

## Workshop on Alienation and Division of Labor

Texts: Selections from *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and *The German Ideology*

Work and the Human Condition

2 February 2009

Join with your workshop group, composed of your triad together with another one from your seminar. Tomorrow night, you'll continue this workshop with your own triad and **a triad from the other seminar**.

## Before You Begin:

This is an exercise in **close reading** – that is, careful reading and rereading of particular phrases, clauses and sentences, with slow, methodical attempts to interpret them. Expect to try out several interpretations before reaching a satisfactory one. Marx is hard to understand! The text requires this kind of slow, methodical, trial-and-error reading. Above all: **Stick to the text – resist the temptation to change the subject!**

**If you're in Stephen's seminar:** Begin with "Alienation," below, and then proceed to "Division of Labor," on the reverse.

**If you're in Susan's seminar:** Begin with "Division of Labor," and then do "Alienation."

## Alienation

Marx discusses "alienation" at great length in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Focus on pp. 59-62 (from "This fact simply indicates..." up to "We have now to derive a third aspect...").

1. In the paragraph straddling pp. 59-60, Marx introduces three terms: "objectification," "externalization," and "alienation." Focus first on "objectification." Find the places where Marx uses it; pay attention also to uses of cognates (that is, words with different grammatical form but sharing the same core meaning, such as "object," "objectify," and the like). *How* does Marx use it? From the context, what does his use of it tell you about what it means? As clearly as you can, say what "objectification" seems to mean.
2. Now turn to "externalization." Again: Where does he use the word (and its cognates)? How does he use it, and what does his use of it tell you about what it means? Further: How does he contrast it with "objectification"? (Note in particular the use just below the middle of p. 60.) How are "objectification" and "externalization" different?
3. Finally, consider "alienation." Once again: Find where Marx uses it (and cognates), how he uses it, and what these tell you about its meaning. Pay special attention to the kinds of reasons and explanations that he associates with alienation (and cognates). How does it seem to be contrasted with both "objectification" and "externalization"? (Note in particular the paragraph near the top of p. 60; note also the parenthetical paragraph near the top of p. 61.)
4. Sum up: What does Marx mean by "objectification," "externalization," and "alienation," as best you can tell from this passage? Write these down and keep your notes for tomorrow.

## Division of Labor

Marx discusses this concept primarily in *The German Ideology*. Focus on the passage from the bottom of p. 117 to the bottom of p. 119 (from “This sheeplike or tribal consciousness...” to “[... (nine lines deleted and illegible)]”).

1. Where does Marx say that “division of labor” begins? What does he seem to mean by this first division of labor, specifically – what is being divided from what?
2. When does “division of labor” become a “true” division? Again: What is being divided from what? What does Marx seem to think are the consequences of this division? Pay attention specifically to what he says about effects on “consciousness.”
3. Marx writes: “...the division of labor implies the conflict between the interest of the individual ... and the communal interest...” (top p. 119). What does this mean? Pay attention to the surrounding context for clues.
4. Look at the middle of p. 119 for examples of division of labor.
5. Sum up: What does Marx mean by “division of labor”? What consequences does it have? Write this down and keep your notes for tomorrow.