

COMMUNISM AS *EUDAIMONIA*: AN ARISTOTELIAN READING OF HUMAN EMANCIPATION

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Karl Marx famously states in volume one of *Capital* that “man, if not as Aristotle thought a political animal, is at all events a social animal” (Marx, 1992, 444). Marx’s distinction between politicality and sociality is revelatory, both echoing his prior analyses of alienation under capitalism as well as expressing what, for Aristotle, would have been profoundly alien in spirit: the factionalization of the social and the political. That Marx draws from Aristotle’s work has been long-recognized, but one could argue that Marx’s very conception of man—what other philosophers would call “human nature” and what Marx calls “species-being”—supervenes upon Aristotle’s theory of the good life.

The intimate connection between the social and political is a theme that underlies much of Aristotle’s writings beyond merely “Nicomachean Ethics” and the *Politics*. Aristotelian dialectics always begins with what *is*—the commonly accepted rather than abstract first principles, the concrete and material rather than the metaphysical—as a means of understanding the “whatness” of the subject matter at hand. Marx, too, begins with the concrete, that is, the historical, the material, and the contingent. It is only by dealing with man as he *is*—not as the abstract, ontological protagonist of Enlightenment thought—but as he is found *in* his social world, and through such an analysis comes to light the material and sociopolitical contradictions and crises of the age. To understand man, for both Aristotle and Marx, then, is to understand the social, insofar as the machinations of nature are manifest in man’s movement in the world and interactions with others—and the world of man is always, of course, the world of politics.

This article explores the Aristotelian underpinnings of Marx’s political philosophy and argues that Marx’s very conceptualization of species-being

(*Gattungswesen*) and human emancipation supervenes upon Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*. The consequence of such a rethinking suggests that the Aristotelian good life itself is possible only in the communist society of Marx's imaginings and, as such, is a state that must be realized—whether by nature or revolution—for human flourishing. Inspired by Aristotle's assertion that "friendship exists to the extent that what is just exists" (Aristotle, 1991a, 527), this article draws from several of Aristotle's and Marx's texts to situate man as an inherently social being, whose need of other men serves both to edify and realize a common end toward which the state is oriented: the life of virtuous activity performed by and in a friendly association of equals.

Human Nature as Collective Activity

Karl Marx's methodology contrasts sharply with those of Hegel and his successors and, in so doing, offers a revolutionary conceptualization of the political. Just as Hegel's tracing of the Absolute was emancipated from the empirical—manifesting instead as the transcendent, rational development orienting the trajectory of the human spirit—the Young Hegelians, too, abstracted consciousness from material man, thereby transforming consciousness into a discrete object of scrutiny dissociated from lived experience. In an attempt to enlighten his contemporaries, Marx penned his 1846 "German Ideology"—in which he outlines his "materialist conception of history"—to suggest that, rather than beginning with premises whose "abstraction can only be made in the imagination", sociopolitical reality can only be problematized by starting with concrete individuals and the "real material conditions in which they live" (Marx, 1978c, 149). Put simply, it is only by empirically observing man's relations with others that we might begin to understand his being—his consciousness—precisely insofar as "life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (155).

Marx himself rarely uses the term "human nature" explicitly and instead invokes *Gattungswesen* (translated as "species-being" or "species character"), a term he most deeply interrogates in "German Ideology". Importantly—and in opposition to classical theories of human nature (which, perhaps, indicates why Marx rarely used the term as such)—Marx did not conceptualize "species-being" as an ontologically static assemblage of qualia; rather, it was the concrete consciousness or cognized existence of man: "Consciousness can

never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process" (Marx, 1978c, 154). On Marx's account, "species-being" is something contingent upon historical and material conditions, as it is, at its core, the *activity* of man qua producer: "Men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (155). Elaborating elsewhere, Marx notes that:

In the social production of their lives men enter into relations that are specific, necessary and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a specific stage of development of their material productive forces ... The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-processes generally. It is not the consciousness of men that specifies their being, but on the contrary their social being that specifies their consciousness. (Marx, 1996, 159–60)

Just as Aristotle prioritized the nation or the city-state above individual man, so does Marx prioritize the community and social character of man over his status as an individual.¹ It is only in the community, Marx asserts in the spirit of Aristotle, that man can flourish: "the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (Marx, 1978g, 145). For Marx, "species-being" in its 'natural' form is realized in an association of men marked by relations of mutual cooperation free from ideological distortion: "Only in community [with others has each] individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible ... [where] individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association" (Marx, 1978c, 197). Accordingly, "species-being" can only find its realization in the community, since for Marx, "[h]uman nature is the *true community* of men" (Marx, 1978a, 131).

¹ The term "*Gattungswesen*" is derived not from Marx but from Feuerbach. In *Das Wesen des Christentums (The Essence of Christianity)*, Feuerbach makes note that "man is to be distinguished from animals not by 'consciousness' as such, but by a particular kind of consciousness. Man is not only conscious of himself as an individual; he is also conscious of himself as a member of the human species, and so he apprehends a 'human essence' which is the same in himself and in other men" (translator's footnote 9 in Marx, 1978f, 33–34).

Importantly, man's *Gattungswesen* comprises both his sociality and his status as *active producer*: "The whole character of a species – its species character – is contained in the character of his life-activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species character" (Marx, 1978b, 76).² As we know, for Marx it is *capitalism*—marked by man's estrangement from the products of his labor—that brings not merely man's sociality, but his very nature as a free producer, into conflict. Rather than self-actualization through socially-directed production, man's production itself becomes the end of his existence and "free, conscious activity" alienated from him: "Estranged labor reverses this relationship, so that it is just because man is a *conscious being* that he makes his life-activity, his *essential being*, a mere means to his *existence*" (Marx, 1978b, 76, emphasis added). The German term used for consciousness, *Bewusstsein*, translates literally as "awareness", although this may be too shallow a reading for Marx. In Marx's genealogy of history, consciousness is and always has been a "social product"—insofar as man is, for Marx, fundamentally a social animal (see Marx, 1992, 444)—and as such, is already inevitably contoured in ways that are not, for the conscious agent, immediately apparent. So understood, man is always at once a product of his age and an embodiment of the assemblage of social, economic, legal, and political forces therein. By understanding those elements which compose man's social reality (and, therefore, his consciousness), the fissures that disrupt man's actualization of his *proper* character are brought into sharp relief. It is to Aristotle's theory of human nature that we now turn, in order to better understand man's *alienation* from this character under capitalism.

The Natural and the Unnatural

Across his writings, Aristotle emphasizes man's intellectual faculty as that which distinguishes him from the plant and the animal, and the heavily materialist, Aristotelian concept of the intellect was rightly considered by Medievalists and early Renaissance thinkers to be essential to any philosophy

² Notably, Marx never uses the term "rational" in his description of *Gattungswesen*—it is not *rational* production that man engages in, but the conscious production of those things that satisfy his needs, needs which are individual, social, and sensible. This rendering of human nature aligns closely with a materialist interpretation of Aristotle's conception of man.

of the state. What became lost in (or more fundamentally, drove) the Catholic Church's prohibition of the study of Aristotelianism—a consequence of the Condemnations of 1277—was the crucial, theoretical bridge between the intellect and the material world as a consequence of *desire*.³ Aristotle states explicitly in "On the Soul" that, for all organic things, "the intellect does not appear to cause motion without desire" (Aristotle, 1991b, 296). Desire—the appetite for some *external thing* experienced by all organic bodies—must always be situated in the concrete and, fundamentally, the *finite*, generated as it is from bodily need. It is for this reason that any brunt reading of Aristotle's man as purely rational is misguided; Aristotle himself was well aware that rationality was always in some sense curbed, contoured, and actualized by man's corporeality. Intellect, situated as it is in a natural body, is thus moderated by those externalities which affect the body and thereby tasked with distinguishing between those desires worthy of pursuit (good) and those to be avoided (bad).

It is from this notion of man that Aristotle declares that "every state exists by nature", emerging as it does from the gradual expansion of human cohabitation and association—a "natural growth" insofar as "man is by nature a political animal" (Aristotle, 1986, 18). Read through a materialist lens, this conceptualization implies that man is naturally oriented toward an end which is, at its core, *politically* contextualized. Any separation of man from politics was understood by Aristotle as deeply *unnatural* and a deviation from his function. From the "Nicomachean Ethics" we know that Aristotle defines man's end—*eudaimonia*, or "human flourishing"—as virtuous activity in accordance with reason (see Aristotle, 1991a, I). In the context of the political community, man cannot flourish but within a collective, with the help of his fellow men to ensure his sustenance and provide a sphere in which to actualize his ethical disposition. Human intellect works in the service of the political, we might say, insofar as the aim of the state is to supply the context in which the community of men can attain *eudaimonia*.

Marx's Aristotelian conceptualization of man lies at the heart of his dialectical critique of capitalism, insofar as capitalist working conditions sublimate men into an indiscriminate and recyclable mass of laboring bodies. The division of labor separates these bodies into smaller, isolated assemblies of

³ For a thorough overview of the materiality of Aristotelian intellect, I direct the reader to Dobbs-Weinstein (2014).

increasingly specialized (or rather, unskilled) workers, each of whom are subject to and exploited by the capitalist in the service of profit. Marx accordingly recognized that workers “find themselves alongside the given instrument of production as instruments of production themselves” (Marx, 1978c, 189). No longer in possession of the means of production, the worker’s life-activity is metamorphosed into the labor time for which he is employed. And because the objects of his labor no longer belong to him (the efforts of his work instead ‘rewarded’ in the form of wage), he must fight against lowering wages, poor working conditions, and technical obsolescence in order to sustain himself and his family:

Centuries are required before the ‘free’ worker, owing to the greater development of the capitalist mode of production, makes a voluntary agreement, i.e. is compelled by social conditions to sell the whole of his active life, his very capacity for labour, in return for the price of his customary means of subsistence, to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. (Marx, 1992, 382)

Through this vivid imagery, Marx tells us that the worker has no choice but to sell himself to the capitalist in order to live. And because his work isolates him from his fellow workers by means of the division of labor, the sociality inherent to man’s essence is perverted into a self-oriented need to produce that does nothing more than reward him with the means to survive another day.

It is upon the State that Marx shines his most critical lens as both the theater of estranged labor and as the mere appearance of community, distorted by the division of labor:

The transformation ... of personal powers (relationships) into material powers ... can only be abolished by the individuals again subjecting these material powers to themselves and abolishing the division of labor ... In the previous substitutes for the community, in the State, ... personal freedom has existed only for the individuals who developed within the relationships of the ruling class, and only insofar as they were individuals of this class. The illusory community, in which individuals have up till now combined, always took on an independent existence in relation to them, and was at the same time, since it was the combination of one class over against another, not only a completely illusory community, but a new fetter as well. (Marx, 1978c, 197)

Just as his notion of species-being is rooted in historical and material conditions—contoured by the evolution of relations of production over time—so too is Marx’s notion of law and politics: “The totality of these relations of production forms the economic structure of society, the real basis from which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond specific forms of social consciousness” (Marx, 1996, 159-160). Marx’s assessment of the political—incorporating as it does the enterprise of social, economic, and legal institutions that *produce* certain forms of (false) consciousness—is in this sense predicated on the relationships between subjects therein. Capitalism, which distorts these relationships to hazardous degrees, thus emerges as a deeply *unnatural* configuration of the social, economic, and political, in perpetual and unsustainable tension with man’s *Gattungswesen*.

Marx’s emphasis on sociality in his analysis of politics is remarkable, given the lineage of political liberalism that held man qua abstract subject of rights as the foundation of the political order popular during his time. This emphasis is very much in line with Aristotle’s own, however, insofar as much of both “*Nicomachean Ethics*” and *Politics* utilize Aristotle’s conceptualization of man’s function as a diagnostic tool by which to examine the *unvirtuous* states—those in which the body politic has failed to develop virtuous habits and is subsequently corrupted by social relations both egoistic and unnatural.

Equality as Friendship

Aristotle’s *Politics* is a continuation of “*Nicomachean Ethics*” such that it concretizes the ‘function’ of man he develops in the latter—the realization of happiness through performing actions in accordance with virtue—within the political. To reiterate, Aristotle has given us a theory of human nature that is not only grounded in human activity, but in activity that is always essentially *social*. It is for this reason that the life of contemplation is an inadequate route to meaningful flourishing and human *relations* of great concern to Aristotle; Lorraine Pangle suggests, for example, that “Aristotle does not assume the natural sociability of man but searchingly questions it” (Pangle, 2003, 4). Although I would argue that Aristotle *does* assume a natural sociability of man—for he is neither Beast nor God—Pangle is certainly correct that the proper realization of this sociability was a recurring question throughout his writings. As he comes to develop it, it is Aristotle’s conception of *friendship* that

serves as the mediating bridge between morality and politics as well as the foundation for the ideal social relation between men.

Books VII and IX of “Nicomachean Ethics” are where Aristotle most robustly assesses the nature of friendship, although it is arguably in *Rhetoric* where Aristotle outlines an identifiable definition thereof. John Cooper, for example, states that, in *Rhetoric*, “the central idea contained in [friendship] is that of doing well by someone for his own sake, out of concern for *him* (and not, or not merely, out of concern for oneself)” (Cooper, 1977, 621). Pangle, drawing from “Nicomachean Ethics”, identifies friendship as “entirely dependent on one’s own character and choice and is not defined and compelled by law” (Pangle, 2003, 7). What is noteworthy in both analyses is the universality and particularity contained in the concept of friendship, not only in terms of morality but also in terms of law, and the role that friendship plays in both one’s individual attainment of *eudaimonia* and within the state.

Simply speaking, friendship characterizes a relationship between two individuals in which each party considers not only her own happiness, but also that of the other. Crucially, friendship is not contingent upon the social or economic statuses of the individuals, but on the compassion and *consideration* mutually paid. This consideration (meaning, considerateness), in keeping with Aristotle’s materialism, is realized through action: relations of friendship emerge from one’s active, virtuous treatment of the other who is the friend, and vice versa. The power of ethical treatment, however, not only forges a bond of friendship between them, but in fact *equalizes* them. Aristotle notes that it is through friendship that “unequals can be friends in the highest degree, for in this way they can be equalized” (Aristotle, 1991a, 526). Besides its personal and social function, Aristotle writes that friendship

seems to hold a *state* together, too, and lawgivers seem to pay more attention to friendship than to justice; for concord seems to be somewhat akin to friendship, and this they aim at most of all and try their utmost to drive out faction, which is inimical to the state. And when men are friends, they have no need of justice at all. (515, emphasis added)

The extension of individual friendship to the association of citizens suggested here is crucial. Friendship is no longer limited to the personal, but also to the *civic* realm, implying that friendship is not only a qualitative description of the relation between two persons, but also reveals a *relation of solidarity* between

them. Friendship thus exists, in Aristotle's words, in an "association" which, along with other forms of association, "appear to be parts of the political association" (527). As a dimension of the political association, friendship extends beyond the interpersonal relationship into the consideration paid by each *citizen* to the *common good* of *all*, for it is only through the flourishing of all that the individual can flourish.

The life of virtuous activity is a product of the virtuous relation of friendship that exists between citizens from all ranks of the social hierarchy, requiring of man both an understanding of human nature generally as well as the nature of each particular citizen with whom he is in relation. As Aristotle states, "a common good is bestowed upon the man who renders service to the public ... for what effects equality and preserves a friendship is what each gets according to merit" (535). The virtuousness and sustenance of the state, as such, is predicated on the degree of friendship that exists between its citizens, and to this end friendship works in the service of the political. As Pangle suggests,

Friendship is an essential safeguard for the life, property, and political freedom or power that virtue requires as equipment for its full exercise, and it provides the worthiest objects of virtuous action ... In all of this, friendship appears less as an end in itself than as a crucial condition for the individual's welfare and virtuous activity. (Pangle, 2003, 16)

If a genuine friendship exists between two subjects—that is, if each subject has become habituated to consider both his own happiness as well as the happiness of his friend—then it is within this relation that each subject can exercise virtuous activity. In the context of the state, however, the extension of friendship from one's immediate peers to the larger community of citizens brings with it greater possibility of deviation, particularly when inequalities predicated on property threaten the internal harmony of the citizen body.

Asymmetries of Power as Unjust Slavery

There are two dimensions that exemplify Aristotle's concern with unnatural social relations: that of unjust slavery and of finance. Aristotle's *Politics* is infamous for the suggestion that there exists a type of social relation as "just"—

meaning, natural—slavery, though the underlying theories of human potential explored in “Nicomachean Ethics” and “On the Soul” shed profound light on this assertion: Aristotle characterizes ‘proper’ slavery as *friendship* between the slave and master (see Aristotle, 1986, 24). Even prior to *Politics*, Aristotle tells us in “Nicomachean Ethics” that the unjust slave relationship, in which “things are done for the what is *expedient to the master*” rather than what is in the common good of both master and slaves, is based on tyrannical rulership (Aristotle, 1991a, 529, emphasis added). What is notable here is Aristotle’s conceptualization of a particular type of expediency which is socially corrosive and which governs his theory of just slavery. It is the “expediency of the moment” that undermines the common good, insofar as it emerges from an insufficient recognition of the man’s end as *consistent and continuous* virtuous activity: “the political association itself is thought to have originated and to continue to exist for the sake of expediency,” Aristotle notes, but adds the caveat that it is only “what is *commonly* expedient” that is just (527, emphasis added). Expediency that is to the benefit of one party—and framed as such, marks a particular temporal ‘moment’—is not only predicated on intention, however; it is also couched in *economic terms*: when something is expedient to one subject, we can say that it is *profitable* for that subject.

The economic undertones of this rendering of expediency were not lost on Aristotle, who himself speaks about virtuosity in the language of political economy. Immediately following his analysis of slavery, Aristotle addresses property, ownership, and ‘natural wealth-getting’ (or ‘acquisition’) as a derivative of ‘household management’. As with his theory of human nature, acquisition—or, that which grounds the social relationship of use and exchange—is always situated within the political. Aristotle states, for example, that household management, as “one species of the art of acquisition”, “is concerned with the accumulation of goods which are *necessary for and useful to* life and *contribute to the political association or to the household*” (Aristotle, 1986, 27).

The emphasis on use and necessity here should immediately remind us of Marx’s own account of use and exchange value, itself inspired by Aristotle’s own writings on the topic: “each possession may be used in two ways,” Aristotle tells us in *Politics*, adding that “both ... belong to the thing itself but not in a similar way; for one of them is but the other is not appropriate to the thing’s [nature]” (28). He then qualifies this claim through the example of a shoe—which “may be worn or it may be exchanged for something else, and

both of these are uses of the shoe" (28). However, the two possibilities described here—that of use and of retail—Aristotle carefully distinguishes from the *art of finance*, which, buoyed by the desire for wealth, carries a profoundly corrupting force. Once the distances across which items are exchanged grow larger, the need for a "medium of exchange" (i.e. currency) emerges, in turn generating an "art" concerned entirely thereupon: finance. Aristotle unambiguously deems finance unnatural, insofar as "there is no limit to the end of this art of finance, for the end of this art is [limitless] wealth or a [limitless] acquisition of money" (29-30). When exchange value (commerce) takes precedent over use value, Aristotle says, man himself becomes beholden to greed, and, "zealous for [mere] living but not for living well," his "desires for [mere] living are unlimited" (30). Wealth-getting described as such, Aristotle adds, is borne out of man's "excessive" desire for "[bodily] enjoyments" (30), untempered by a proper understanding of the good and cultivated faculty of deliberation. The most damning critique Aristotle lodges against wealth acquisition, however, is its *unjust* nature: "the art of finance," he states, "is justly blamed (for men make gain not according to nature but from each other), perverting the exchange relationship into one of frivolous greed and individual satisfaction" (31).

Aristotle's theoretical construction of finance and slavery illuminates an underlying theme linking his critique of unjust slavery to his conceptualization of the exchange-relationship: both are predicated on an asymmetric relation of force which renders them unnatural and unequal. *Excess* in any manifestation is, for Aristotle, beyond the boundaries of the natural—whether in terms of what the master demands of the slave or what wealth man pilfers through usury—as nature gifts its children only with what they need and nothing in vain. Marx and Engels, of course, later bridge the gap between slavery and political economy by characterizing the capitalist contract as precisely one of institutionalized slavery. In a footnote found in volume one of *Capital*, Marx, quoting Engels, states the following:

"The slavery in which the bourgeoisie holds the proletariat chained is nowhere more conspicuous than in the factory system. Here ends all freedom in law and in fact . . . Here the employer is absolute law-giver . . . the courts say to the working man: Since you have freely entered into this contract, you must be bound to it." (Marx, 1992, 550)

The capitalist system thus degrades the worker's species-being to the point of unrecognizability, insofar as his entire way of life is mutated into one of abject isolation exacerbated by poor working conditions, estrangement from his object of labor, and alienation from the community: "utter, *unnatural* neglect, putrefied nature, comes to be his *life-element*" (Marx, 1978b, 94). It is the instability that asymmetry generates among the citizenry—whether in terms of material resources or human dignity—that creates the conditions for the possibility of domination and subordination and, eventually, factionalism and revolution.

Though Aristotle himself does not explicitly articulate this theoretical leap, the possibility of social resentment that troubled Marx and Engels similarly motivated Aristotle's own writings. Once his theorization of political economy is applied to the state more broadly, it is no surprise that Aristotle identifies the particular good of the state as "*reciprocal equality*" (Aristotle, 1986, 39). This reciprocity serves not only as a means of avoiding asymmetric concentrations of power—as Aristotle states that it is "just that all should so partake of rule" (39)—but also inspires the claim that "*friendship* [among citizens] [is] the greatest good in a state (since it is least likely to cause rebellion)" (42). For both Aristotle and Marx, then, social harmony is made possible only by relations of friendship that guarantee equality.

Revolution, Human Emancipation, and Democratic Freedom

Revolution, for both Aristotle and Marx, is tied intimately to the question of human dignity, the degree of which is predicated of the presence (or absence) of equality among the citizenry. Aristotle, as we know, explores this theme in his discussion of the various types of governments and constitutions and their respective deviations. Though he outlines six forms of government—three 'ideal' (kingship, aristocracy, and constitutional government) and three corrupt (tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy)—it is noteworthy that Aristotle identifies only *two* forms of constitution: the people's rule (commonly called "democracy") and oligarchy, with all other forms derivatives of these two models. We know that Aristotle famously advocates for aristocracy as the ideal structure of the State, but less explored is his endorsement of the *people's rule* (what I will call the "democratic constitution") as most conducive to fostering *friendship* among the people. It is only in a constitution codified in the spirit of

the rule of the people that “the free and needy” are the majority and in which all are disposed to rule equally (Aristotle, 1986, 110):

what is right should be taken as that which is equally so; and the equally right is that which is beneficial to the whole state and to what is common to the citizens. And what is common to citizens is to share in ruling and being ruled, although differently in different forms of government; but under the best form of government a citizen is one who is able and deliberately chooses to be governed and to govern so that he may lead a life of virtue. (93)

Equality, accordingly, is not a prescriptive measure, but a *state* which brings with it moments of compromise, sharing, and tempering one’s individual freedom for the sake of virtue.

In one of the most significant moments of *Politics*, Aristotle emphasizes the unique importance of the constitution, stating that “where the laws have no authority, there is no government. For the laws should rule over all matters [universally], whereas particular matters should be decided by officials or the government” (114). (The law, for Aristotle, is nothing more than “a certain order” [197], and it is for this reason that the community of friends—which is by nature inclined towards equality—has no need of law at all.) The constitution, as the codification of law, outlines the three political criteria whose expediency the “serious lawgiver should investigate”: 1) the deliberative body; 2) the offices or the state’s bureaucratic organization; and 3) the judiciary (127–28). All three, ultimately, serve to advance the life of flourishing articulated in “Nicomachean Ethics”; that is, the happy life that is “the life according to virtue and free from impediments” (121). And insofar as the ideal state is composed of persons that are “equal and alike”—because virtue is the mean between extremes, encouraging a state of being free of factionalism—it follows that the best political association is “composed of middle-class citizens” (122).

Read together, it is the *middle class state* that Aristotle believes sustains a political association characterized by friendship and which best eschews the development of class warfare that leads to rebellion. Just as Marx rejects the oligarchic social relations produced by the capitalist contract, so too does Aristotle emphasize the significance of the economic middle class as the safeguard against revolution. Democracy, composed as it is of the middle-class, is therefore the only type of constitution that ensures that both profit and

honor—the two primary causes of antagonism—are fairly distributed (140). Revolution, as such, emerges in contexts in which democracy breaks down, where citizens are either unbalanced in spirit or in possession, “for some, having less, rebel in order to gain equality, and others, having equality, rebel in order to gain superiority” (139-140). Aristotle’s appeal to equality here is, of course, another way of advocating for distributive justice: just as Marx (and Hegel before him) was acutely attuned to the societal hazards of poverty, Aristotle too recognized that “what a true friend of the common people should do is see to it that the multitude *is not kept excessively impoverished*” (182). As a proto-advocate of the welfare state, Aristotle knew that the truly democratic state, the one mediated by laws that promoted relations of equality, was the state that enacted measures “to make possible a lasting prosperity” (182).

On Marx’s reading, of course, it is the right to *private property* in particular that introduces this division of needs, ultimately elevating the need for money as the primary human need: “The need for money is therefore the true need produced by the modern economic system ... Private property does not know how to change crude need into *human need*” (Marx, 1978b, 93-94). Over time, however, the worker begins to resent those means—the modes of production, the machinery—that perpetuate the deterioration of his *Gattungswesen*, and soon recognizes that it is the larger economic-political system that allows for its realization. This is most clearly seen in Marx’s observations of the Luddite riots by English textile workers, laborers who destroyed industrial equipment in textile factories that resulted in a region-wide rebellion that required military force to suppress: “It took both time and experience before the workers learnt to distinguish between machinery and its employment by capital, and therefore to transfer their attacks from the material instruments of production to the form of society which utilizes those instruments” (Marx, 1992, 554-555).

This transfer of revolutionary efforts from the capitalist modes of production to the system of capital proper is a necessary condition for the social revolution Marx envisions, signifying as it does “man’s protest against a dehumanised life” (Marx, 1978a, 131). The aim of the revolution is, of course, the “change of the economic foundation” such that “the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed” (Marx, 1978e, 5). However, such a revolution merely constitutes *political* revolution and, if successful, allows for man’s *political* emancipation. Nonetheless, Marx regards this political emancipation a crucial and ineluctable step towards man’s attainment

of *human* emancipation: “Political emancipation certainly represents a great progress. It is not, indeed, the final form of human emancipation, but it is the final form of human emancipation within the framework of the prevailing social order” (Marx, 1978c, 35). Importantly, the social revolution cannot be confined to simply one group of workers; it necessitates the conscious realization on the part of the entire proletariat—not limited merely to England or France, but society *en masse*—“a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the *consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness*” (Marx, 1978c, 192-193).

Nevertheless, the revolutionary drive cannot be confined to mere consciousness or ideology. It is “not a mental act,” Marx says, but one arising from material conditions and, therefore, requiring material change, “of practically attacking and changing existing things” (169). This, of course, necessitates dissolution of the capitalist system and the civil society thereof, resulting in political emancipation. In his “Communist Manifesto”, Marx likens the communist revolution to “the abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom” (Marx, 1978d, 485), and consequently, the egoistic man. And as we have seen, the egoistic man is no one but the citizen himself, and the destruction of the former necessarily entails the destruction of the latter. Juridical rights in the capitalist state are nothing more than the rights of capitalism, and the citizen is no one else but the free slave:

The law of capitalist production which really lies at the basis of the supposed ‘natural law of population’ can be reduced simply to this: the relation between capital, accumulation and the rate of wages is nothing other than the relation between the unpaid labour which has been transformed into capital and the additional paid labour necessary to set in motion this additional capital. (Marx, 1992, 771)

For proper *human* emancipation to take place, then, the proletariat requires abrogation of juridical rights altogether; namely, the overthrow of the politico-legal structure that institutionalizes man’s estrangement from his species-being. Human emancipation, contrasted with political emancipation, is not simply the revolt of the proletariat against the capitalists in the sense of a manner of transference of power, but demands the dissolution of class altogether. The overarching aim of human emancipation is, therefore, to

dismantle the ideological and material superstructure that sustains man's alienation and allow for a return to *Gattungswesen*, to species-being:

Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, has become a *species-being*; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers as *social* powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as *political* power. (46)

The economy of free choice must be wrested from the hands of the capitalists, seized by the proletariat and, through the subsequent disintegration of false consciousness, reinstate man as the author of not only his own actions, but his own beliefs, needs, and desires. It is only when man is once more a truly social being, unbound by the oppressive chains of the capitalist for whom his life-activity is devoted, that he can claim the freedom that is rightfully his own.

Towards a Communist *Eudaimonia*

Similar as their visions for human freedom are, Marx and Aristotle diverge in significant ways, and particularly when it concerns the question of governance: It is clear that Aristotle is beholden to the concept of rulership in a way that Marx himself seemed to reject. Nonetheless, the rationale behind Aristotle's recognition of (the need for) the ruler appears, in similar fashion, in Marx's writing. In the "Manifesto of the Communist Party", for example, Marx outlines the general steps that will be taken before and during the proletarian revolution, stating that after

class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, *the public power will lose its political character*. Political power, properly so called, is merely the *organized power of one class for oppressing another*. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstance, to organize itself as a class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have *swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally*, and will thereby have *abolished its own supremacy as a class ... [and] in place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development*

of each is the condition for the free development of all. (Marx, 1978d, 490-491, emphasis added)

The absence of the political, for Marx, does not imply the end of politics, however: in “On the Jewish Question”, Marx explains that human emancipation will be attained only when

the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a *species being*; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (*forces propres*) as *social* powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as *political* power. (Marx, 1978f, 46)

Just as did Aristotle, Marx too regarded the social and the political as essentially intertwined; to be a social being simply *is* to be a political being, insofar as the ‘political’ defines a relationship between peoples working toward a common end. And just as Marx saw the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary step in the process toward this ideal state—insofar as the “dictatorship of the proletariat” or the “proletariat organized as the ruling class” is not so much the *replacement* of capitalism as it is the “*first step* in the revolution” (Marx, 1978d, 490)—so too did Aristotle recognize that the possibility of a truly virtuous State was only realizable through virtuous leadership: “the task of a lawgiver would be (a) to see that *men* become good, (b) to find the appropriate means by which this can become accomplished, and (c) to know what the end of the best life is” (Aristotle, 1986, 212).

As this article has aimed to show, both Marx and Aristotle recognized and affirmed the malleable social nature of man, and understood that the good life was not something that man attained through instinct, but which man had to be taught, act, and actualize through habit, the cultivation of reasoned deliberation, and free and equal association with his fellow men. Just as Marx envisioned the eventual abolition of the proletarian dictatorship, Aristotle, too, recognized that genuine relations of friendship—that which define the civic body in the ideal State—had no need of bureaucratic structures to uphold law. Ultimately, it is with an eye toward Aristotle’s oeuvre as a holistic system, constantly self-referring and dialectical, that Marx’s own political philosophy can be viewed, in its ideal iteration, as a friendly association of political beings of equal dignity working, as *each* is able, to ensure the flourishing of *all*.

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