to things.<sup>23</sup>

Berle's thesis can be summarized in the statement "that power has been divorced from property," while Harbrecht contended "that power follows from the control of property rather than the ownership of property, . . ." <sup>24</sup>

This section certainly does not attempt a conclusion to this question nor even to present an adequate commentary upon it. The section is rather meant to introduce an important element of Catholic thought into the Church's property position--the element of human labor. Just as Marx saw a fundamental relationship between private property and alienated labor, so the Church sees a relationship between human labor and property. But the Church envisions a relationship in which man's labor, through the institution of private property, extends man's personal capabilities into an instrument of economic and social power.

Leo XIII maintained that the wealth of nations comes from "the labor of the working man." Those goods which become property are thus predominantly the result of man's labor. Moreover, the Pontiff held that the labor of the worker gives him a claim to specific property. Leo noted what the results of the worker's labor should be: ". . . by that act [of labor] he makes his own that portion of nature's field

<sup>23</sup>Paul P. Harbrecht, Pension Funds and Economic Power (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1959), p. 287.

<sup>24</sup>Michael D. Reagan, The Managed Economy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 41.

which he cultivates--that portion on which he leaves, as it were, the impress of his own personality; and it cannot but be just that he should possess that portion as his own, and should have a right to keep it without molestation."<sup>25</sup> Pope Pius XI uttered the same opinion but specified this relationship further: "The only form of labor, however, which gives the workingman a title to its fruits is that which a man exercises as his own master, and by which some new form or new value is produced."<sup>26</sup>

The Church sees labor as giving a legitimate title to certain goods. "A title to property is a historical fact that changes the abstract right of ownership in general into the concrete right of ownership over this particular piece of property."<sup>27</sup> Leo used the title-giving aspect of man's labor to support his natural law argument for private property. There is some difference here, however, between the intent of Leo's argument and John Locke's property teaching. Locke claimed that man has a natural law right to private property. The aspect of human nature which justifies this conclusion is that man's labor is a part of his nature and that he has a lawful right to any good to which he applies this labor. As Schlatter has remarked, "From Locke's day to our own, the Lockean theory of property has been thought of as the natural right theory of property."<sup>28</sup> The argument of Leo XIII,

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<sup>25</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, nos. 27, 7.

<sup>26</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 52.

<sup>27</sup>Fagothey, Right and Reason, p. 331. This work has a succinct "layman's" treatise on property titles, pp. 331-333.

<sup>28</sup>Richard Schlatter, Private Property (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1951), p. 159.

however, was that man's labor is ordinarily the only means he has of providing for his own welfare. Man's labor flows from man's nature, it is true. But it is the rational aspect of man's nature which gives him a right to property, while his labor gives him a right to "this specific property." The claim upon any specific property is not absolute but must be subordinated to other legitimate claims. The labor of the worker does represent a valid claim to at least a portion of the new value created.

Man's labor, which is an activity of man's nature, plays a much more important part in Catholic social thought than has hitherto been given to it. As hinted above, Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI attempted to point out the intimate relationship between private property and labor. Pope Pius XII repeated this emphasis and noted:

. . . it is . . . no less certain that this private property is in a special way the natural fruit of labour: the product of an intense activity of man, who acquires it thanks to his energetic determination to safeguard and develop, with his own strength, his own existence and that of his family, to create for himself and his own a sphere of just freedom, not only of an economic nature, but also political, cultural, and religious.<sup>29</sup>

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the importance of labor in economic life: "Human labor which is expended in the production and exchange of goods or in the performance of economic services is superior to the other elements of economic life."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Radio Message of September 1, 1944," in The Pope Speaks, ed. Michael Chinigo (London: Methuen & Co., 1958), pp. 314-315. This book should be distinguished from a book with the same name published by Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1940.

<sup>30</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 67.

The Church's insistence upon private property is also the logical consequence of the value of human labor as "an expression of the human person"<sup>31</sup> and of the necessity of labor to produce economic goods. Leo XIII held that, since labor was "personal" and "necessary," then "It follows that each one has a right to procure what is required in order to live; . . ." <sup>32</sup> In more recent times this right is expressed in terms of complete human development. As is obvious, "For the great majority of mankind, work is the only source from which the means of livelihood are drawn."<sup>33</sup> In simpler economic societies this remuneration was frequently in terms of commodities. In modern industrial societies it is usually in terms of wages and other wage-equivalents.

The Church holds that the wage contract is basically an ethical legal contract. Workers must be able to "receive a wage sufficient to lead a life worthy of man and to fulfill family responsibilities properly."<sup>34</sup> This remuneration gives to the individual a control over his own personal development and enables him to provide for the development of his family. The private property of the worker "is only his wages in another form; . . ." To deprive the worker of his property would be to "deprive him of the liberty of disposing of his wages, and thus of all hope and possibility of increasing his stock and of bettering his condition in life."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 18.

<sup>32</sup>Pope Leo XII, Rerum Novarum, no. 34.

<sup>33</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 18.

<sup>34</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 71.

<sup>35</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 4.

The fundamental point here is not simply the availability of a financial reward and consequent acquiring of material goods. The important element is that the individual must be allowed to control his own life and development. Hopefully this point was made clear in previous chapters. What the present analysis is attempting to show is the intimate connection among private property, human labor, and the individual's power over his own development within a social setting. The Church holds that the labor of the individual is an expression of his own person and of his personality. The result of that expression, in terms of economic value, belongs, at least in part, to the individual. In industrial society that return can legitimately be expressed in some salary or wage-equivalent. Private property is simply an extension of that wage and is a further free expression of the individual's person. The ability to acquire property represents a power necessary to the individual if he is to achieve the perfection of a rational being in society. The property so acquired enables him to sustain and perfect himself for further activity or labor. Thus there is a complete interdependence among labor as an expression of the individual and private property and power within society.

This interdependence is becoming more evident in the light of contemporary practices. Pope John noted the trend toward investment in human capital, especially one's own. Instead of investing in real property or corporations of various sizes, more individuals today are investing in their own education and in their professional or technical training. Pope John called this "an advance in civilization" and remarked that it "clearly accords with the inherent characteristics of

labor, inasmuch as this proceeds directly from the human person, and hence is to be thought more of than wealth in external goods."<sup>36</sup> A reverse argument may now be employed. Men have a right to education and professional development. Since these are analogous to, or "elevated" aspects of, private property, men have a right to property. Such investment in one's own professional training is indicative of the forms of property developing in society today. The Church seems to be recognizing these forms and giving them an importance equal to older property forms.

#### Private Property--The Ability to Withhold

It has been remarked that "Orthodox economic theory misses the issue of economic power because it asks different questions."<sup>37</sup> The author of this quote saw orthodox economics to be concerned with the efficient provision of goods to consumers. The question of power arises, he maintained, when the members of society are divided into classes with varying degrees of control over the operations of the economic system. Such a viewpoint was that of Marx, elucidated in Chapter 6. Private property for Marx meant that the capitalist was able to withhold from the worker the means of production which are necessary for the welfare of society and the well-being of the worker. This section looks at the Catholic view of this aspect of economic power.

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<sup>36</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 107.

<sup>37</sup>Don Kanel, "Property and Economic Power as Issues in Institutional Economics," Journal of Economic Issues 8 (December 1974), p. 832.



Marx, in Capital and in Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, traced the historical process by which the worker was separated from the means of production. As a result of this process the workers "confront all objective conditions of production as alien property, as their own non-property, . . ." <sup>38</sup> This permanent property-less condition of the workers was expressed somewhat more dynamically by Commons as the "power to withhold from others what they need." Commons traced some of the legal steps in the transition to this stage and concluded: "But when markets expanded, when laborers were emancipated, when people began to live by bargain and sale, when population increased and all resources became private property, then the power to withhold from others emerged gradually from that of exclusive holding for self as an economic attribute of property." <sup>39</sup> The conclusion of Marx was, of course, the abolition of the institution of private property. The Church has a two-fold comment to make on the power, which is a concomitant of private property, to withhold needed resources from others.

The first comment has been mentioned earlier but its importance bears its repeating. The Church argues for private property because it wants such property to be universally distributed among all individuals. This argument of the Church has been made clear in recent times by Pope John and the Second Vatican Council. The Council wrote that all forms of property--material and intangible goods--"remain a source of security not to be underestimated, even in the fact of public funds, rights, and services provided by society." The Council noted that "it

<sup>38</sup>Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 104.

<sup>39</sup>Commons, Legal Foundations, pp. 52, 53.

is very important to facilitate the access of both individuals and communities to some control over material goods."<sup>40</sup> Pope John XXIII wrote: "It is not enough, then, to assert that man has from nature the right of privately possessing goods as his own, including those of productive character, unless, at the same time, a continuing effort is made to spread the use of this right through all ranks of citizenry."<sup>41</sup> If private property gives to its owners a power to withhold its use from others, the Catholic response is that this must be counteracted not by the abolition of property but by its more universal distribution so that any negative effects of ownership may be nullified.

The second comment of the Church relative to this problem of the withholding power of property owners is also fundamental. This comment was summarized by Paul VI:

. . . private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditioned right. No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, when others lack necessities. In a word, "according to the traditional doctrine as found in the Fathers of the Church and the great theologians, the right to property must never be exercised to the detriment of the common good."<sup>42</sup>

Catholic teaching maintained that the withholding of goods from others is often unjustly done by the owners of property. The cases where this injustice arises are those instances where the social use of private

<sup>40</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71.

<sup>41</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 113. See also Pope Pius XII, "Radio Message of December 24, 1942," in Yzermans, The Unwearied Advocate, 1:35.

<sup>42</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 23. The citation in quotation marks is from Paul VI's "Letter to the 52nd Session of the French Social Weeks (Brest, 1965)," in Documentation Catholique, t. 62, Paris, 1965, col. 1365. Cf. Populorum Progressio, no. 23, footnote 23, for further references to this latter document.

property is vitiated by certain practices of owners. Pius XI noted the right of the state to force owners of private property to contribute to the common good. These owners may be forced to make such contributions, and the Pontiff claimed that such enforcement actually served to strengthen private property as an institution.<sup>43</sup>

It might be helpful to note specific applications of this principle of the common good to the question of withholding-power. The right of the state to tax private owners in order to provide for essential services has already been noted. The Second Vatican Council noted the right of the state to expropriate large rural estates which are not sufficiently productive. The Council wrote that "insufficiently cultivated estates should be distributed to those who can make these lands fruitful." The Council had in mind principally underdeveloped nations, but the application can be extended to developed areas and to industrial concerns which hinder the common good. The Council also maintained that "Especially in underdeveloped areas, . . . those men gravely endanger the public good who allow their resources to remain unproductive or who deprive their community of the material and spiritual aid it needs."<sup>44</sup>

Those factors which promote the common good were spelled out in a general way in Mater et Magistra. John XXIII noted the following points relevant to the common good of a nation:

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<sup>43</sup>See Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 49.

<sup>44</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71. The Council maintained that compensation should be given for any property so expropriated. For an identical view in this entire matter see Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 24.

. . . to provide employment for as many workers as possible; . . . to maintain a balance between wages and prices; to make accessible the goods and services for a better life to as many persons as possible; either to eliminate or to keep within bounds the inequalities that exist between different sectors of the economy-- . . . to balance properly any increases in output with advances in services provided to citizens, especially by public authority; . . . finally, to ensure that the advantages of a more humane way of existence not merely subserve the present generation but have regard for future generations as well.<sup>45</sup>

Pope John also mentioned the international common good and admonished that both levels of the common good "should be borne in mind, when there is question of determining the share of earnings assigned to those responsible for directing the productive enterprise, or as interest and dividends to those who have invested capital."<sup>45</sup>

Pius XI had cautioned against the evil effects of excessively high or low wages. He held that it was "contrary to social justice" to lower or raise wages solely for the sake of private profit and "with no consideration for the common good."<sup>46</sup> The Pontiff also urged that there be a proper proportion between workers' wages and the salaries of a firm's administrative officials. This doctrine would certainly allow a ceiling on certain corporate salaries or a raising of some workers' wages. A similar demand was made by Pius for a correct proportion of prices among the various sectors of the economy. The aim of all these procedures, many of which connote the injustice of withholding goods or services from the market, is to allow society to provide an abundance of goods for all its members.

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<sup>45</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 79, 81.

<sup>46</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 74.

A summary of the Church's position on private property's ability to withhold goods from others is as follows:

It is consistent Christian teaching, going back to the Fathers, that to save without investing is a wrongful use of resources. We have an obligation in justice either to invest usefully or to give away anything which is surplus to our needs. To hoard is sinful.<sup>47</sup>

When the Church says that private property possesses a social function, it is explicit in its meaning. Private property provides, or should provide in the Church's views, an adequate distribution of this world's goods. The Church, however, is not an egalitarian in this regard. Wealth, or wealthy people, can perform valuable functions for society. Pius XI, utilizing the principles of St. Thomas, maintained that "the investment of superfluous income in developing favorable opportunities for employment . . . is to be considered . . . an act of real liberality particularly appropriate to the needs of our time."<sup>48</sup>

In a true sense in the Church's doctrine there should be no superfluous income or superfluous wealth. Excessive income should be abolished. Income, even if not excessive, not individually needed is needed for the rest of society. There is a great latitude as to how society would best be aided by excess income. The main point here is that private property does not give the property owner an absolute right to withhold his property from others. On the contrary, the owner of private property has an obligation to make sure that his property is

<sup>47</sup>J. R. Kirwan, "Modern Economics and the Social Encyclicals," The Month 2d n.s. 9 (December 1976), p. 403.

<sup>48</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 51. "Larger Incomes" is perhaps a better translation of the document's phrase largiores proventus than is the given "superfluous income." For the teaching of St. Thomas see Summa Theologica, II-II, q. 134.

utilized for the good of others. If private property as a cultural and legal system does not provide for this universal utilization, then the state may modify or limit the institution of property itself. The state, however, must leave the institution sufficiently integral.

### Conclusion

In his book Capitalism and Freedom, Milton Friedman has maintained that a capitalistic form of economic organization is essential to the existence of human freedom. He wrote:

. . . freedom in economic arrangements is itself a component of freedom broadly understood, so economic freedom is an end in itself. In the second place, economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom.<sup>49</sup>

The Church has established a similar thesis in relationship to private property, although Friedman's espousal of a laissez-faire market economy does not seem reconcilable with Church social doctrine. The Church maintains that private property, not necessarily capitalism, is a social institution which is essential for securing human freedom for men as members of society. Private property is essential both as means and as quasi-end.

Private property guarantees in a special way freedom from want to members of a political and civil society. It gives to the individual as a member of society the power which enables him to determine the nature of his own existence in the face of an all-powerful state. In

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<sup>49</sup>Milton Friedman with the assistance of Rose D. Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 8.

this sense private property takes on the nature of a desired end and is a constitutive element of human freedom.<sup>50</sup> Private property is also seen by the Church to be an essential means to the attainment of human and civil liberties. It produces an order within society and instills a motivation within citizens which help to guarantee fundamental rights to all members of society.

This power-bestowing aspect of property is further corroborated by the fact that private property is obtained by human labor and is even constituted by the capacity to labor. This places property within the grasp of most individuals and further guarantees to them control over their personal development. Finally, the universal distribution of property means that, insofar as possible, all citizens will enjoy such control. The principle of the common good prevents the owners of private property from infringing upon the rights of others and forces them to use their property for the welfare of all members of society. The Church's thesis may thus be restated: Private property provides to individuals as members of society and to groups of individuals the power to control their own lives, their own development, and the nature of society itself.

The following chapter will investigate the Church's vision of a just and well-organized society.

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<sup>50</sup>The Second Vatican Council insisted that economic development be controlled by individual citizens. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 65.

CHAPTER XI  
A CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ORDER

Introduction

As proposed in Chapter 2, it is the function of this chapter to present the Catholic view of a normative social and economic order. This is done so that the Church's position on property may be placed within the context of the Church's more comprehensive view of the entire social order. After this brief introductory section the following section attempts to portray this more comprehensive Church view. The third section analyzes the role of private property and human labor within the Church's ideal social order.

The Church is ambivalent, but not ambiguous, about its concern with the economic order of the state. On the one hand it claims no jurisdiction nor expertise in economic affairs. Pius XI wrote:  
" . . . the Church believes that it would be wrong for her to interfere without just cause in such earthly concerns . . . " <sup>1</sup> On the other hand the Church claims a right and a duty to speak out on social and economic problems when these matters involve the moral law and questions of justice. In contemporary society the concern of the Church about social questions has a twofold character. First of all, the Church documents have more of a pastoral tone and less of a dogmatic one. This change

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<sup>1</sup>Pope Pius XI, Ubi Arcano (Encyclical Letter on the Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ), Acta Apostolicae Sedis 14 (December 27, 1922), p. 698, quoted in Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 41.



began to take place in the reign of Pope John XXIII, the change being due both to changed social conditions and to the personality of that pontiff. The change is a reflection of the desire on the part of the Church to enter into a meaningful dialog with "all of humanity" about the important problems of human living. Secondly, the Church's concern about temporal problems is more comprehensive in the twentieth than it was in the eighteenth and greater part of the nineteenth centuries. This involves the question of the socialization of the Gospel, that is, the relevance and application of religious and moral teachings of the Gospel to social structures and institutions.

#### Christian Concept of the Social Order

All popes since Leo XIII have testified to the existence of a Christian concept of an appropriate social order. Pope Pius XII noted explicitly that there is a "Christian concept of social economy."<sup>2</sup> This concept involves many elements, but it can be simplified into at least three different characteristics.<sup>3</sup> These three characteristics are:

1) An economy centered around the human personality and geared to satisfying human needs.

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<sup>2</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Address to Members of the World Congress of Chambers of Commerce, April 27, 1950," quoted in Guerry, Social Doctrine of the Church, p. 112.

In this chapter of the study the phrase "Christian social order" is used. Christian here refers to the doctrine proposed insofar as that doctrine is interpreted as flowing from the teachings of Jesus. The doctrine given is still that proper to the Roman Catholic Church and not (necessarily or even usually) that of all Christian Churches.

<sup>3</sup>For a more expanded version of the characteristics of a normative society see Guerry, Social Doctrine of the Church, especially Part III, "The Christian Concept of the Social Economy," pp. 111-201.

- 2) An economy which contributes to the common good.
- 3) An economy which is subservient to the natural and moral laws.

These characteristics have already been treated, at least in a general way or on a theoretical level. It is not intended to repeat or even summarize this treatment here. But it is necessary to look at the specifications and implications of these principles insofar as these specifications constitute a normative society. This elaboration of the principles will, in the remainder of this section, center around a description of the social order which the Church sees as an application of the above characteristics. The following section will then, as mentioned, comment further on the position of private property and of human labor in that social order.

The Church has established numerous specific conditions for a normative Christian society. These conditions are frequently expressed in a general way as being rights which are due to every man. These rights include that basic right to all the means necessary to sustain and develop life. "These means are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care and finally the necessary social services."<sup>4</sup> These rights are extended to security in sickness, unemployment, or old age.

The Church also holds that various moral and cultural rights are fundamental to man, the existence of which are necessary for a just society. These include the right to worship God as one's conscience determines, the right to be informed about public events and to have an opportunity to seek after truth, the right to express one's opinion

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<sup>4</sup>Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, no. 11.

and to practice and enjoy artistic endeavors. Fundamental to man also is the right to choose freely his state of life and to establish a family. There is also a range of political rights which a just society will grant to its citizens. These include an opportunity to participate in political life and to have the protection of the state for one's property and person.<sup>5</sup>

It is possible to catalog all of the rights which the Church wishes to see realized in society. It is hoped that the following analysis will provide a better insight into the type of society the Church envisions. At the same time this analysis will locate the Church's contribution, as it understands that contribution, to world social doctrine.

In the course of this study there was an incidental questioning of the validity of the phrase "Christian philosophy." Such a concept is often considered inaccurate since philosophy is the study of the ultimate nature of all reality by the human intellect and cannot properly be subdivided into Christian and non-Christian. With this understanding Christian philosophy is a valid concept only insofar as the human reason considers reality which is connected with or utilized in Christian teachings.

This study in discussing private property was faced with an analogous difficulty. The Church's teaching on property flows from man's nature. It is true that the Church considers man to have a supernatural life and destiny, and this has been shown to exert an influence on the Church's view of man and the type of life he should live. But much of

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<sup>5</sup>For a fuller development of these rights, see Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, nos. 8-27.

the force of the Church's teaching on property depends on the natural law and this law can be analyzed philosophically, that is, independently of theology.

In keeping with this type of argument the Church can be said to possess a natural sociology, a theory of the social and economic order which can be understood and accepted by men of all religious beliefs or even of none. Even the theological content of this sociology is considered by the Church as something which the human mind, unaided by "divine grace" as the Church understands this term, can arrive at. Those who profess no belief in a deity can arrive at similar conclusions from the nature of man but without the theological foundation. In this sense it can be said that "In substance . . . Christian moral law goes only a little way beyond natural moral law."<sup>6</sup> The practical conclusion for the social order is that the institutions which the Church proposes to society should be acceptable to most segments of that society, in the Church's view.

The "little way beyond natural moral law" is, however, theologically significant. This theological significance has practical implications, since the most abstruse theological tenet has some bearing upon the Church's concept of social order. This was shown in Chapter 8. The Church claims a more complete view of man, one which includes a supernatural order. It is in this supernatural order, in union with Christ, that "man attains to new fulfillment of himself, to a transcendent humanism which gives him his greatest possible perfection:

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<sup>6</sup>Messner, Social Ethics, p. 85.

this is the highest goal of personal development."<sup>7</sup> In the practical order the Church does not expect all men to accept this belief. The Church does feel that in its preaching of Christian principles "She can draw from the Gospel the most profound reasons and ever new incentives to promote generous dedication to the service of all men . . . and to eliminate the social consequences of sin which are translated into unjust social and political structures."<sup>8</sup>

The social psychologist George H. Mead recognized two fundamental forms in human society. These forms, he stated, have "found their expression in universal religions and in universal economic processes." Mead recognized the interrelationship between these two processes. He declared that the economic process "has been the most universal socializing factor in our whole modern society."<sup>9</sup> At the same time the economic process is the more successful the more its participants are able to understand and appreciate one another.

It is precisely this attitude, amplified by a complete theological system, which forms the basis of the Christian concept of a social and economic order. In Christian sociology it is not possible to separate economic activity from the religious sphere; such activity has moral rights and duties. This was the attitude of the Church and of European society in the Middle Ages. St. Thomas's treatment of property is had in a discussion on theft and robbery in a larger section devoted to

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<sup>7</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Synod of Bishops, Third General Assembly (October 25, 1974), "Evangelization of the Modern World," in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, no. 12.

<sup>9</sup>George H. Mead, Mind, Self & Society, edited and with an Introduction by Charles W. Morris (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934), pp. 258, 296.

virtues and vices. Charging a just price for an article or charging interest on loans were seen, not just as economic activities, but as moral ones affecting man's spiritual health.

Such an attitude is prevalent in the Church today in a more developed form. A noted Catholic theologian has written "The point above all others that Christian sociology must emphasize is that human society is more than a profanum or a purely natural structure."<sup>10</sup> Thus "Christian sociology" embraces all social, cultural, and economic activity. By engaging in economic activity a person develops himself and performs a valuable function for society and his fellowmen. Salvation is achieved in the marketplace as much as, if not more than, in the church. Giving a just wage to an employee and spending adequate time working are religious obligations, and failure in these areas are violations of God's law. Moreover, individuals have the right to enjoy social institutions and an economic structure which will further their freedom and allow for their personal development. If individuals have this right, then individuals and society have the obligation to strive for an adequate social structure. Pope Paul VI noted in this regard that "local and individual undertakings are no longer enough. The present situation of the world demands concerted action based on a clear vision of all economic, social, cultural, and spiritual aspects." The Pontiff further exhorted that urgent reforms in society should be taken immediately. "It is for each one," he wrote, "to take his share in

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<sup>10</sup>Fuchs, Natural Law, p. 182.

them with generosity, particularly those whose education, position and opportunities afford them wide scope for action."<sup>11</sup>

Thus the interrelationship between economic and religious activities results in a normative factor for the economic order. This normative factor is twofold, one element being the reverse of the other. The first element is that the institutions of society are to be such that they allow a person to lead a life of dignity, in peace with his fellowmen and socially and individually capable of developing those "virtues" which mean his true development. The second element is the reverse of this, that considerations and love for one's fellowman be the motivating force of social activity.<sup>12</sup>

This does not mean that the Church demands a completely Catholic or Christian community. The Church does look for a society basically and fundamentally founded on the principles of natural law.<sup>13</sup> These principles the Church sees as acceptable to all men. The Church claims also to be able to bring to this fundamental knowledge a new order of reality--the supernatural order. The theoretical conclusion to this brief discussion about the Church's view of a normative society is: "The special characteristic proper to Christian sociology consists,

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<sup>11</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, nos. 13, 32.

<sup>12</sup>To add a Catholic theological note this consideration and love should be modeled after the inner life of the triune God and the God-man Jesus Christ.

<sup>13</sup>Theoretically the specific content of the natural law can be known by the intellect of man unaided by grace. Practically, the Church understands this as almost impossible and certainly improbable. Thus the role of the Church in the social order is seen not only as adding supernatural truths to be considered by society but also as clarifying and confirming naturally knowable verities.

therefore, in the fact that its object is society in its entirety, in all its dimensions."<sup>14</sup> What is the practical impact of this theoretical conclusion?

Practically speaking the Church sees as a normative society one that is Christian in attitudes and institutions. As has been stated, this does not mean that all men be Christian or even that all men profess religious belief.<sup>15</sup> The Church sees as a practically normative society one which considers man in his entire nature and in his existential condition. The Church proposes to society and hopes from society's members a social order where each person considers himself to have some responsibility to every other person and to society. Every individual is to look upon every other individual as a fellow human being. Each person is conscious, not only of his strengths, but also of his weaknesses. This means that the limitations of man's intellect and the weakness of his will must also be considered. Many of the effects of these weaknesses can be overcome by the cooperative action of all members of society.

The Church sees every individual as having the right and the obligation to strive for human perfection according to the abilities and opportunities which he possesses. This human perfection can only be

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<sup>14</sup>Fuchs, Natural Law, p. 193.

<sup>15</sup>This sentence and the previous one need clarification. A theoretically normative society for the Church would be one where all men are "perfect Christians." A practically normative society is one where the existential conditions of man are considered and wide diversity of human potential is acknowledged. What is being presented here is a practically normative society. The Church is always working toward a more perfect realization of the practical norm so that it will approach the theoretical one.



had in a social setting, so that man can never forget his social dimension and responsibility to others and to society. The Church hopes that all men will be able to realize their dignity as human beings and that their lives will reflect that dignity. The Church declares: ". . . human fulfillment constitutes, as it were, a summary of our duties."<sup>16</sup>

It is this human fulfillment which the Church sees as the goal of the social and economic structure: ". . . all men are called to this fullness of development." The world should "furnish each individual with the means of livelihood and the instruments for his growth and progress, . . ." But an exclusive search for riches and possessions "becomes an obstacle to individual fulfillment and to man's true greatness." Technological development is needed to achieve the goods and services which will ensure an adequate existence for man. The Church, however, insists upon more than this technological development:

. . . even more necessary is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism which will enable modern man to find himself anew by embracing the higher values of love and friendship, of prayer and contemplation. This is what will permit the fullness of authentic development, a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human.<sup>17</sup>

Just as no individual can reach the perfection of his being in isolation, neither can individual nations achieve those conditions which will bring this perfection without cooperation with other nations. To continue the words of Paul VI: "There can be no progress towards the

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<sup>16</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 16.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., nos. 17, 22, 19, 20.

complete development of man without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity."<sup>18</sup> John XXIII argued strongly for this increased cooperation among nations as well as among different economic sectors of the same country.<sup>19</sup> The Second Vatican Council referred to this solidarity among nations as the "universal common good."<sup>20</sup> The principle of the common good enunciated earlier is now extended by the Church to cover the actions of individual states which will affect the social and economic status of other nations. The Church proposes this world-wide solidarity as an integral and realizable part of its social vision. Pope Paul VI expressed the goal of this world-community effort: "It is a question . . . of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man."<sup>21</sup>

The realization of, or at least the working toward the realization of, all of the above goals constitutes in a general way a Christian concept of the social economy. The following section treats specifically the role of private property and human labor in that Christian vision.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., no. 43.

<sup>19</sup>See Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 128-30, 157-60.

<sup>20</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 84.

<sup>21</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 47.

Private Property and Human Labor

This section attempts to analyze the normative role of private property in society according to the Church's view. Since, as was shown in Chapter 10, there is an intimate connection between property and labor, an analysis of this latter category will help to clarify the Church's picture of a normative society.

## Private Property

It is frequently thought that private property is an institution which benefits only the rich. The person who seems to gain the most is the large landholder, the owner of substantial amounts of corporate stock, or the possessor of a portfolio of large and varied financial assets. The Church looks at private property from another view. The person it intends to aid is the "common man," not the wealthy one. The distribution of private property is to be so widespread that all persons who can benefit from its possession may do so.

Private property is not an institution, in the Church's eyes, which is intended to justify the manifest inequalities in income and wealth which are prevalent in many industrialized societies. It is true that the Church is not egalitarian to the extent that the amounts of property possessed by each individual can be accumulated by a "one man, one acre" rule of distribution. The talents and abilities and motivation of men are different. These differing factors will be reflected in a distribution of this world's goods which is certainly not one to ensure a uniform mode of existence.

To miss the intention of the Church in the matter of private property is to miss an important aspect of its social doctrine. The Church documents constantly reiterate the demand that the inequalities in distribution must be remedied. The basis of the injustice is not that there is an inequality, but that many, if not a majority, of the people of the world are simply not able to provide for themselves in a suitable manner. These inequalities refer to the income and property of individuals, of different geographical areas or economic sectors, and of different countries.

Pope John XXIII insisted that "widespread private ownership should prevail, . . ." He lamented the fact that in many countries "great masses of workers . . . receive too small a return from their labor." It also happens that "the wealth and conspicuous consumption of a few stand out, and are in open and bold contrast with the lot of the needy." Pope John was concerned about "what can be done to minimize the differences between the rural standard of living and that of city dwellers whose money income is derived from industry or some service or other?"<sup>22</sup>

The correct understanding of the distribution of property and income requires an international viewpoint. The Second Vatican Council wrote that "advanced nations . . . have a very heavy obligation to help the developing peoples" in the latter's efforts at "human fulfillment of their citizens."<sup>23</sup> Pope Paul VI explicitly stated: ". . . the

<sup>22</sup> Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, nos. 115, 68, 69, 125.

<sup>23</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 36.

superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations."<sup>24</sup> Catholic bishops, meeting in Rome in 1971, were concerned with development and justice in the world. "The right to development," this synod wrote, "must be seen as a dynamic interpenetration of all those fundamental human rights upon which the aspirations of individuals and nations are based." This synod recommended "the transfer of a precise percentage of the annual income of the richer countries to the developing nations, fairer prices for raw materials, the opening of the markets of the richer nations and, in some fields, preferential treatment for exports of manufactured goods from the developing nations."<sup>25</sup>

The doctrine of private property, viewed as the right of all persons of all nations, is "a very bold doctrine, for it implies in effect a complete transformation of society."<sup>26</sup> Private property, viewed as an institution of just distribution, is thus a revolutionary doctrine, and this is how the Church intends it. The revolution, of course, is not one of physical violence but of social and moral reform. This is why it was said earlier that the Church's support of private property is not an approval of capitalism, either in theory or in actual practice. Theoretically the institution of private property is an essential element of capitalism. The Church supports private property not because it substantiates, in the root sense of standing under, capitalism, but

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<sup>24</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 49.

<sup>25</sup>Synod of Bishops, Second General Assembly (November 30, 1971), "Justice in the World," in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, nos. 15, 66.

<sup>26</sup>Guerry, Social Doctrine of the Church, p. 83.

because the nature of man demands property. Moreover, the Church sees most capitalist countries as being deficient in private property because not enough individuals possess it.

There is one other factor which is to be considered in the Church's analysis of the extent of private property among the members of society. To say that the Church supports private property is to give the implication that this support connotes approval of consumption patterns in the industrialized, private-property countries. The Church has, ever since its foundation, inveighed against exaggerated consumption of goods and against a stress on the acquisition of material possessions. The major reason for this has been that the possession of and striving for wealth has the tendency to supplant justice and charity for one's fellowman. The possession of wealth, in the eyes of the Church, allows man to forget his dependence upon God. The striving for wealth can obscure one's duty to God and obligations to neighbor.

Aristotle noted that there is a "natural" desire for wealth which is a part of the management of households. This desire is limited since man's needs in this regard are limited. But, he wrote, "some men turn every quality or art into a means of making money; . . ." Aristotle observed that in such men "as their desires are unlimited, they also desire that the means of gratifying them should be without limit."<sup>27</sup> St. Thomas also observed among some men an unlimited desire for riches. He wrote: "Hence he that desires riches, may desire to

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<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W. D. Ross, vol. 10: *Politica*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), bk. 1, chap. 9, 1258a2.

be rich, not up to a certain limit, but to be simply as rich as possible."<sup>28</sup> The Church, in the words of Pius XI, holds that an inordinate desire for riches "has impelled men to break the law of God and trample on the rights of their neighbors."<sup>29</sup> Paul VI noted: "The exclusive pursuit of possessions thus becomes an obstacle to individual fulfillment and to man's true greatness."<sup>30</sup>

The question arises as to the amount of income and wealth which the Church sees as appropriate for a complete and fulfilling life. The conclusion is not a specific one, since this amount is in part historically and culturally determined. The Church never attempts to make precise the limits which constitute adequate income and wealth. While at this same time it insists on property rights, it cautions against a growing supply of possessions for man. It sees an abundance of goods as imprisoning man if these goods are sought "as the highest good beyond which one is not to look."<sup>31</sup> In contemporary documents the Church is now proposing other moral arguments against excessive consumption. The Church speaks of the demand for resources and energy of the richer countries of the world and cautions against the "irreparable damage" that will be done to the earth "if their high rates of consumption and pollution . . . were extended to the whole of mankind."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 30, art. 4.

<sup>29</sup>Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 132.

<sup>30</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 19.

<sup>31</sup>Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 19.

<sup>32</sup>Synod of Bishops, Second General Assembly, "Justice in the World," no. 11.

## Human Labor

A Catholic writer on social issues has noted:

Without ever losing sight of the top role of private property on the personal as well as on the social level, we are permitted to think that society should seek more and more to center itself on labor. It is especially from labor that, directly or indirectly must be sought man's self-fulfillment, the goods that he requires for life, and the security that should attend its course.<sup>33</sup>

This comment seems to be a response to the importance which labor has received in recent Church documents. The interrelationship between private property and labor was shown in the previous chapter. The role of labor provides an insight into the importance of property and establishes an important norm for Christian society. The right and the duty to work is something which flows from man's nature and thus is also a part of the natural law. Pope Pius XII spoke of the "personal duty to labor imposed by nature."<sup>34</sup> John XXIII commented: ". . . it is clear that human beings have the natural right to free initiative in the economic field and the right to work."<sup>35</sup>

Labor has a threefold importance to the Church. First of all, it is an expression of human liberty and is the means of man's development.<sup>36</sup> It is true that man's labor is necessary; he is forced to labor

<sup>33</sup>Jean Villain, "L'encyclique Mater et Magistra: son apport doctrinal," Revue de L'Action Populaire (septembre-octobre 1961):898, quoted in Calvez, Social Thought of John XXIII, p. 107, chap. 2, footnote 68.

<sup>34</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Radio Address of June 1, 1941," in Yzermans, The Unwearied Advocate, 1:215.

<sup>35</sup>Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, no. 18.

<sup>36</sup>Labor itself is self-fulfilling. Any suffering or drudgery connected with labor is seen as flowing from original sin, that is, "a freedom turned aside from its proper end and bent back upon itself to serve the demands of egotism" (Calvez, Social Thought of John XXIII, p. 29).



in order to survive. But this necessity to labor is part of man's nature, just as it is necessary to breathe in order to live. The Church seems all too mindful of the injustices associated with human labor. It is the intention of the Church to give to the individual worker as much freedom as it is possible to have. Thus, as just noticed in the quote of John XXIII above, the Church insists on the necessity for "free initiative in the economic field." The Second Vatican Council contended that "the active participation of everyone in the running of the enterprise should be promoted." It is only by participating in many aspects of decision-making, the Council noted, that workers "will grow day by day in the awareness of their own function and responsibility."<sup>37</sup> Worker participation in decision making will be returned to shortly.

The second importance which the Church gives to labor is that by their labor men are able to change the world and bring about justice and peace. Labor thus is not only a personal activity, it is also a social one. The purpose of labor can never be an isolated function; it must also have as its goal some good or service to be given to society. The good produced by a person's labor may be self-consumed, but even this is seen as benefiting society insofar as it produces a useful and productive citizen. It is by the production of goods and services that society as a whole and its individual members maintain themselves. A plentiful supply of goods is needed for physical health and cultural development. These goods contribute to a peaceful social order,

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<sup>37</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 68.

especially when the conditions of labor and the distribution of goods reflect a just social system.

Not only is the product of labor a social one, but the labor process is, or should be, one furthering social goals and producing social order. Men and women, organized and working in a common production process, especially one which has some social value, do thus constitute a social good and a benefit to society. Labor is thus a unifying element, bringing together various individuals in a common goal. The above two benefits of labor are summarized as follows:

Work is social by virtue of its end, the service of the commonality. It is social by virtue of the naturally social character of its performance. It is social by virtue of its capacity to serve as a vital bond for a society which, without it, would be no more than an amorphous mob.<sup>38</sup>

The third element of importance which the Church sees in labor is a theological one. The labor of man reflects the labor of God himself, who created the world and continually sustains it, according to Catholic doctrine. In addition the work of Jesus is seen to have a salvific character. The Catholic position states: "Work is, then, raised up and sanctified because the man-God has been a worker"<sup>39</sup> and because of God's continuous work. Work is also salvific because, as mentioned in the first of these three points, it brings about social conditions which allow for man's development. This view sees work as "holy" in its very essence. The Church's position also sees work as having a

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<sup>38</sup>Calvez and Perrin, The Church and Social Justice, p. 238.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

contemplative value because "It should remind you always of the creative hand of God; . . . "<sup>40</sup>

The normative factor connected with man's labor and flowing from man's nature is the responsibility which man should achieve in economic decisions. Just as the Church advocates the widespread ownership of property, it also demands that individuals should have a deciding vote in the economic operations which affect them. John XXIII noted: "From the dignity of the human person there also arises the right to carry on economic activities according to the degree of responsibility of which one is capable."<sup>41</sup> The responsibility here refers to the actions of individuals and groups of individuals making judgments which flow from their minds and wills. Such types of actions are the right and duty of all men. Since economic considerations play such an important role in man's human condition, the economic order is an important area of man's responsibility.

Here again something of the revolutionary nature of the Church's doctrine should be noted. The theoretical foundation of this thesis is the principle of subsidiarity, which holds that human freedom and development depend upon human responsibility. The Church always balances the need for the actions of civil authorities with a reliance upon individual responsibility. Indeed, the actions of the civil authorities are to be of such a nature that they further and demand

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<sup>40</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Address to Italian Workers, June 13, 1943," Acta Apostolicae Sedis 35 (1943), p. 178, quoted in Calvez and Perrin, The Church and Social Justice, p. 229.

<sup>41</sup>Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, no. 20. The degree of responsibility should naturally vary according to the capability of the individual to respond to and profit from that responsibility. There is an

individual and group responsibility. Such actions are truly promotive of the common good, that is, they allow and enable individuals "to achieve their own perfection."

This principle of subsidiarity, one which has been linked with the principle of the common good, is also valid for assigning responsibility to different sectors and nations. The insistence of the Church upon the obligation of the richer nations to help those which are still developing has already been pointed out. At the same time it urges these developing nations "to seek the complete human fulfillment of their citizens." The Church holds that "true progress begins and develops primarily from the efforts and endowments of the people themselves." These nations, while utilizing the frequently necessary help of other countries, "should rely chiefly on the full unfolding of their own resources and the cultivation of their own qualities and tradition."<sup>42</sup>

It is now possible to make comparisons between the teachings of Karl Marx and the Roman Catholic Church on private property. This comparison is done in the following chapter.

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analogy here with private property. Men have a right to property, but an individual may be better off by not actually owning property.

<sup>42</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 36.

## CHAPTER XII

### COMPARISON OF MARXIAN AND CATHOLIC VIEWS

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the Marxian and Catholic teachings on private property. This comparison will revolve around the four categories mentioned in Chapter 2 and analyzed separately for each system up to this point. The intention is not to attempt to mention all similarities and differences, but to highlight those areas which have some noticeable relationship to private property.

#### Analysis of the Economic Process

This section discusses the analysis of the economic process given by both systems under two headings--"philosophical perspective" and "technical critique." The functions of these subcategories were outlined in Chapter 2.

#### Philosophical Perspective

##### The Interpretation of History

The first apparent discrepancy which must be noted between the Marxian and the Catholic systems involves the interpretation of history. Marx saw history as predominantly a response to economic factors, primarily the mode of production. Catholic thought emphasizes history as a process of salvation. The question which will be

of ultimate concern is the effect which the respective theories have upon the property doctrine of each system. It is important to re-emphasize here that this study is concerned with the intellectual integrity of the systems. This means the truth and consistency of doctrine along with its logical development. Psychological and religious motivations are important only insofar as they help to an understanding of each system.

The Marxian economic interpretation of history speaks of the effect which the economic process has upon the historical development of society. The theory says that society's political and cultural development are predominantly influenced by the system of production. The theory is certainly not a denial of free will nor does it deny the importance of human decisions upon man's historical development. Leonard Krieger has noted: "For Marx the common substance of history was the activity of men--'men as simultaneously the authors and actors of their own history'--and this activity extended equally to all levels: modes of production, social relations and categories."<sup>1</sup> It was pointed out in Chapter 3 that the economic interpretation of history does not postulate an economic man responding only to some nebulous quantification of profit or pleasure.

The theory does state that the method by which society organizes its production is crucial to society's development. Such a theory in itself, if the implied philosophical materialism and class struggle

<sup>1</sup>Leonard Krieger, "The Uses of Marx for History," Political Science Quarterly 75 (September 1960):362. Reference to this article is made in Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, p. 13, footnote 10.

which accompany it are prescinded from, does not contradict any Catholic religious dogma.<sup>2</sup> To prescind from both of these characteristics, however, would destroy a substantial Marxian aspect of the theory.

Catholic doctrine does contain an elaborate theory of history, but this is more properly a theological doctrine involving historical events insofar as they contribute to man's salvation and manifest God's salvific will. The Church refers to this theological interpretation of historical events as salvation history or the history of salvation. This salvation history is obviously concerned with existential man, man with his intellectual, volitional, and social nature. This salvation history does not represent incidents different from those in "secular" history, but these events are interpreted from a particular theological viewpoint. A point of discrepancy between Marxian and Catholic thought is the degree to which the free decisions of man are determined, guided is perhaps a better word, by material conditions of life. Catholic doctrine implies that such decisions are more open to man's intellectual determination than does Marxian doctrine.

A comparison in this area is difficult, however. Catholic teaching frequently condemns not the materialist interpretation of history but the atheistic, philosophical materialism which is concomitant with that theory. In point of fact it is difficult to find official

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<sup>2</sup>Marx's anti-religious attitude constantly intrudes itself into his theory of history. The theory is not incompatible with a theory of spiritual reality, as was mentioned in Chapter 3. Marx's emphasis upon class conflict is an important element of his theory, but is incidental to a materialist interpretation of history. Schumpeter noted that Marx's theory of classes is "logically separable" from his interpretation of history. See Schumpeter, History, p. 439.

Catholic documents which comment on Marx's theory of history. The Church cautiously guards man's free activity, but this is not incompatible with Marx's theory. Marx and Engels, in their later works especially, seem to have modified their theory so as to allow determining force to man's initiative.

The relationship in Marx between his teaching on private property and his theory of history is not clear. If Marx had not had his insight about the primacy of production, it is quite likely that his further studies might have taken him in a different direction than they did. Two things are apparent, however. The first is the intimate causal relationship of private property to the corruption of the economic system under capitalism. Marx postulated a determining effect to the production process. The capitalist system, based upon private property, brings with it expropriation and alienation. Private property becomes equivalent to a corrupt system.

The other apparent fact is that there is no logical necessary relationship between the economic theory of history and the alienating nature of private property. This conclusion can be put two ways in order to make it more apparent. If the economic interpretation of history were false, Marx's thesis on the effects of private property could still have some validity. On the other hand, even if the economic interpretation of history is true, then the Catholic position on property could still be valid. Thus the property institution most appropriate for society cannot be discerned from the economic interpretation of history. This point will enter into the conclusions in Chapter 13.



Interest in the Economic System

The dependence of society upon economic realities was an insight perfectly clear to Marx. This insight forced a systematic study of economic organization. Marx looked at the entire course of human history and traced man's economic development, which was fundamentally man's social, political, and cultural development, throughout this history. This involved a journey from tribal society to ancient or Asiatic society, the latter exhibiting a union of several tribes and a communal type of ownership. The next stage of ownership was the feudal one. During this stage property "primarily consisted on the one hand of landed property with serf labour chained to it, and on the other of the personal labour of the individual who with his small capital commands the labour of the journeyman."<sup>3</sup> Feudal society developed by the forceful acquisition of common properties and the development of the new industrial potential into capitalist society. Marx's analysis, that which occupied the major part of his life, was concerned primarily with this capitalist form of society. His goal, as noted in Chapter 3, was "to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society."

Marx noted that in capitalist society the owners of capital claimed a portion of the economic value which was produced by the workers. Maurice Dobb has argued that appropriation of a surplus by those who had no part in its production was an historical datum for Marx. This appropriation was for Marx an expropriation and

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<sup>3</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 34.

exploitation; it was as unjust as if it had been done by military force. Dobb held that for Marx "The specific economic problem consisted, not in proving this, but in reconciling it with the law of value . . ." <sup>4</sup> This expropriation by the capitalist was to Marx the evident consequence of the capitalist mode of production, therefore, it was the result of private property.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact genesis of Marx's views on private property. They originated in his early formative years. The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts are ample evidence of this. <sup>5</sup> In this work Marx showed that he had already spent some time in analyzing property. He began his analysis of labor with the complete poverty of the worker, a starting point he accepted from the economists themselves: "On the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; . . ." <sup>6</sup> In his analysis Marx showed the poverty and alienation of the worker to be due to private property.

The Manuscripts were written before Marx began his systematic study of political economy. The work contains Marx's philosophic and even poetic insights into the corruptive nature of private property.

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<sup>4</sup>Maurice Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 146.

<sup>5</sup>David McLellan analyzed Marx's earlier works in Marx Before Marxism. McLellan showed that, in addition to the Manuscripts, in Marx's earlier works, especially the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of State and On the Jewish Question, Marx was already critical of private property. See David McLellan, Marx Before Marxism (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1970), pp. 122-125, 134-139, 180-188.

<sup>6</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 106.

In the course of his campaign for communism Marx realized that he needed to build an economic analysis which showed, in scientific and technical terms, the validity of his observations and insights. His economic analysis incorporated and substantiated his property views.

The concern of the Catholic Church for economic matters began with its concern about man's final goal, for it saw its function as one of leading man to this end. In order to achieve the purpose of his existence, that is, to lead a fully human life of personal development in service to one's neighbor, man needs material and other economic goods. The Church consequently became concerned with the methods and conditions of society which were to provide these goods, that is, it became concerned with the economic order.

The entire logical development of the Catholic theory on property, here again obviously not chronological, is easy to follow. How can man best be provided with the material goods he needs to satisfy his personal demands? In the light of the obvious fact that the earth's resources were needed by all men of all ages, this use by all thus establishing natural law, what system of apportioning these resources would best fulfill the function they had to perform? The preeminence of man over other creatures was obvious to Catholic thought. His nature was analyzed and his destiny noted. Society, or the coming together of men to achieve some common purpose, was seen as a natural phenomenon which was to help all its members reach their final destiny. The Church's response to the problem was: Man's nature demands that he be able to own and control material goods as his private possessions. The use of these goods, however, always involves

a social dimension. Goods must be used to achieve the common good of the entire society.

This property doctrine satisfied the various criteria for a correct social order which the Church had developed. It is quite possible that the Church could have given greater importance to state or community ownership of goods. This is evident when the universal goal of material goods is considered. But the Church concluded that man's nature was such that private property was an institution necessary for his welfare. The point here is that the Church applied a theory of social and economic analysis to a specific problem of social organization. The basis of that theory is that society must be organized to allow man to achieve the purpose of his existence.

#### Technical Critique

Marxian technical analysis of the economic order, that is, of the capitalist mode of production, was done in a manner acceptable to economists of Marx's day and even of the present. The Church, on the other hand, while accepting any legitimate method of technical analysis of the economic system, has relied upon a theologically and philosophically oriented method in its own investigation of such a system. Because of this, it is difficult to compare the technical analyses of the economic order made by Marx and the Church. There can, however, be a comparison of the approach to technical analysis, of the heuristic, in the sense of guiding, methodology used by the two systems.

The important point of comparison is that both Marxian and Catholic analysis follow a strictly deductive method. The deductive method

is understood as one where the conclusions are derived from general premises which are, for some reason, taken as certain truths: "Deduction is an inference or argumentation from a universal to a less universal or particular, and in some cases also to another universal; . . ." <sup>7</sup>

The basic universal premise governing both systems is similar. For Marx it was the conviction that man is the supreme being and that all social order must contribute to man's development. The Church, on the other hand, holds that the full development of the human person is an obligation and a right given to man by the supreme being, God. <sup>8</sup>

Hegelian philosophy centered around the Idea or the Absolute:

The Absolute, which is the inner, the fundamental, nature of the universe is essentially a rational or an intellectual being, and is therefore designated by Hegel as the "reason." It is the Reason, then, which as the basis of reality, manifests itself in the world as it appears to us. <sup>9</sup>

For Hegel history was a rational process, the goal of which was an ever fuller unveiling of truth and freedom as man approached knowledge of himself and of nature as part of the Absolute.

Such a process was both too theistic and too divorced from the realities of material existence for Marx. He held that it was the

<sup>7</sup>Brugger and Baker, eds., Philosophical Dictionary, s.v. "Deduction," by J(osef) S(anteler).

<sup>8</sup>For a similar statement on the Marxian position see A. van den Bald, "Karl Marx and the End of Religion," Theology Digest 25 (Spring 1977):66. This article is a condensation of van den Bald, "Karl Marx en het einde de religie. Een kritische beschouwing over Marx' godsdiensttheorie," Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift 30 (1:1976):37-54. It is perhaps possible to establish both statements, but particularly the Catholic, in even more fundamental convictions. The above are chosen because they encompass a reference to the social order.

<sup>9</sup>Cooper, The Logical Influence of Hegel on Marx, p. 95.

material or economic structure which determined the nature of man's existence. The entire tremendous effort of Marx's economic works was directed to showing that society was evolving to that state or set of conditions which would allow the full development of human potential. Bronfenbrenner intimated that it is perhaps impossible to separate "Marx's theoretical system . . . from the remainder of his social philosophy, . . ." <sup>10</sup> Such inseparability is the conclusion here proposed. Capital, in simplistic terms, is the technical justification of the Marxian thesis that social and economic conditions will someday allow man to be free and human.

The Church's insistence upon the God-given dignity of the human person has already been stressed. It has been pointed out that the Church advocates a "transcendent humanism" which sees man as the "end of all social institutions." John XXIII remarked: "Beginning with this very basic principle whereby the dignity of the human person is affirmed and defended, Holy Church . . . has arrived at clear social teachings whereby the mutual relationships of men are ordered."<sup>11</sup>

The observation as to the general deductive methodology used by both Marxian and Catholic thought is important for two reasons. First of all, this conclusion obviates the necessity to categorize more explicitly the Marxian methodology, a task beyond the scope of this study. There is, consequently, no attempt to espouse the thesis that

<sup>10</sup>See Martin Bronfenbrenner, "Das Kapital for the Modern Man," in David Horowitz, ed., Marx and Modern Economics (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), p. 206. This article is reprinted from Science and Society, Autumn 1965.

<sup>11</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 219, 220.

dialectical rationalism was the root of the Marxist method,<sup>12</sup> or that Marx and Engels used "the 'factual' method of modern empirical science, . . ." <sup>13</sup> It should be noted that Venable, the author of the latter quote, rejected the thesis that Marxian analysis is deductive. His meaning of the deductive method is, however, somewhat more restrictive than is intended here. Marx's deductive method consisted in an effort to explain how society was going to arrive at some set of social conditions which he saw as normative. This normative position itself seems to have been derived from several more basic truths which Marx held as firm convictions. There is no evidence, although this is certainly open to study, that the realization of these basic truths was reached by some empirical or positivist methodology.

The second reason why Marxian and Catholic use of a deductive method is important is that this common method gives greater validity to this study and aids the determining of the conclusions in the following chapter. The generally deductive nature of the development of both systems allows the two systems to be compared by examining two general areas of study. The first area is the basic assumptions of the systems, which in this case include the goals of an economic system. The second area to be examined is the degree to which the proposed economic system of property builds upon the assumptions and furthers the goals of that system.

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<sup>12</sup>Murray Wolfson, A Reappraisal of Marxian Economics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), pp. 19-26.

<sup>13</sup>Venable, Human Nature, p. 10.

Both of these two general areas are examined in the three remaining specific categories which have served as topics of analysis for this study. In other words one result of examining the analysis of the economic process by each system, the first of the four categories to be compared, is the conclusion that a comparison of the three remaining categories should logically give some insight into the divergent property views. The following section compares the two views on man and human development, a topic which is fundamental to both systems.

#### Human Nature

The two subsections of this category outlined in Chapter 2 and developed in Chapters 5 and 9 will be compared here. These two subsections concern human nature and its development and the role of property in that development. These topics are not so neatly separated in this section. Human nature and property's role in its development is first discussed. This is followed by a look at the evolutionary development of man.

#### Human Nature and Private Property

The fundamental difference between the Catholic and the Marxian conceptions of man can be analyzed in several ways. These conceptions can be said to revolve around the dichotomy between theism and atheism. In philosophical terms the conceptions revolve around a conflict



between spiritualism and materialism.<sup>14</sup> These ideas about human nature can also be expressed from an anthropological viewpoint which treats of the origin and nature of man. The following analysis involves something of all three views.

In comparing the Marxian and Catholic views on human nature there is certainly no doubt about the obvious discrepancy centering around the relationship of man to a creator. Catholic thought sees God as both the origin and destiny of man, while Marx saw God to be unnecessary and unreasonable. In Catholic thought man is supreme because God, the transcendent being, has made man's nature like to his own. This God-given nature, a reflection of God himself, thus becomes the basis for absolute norms of human action. In Marxian thought man is supreme unto himself. Marx certainly did not espouse theoretical pragmatism. Nor was he a complete relativist, advocating an ethics in which moral laws were completely varied according to diverse social situations. He recognized a need for some absolute, for something which would serve as a universal criterion against which to judge human actions. He found this absolute in human nature. The specific characteristics of that nature which became supreme for Marx were (1) the conscious, self-creative activity of man and (2) the species and social aspect of man's nature which flowed from this conscious activity.

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<sup>14</sup>It is curious that Marx, an accomplished philosopher, recognized a certain "spiritual" element in man, but never scientifically analyzed this element in terms of fundamental principles of being.

Opposed to the theism of the Church Marx's anthropocentrism represented a type of natural religion. For the Church, man was in existence because God freely willed it so. The world ultimately came from God and immediately depended upon him. Man's existence had to be God-centered. Marx saw no need of a creating power. Man had achieved his nature of being, according to Marx, solely by his own activity and completely independently of any supernatural being. Marx wrote in the Manuscripts of 1844: "A being only considers himself independent when he stands on his own feet; and he only stands on his own feet when he owes his existence to himself."<sup>15</sup> To anticipate a conclusion from this would be to say that if Marx saw the need for a world free from suffering, man would have to produce it by his own abilities and actions.<sup>16</sup>

As a consequence of the above beliefs, the dignity of the human individual receives a different emphasis in the two systems of thought. The Catholic position sees man as made in the image of God; man's rational nature places him above and able to control all other beings. Man also has a destiny as an eternal companion of a living God. Obviously it was otherwise for Marx:

Man's chief dignity, Marx and Engels believed, lay precisely in that biological endowment which ultimately distinguished him in their eyes from all other animals--the ability, for which man's labour in the course of evolutionary development

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<sup>15</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 144. Bertell Ollman has noted that "Many of the poems . . . that Marx wrote while still a student are songs of praise for man's creative drives and cries of defiance against whatever would fetter him" (Ollman, Alienation, p. 104).

<sup>16</sup>This statement is meant to be a logical conclusion of Marx's thought and not an attempt at posthumous psychoanalysis.

was primarily responsible, to manipulate and transform nature in accordance with his own purposes, and to make his own history consciously.<sup>17</sup>

Man was unique and valuable because he was a member of a species which could act consciously and self-creatively.

The difference in attitude toward human dignity arising from these viewpoints may seem only superficial. In the writings of Marx and of the Church there seems to be equal concern about the welfare of all individuals. Human dignity is regarded differently in each system, however; the difference is both theoretical and practical.

For Marx man is a biological being with some quality analogous to that of a spiritual being. Man is clearly different from other beings and clearly superior to them. This superiority rests upon man's conscious, creative activity. For the Church man is a biological being with a spiritual principle. This spiritual principle not only means the ability to perform acts beyond the capability of man's biological nature, it means an eternal destiny with the possibility of sharing in some mysterious way in the being of God.

The practical consequence of this difference is also real. A simple reference here must suffice. Marx exhorted to revolution to attain a communist state and allowed that state to be totalitarian in the early stages of communism. The Church, at least in theory, does not allow the rights of an individual to be denied in order to obtain some good and praiseworthy end. In the Marxian view there is a certain superiority of species over individual, while Catholic teaching

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<sup>17</sup>Venable, Human Nature: The Marxian View, p. 74.

emphasizes individual rights to what might be considered a point of fanaticism. The latter's concern for human dignity further confirms the value of natural law and, for the Church, lends greater emphasis to the force of that law.

The permanence of those characteristics which form human nature also present different opinions between the two systems. The Church views man's nature as a God-given, permanent reality, while Marx saw man's nature as capable of changing in different cultural and historical periods. Although this represents a true difference of opinion, it would not be completely correct to label the Church as the "essentialist" and Marx as the "existentialist" in this matter. Both views hold to permanent characteristics of the human person, without which they would not be human. The Church speaks in terms of man's intellectual and volitional powers, while Marx maintained that "free, conscious activity is man's species character."<sup>18</sup>

But for Marx man actually changes and determines his nature by his productive activity. He wrote:

But since for the socialist man the entire so-called history of the world is nothing but the creation of man through human labor, nothing but the emergence of nature for man, so he has the visible, irrefutable proof of his birth through himself, of the process of his creation.<sup>19</sup>

The natural law for Marx, if he would admit of such terminology, resides in the freedom which man must have to "create" his own nature.

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<sup>18</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 113.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 145. For further elucidation on this point see in the Manuscripts the entire chapter entitled "Private Property and Communism." Cf. in this study Chapter 5, pp. 121-122.

This is an essential condition of Marxian anthropology because it alone guarantees to man the capability of human development.

This social development by man's own conscious activity became Marx's "religion." It is possible that Marx owed some or much of this insight to Feuerbach, who laid the foundation for the transformation of the Hegelian dialectic:

The concept of dialectics, in Hegel as elsewhere, refers to a reciprocal relation between a subject and its object, a "conversation" between consciousness and whatever is outside consciousness. Hegel's notion of this was first developed in a theological context, the "conversation" was ultimately one between man and God. With Feuerbach, it was a "conversation" between man and man's own productions. Put differently, instead of a dialogue between man and a superhuman reality, religion became a sort of human monologue.<sup>20</sup>

It was this latter dialectic, appropriated and completed by Marx, which stood the dialectic of Hegel on its head. Marx, with an "innate" distrust and even hatred of anything religious, consistently condemned anything different from his religion of the development of man's social and species nature by his, man's, own activity. This activity was influenced, of course, by man's method of production.

The Church lays claim not only to essentialism but also to existentialism in that it professes to notice the permanent realities of man's nature as that nature exists in the present historical period. What the Church claims is that those God-given characteristics of human nature--rational and volitional powers--are the characteristics of man's nature which demand that he be able to own property. These

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<sup>20</sup>Peter L. Berger, A Rumor of Angels (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday & Co., 1969), p. 57.

powers are permanent and the limitations of these powers are also permanent. What gives particular force to this argument is that the prescription of private property is looked upon as inviolable because it is a prescription of God intellectually recognizable by man by an analysis of his own existing nature.

The role which private property plays in the development of the human personality is exactly contradictory in each system. There are two major reasons for this. The first reason is concerned with the different concept of man and with the difference between Marxian and Christian humanism. For the Church private property brings to an individual freedom in directing his own affairs. It also gives a needed area of responsibility so that the individual's development can expand by his own rational decisions.

Marxian denunciation of the extent to which private property (in productive goods) degraded the individual could not be more complete. In his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 Marx developed this degradation in terms of alienation. This alienation forced the individual worker to be concerned about his own personal existence to the detriment of society's welfare. Concomitant with this alienation was the desire for the acquisition of material goods as one of the primary motivations of human activity. While not rejecting this analysis, Marx later translated alienation into technical economic terms so that private property was shown to be the exploitation of the worker's labor power and consequently of the worker's own person. Under the capitalist mode of production "Self-earned private property . . . is supplanted by capitalistic private property, which rests on

exploitation of the nominally free labour of others, i.e., on wage-labour."<sup>21</sup>

The second reason for the discrepancy over property's role in human development is concerned with property insofar as it is a legal and social institution and not simply because it provides for individual possessions. It is easy to note that both Marxian and Catholic thought see similar benefits coming from a different social institution--the presence or the absence of private property. These benefits are freedom of the human person and the possibility of responsible, creative human activity. The controversy then devolves into one of selecting the better means of arriving at human development by arriving at free and responsible activity. This controversy resolves itself into the question of whether private property is a source of power for the individual person or whether it "concretizes" power in the hands of a particular group. This question will receive comment in the next section, after some notice is made of the possibility of man's evolutionary development.

#### Evolutionary Development of Human Nature

The foundation for this comparison was laid for the Marxian position in Chapter 5 and developed more fully in Chapter 9, while the Catholic position was outlined in Chapter 8. Marx proclaimed that the abolition of private property in capital goods would mark the real beginning of human development. He noted: ". . . it is the

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<sup>21</sup>Marx, Capital, 1:762.

association of individuals [a community of revolutionary proletarians] . . . which puts the conditions of the free development and movement of individuals under their control-- . . . "22

This development eventuates in a truly socialized individual.<sup>23</sup> With increased leisure time and with property-caused alienation gone, man is set free for "an existence guaranteeing to all the free development and exercise of their physical and mental faculties."<sup>24</sup> The possibility of this development is further explained by Engels:

With the seizing of the means of production . . . the whole sphere of the conditions of life which environ man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man, who for the first time becomes the real, conscious lord of Nature, because he has now become master of his own social organisation. . . . The extraneous objective forces that have hitherto governed history pass under the control of man himself. . . . It is the ascent of man from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom.<sup>25</sup>

It is the purpose of these few pages not to recount the direction and possibility of that human development, but to contrast it with the Catholic view of developmental possibilities of man. Even this area is too broad for this study and the discussion will be limited to the central point of concern. This point was mentioned in Chapter 9:<sup>26</sup> Is it possible, in the Church's view, for human nature to develop to

<sup>22</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 80.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 132-146; Grundrisse, p. 712.

<sup>24</sup>Frederick Engels, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, in Robert C. Tucker, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), p. 637. This work is a portion of Engels' Anti-Duhring.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 637-638.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Chapter 9, pp. 235-241.



the point where private property in productive goods will not be a necessary institution of society?

Even the casual reader will have noted that the Church documents constantly reiterate that the right to property, even in productive goods, is held by the Church to be something which is always and everywhere valid. There are two points of concern here: (1) the possibility of human development to the point where man's nature will no longer require private property, and (2) the various forms which property takes and might take in different historical periods.

These two areas, of course, overlap, and, in discussing the possibility of human development an insight is given to the Church's position on changing property forms. An early and clear formulation of the Church's natural law argument for private property was given by Pope Leo XIII:

For every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own. . . . It is the mind, or the reason, which is the chief thing in us who are human beings; it is this which makes a human being human, and distinguishes him essentially and completely from the brute. . . . [Man] must have within his right to have things not merely for temporary and momentary use . . . but in stable and permanent possession; . . . <sup>27</sup>

John XXIII confirmed the same right of property because "it is rooted in the very nature of things, whereby we learn that individual men are prior to civil society, and hence, that civil society is to be directed toward man as its end."<sup>28</sup> John continued by proclaiming private property a prerequisite for human freedom. The Second Vatican

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<sup>27</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 5.

<sup>28</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 109.

Council, in a quote already given, maintained that "Ownership and other forms of private control over material goods contribute to the expression of personality."<sup>29</sup>

The natural law argument is expressed in various forms in these documents. This argument is based on the assertion that man's rational nature gives him a particular character and places him at the pinnacle of creation because rationality is a faculty of man's spiritual soul. This gives to man a preeminent dignity and makes him the goal of all social structure. In the words of Pope Pius XII: "The origin and the primary scope of social life is the conservation, development and perfection of the human person, helping him to realize accurately the demands and values of religion and culture set by the Creator for every man and for all mankind, both as a whole and in its natural ramifications."<sup>30</sup>

The stress at this point is clear. Man by very definition is a rational animal, a being surpassing in dignity lower forms of life by reason of his intellect and free will, faculties metaphysically based in a spiritual soul. Any evolutionary development of man cannot take away his intellectual capacity without at the same time taking away the human nature. The Church maintains that man's intellectual power cannot develop and he cannot direct his life in freedom if the economic and psychological freedom given by private property is lacking. Private ownership is fundamentally considered by the Church "as an

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<sup>29</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71.

<sup>30</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Radio Address of December 24, 1942," in Yzermans, The Unwearing Advocate, p. 30.

extension of human freedom."<sup>31</sup> The ability to acquire this freedom is a permanent requirement of the human personality.

The other area mentioned above which is relevant to this entire question is that of changing property forms. These changing forms have little, if any, influence on the Church's theory. It was previously noted that John XXIII approved of professional training, a type of property ownership, over external goods because such an asset "proceeds directly from the human person."<sup>32</sup> The Pontiff was saying that such training involves more human development than does the mere acquisition of material goods. On the practical level the Church warns the state not to usurp its power and deny to the individual those rights which will make him free in a contemporary world. At the same time, as noted in Chapter 2, many church documents have supported the right of the state to regulate and determine forms of property appropriate to a particular historical period, people, or culture.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71. The Church's explanation of the natural law right to property is patently more positive than that of some Catholic commentators, a few of whom were mentioned in Chapter 9 (cf. pp. 243-244). Church documents never stress the fallen nature of man as the basis of man's right to property, but always emphasize the dignity of man's reason and of his person. It is true that man's reason, according to the Church, is defective because of original sin, and the Church holds that property is due to man in his existential situation. But if the Church means that property is due to man predominantly because man's will is weak and his interest defective, it has not made such an argument in its official documents.

<sup>32</sup>Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no. 107. Cf. also Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 77.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 40-43. In Church documents cf. Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, nos. 7, 35; Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 49; Pope Pius XII, "Address of June 1, 1941," in Yzermans, The Unwearing Advocate, 1:214; Pope John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, nos. 54-55; Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 71.

Further comment on the developmental possibilities of man will be found in this chapter in the final section on the ideal society.

#### Private Property--Source or Abuse of Power

This section addresses itself to the obvious contradictory views of Marxian and Catholic thought on the role private property plays in distributing power in society. For Marx private property enabled the small capitalist class to control the large working class. Catholic doctrine sees private property as an institution which preserves a measure of individual freedom vis-a-vis the political power of the state and the power of the community as a whole.

Marxian analysis emphasizes the commodity nature of the worker under the capitalist system. The worker is forced under this system to sell his labor to the capitalist. There is no other way that the worker can survive in such a system, much less be able to provide a life of dignity for himself and his family. The worker is forced, moreover, to labor at the wage established by the owner of capital.

It is possible for the capitalist to withhold his instruments of capital from the worker. The capitalist system provides all economic sectors with a reserve army of workers. The owner of capital can deny to a worker the productive capability of the tools of production which the capitalist owns. The reserve army of workers and the poverty of these workers enable the capitalist to find workers who will accept his wage offer. It is sometimes possible for a worker to refuse to work in a specific plant or a specific industry. But it is impossible for him to refuse completely to accept the offer of some

capitalist, for the worker himself has no adequate tools of production.

Not only does the owner set the wage, he determines the product and also the method by which that product will be produced. The worker is allowed no decision-making opportunity, no chance to employ his own self-creative activity. The worker is forced into a fragmented division of labor. This division of labor forces the worker to concentrate on some small part of the production process. The worker cannot become an artisan with pride in his own intellectual, mechanical, or artistic achievement. The worker is reduced to a robot-like existence and becomes insensitive to the needs of others and of his own personal human dignity. He is alienated from all members of society and forced to concentrate on his own survival.

The capitalist mode of production forces an antagonism of interests between capitalists and workers. It is not possible for any amount of good will of the capitalists, individually or as a class, to correct the system of which they are a part. The very existence of the capitalist depends upon the subservience and consequent degradation of the worker. The capitalist cannot permit himself to fail, else he himself will be forced into the ranks of workers. The worker, on the other hand, is also powerless. Marx concluded:

. . . do what he may, the working man will on an average, only receive the value of his labour, which resolves itself into the value of his labouring power, which is determined by the value of the necessaries required for its maintenance and reproduction, which value of necessaries finally is regulated by the quantity of labour wanted to produce them.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit*, ed. Eleanor Marx Aveling (New York: International Publishers, paperback, 1935), pp. 56-57.

The power which the capitalist class possesses over the workers in the economic area extends itself into all other areas of society. The legal and social institutions of society as well as all cultural development are able to be controlled by the capitalist class. This is the logical consequence of the economic interpretation of history; it is the historical consequence of that reality from which this interpretation is deduced.

One further point should be noted about the determination of history by the economic structure. This structure determines, here again guides or forces are similar terms, man's activity in such a way that his greed and selfishness are made to manifest themselves. Thus for Marx this selfishness, at least in great part, is a function of social and economic organization. Man always maintains his free will and makes his own history. But the economic system determines the direction that history will take. The capitalist system determines that some few persons will be able to acquire and maintain for some length of time power and control over the majority of persons living in society. The fundamental condition for this ability lies in the institution of private property. The abuse of power, this control which the few exercise over the many, will remain as long as private property is the predominant form of property distribution. The abolition of private property in productive goods is a necessity.

The Catholic approach to private property is entirely different. Official Church documents do not treat explicitly the theory of history developed by Marx except to reject the concomitant emphases upon

philosophical and ethical materialism and class struggle.<sup>37</sup> Implicitly, however, Marx's theory of history in its pristine form is constantly rejected by the Church.

The Church sees much of human degradation to flow, not from this specific economic structure in which this degradation exists, but from the selfishness and greed which is a part of man's existential nature. The Church goes to great lengths to promote a social and economic system which will best allow man to preserve his dignity and provide for his development. It sees that capitalism contributes to the poverty of men and of society itself. The Church analyzes capitalism, not only from its bad effects, but also from its congruency with social principles developed by analyzing man and his nature and his goal in life. Some of the bad effects, the inability of individuals to participate in economic decisions, for example, come from the present structure of economic society, and the Church sees the need for reform of this structure. Other effects, the unequal distribution of income and wealth, for example, flow from man's selfishness and imperfection. The property institution which allows such distribution must be reformed, but the legitimacy of property itself must be deduced from other principles. This attitude can be expressed thus: "Economic alienations are not an adequate explanation of human alienations."<sup>38</sup>

Private property, when analyzed by Catholic thought in this way, emerges as a necessary safeguard for human freedom. Only by the

<sup>37</sup>This ethical materialism is not necessarily Marxian, but is deduced as such by some of Marx's followers.

<sup>38</sup>Giulio Girardi, *Marxism and Christianity*, trans. Kevin Traynor (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 187.

individual's being able to possess property does society provide for its citizens an adequate opportunity to exert the freedom which is rightfully theirs. The common good of society is those conditions which allow all members of society an opportunity for complete human development. Private property protects the individual from the political power of the state and the moral power of the community and thus helps to establish the common good.

The Church attempts to correct the evils of private property not by abolishing it but by extending the possession of goods to all citizens. Marx said: "The institution of private property enslaves man; abolish it." The Church replies: "The present distribution of property leaves many people in poverty; all men should be able to own goods."

Thus there is in the matter of property analysis another methodological difference between Marxian and Catholic thought. The Catholic view looks at the nature and purpose of man and strives to fit the institutions of society to human nature and man's destiny. This approach is more metaphysical and essential, the latter word meaning more directed by the ultimate nature of reality. This Catholic approach sees private property as necessary for the correct use of power.

The Marxian view sees man's misery, looks at its cause, and presents what it considers the obvious remedy. Marx's view is more insightful and existential, the latter word meaning here a deep awareness of man's lack of freedom. Marx saw throughout the history of society under the capitalist mode of production the poverty of the masses and the riches of the owners of capital. Appeals to the



justice, charity, and kindness of the capitalists are useless. Even well-intentioned capitalists can accomplish little because they are caught in the system they employ. It is the system which is wrong and which must be eradicated. Marx saw private property in productive goods as responsible for the greatest abuse of power.

Both Marx and the Church wish to correct the abuse which so frequently exists in capitalist societies. This abuse is that the economically powerful control society and the lives of others; the very large group of workers is "provided for" by the self-interested wisdom of the wealthy. Both Marx and the Church see that the needed change is revolutionary, meaning that society must be turned around.

This revolution for Marx is to make the state, more properly the community, the supreme capitalist and to unite men into one economically homogeneous or classless society. All people supplied with material plenty, would be able to work together for a united society at the same time that they are fulfilling their individual desires.

The Church says that giving productive property (solely) to the community is a method as repressive and destructive of human freedom as the maldistribution of private property. The Church's judgment is this: If economic wealth and income (and income-producing assets) give to their owners not only economic but social and cultural power, then let all individuals possess these assets to the degree that they can control their lives and play some part in bringing about social welfare.

These concluding paragraphs have led to a discussion of the ideal society as proposed by both systems. The final section of this chapter will compare the thought of both systems on this ideal social structure.

The Ideal Society

This section compares the ideal society as envisioned by each party concerned. Marx, of course, does not see this ideal society to be a static concept, but then neither does the Catholic view. It is not complete nor even accurate to see either view of ideal society as a type of utopia. Society is a constantly changing dynamic process, since man is constantly changing. This dynamism in society is an important element common to both views.

For Marx man constantly changes his nature as he goes through each historical period. Man's ability to change is hampered, however, by the structure of economic and civil society. Man's complete development depends upon the institutions of society. Primary among these institutions is the organization of the mode of production. An ideal state for Marx is one which has "swept away the conditions of class antagonisms."<sup>39</sup> Marx did not see the communist state as abolishing personal problems nor even social ills which arise from personal deficiencies. What the communist society does is to provide the correct social institutions so that man can more adequately concentrate on his own true personal evolution. Man cannot evolve into an unselfish individual under capitalism; this selfishness is the very motive power of the system. When private property is abolished and the true communist society achieved, society has not reached the climax of its development. A true communist society is but the beginning of man's development, a development which is practically unlimited.

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<sup>39</sup>Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p. 105.

There are three points of divergence which are immediately evident concerning the developmental capabilities of man. The first is that the Church, while emphasizing the development of all man's capabilities, places heavy emphasis upon man's spiritual or supernatural development. An examination of this topic is beyond the scope of this study. It is possible to point out that what Marx saw as the natural development of man the Church at times sees as possible only by supernatural means. The fundamental difference here is the humanism of Marx and the humanism of the Church. Marx saw man as an independent being, complete unto himself. The Church's humanism is theocentric: "But anyone who is truly in earnest about God will not be able to treat man as though the whole meaning of all created things were comprised in him."<sup>40</sup> This view sees man and his development as important because man is a creature important to God.

It is difficult to ascertain the effect of Marx's anthropocentric humanism upon his private property views. Even if there were some psychological effects, there is no necessary logical connection between Marx's economic system and his atheistic humanism. In other words, as far as private property is concerned, a believer in God and in an institutional religion could, for the most part, find no contradiction between his religious beliefs and the doctrine of common property.<sup>41</sup>

The second point which indicates a divergence of thought between Marxian and Catholic views on man's development concerns man's

<sup>40</sup>Hugo Rahner, Man at Play, trans. Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), pp. 13-14.

<sup>41</sup>The only qualification here is that there might be some reservations about common property if the person were a Christian and certain biblical texts were considered.

capability from another aspect. The difference here centers around the Church's view on man's existence under original sin. The practical conclusion is that the selfish orientation or inclination of man is something which in the Catholic system cannot be eradicated from his nature. No matter to what high estate of personal and social development man attains, this orientation remains, and it remains a separating entity between man and his fellowman as well as within man himself. This view embraces something of the existential alienation of Walter Weisskopf, who claimed: "Existential alienation has its roots in the human condition."<sup>42</sup> Weisskopf meant that there is something in the very existence and nature of man which gives rise to human difficulties and suffering regardless of the type of social structure.

Marx, on the other hand, saw the natural evolutionary possibilities of man to be immense. A social structure can be achieved, according to him, which will allow man to recognize his oneness with other men in forming one species. This structure will allow each man to orient his life in a truly social way so that all of his decisions and actions will consider the common interests of all.

The third point of difference concerning man's developmental capabilities is simply the dynamic element of the above point. To put this in question form: What effect does the social structure have upon the personality of man? For Marx man's alienation was a function of social and economic institutions, particularly of the institution

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<sup>42</sup>Walter Weisskopf, Alienation and Economics (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1971), p. 19.

of private property. The full development of man was a logical and certain consequence of a just and correct socio-economic organization. This, of course, is not to deny that man's development requires conscious effort and wise decisions. But man is able to posit such wise, judicious acts. If, then, society's structures can be reformed, man will eventually evolve into a fully human and socially oriented person.

The Catholic view is not so sanguine about man's development capabilities, at least as a result of the social structure. The Church holds that the foundation of many of man's problems lies within man himself. It demands a just social order because such an order enables an individual to live more in keeping with his dignity, to develop himself more completely, and to enjoy that freedom which should be his as a rational creature of God.

Man's development and salvation always maintain a social aspect, and in this Marxian and Catholic thought are quite similar. For Marx this complete social development of man comes as a result of the social structure. For the Church, on the other hand, the very effort which men must use to establish an equitable social order is salvific. The Church holds that the perfection of man consists at times not in eliminating alienation, but in working for the good of one's fellowman in spite of this alienation.

For Marx the abolition of private property in productive goods is the beginning of a developmental process in which the alienation of man will be eliminated. Man can become brother to his fellowman at the same time that he engages in those activities which are personally

meaningful to him. For Catholic thought the doctrine of original sin maintains that man in this present life will always be subject to some degree of alienation. The ideal society for the Church becomes one in which, despite this alienation, man realizes his brotherhood with all men and makes an effort to live that brotherhood in a practical way.

A discussion of the ideal society also brings forth other insights into the two systems. If it is not an attempt to be too sophic, it may be said that Marx and the Church reverse their roles. Marx, a philosophical materialist, concludes to a spiritual state of man. The Church, in essence spiritually oriented, sees a necessity for materialism and materialistic motivation. Such an affirmation is obviously too simplistic and consequently may be misleading; it needs further comment.

In Marx's complete communist society the desire for material goods as personal riches will exert no powerful influence over man. Marx proposed two reasons for this. One was that material goods will be available in such abundance for each person that there will be no need for concern over acquiring them. The other was that the perfectly developed individual will not be concerned about the acquisition of goods, at least from a selfish motive.<sup>43</sup> Marx saw man in communist society as acting solely from social and humanitarian motives. Man will consider his own good, but he will realize that his personal development cannot be furthered if the social good is injured.

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<sup>43</sup>A more complete discussion of these points was had in Chapters 5 and 7.

While the Church subscribes to this last statement, it sees man's desire for material goods as legitimate and even perpetual. The legitimacy, it is true, comes from motives other than self-aggrandizement and can thus be considered a legitimated desire.<sup>44</sup> But the Church sees this desire as a permanent factor in man's nature and strives to perfect that desire by social and spiritual motivations.

The ideal Marxian society can be achieved insofar as it consists of community ownership, central planning of production, and no detailed division of labor. From this ideal social structure evolves, by human effort of course, the well-developed human personality. The ideal Christian society can only be achieved when all people, given the weakness of their human nature, strive to achieve the common good under the principle of subsidiarity. But the Christian striving allows a permanent alienating factor within man, one which alienates man from himself and from others. The perfection of society in this case involves, not just correct social institutions, but the desire and the effort of all to overcome that alienation and reach out in brotherhood and community to all men.

Chapter 13, the final chapter, will strive to present some conclusions which can be drawn from this investigation of two divergent systems of economic and social thought. At the same time the chapter will point out needed areas of further investigation and some weaknesses in the study itself.

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<sup>44</sup>This implies that the desire for material goods, according to the Church, can be morally good or evil depending upon the motives for that desire. For an introduction to this topic see New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967 ed., s.v. "Morality," by T. J. Higgins.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS

This chapter contains two major sections. The first section presents conclusions which are drawn from the previous parts of the study and become part of it. These conclusions are comments on and answers to the question: What ultimately accounts for the contradictory views of Karl Marx and the Catholic Church on private property? The second section deals with the strengths and weaknesses of the study and points out areas of possible further investigation. The purpose of this second section is to position the study as an overall explanation of the Catholic-Marxian views on private property and to indicate other points which might profitably be investigated on this subject.

#### Conclusions

The propositions presented in this section, with various subpoints, are given as conclusions logically and legitimately drawn from the previous chapters of the study. Some attempt will be made to justify or explain the conclusions, but it will be supposed that the reader is familiar with the discussion previously carried on. Consequently it may be necessary to refer to earlier chapters for more adequate insights into the conclusions. The major, and even some minor, conclusions will be underscored.



## The Economic Interpretation of History

The Marxian view on private property has no necessary logical connection with Marx's economic interpretation of history. It should be recalled that Marx's philosophical materialism is not the same thing as, nor is it a prerequisite of, his theory of historical materialism. Although there can be a close relationship between the ultimate nature of reality and those forces which influence history's development, the Marxian economic interpretation of history established no such necessary relationship. This point is presented because the Catholic Church has frequently condemned Marxian materialism. What has been condemned by the Church is Marx's philosophical materialism, his atheism, and his seemingly deterministic view of man's historical development.

The Church obviously must oppose atheism and, to be true to its being, also philosophical materialism. But there have been such expositions by Catholic authors of Marx's theory of history as the following: "Men are determined in all their actions, not determining."<sup>1</sup> This is not an accurate presentation of Marx's economic interpretation of history. Even in early commentary on his theory he held that "Men make their own history,"<sup>2</sup> but that they do so under conditions given them from the past. Elaboration on this point was made in Chapter 3.

<sup>1</sup>Dempsey, The Functional Economy, p. 132. This author is an excellent commentator on the economic order. It should perhaps be recalled that this work was published in 1958.

<sup>2</sup>The expanded quote was given in Chapter 3, p. 62 (footnote 8, p. 63) and is from Marx, Eighteenth Brumaire, p. 13. On this subject cf. Marx and Engels, "Letters on Historical Materialism," and Engels, "On Historical Materialism," both in Marx, Selected Works 1:372-394.

The abolition of private property in productive goods is not the logical consequence of Marx's economic interpretation of history. The fact that, for Marx, the method of production was the primary and determining element in historical development in no way demands that productive goods be the property of the state or the community. There should be no doubt on this point since Marx's theory of historical development also applied to a capitalist system in which property was privately owned.

What the economic interpretation of history did was to make the question of private property an immensely important one. If economic conditions are paramount to society's structure, then the form of property becomes paramount to society. One other practical effect of Marx's historical theory was that it led him into a life-long study of the discipline of economics and of the economic world.

#### Marx's Technical Analysis

Marx's technical economic analysis of capitalism is not the fundamental reason for his property views. Marx's labor theory of value and his concept of surplus value are the economic explanation of the workers' exploitation by capitalists.<sup>3</sup> This exploitation flows from 395-416 respectively. See also Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, Part I, pp. 50-53 and Marx, Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

<sup>3</sup>This is not the same as saying that the exploitation of workers can be proved only if the labor theory of value is correct. Joan Robinson wrote that Marx used his labor theory of value "to express certain ideas about the nature of the capitalist system, and the importance of these ideas in no way depends upon the particular terminology in which he chose to set them forth." Chief among these ideas are that under capitalism the worker is impoverished and that the mere owning of capital, as opposed to its use in the production process, "is not

the very nature of capital. Marx was not led to the conclusion that private property was unjust by a prolonged study of political economy. Early in his life he frequently wrote against the "evils" of private property. Led by his theory of historical development to the study of economics, Marx was faced with the problem of showing that impropriety in technical economic terms. In Capital Marx looked for the law of motion which would eventually bring about the abolition of private productive property.

This above paragraph is not meant as an argument against the validity of Marx's theory of value. In the physical sciences, for example, a phenomenon of nature will be known as a fact; the scientific problem will be to explain how or why that fact occurs. Marx's theory of value found the ultimate "why" of the workers' alienation and exploitation to lie in the nature of capital itself. This solution showed that the private owners of productive goods in a capitalist system were forced, by the very fact that they were such owners, to act against the welfare of the workers.

#### Natural Law Arguments

The Catholic Church holds that private property is a perpetual and inalienable right due to man by natural law. Marx maintained that private property in productive goods was basically and fundamentally unjust because such property contravened the very nature of man.

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an economic activity" (Joan Robinson, An Essay on Marxian Economics, 2d ed. [London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967], pp. 17, 18).

The Catholic position hardly needs elaboration here; it was expounded fully in Chapter 9. For Marx the injustice of private productive property arose from the fact that such property gave to one class of individuals effective control over the lives of another class of individuals and withheld from the former the productive tools needed to work and live and develop. The institution of private property forced the larger mass of humanity to lead lives of material scarcity, complete alienation, and inability to perform self-creative (and nature-creative) activities, and motivated all men to greed and selfishness.

In the Grundrisse Marx spoke of true wealth as consisting in the "totality of development, i.e., the development of all human powers as such . . ." He criticized capitalism because it did not allow such development:

In bourgeois economics--and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds--this complete working-out of the human content appears as a complete emptying-out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end.<sup>4</sup>

The impropriety of private productive property as Marx understood it can logically be called a type of natural law argument against such property.

The conclusions of both the Marxian and the Catholic systems were posited because they were thought to be congruent with the demands of human nature and to further the development of that nature. These

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<sup>4</sup>Marx, Grundrisse, p. 488.

arguments strive to form the property patterns of a complex economic and social world in order to promote the needs of the human person. The arguments were deduced from views of human nature and thus allow comparison by an examination of those views and the deduction process. This reasoning prompts the following conclusion.

#### Human Nature as a Foundation of Divergence

One major source of divergence in property doctrine between Marxian and Catholic thought lies in the views of man and his development as held by each system. The different property doctrines are related logically to the different formal insights into the nature of man. The comparison concerning human nature and property's role in its development can be summarized in three points or, at least, three general areas.

(1) Both arguments stress a type of natural law argument, placing great emphasis upon the effect of private property upon the development of the human person. The property proposals of the Church clearly began with an examination of man's rational nature and the daily material needs of the individual. At the same time there was an affirmation that the purpose of civil society was to promote the good of the individual. A summary of this view says that "Private ownership is the extension of the human person into the material world for the purpose of fulfilling his existential ends."<sup>5</sup> Marx had an immediate intuition that man's freedom was denied because of private property in productive

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<sup>5</sup>Messner, Social Ethics, p. 323.

goods and he had no hesitation in calling for a revolution against this institution. His insight is characterized by such statements as the following: "From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another."<sup>6</sup>

(2) The different anthropological doctrines of each side are fundamental. Catholic theism holds that human nature is the basis for judging man's moral actions and, in this case, an institution of society, because it is an imitation of God's own being. God's creative decree (of man) established that created nature as a guide in deciding the ethical propriety of man's actions. Thus for Catholic thought man's essential nature, always considered by the Church to exist with precise characteristics and under certain conditions, is a supreme norm.

For Marx human nature, as he understood it, is also a supreme guide or norm of ethical activity. But for Marx man's nature is what man makes of himself. Whatsoever man's nature becomes, however, it is always a species and social nature. Marx wrote:

Man's individual and species life are not different however much--and this is inevitable--the mode of existence of the individual is a more particular, or more general mode of the life of the species, or the life of the species is a more particular or more general individual life.<sup>7</sup>

Man's conscious activity establishes him as the species. Nothing could contradict the social and species nature of man because this

<sup>6</sup>Marx, Capital, 3:776. Cf. Chapter 7, footnote no. 27.

<sup>7</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, p. 138.

very species nature--the consequence of conscious activity in some productive or creative process--and not some creative act of God made man supreme.

(3) As a consequence of point 2 the Church "logically" argued for private ownership. The Catholic attitude held: "Man is not really free unless he can, at least to a certain degree, dispose of external goods at will, not only of goods of consumption but also of productive goods."<sup>8</sup>

As regards productive goods Marx saw only the alienation and the degradation of the human person connected with the private ownership of these goods. More correctly, he saw that this alienation and degradation were the inevitable "evil" effect of such ownership. With an imperative as categorical as the Catholic acceptance of private property, Marx called for the complete dissolution of this institution. He saw no need to examine any possible "good" consequences which might override the damning consequence of such ownership--the destruction of man's freedom. This destruction affected the very development of every human person.

In addition individual existence became an anomaly for Marx if such existence caused man to lose sight of his species nature. This is precisely what Marx accused the institution of private property of doing. Marx held that man, as a species being, should direct all of his activities to sustain and develop the species. Marx saw private property in productive goods as a personally oriented institution.

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<sup>8</sup>The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911 ed., s.v. "Property," by V(ictor) Cathrein.

The very nature of property forced its possessor to look upon himself as an individual and to make himself the core and the goal of his activity.

#### Class Conflict

Another major source of divergence between Marxian and Catholic property doctrine lies in the different views of the ability of individuals insofar as they are members of a particular socio-economic class to gain an adequate measure of control over their lives. The foundation of this divergence lies in the different emphasis given by each system to the importance of class struggle as a radical social relationship.

It was said earlier in this chapter that there was no necessary logical connection between Marx's economic interpretation of history and his property views. This statement must be modified to the extent that one element in Marx's theory does play a role in his views on property. This element is Marx's insistence that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."<sup>9</sup>

The Catholic Church saw the existence of class conflict in recent historical periods. Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) "deplored the 'poisonous' spirit of class hatred which he thought was spreading throughout the society of his day."<sup>10</sup> Pope Leo XIII had noted the existence

<sup>9</sup>Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup>Richard L. Camp, The Papal Ideology of Social Reform (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1969), p. 92.



of class antagonisms in 1891, a reference confirmed forty years later by Pope Pius XI.<sup>11</sup>

The attitude of the Church toward class conflict, however, differs from the Marxian attitude in one important way. Marx saw class struggle as an intimate and necessary part of man's historical development. It is difficult to tell if this necessity was a metaphysical one for Marx; certainly it was a de facto one. Class struggle played an important role in man's social and human development. Marx held "that all struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc. are merely the illusory forms . . . in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another . . ." <sup>12</sup> The attitude of the Church is that class struggle is a moral aberration which harms society and which should and can be eliminated. Leo XIII wrote:

The great mistake that is made in the matter now under consideration, is to possess oneself of the idea that class is naturally hostile to class; that rich and poor are intended by nature to live at war with one another. So irrational and so false is this view, that the exact contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human body is the result of the disposition of the members of the body, so in a State it is ordained by nature that these two classes should exist in harmony and agreement, and should, as it were, fit into one another, so as to maintain the equilibrium of the body politic.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. Pope Leo XII, Rerum Novarum, no. 1 and Pope Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno, no. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 46-47.

<sup>13</sup>Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, no. 15. See also the various Christmas messages of Pope Pius XII.

As pointed out in Chapter 6,<sup>14</sup> Marx held that the antagonism between capitalists (owners of property) and workers was inevitable; their interests were "diametrically opposed." In his view there was no way that the capitalists as a class or as individual members of a class could help to alleviate the plight of the workers. The capitalist had to foster a fragmented division of labor; he must rely upon a reserve industrial army. The nature of capitalist development meant that the capitalist must expand his own stock of capital, even to the detriment of other capitalists and thus a fortiori to the detriment of the worker. In such a situation, that is, with the institution of private property, there could be only one logical and necessary result. The worker would continue in his impoverishment and the gap between the capitalist and the worker would even grow greater. Private property meant that the capitalists controlled the lives and fortunes of the workers. Naturally the capitalists also maintained political control and hegemony in all cultural areas.<sup>15</sup>

The Church maintains that the above result is not inevitable because the human person, even as a member of a socio-economic class, can and morally must overcome any antagonisms which naturally arise or are artificially instigated between himself and members of another class. Pope Pius XII proclaimed that the economy of a nation was an organic

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 163-166.

<sup>15</sup>Little has been written on whether Marx's theory of class conflict received its impetus from Ricardo's thesis that economics' major concern was how to divide a given amount of production among the various classes of society. Dempsey maintains a Ricardian basis to the theory of class conflict, but he does not trace the evolution of this theory to Marx from Ricardo. Cf. Dempsey, The Functional Economy, pp. 123-124.

whole and should be harmoniously developed. The Pontiff held that there should be a solidarity which "should extend to all branches of production and become the basis of a better economic order."<sup>16</sup>

Marx saw that private property allowed the capitalist class to withhold the tools of production from workers. Private property in productive goods allowed no other condition but the poverty of the masses. The Church holds that the only legitimate remedy to the power which the capitalists have is to disperse that power among all members of society. Pius XII called for "Not destruction, then, but construction and consolidation: not abolition of private ownership, the basis of family stability, but its promotion and spreading as the fruit of the conscientious efforts of every worker, . . ." <sup>17</sup> A universal distribution of private property will help to bring about social and economic harmony among all classes. This harmony can be achieved because it represents the common good of a society of social beings who recognize their common dignity and common interests. This harmony should be brought about not "because the forces of each side are so evenly balanced that they are stabilized in a sort of cold war," but because such harmony represents "an objective which is too great for any one of them to accomplish singly."

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<sup>16</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Allocation to Italian Workers, March 11, 1945," quoted in Guerry, Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, p. 141.

<sup>17</sup>Pope Pius XII, "Address to the Representatives of Italian Workers, January 13, 1943," in The Teachings of Pope Pius XII (ed. Michael Chinigo), p. 330.

<sup>18</sup>Guerry, Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, pp. 142-143.

## The Social Order

One further basis of divergence in property doctrine lies in the view of the ideal social order envisioned by Marx and the Church. The basis for this difference, however, is traceable to their different views of man.

Marx's view of an ideal society contained two very important notes or characteristics. These notes were, first, that man would gain control of the production process and would be able to subordinate that process to his own welfare. The second note was that the human spirit would be able to gain transcendence over material goods. Marx saw this transcendence as capable of being achieved only in a society where the greed for material goods was eradicated from man's motivational structure by social institutions which permitted and encouraged this eradication.

The Catholic view, if it can be summarized in a single phrase, is that social conditions should be such as to allow for the full and complete development of the human person. This development means "the full vision of man as a responsible moral agent, creative in his action, free in his ultimate decisions, united to his fellows in social bonds of respect and friendship and co-partner in the work of building a just and peaceful world."<sup>19</sup> But the Catholic view feels that it forms its vision of the correct social order by looking at

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<sup>19</sup>Cardinal Maurice Roy, "Message on the Occasion of the Launching of the Second Development Decade (November 19, 1970)," in Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice, no. 15.

the human personality in all its aspects. Thus the existential demands of the human person, in this Church view, argue forcefully for private property.

Both the Marxian and the Catholic views of the ideal social order see man's control of social and economic affairs as paramount. The great divergence comes in their attitudes toward material goods or possessions and the propriety of these possessions as developmental factors of the human person.

The different views of the ideal social order and the relationship to man can be highlighted by the following analysis. In the introduction to his abbreviated compilation of the works of St. Thomas, Anton Pegis stated that one of the three major questions facing Thomas in the thirteenth century was the nature of man. Pegis wrote: "It seemed to St. Thomas that . . . his ultimate opponent was Plato himself."<sup>20</sup> Insofar as the ideal social order is concerned and as it is understood by Marxian and Catholic thought, the question of the more appropriate doctrine resolves itself into this: Is Marx a Platonist or is his humanism more life-giving than that of the Church? This question is posited as a sincere commentary on the two positions and is not meant to be pert or sarcastic.

Marx trusted in the evolutionary possibilities of the human "spirit." He believed that man is capable of such development that the mundane motivations of worldly possessions can be transcended by social considerations and concern for one's fellowman. Marx saw as a

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<sup>20</sup>Anton C. Pegis, Introduction to Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Modern Library, Modern Library College Editions, 1948), p. xvi.

definite possibility, rather he predicted as a definite certainty, a future society where man will employ social senses which differ from the senses of the human person influenced by the capitalist mode of production. He meant that man's physical and mental powers will operate only for the social good and the welfare of others.<sup>21</sup>

There is no question here, of course, of essential Platonism. But is this Marxian view a form of operational Platonism? Was Marx idealistic to an extreme? Did he lose sight of the existential man whose material needs cry out so strongly that their acquisition requires a major part of man's time and attention? Are these concerns for material goods a legitimate part of man's strivings and a means helpful to his freedom? Or does the Marxian view give man a freedom and independence which the search for private property does not allow? Does the Catholic position fail to challenge man to a new freedom of spirit and belie the scriptural admonition: "How happy are the poor in spirit; . . ."?<sup>22</sup>

These questions are meant to point out that the root of the divergent views of the ideal society are related to the views of man's nature and the development of that nature. Marx, the materialist, made an effort similar to "Plato's effort to save essences, mind and knowledge from the barbarism of matter . . ." The Church follows the Thomistic and biblical doctrine and holds that "since matter is a creature in a world of creatures, it has an intelligible role to play

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<sup>21</sup>Cf. Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 118-119, and Chapter 5 of this study, pp. 146-147.

<sup>22</sup>Matt. 5:3.

in the structure and organization of the world."<sup>23</sup> In no way is this argument meant to deny the entire materialist basis of Marx's philosophy and of his economics. The argument is made in part to point out that Marx upheld a psychology which proclaimed the need for a liberation from material goals.

There is one other conclusion which arises here which is related to the ideal society. This conclusion is that Marx held that man's alienation was due predominantly to the injustice of social institutions. The Church holds that much of such alienation is due to man's existential situation and cannot be remedied by institutional changes. This conclusion can be expressed in more exact theological terms by stating that the Church subscribes to a doctrine of original sin and its consequences, that is, man has a basic selfishness and weaknesses in his intellect and will. This makes man subject to conditions of alienation, suffering, and misunderstanding which are often independent of the ideal social order. Marx, on the other hand, held that alienation was predominantly a function of the social structure. The real cause of such alienation for Marx was the improper social relations which flowed from unjust social and economic institutions.

It does not seem reasonable to think that Marx considered all alienation to arise from class struggles of deficient social relationships, yet he frequently spoke in this manner. He held that "In the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association."<sup>24</sup> In the Manuscripts of 1844 he maintained: "The

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<sup>23</sup>Pegis, Saint Thomas Aquinas, p. xvii.

<sup>24</sup>Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 78.

estrangement of man, and in fact every relationship in which man stands to himself, is first realized and expressed in the relationship in which a man stands to other men."<sup>25</sup> In analyzing Marxian alienation Ollman has contended that all the activities of alienated individuals are qualitatively the same. He referred to value relations as the relations which give any activity some worth and named some of these value relations to be: ". . . class, state, religion, family, ethics, science, art and literature . . ." Ollman continued: "As a value relation, class is the abstracted common element in the social relations of alienated people."<sup>26</sup>

The Church frequently chastises the injustice of existing social institutions as being responsible for the poverty and misery of many people. A simple summary of the Church view is to say that social institutions help but do not guarantee a satisfied human existence. The Church notices "the serious injustices which are building around the world of men a network of domination, oppression and abuses which stifle freedom and which keep the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and enjoyment of a more just and more fraternal world." At the same time the answer to such oppression always involves an element of personal reform:

The Christian lives under the interior law of liberty, which is a permanent call to man to turn away from self-sufficiency to confidence in God and from concern for self to a sincere love of neighbour. Thus takes place his genuine liberation and the gift of himself for the freedom of others.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Marx, Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 114-115.

<sup>26</sup>Ollman, Alienation, p. 207.

<sup>27</sup>Synod of Bishops, Second General Assembly, "Justice in the World," nos. 3, 13.



Obviously it is impossible to formulate for either system a precise functional relationship between alienation and human suffering on the one hand and social and economic institutions on the other. Still there remains a difference of viewpoint on the nature of that relationship in Marxian and Catholic thought.

#### Value of This Study

The significance of the present study was outlined in Chapter 1. It is not meant to repeat those observations here, but to point out some specific points of the study which are noteworthy. This section also indicates areas which, if investigated further, might provide additional insight into the property question insofar as it pertains to the two systems of thought studied here.

#### Specific Contribution

The approach of this study, that is, an investigation of the property question within the context of the total social and economic systems concerned and an attempt to decide the areas which led to their property conclusions, is seen to have been advantageous. One advantage lies in the removal of the property question from the emotional context of political ideology and to some extent even from considerations of economic efficiency. More importantly this approach has placed the property question within a total sociological and philosophical framework. Such an approach was needed, especially with regard to Marxian and Catholic thought, because the property conclusions

of these two systems have been given as derived from and supportive of such overall doctrine.

The attempt to locate the very foundation of doctrinal difference between the two systems may seem to have been a simplistic effort. It was always assumed that such simplicity would not be proven valid by the discovery of a single intuition or assumption or hypothesis or interpretation of fact which alone would provide the key to doctrinal differences. There is even a certain vagueness of functional relationship in several of the given conclusions. But the comparative analysis of the total systems has provided definite conclusions. It is the definite conclusions and not the functional uncertainty which is important.

The approach used in this study is valuable for one other reason. It represents an attempt to study an economic question in the light of interdisciplinary considerations. In this respect it has tried to mirror the two systems analyzed, whose property teachings are derived not only from economic analysis but also from doctrines of philosophy, theology, political science, sociology, and psychology. These disciplines have been brought into the study, not with the rigor which experts in those fields would have liked, to indicate that economic realities are often events not isolatable to nor explainable by economic tools alone.

This approach has value also for understanding the Catholic approach to property. The Church has frequently fought Marxian doctrine predominantly in theological terms. It has thought this appropriate because of the atheistic tone and materialistic basis of Marx's

teachings, together with a widespread vagueness about volitional determinism. The conclusions arrived at indicate, however, that, in the matter of private property, theological differences are not comprehensive. Certainly the conflict between theism and atheism is fundamental to the property doctrines concerned, but it is necessary to expand the understanding of that conflict so that all humanistic aspects and physical and social realities are examined.

There is a second element of value to this study which follows naturally from the approach used. This element is that the study brings together into one place discussions on Marxian and Catholic doctrine which are scattered throughout many documents, works, and studies. This, of course, should follow from any novel investigation of a disputed topic. But the present study presents a comparative analysis and synthesis of the doctrines which it is impossible to find in any other work.

The specific conclusions themselves add a third element of value to the study. Without repeating these conclusions at length it is possible to summarize points of difference and similarity between Marxian and Catholic views which have affected their property teachings. One important similarity is that Marxian property doctrine, like Catholic teaching, relies heavily upon a natural law type of argument and is not based predominantly upon economic considerations. The emphasis upon this conclusion in itself, it is thought, adds an important consideration to Marxian literature.<sup>28</sup> Marx did not need his

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<sup>28</sup>It is not claimed here that this is an original thesis, although the author has discovered only one reference to it. Richard Schlatter has written that in condemning capitalists' expropriation of the

economic analysis to condemn private property. His economic analysis simply confirmed an insight which he had had in his early life. This analysis made that insight more acceptable to the scientific world, to those wronged by the evils of capitalism, and to those searching for a cause to which to dedicate their lives.

There are two points of difference taken from the conclusions which, though certainly not new, have received insight in the present study in that they have been proposed in a dynamic analysis as bases for contradictory property doctrines. These points are that the Marxian world and the Catholic world have a different metaphysics and a different humanism.<sup>29</sup>

Marxian metaphysics saw the world as matter capable of achieving and having achieved various stages of being. This metaphysics saw man as matter which had struggled to consciousness. Man was someone who was conscious of his actions, that is, he could plan them in his mind before performing them with his hands. Man's development was made possible by these free, conscious actions. "This, then is the most specific content Marx and Engels felt able to give to their general definition of man as the animal that is conscious of method in

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property earned by laborers "Marx was following directly in the tradition of the radical interpreters of natural right" (Schlatter, Private Property, p. 274).

<sup>29</sup>Metaphysics is used here in the sense of a philosophical science concerned with the ultimate nature of reality. Humanism is taken to mean the total view of man's nature, his dignity, and his search for self-realization through the development of the human person. In the explanation which follows in the text the metaphysics and the humanism of each system are at times interwoven.

production: man is a consciously nature-controlling and history-making animal."<sup>30</sup>

Catholic metaphysics sees the world as matter which could not be the reason for its own existence, that is, could not have been caused by itself. The world's existence had to be traced to a Creator-God. Catholic metaphysics sees man as matter which had been united to a mysterious and unexplainable spiritual principle. "In connection with the question of the evolutionary origins of man, the Church's teaching emphasizes that spirit and matter are not the same, that spirit cannot be derived from matter, and that man, because spiritual, has a metaphysically irreducible position in the cosmos, so that his origin, as far as his spiritual nature is concerned, cannot be found in matter."<sup>31</sup>

The humanism of Marx saw man as a being producing his own history and involved in a struggle for the ability to write this history with all the perfection which man was capable of achieving. The one essential to this project was that man must be completely free, free from every material constraint and free from every socially-induced anxiety. For Marx the struggle between classes was an historical inevitability which paradoxically furthered, at least ultimately, man's freedom. The wholeness of man would come when his conscious effort had mastered matter and formed social relationships which would bring him to perfect freedom.

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<sup>30</sup>Venable, Human Nature: The Marxian View, p. 74.

<sup>31</sup>Karl Rahner, Hominisation: The Evolutionary Origin of Man as a Theological Problem, trans. W. F. O'Hara (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965), p. 46.

Catholic humanism sees man as a being who can act meaningfully only in freedom, but at the same time as a being who is completely dependent upon the God who ultimately formed him. For the Church class struggle is the result and the sign of man's inner disorientation. Man shows his freedom by his attempt to reorient himself as a caring individual and as a functioning member of a community. Paradoxically this caring involves self-love, for " . . . you must love your neighbour as yourself."<sup>32</sup> The holiness of man comes from the acceptance of a human condition in which man's whole being depends upon another far greater than himself and in striving to perfect an obviously "imperfect" world by a life of service for and dedication to his fellowman.

Private property in productive goods in Marxian thought is that social and economic institution which most thoroughly hinders that freedom which is an essential requirement of man's being. In Catholic thought man's freedom and development, in a world where alienation<sup>34</sup> can never wholly be eliminated, require private property, even in productive goods, as an institution essential to human dignity.

#### Topics for Investigation

In this concluding subsection topics will be mentioned whose additional investigation might add some contribution to the area of

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<sup>32</sup>Matt. 19:19.

<sup>33</sup>Alienation in Church language is sometimes rendered by terms of ascetical theology such as suffering, humiliation, acceptance of one's "cross," and similar expressions.

property rights.<sup>34</sup> In doing this some weaknesses of the present study will be noted and, hopefully, some ambiguities clarified.

One possible area of investigation within the Marxian system is the establishment of a more accurate understanding of the genesis of Marx's property views. The views on property which Marx exhibited in his mature works are clearly discernible in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and in other early writings. Thus it is possible to say that Marx did not deduce these views from his economic analysis. It is more difficult, however, to trace the development of Marx's thought on the subject of private property. A study of this development should help toward a better understanding both of Marx and his message.

In another area Murray Wolfson has claimed that "The unifying attribute of Marxism is the belief that it is a body of scientific deductions from the laws of motion of society."<sup>35</sup> The question naturally arises why the Marxian analysis is scientific while that of other socialisms is not. The Communist Manifesto contains such criticism that feudal socialism had a "total incapacity to comprehend the march of history" and that petty-bourgeois socialism showed its self-deception by resulting historical fact and "ended in a miserable fit of the blues."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>These areas pertain to the property question as it has been approached in this study. The question of property rights is developing in many ways in contemporary economic analysis. Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 3-5.

<sup>35</sup>Wolfson, A Reappraisal of Marxian Economics, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup>Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, pp. 106, 109.

The question can be further reduced to one which seeks to explore Marx's understanding of science. In other words is Marx's analysis scientific because it is Marx's, or, as is more likely, does he have a definite theory of what constitutes scientific truth? The notion of science which Marx exhibits in his writings was founded predominantly upon his metaphysics--a metaphysics of materialism.<sup>37</sup> A fuller explanation of Marx's understanding of science, a definite lack in the present study, should prove a unifying factor to his entire sociology.

Another notable omission in this study is a comprehensive treatment of Marxian and Catholic political theory of the state. Sweezy has observed that "The recognition that the defense of private property is the first duty of the state is the decisive factor in determining the attitude of genuine Marxist socialism towards the state."<sup>38</sup> This Marxian view is only the logical extension of Marx's theory of history and, as such, refers to the capitalist state. A Catholic view of the state sees it as "that part of the body politic especially concerned with the maintenance of law, the promotion of the common welfare and public order, and the administration of public affairs."<sup>39</sup> In this view it is easier for the state to serve the interests of all members of society.

The different political theories of the two systems are important to their property doctrines. Marx demanded that productive property be owned by the state and then by the community. The Church replies:

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<sup>37</sup>Cf. Wolfson, Marxian Economics, p. 32.

<sup>38</sup>Sweezy, Capitalist Development, p. 244.

<sup>39</sup>Maritain, Man and the State, p. 12.



If the state has a right to own such property then the individual person has an a priori right to own it, for man "holds the right of providing for the life of his body prior to the formation of any state."<sup>40</sup>

There are several points of Church teaching concerning property which need fuller treatment. Of theoretical interest, with no foreseeable effects upon social prescriptions, is the question of whether private property is due to the perfection of man's rational nature or due to man precisely because his nature exists as a "fallen nature."<sup>41</sup> Another point, mentioned in Chapter 11, concerns the actual amount of material goods needed by the individual or family in order to provide a standard of living which will ensure a fuller human development.<sup>42</sup> The ambiguity of Church teaching in this matter was pointed out, but existing Church documents perhaps contain more direction concerning individual wealth than it was possible to notice in this study. The obtaining of this direction would require, however, a careful survey of many Church documents.

There is another ambiguity in that this study has not reconciled the Church's ascetical and spiritual doctrine with its social philosophy. This social philosophy emphasizes the importance of and the necessity for the ownership of material goods in order to live a life of human dignity. The Church's ascetical teaching insists upon poverty of spirit, that is, a lack of excessive concern for worldly goods. The ambiguity arises in relation to the stronger scriptural

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<sup>40</sup>Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, no. 7.

<sup>41</sup>Cf. Chapter 9, pp. 241-249.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Chapter 11, p. 291.

admonition of Jesus: "'Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'"<sup>43</sup>

The Church has accepted this message by allowing the establishment of religious groups whose members profess by vow a life of poverty. This poverty, it is true, is meant to be one of dependence, not of want of material goods. Still the group members divest themselves of all ownership rights. The Church considers this vow, along with others, to be a "consecration" of the individual to divine service and it holds that "This consecration gains in perfection since by virtue of firmer and steadier bonds it serves as a better symbol of the unbreakable link between Christ and His Spouse, the Church."<sup>44</sup>

Thus there is an ambiguity in Church teaching. The Church from its earliest history has approved a religious consecration which has as one of its primary elements a renunciation of property ownership. At the same time that the Church affirms that ownership of property is a necessity for human development it also affirms that, under certain circumstances, the renunciation of property can make possible a more humanistic development. If this is true, is it not possible that the Marxian vision of man as free from material concerns represents this more humanistic development for society as a whole? Modern

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<sup>43</sup>Mk. 10:21.

<sup>44</sup>Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), in Walter M. Abott, ed., Joseph Gallagher, translation ed., The Documents of Vatican II (New York: The America Press, 1966), no. 44. Cf. also Second Vatican Council, Perfectae Caritatis (Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life) in the same work.

Church documents do not attempt to reconcile the Church's ascetical and social teachings.<sup>45</sup>

The above topic serves as preparation for the following fundamental questions: Does the Church's insistence on the institution of private property mean that every person must actually own productive goods in order to achieve his complete fulfillment? Must everyone, in addition to or instead of productive goods, own some (substantial) amount of consumer goods in order to reach that personal fulfillment? The Church's position can only be outlined here; a more complete development of that position would certainly add to the knowledge of the Church's property doctrine.

First, the Church recognizes that it is physically impossible for all persons to own both productive and consumer goods; at times it is not possible to own either. This impossibility may result from realities of the physical world, geographical or racial factors, resource scarcity, or any number of other variables which affect society or some large portion of it. This impossibility may also result from personal inadequacy, that is, an individual may not have the minimal education to equip him to be a property holder or he may suffer from physical or psychological afflictions which make it impossible for him to own property. In addition the life-style

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<sup>45</sup>The Church originally faced the question of reconciling vowed religious poverty and the need for material goods in the thirteenth century. See the following works: St. Thomas Aquinas, De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis and Contra Retrahentes a Religionis Ingressu; Pie-Raymond Regamey, Poverty, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1950), pp. 81-86. For more recent comments on the subject see Giovanni Battista Montini (later Pope Paul VI), The Christian in the Material World, trans. Michael M. McManus (London: Burns & Oates, 1963).

of certain individuals may make property ownership for them a burden rather than a help.

Secondly, universal ownership of property is for the Church an ideal toward which society must strive. This does not mean that some individuals under certain circumstances cannot achieve a high level of human development without property. It means that all individuals must be allowed to partake of ownership, even of productive goods, insofar as that ownership will allow them to achieve a higher level of human perfection without at the same time damaging the human and civil rights of others. It also means that society must do its utmost to promote a social and economic order which will allow for this universal distribution. In Church terms this is nothing but the accomplishment of the common good under the principle of subsidiarity.

A further point, one more of anticipation than of doctrinal difficulty, concerns the changing property forms of contemporary society. There is every indication that the Church will accept these new property forms, such as personal professional training, as legitimate property resources and thus as able to provide individuals the needed material security. This is a further implication, as was pointed out earlier, that the Church does not promote a capitalist economy but a private property one.

This last sentence provides a closing note for this study. The presentation and comparison of two contradictory property systems will hopefully provide continued discussion of one of the more important political and economic questions of the day--to what extent should private property be an institution of society?

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