(RE)MEMBERING OUR SELF: ORGANICISM AS THE FOUNDATION OF A NEW POLITICAL ECONOMY

by

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It would be disingenuous of me to write a whole dissertation about the about the role of community in creating an individual and *not* have an extra-long acknowledgements section. I am overwhelmed in gratitude for the many people who were invaluable to the completion of this project. It takes a village...

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ABSTRACT

I argue in my dissertation that the Marxist ethical claim against capitalism could be bolstered through: 1) a recognition of the inaccurate human ontology that capitalist theories of entitlement presuppose, 2) a reconceptualization and replacement of that old paradigm of human ontology with a concept that I call "organicism" and 3) a normative argument for why this new paradigm of human ontology necessitates a new political economy and a new way of structuring society. I use the debate between Robert Nozick and G.A. Cohen as a launching point for my case.

In his book, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, G.A. Cohen argues that Robert Nozick's "entitlement theory" is unable to produce the robust sense of freedom that libertarians and capitalist proponents aggrandize. According to Cohen, the reason for this is due to the limitations and consistency errors produced by the libertarian adherence to the "self-ownership principle." (the moral/natural right that a person is the sole proprietor of their own body and life). Namely, that the pale freedom that the proletariat enjoys within capitalism is inconsistent with the Libertarian's own standard for freedom. So, Cohen argues for the elimination of the self-ownership principle. My project picks up where Cohen's leaves off, claiming that the consistency errors don't lie in entitlement theory's use of the self-ownership principle (it is important that we don't throw out the baby with the bathwater). Rather, the errors lie in the principle's metaphysics - specifically in the ontology of the human being. The self-ownership principle is only faulty because it presupposes an impossible self. I show that entitlement theory heedlessly presupposes the self (or a human ontology) as a "rational, autonomous, individual." I then deconstruct each of these three features (rationality, autonomy, and individuality) to show that this picture of the human being is not necessarily incorrect, but it is incomplete.

Although we are indeed rational, autonomous, individual creatures, these are only emergent characteristics that merely arise after the organic and socially interconnected aspects of our selves are nurtured. I encompass these latter features of our selves under the heading: "organicism". So, my contribution is to provide a different ontological foundation of the human being – "organicism" – to replace the Enlightenment grown: "rational, autonomous, individual". I draw heavily from Karl Marx's philosophical anthropology, and G.W.F. Hegel's theory of the unfolding of Geist/Spirit, with a little inspiration from Aristotle and ecological theory to construct "organicism" – a pancorporealist, naturalistic materialism. It is the theory that the human being is,

in essence, an organic creature, inseparable from nature, but *through* the nurturing of these material, organic, symbiotic relationships (with other humans and with the ecosystem) that these "super"-natural capacities of rationality and autonomy arise along with and because of a *full* self-consciousness.

Finally, I infer the normative implications of this ontology of subjectivity. This organicist conception of the self has transformational effects on our notions of property and the way we structure society. So, I contend that organicist ontology then serves as the foundation for a normative theory of political economy that sees the flourishing or health (broadly speaking) of the organicist human as the primary ethical goal. I speculate on an alternative political economy that can provide the robust sense of freedom that Nozick's entitlement theory (capitalism) was lacking because it actually produces the *conditions* necessary for rationality, autonomy and individual freedom.

INTRODUCTION

Since the Cold War era, the debate between communism and capitalism has been centered around the rhetorical debate between freedom and equality, democracy or authoritarianism, individual vs. community. Furthermore, part of the rhetorical strategy is to either create a false dichotomy (as in the case of democracy or authoritarianism) or make either of these pairs mutually exclusive. This is the strongest and most pervasive argument against Marxist political theory, and this argument is essentially a Libertarian one because it appeals to the principle of self-ownership and entitlement theory. Theoretical libertarianism is the backbone of any "free market" argument (regardless of any particular party affiliation). It supports the aversion to government paternalism, and market regulations, the tendency to conflate fascist with socialist/communist ideas, the drive to privatize publicly owned infrastructures and goods, and the general trust that the *free, unrestricted,* movement of commodities and market domains is the best solution to our social and political problems. It is for these reasons, that I take theoretical libertarianism as a serious opponent to Marxist political theory.

One of the biggest impasses Marxists face when debating libertarians about the structuring of a political economy is the simple fact that their value systems seem to be at odds with each other – Marxists take the side of equality and libertarians take the side of freedom/autonomy in regard to the normative functioning of the market. Entitlement theory is the foundational theory that libertarians use to defend capitalist inequality because it places individual autonomy and private property above any "patterned theory" of distributive justice that would ensure equality or comprehensive welfare.[1] In other words, it doesn't matter how drastically unequal a distribution of wealth may be, what matters is that capital and money is able to freely (voluntarily) and justly (according to rules of property) move from hand to hand. To interrupt this flow constitutes an unjustified or coercive authoritarian overreach and a threat to democratic process. To limit the wealth accumulation of one for the benefit of many is a paternalistic infringement on that individuals' inherent right. But Marxists insist that the *process* of acquiring entitlement to property, and the profit that arises therefrom, is exploitative within capitalism. So how does one overcome this stalemate of viewing the free market as, on the one hand, an expression of inherent human

[1] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1974), 155-164.

autonomy/freedom and, on the other hand, an inherently exploitative practice. This dissertation attempts to make progress on this debate by first arguing that the application of entitlement theory within capitalism does not actually produce more freedom, individual autonomy, and democracy. Marx's latter works of economic theory and contemporary Marxists such as Gerald Allan Cohen point to the mechanisms of capitalism as the culprit. I take this assessment to be correct, but it could still be the case that a diehard capitalist advocate might insist that exploitation and inequality, though abhorrent, are unavoidable consequences of the best economic system. This sentiment could be expressed in a modification to Winston Churchill's quote: "[Capitalism] is the worst form of [political economy], except for all the others." At root of all this is the core libertarian principle that "freedom" is nonnegotiable.

To get past this stalemate of values, we must find a common ground, an objective fact about reality. With moral realism as a presupposition, my aim is to find a point of ontological agreement whereby a moral theory, and by extension, a political-economic theory can arise. So, I descend from an analysis of the structure and mechanisms of political economy to an analysis of the ontology of the humans that make up these systems. What I find is that the pitfalls of capitalism (the exploitation, inequality, or the pallid freedom of the proletariat) that any honest economist (Marxist or libertarian) will recognize as a reality of the system, is due to a fundamental misinterpretation of human essence. In other words, I discover that libertarianism relies on a misguided theory of human ontology, namely, the belief that a human being is a rational, autonomous, individual. So, the root of the problem is ontological[2]. So, I propose a new way of understanding the essence (or the fundamental ontology) of a human being, and I call this ontological theory, "organicism". I attempt to establish both empirical and theoretical evidence for the adoption of organicism. Then this can serve as a foundation for a normative ethical and political/economic theory that we can all agree upon because it will align the types of beings that we are. This alignment provides the grounds for flourishing and accomplishes what theoretical libertarianism could not: the conditions necessary for rationality and true freedom for, not only the individual, but for all.

[2] This is being very generous to the libertarian entitlement theorist, because we could simply say that their ethics is wrong and that what is actually happening structurally is exploitation. But we would end up with the stalemate stated above between freedom & equality, etc. So, we need some extra grounding for why this isn't just a matter of relativistic preference between two ethical theories.

This strategy that I am implementing – of using ontology as a leverage for a normative argument in political philosophy – is effective for grounding our understanding of the social world in the most foundational way possible because we can point to objective realities. Michael J. Thompson argues for a similar approach to critical theory in his book, *The Social Ontology of Capitalism.* The relationship between human social ontology and normative political theory is so important because it forms a more compelling approach to social analysis that closes the gap between is and ought, facts and values, or praxis and theory. In Thompson's own words,

> I want to…suggest that a more compelling and more rational path for critical theory is one that seeks to place a critical social ontology at its center and to keep in view the notion that normative claims are critical only to the extent that they carry descriptive claims about the essential structures of sociality within them. According to this view, norms must be evaluated according to an objective criterion that is stronger than the epistemic reason-giving and linguistic-discursive theories can provide. This criterion is rooted in the social-ontological categories that serve as the desideratum for any valid social knowledge and therefore any diagnostic or critical account of the social world. This means that the advantage of a critical social ontology is that it can provide us with a means to sublate the division between facts and values, between our cognitive grasp of the social world and our normative-evaluative diagnosis of it. This is a powerful mode of critique because it can enable us to bring to critical awareness the perverted and distorted forms of sociation (alienation, reification, etc.) that plague modern forms of life. A critical social ontology therefore grants us a more stable ground from which objective ethical postulates can be articulated and defend against the dangers of ethical relativism on the one hand and epistemic abstraction on the other.[3]

So I offer a negative and positive argument in the ensuing chapters as my process of presenting an ontological justification for a new political economy. Simply put, the negative argument explains why I think entitlement theory and its human ontology is wrong, and the positive argument explains why the "organicist" theory of human ontology and its resulting ethical and political claims are correct.

The negative argument begins by seeking the presuppositions of capitalism – the main question being: What is the core ontology of subjectivity for capitalism? The conclusion I reach is that the human is a rational, autonomous, individual and I reach this conclusion through the following logical progression:

[3] Michael J. Thompson, "Social Ontology and Social Critique: Toward a New Paradigm for Critical Theory" in: *The Social Ontology of Capitalism*, ed. Mark P. Worrell and Daniel Krier (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). 19.

P1) Capitalism is premised upon entitlement theory.
This claim is supported by Nozick's work (and Cohen's interpretation of Nozick) – Chapter 1.

P2) Entitlement theory is premised upon the self-ownership principle
This claim is supported by Cohen's analysis of *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* – Chapter 1.

P3) The self-ownership principle is premised upon the self being a rational, autonomous, individual.
This claim is supported by the political theories of the Enlightenment – Chapter 2.

This logical progression from ontology to a normative political economy seems valid, as I explain this progression in chapter 2.

Then I investigate the truth of the claim that the human being is essentially a rational, autonomous, individual. What I find is that this foundational premise does *not* empirically hold up according to modern psychology (Chapter 2 shows that we are not as rational and autonomous as we would like to believe) and modern biology and ecology (Chapter 3 shows that the boundaries of an individual are indistinct). The consequence of this is that capitalism is premised upon a nonexistent theory of the human being. Therefore, it cannot function to protect or promote the interest of human beings as they really are. All of these "human nature" and "human ontology" centered problems within entitlement theory shows us that we need to first understand who, or rather *what,* we are in order to construct a theory of justice or a normative political theory that works morally.

The positive argument then builds from the ground up – beginning with ontology and building to a normative theory.

P1) Human beings are material, natural, and organic beings.
This claim is noncontroversial and empirically supported by basic biology and ecology – Chapter 3.
Therefore, like nature, they are symbiotically dependent upon ecosystems and other organisms.

P2) Human beings are also socially dependent upon other humans.
This claim is supported by the socializing characteristics of labor itself (Marx) and theoretically by various theories of humanism and recognition (Ubuntu and Hegelianism). – Chapter 3.

From this ontological foundation we can infer that what is good for other natural life-forms is good for the human. Flourishing, as in, not just surviving but thriving to the point of producing and creating is a good; and the prevention of flourishing and premature death is a harm. This can be gauged by the concept of health. Therefore, health is the ethical imperative of organicism. – Chapter 4.

An organicist-based ethics would be morally preferable and socially/politically more effective than entitlement theory because: 1) It aligns with the types of beings that we are – it is consistent with our foundational human ontology. And 2) because it provides a more robust freedom than entitlement theory (Cohen unveiled the pallid freedom that entitlement theory actually provides in *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*), and it does so because the latter only guarantees "abstract freedom" while an organicist based political economy provides the grounds for "concrete freedom".

In chapter 1 I give my motivation for choosing this topic, namely the frustrating impasse that seemed to occur in the debate between Marxists and libertarians. So, I look to Gerald Allan Cohen's book, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* to explore this stalemate. Cohen claimed that the impasse occurs because the Marxist exploitation argument and the misery that inequality creates is not convincing for libertarians because of their adherence to the self-ownership principle, which, Cohen claims, is the foundation of entitlement theory. Cohen correctly discovers that the self-ownership principle (and by derivation – entitlement theory) doesn't provide the robust freedom that one would think a libertarian would desire in a political principle. I agree with Cohen up to this point.

My contribution to this debate is to tag-team with Cohen by explaining *why* the self-ownership principle and Nozick's theory of distributive justice doesn't deliver a satisfactory freedom. It is because: 1) Nozick's theories only provide *abstract* freedom (discussed in Chapter 5); and 2) because he had an inaccurate theory of self/human ontology – and when you get the wrong theory of self, you get an inadequate theory of property and distributive justice. So, Cohen thought that self-ownership was the foundation of entitlement theory, which is the foundation of

the defense for capitalist inequality. But I think we must dig deeper. The self-ownership principle itself is not to blame, but rather the concept of "self" within that principle. So, I spend the next chapter exploring this libertarian "self" (Chapter 2) and proposing a new concept (Chapter 3).

Now, it is worth me taking this brief detour to explain why I've chosen this particular dialogue. I recognize that, by choosing Marxists and Libertarians as the representative discussants, this particular exegesis is characterizing the debate between freedom and equality, or individualism vs. community in terms of its extremes. It is very likely that I can receive the question, "but why not discuss John Rawls?" As Nozick himself said, "Political philosophers now must either work within Rawls' theory or explain why not."[4] I have chosen not to because I don't think there is a moderate position that does not run into contradictions within its understanding of the terms of the debate, that is, 'freedom and equality', and the existing social problems within the current economic system. In other words, moderate positions such as that of John Rawls cannot adequately address social inequities such as race and gender as shown in Carole Pateman and Charles Mills' *Contract and Domination*[5]. There is a gap between the ideal-theory of moderate liberal political philosophy and the non-ideal world we live in. As the author Anatole France said in 1894, "In its majestic equality, the law forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, beg in the streets, and steal loaves of bread." Which illustrates that all are, indeed, *not* equal if legal equality remains blind to social inequality.

On the same note, the liberal hope of preserving capitalism, controlling it through regulations, *and* maintaining a democratic welfare state is, unfortunately, wishful thinking. Capitalism, in its inherent functioning is what throws a wrench in the liberal dream of democracy. One of the consequences of Rawls' liberal defense of inequality – of the "rising tide" of the economy "lifting all boats" – is that, with this rise comes the rise of all costs and the standard of living. The poor don't struggle any less in a world that has increased its standard of living – poverty is contextual.

In general liberals tend to see justice as a matter of rules and structure allowing individuals to pursue their own interpretation of life, liberty, and happiness. But I lean towards a more classical interpretation of justice, one that considers both the rules that structure society *and* that is

[4] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2013). 183.
[5] Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

concerned with the flourishing moral character of citizens. So, my view differs from Rawls' because it makes stronger claims (or claims at all) about what counts as a 'good life'. As a liberal, Rawls' interpretation of the good life will largely be left up to each individual. Justice for him is political and ought to remain neutral in judgements of the good. But I am arguing here that there is an empirically validated component to justice (particularly distributive justice) that can be universalizable. So, although I am indeed characterizing this debate in terms of its extremes – Marxism and libertarianism – this is because I don't believe that the middle ground (particularly as Rawls articulates it) is bold enough to be able to play the role of either the protagonist or antagonist of this debate. He cannot function as the protagonist for all the reasons mentioned in the previous two paragraphs, and on the other hand he wouldn't be a suitable antagonist because Nozick, I think, is more honest about the consequences of capitalism. So, I've chosen to look to the transparency of Nozick. Nonetheless, by keeping capitalism as their economic modus operandi, they are both cut from the same cloth. As such, all the shades of grey of liberalism are not consequential for this particular project because they all have the issue of presupposing a mistaken view of a person.

A core concept that both Rawls and Nozick share is a foundational reliance on private ownership of capital. Rawls ensured that the economic consequences of his theory would apply to "a properly organized democratic state that allows private ownership of capital and natural resources."[6] Nonetheless there have been arguments put forth that John Rawls was a "reticent socialist"[7]. This argument focuses on Rawls' more mature work later in his life, like his final work, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement,* where he acquiesces that justice, namely, political equality and fair opportunity, is incompatible with capitalism. But this analysis and reinterpretation of Rawls, though interesting, would take us off track of this project here. The point is that the *majority* of uses for Rawlsian theory still come from his original *Justice as Fairness*, and I think there is enough overlap between classical and modern liberalism, that the common relevant features – the private ownership of capital, self-ownership, and the theory of self that precedes these two – will be the focal point of my critique. So, by focusing on one version of liberalism, (albeit the "more extreme" version – libertarianism) I am incidentally addressing problematic features of both.

[6] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Rev. ed (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999). 243

[7] Ed Quish, "John Rawls, Socialist?," Jacobin, August 22, 2018, https://jacobinmag.com/2018/08/john-rawls-reticent-socialist-review-theory-of-justice.

In chapter 2 I state that the libertarian theory of self would have to be a "rational, autonomous, individual" in order for entitlement theory to be consistent with its own presupposed morality. It is here in chapter 2 that we notice that both the "principle of just acquisition" and the "principle of justice in transfer" (the two desiderata of entitlement theory), both require a separation between humans and nature. I explain entitlement theory's roots in Enlightenment-grown contract theory, which, in turn, explains how we humans have climbed out of (or avoid) the 'state of nature'. This is the chapter where I layout my negative argument and point to two problems with this picture. One is that colonialism exposed the one-sidedness and racism of 'social contract theory', thus pointing out that entire portions of the population are not included as rational, autonomous, individual, selves. The second problem is that modern psychology concludes that we are not really as rational, free-willed, autonomous agents as we would like to believe. So, the "self" referred to in "self-ownership" is not actually protected with entitlement theory provisions of justice because it doesn't actually exist (or if it does, it is certainly not universal).

Chapter 3 goes into more depth about the *real* "self" – that is not the "rational, autonomous, individual". Instead, the self can be described under the heading of "organicism" which states that the self is primarily an organic being. I list the components of organicism, one of them being that the boundaries of an individual person are blurry given all the "external" and "internal" contributions to a human being's existence. Although this theory of self is inspired by a Marxist picture of philosophical anthropology, it is an expansion of Marxist ontology to the realm of biology and ecology, thus also diverging from his anthropocentrism.

After defining organicism and explaining why it is more accurate than the picture of humans as a set of rational, autonomous, individuals, I then explain, in chapter 4, how our material conditions (specifically health and the environment) affect our rationality and autonomy. I explain that rationality and autonomy not ever-present, but rather are *emergent* from "healthy" material conditions. The morality of organicism is perfectionist, that is, it is measured by our proximity to our true selves. This is determined by two levels: survival (the base level) and flourishing (creativity and growth). The inverse, or "harm" is defined as premature death or a hinderance to flourishing.

Finally, in the last chapter – chapter 5 – I explain how the application of an organicist-based theory of morality, when translated to a framework of political economy, would create a more robust freedom for citizens than libertarian entitlement theory. I do this by scrutinizing

Nozick's and Lockean theories of property and explain what an organicist-based theory of property would look like. Then I draw upon the distinctions that Hegel has made between "abstract freedom" and "concrete freedom" to show how organicism and its corresponding morality and theory of property produce a more robust freedom than libertarians and liberals were able to provide under capitalism. Finally, I speculate about what a possible alternative political economy could look like that would allow for the flourishing of the true ontology of a human being.

This dissertation is titled, "(Re)membering the Self: Organicism as the Foundation of a New Political Economy" because the process that is occurring in these pages is an act of remembering and re-membering. We are remembering the self that we once knew and that still exists deep inside of us. This 'self' contained our essence, our ontological core as human beings. But it has been hidden, distorted, and removed from our awareness. In a word, we have been alienated from it. I am not creating something new but putting a word (a concept) to a way-of-existing that we already knew but have been *separated* from. Organicism ought to feel familiar, intuitive, and almost trivially true. And yet our lived experience, our way of being in the world, the social structures that we have grown accustomed to, and the scaffolding that was put in place to maintain it, is a decimation of this essence that we once knew.

This project is also a re-member-ing. It is a putting-back-together of all the physical components of our self. If capitalism is a dismembering of the parts and pieces of our whole organic body which includes internal and external ecosystems, then to "re-member" is to reassemble the scattered pieces. The word "member" is both corporeal (as in a limb or an organ) and social. To be a member is to be part of a unified collective or community. So organicism is also a reuniting of the self to its body and the individual to its membership. And through this remembering and re-membering of the organicist self, we will come to see that this current political economy is not the one we were meant to flourish in.

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEMS WITH SELF-OWNERSHIP

In this chapter, I summarize G.A. Cohen's unveiling of self-ownership as the normative foundation for "entitlement theory". I reveal that self-ownership is deeply embedded in our political theories, from libertarianism to Marxism and feminism. I conclude in agreement with Cohen that self-ownership is not an adequate foundation for our political theories. My goal for this first section (1.1) is to review the self-ownership critique. I think Cohen's work in "Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality" is successful on this front. So in section 1.1, I will outline Cohen's attack on the libertarianism of Robert Nozick. Cohen reveals that the libertarian fetishization of freedom (which includes the unfettered freedom of the market) actually stems from a more foundational normative principle, that is, the principle of self-ownership. He shows that the libertarian principle of self-ownership is used to defend capitalist inequality under the guise of protecting freedom. But this attempt, by the libertarian, fails to produce the robust freedom that they evangelize. Cohen's solution then, is to restrict the principle of self-ownership.

In the next section (1.2) we will see how Marxists also mistakenly appeal to this principle within their theory of exploitation. But for the sake of consistency and maintaining the stronger argument against capitalism, they must also rid their theories of this rhetoric of self-ownership. Then, in the last section (1.3) I will consider a potential objection to the rejection of self-ownership. This objection will come from liberal feminists who will have good reasons to adopt this principle for the protection of the female body[8]. But this principle can actually serve to undermine feminism. On the other hand, Womanism and Mujerista (as branches of feminism) can both protect autonomy and bodily integrity while doing away with self-ownership. But it is not exactly self-ownership (as a normative theory of property) that they are eliminating, it is more of a re-conception of the self in question *within* "self-ownership". Although not yet developed in philosophical depth, the Womanists and Mujeristas provide more of an ontological framework from which a coherent picture of the human being can be developed (more so than Cohen in "Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality").

[8] The reason why I take the feminist critique seriously is because Marxists have historically been (and must be) concerned with women's liberation, and as proponents of equality, the concerns of marginal identities must be taken seriously.

1.1 G.A. Cohen on Nozick: Problems with the Libertarian Argument

Nozickian entitlement theory supports the idea that the best arrangement of a political economy is founded on a strong system of private property and a free-market, which is an essential defense for the continued existence of capitalism. Nozick is not a proponent of end-state or patterned principles of distributive justice. What this means is that one cannot determine whether a set of distributions of wealth/capital is morally permissible simply by looking at the pattern that arises after all assets have been listed. In other words, we can't simply point to inequality and claim that it is unjust. This is because there are other relevant factors that Nozick thinks are necessary to determine whether a particular distribution is just. Examples of other relevant factors that would *not* be apparent in a simple graph of asset distributions (i.e. a patterned model) are: the level of economic effort an individual put forth, perhaps an individual was enslaved to another, or the wealth of an individual was the result of theft. A Nozickian would claim that these are all important considerations when determining the justice of wealth distribution. More specifically, a distribution is just when it meets his criteria for entitlement: 1) Justice in acquisition (did individuals acquire their assets fairly?); if that criterion is met then repeated applications of: 2) Justice in holdings, and 3) Justice in transfer would result in an entitlement to total assets regardless of how this process would play out in distribution. In this sense, entitlement theory is not so much a theory of "distributive justice" because planned or patterned distribution is never acceptable, rather, it is more of a theory of property or "entitlement justice". The first step, justice in acquisition, is met in the Lockean sense that when an individual mixes his or her labor with raw external resources, that set of external resources is morally privileged to them and thus protected against appropriation or interference.

This entitlement theory of distributive justice is a cornerstone for capitalism. This is what allows capitalists to have a moral entitlement to their holdings. It is the bedrock for their right to private property. This is why, when socialists make the argument that wealth inequality is morally objectionable, it is a innocuous argument against the libertarian or capitalist – in fact they think it is a bad argument because they know that looking at wealth distribution is not enough to qualify a distribution as just or unjust. Poverty is an unfortunate (but not immoral) outcome, and inequality is a natural occurrence, so pointing to the massive amounts of wealth accumulated in the hands of a few, or the rhetoric of "the 99%", does nothing for the moral argument against capitalism for those sympathetic to entitlement theory.

With this in mind Gerald Allan Cohen, wisely takes a different approach. He notices the seeming fetishization of freedom that we all associate with the libertarian (this notion is even contained within the title of the ideology itself: libertarianism as rooted in *liberty*), but he deduces that freedom is *not* the foundation of the ideology. Instead, he concludes that the foundational premise for the profuse "freedom" that Nozick defends, and that justifies the freedom of the markets, is 'self-ownership'. Self-ownership is an inalienable right that entitles each person to be free to do what they want with themselves and their capacities, provided they do not (directly) harm another person or limit the other's freedom to do the same. This right must trump equality, if given the option, because inequality may be an unfortunate consequence, but self-ownership, and by way of Lockean acquisition, the private property acquired by this self, are unquestionable rights.

On the other hand, a socialist might make the argument that the injustice lies in the contradiction between the supposed aims of the self-ownership principle and the actual experience of the proletariat: If self-ownership entitles each person to be free to do what they want with themselves and their capacities, isn't it the case that a propertyless worker has less freedom to do just that than a property owning capitalist? But a libertarian would not be bothered by the lack of *freedom* in possession by the worker within capitalism. The propertyless worker would *already* be free in the appropriate sense. Cohen explains: "For the proletarian forced daily to sell his labour power is nevertheless a self-owner, indeed must be one in order to sell it, and is, therefore, nevertheless free, in the relevant sense."[9] So we cannot challenge the capitalist or libertarian by pointing to inequality, *nor* to the lack of freedom for the less advantaged because both fairness and freedom are subordinate values to self-ownership.

Next, Cohen decides to target the first proviso of entitlement theory: the Lockean principle of original acquisition. Locke claims that the land and its resources exist unowned before humans come to cultivate it and produce goods with it, where after they are entitled to claim it as their property. But this claim is purely axiomatic – it is an ungrounded starting point. Cohen wonders why original appropriation is not "a theft of what rightly should (have continued to) be held in common"?[10] So Cohen thinks of an alternative situation; instead of an external world where

[9] Cohen, Gerald Allan. *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 68.

[10] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 73.

everything is essentially 'up for grabs', in this alternative world, everything is already jointly owned, and as an owner, each person has a veto over its prospective use. This scenario is maintaining the self-ownership thesis (each person maintains their self-owning status), but in place of original acquisition, there is instead, a *joint* ownership of external resources. Consequently, in this scenario, you could have a more egalitarian distribution while keeping the principle of self-ownership. Joint-ownership of external resources would not produce inequality (as private acquisition does).[11] This means that inequality is not a necessary consequence of self-ownership as Nozick claims.

But a libertarian could refute this claim that self-ownership was compatible with equality of condition (where all external resources are jointly owned in common). Because, if every other person has a veto over my use of these external resources held in common, then my rights to self-ownership are weak in practice – I don't really have substantial control over my own life. Interestingly, this foreseen objection from the libertarian is the realization of their checkmate. The self-owned agent in a jointly owned world has limited freedoms in the same way as a proletariat who, because of their lack of property, has limited freedoms in the direction of their lives. As Cohen articulates it,

> [The libertarian] could not complain that the joint ownership of the external world degrades self-ownership, since the pale self-ownership enjoyed by persons in a jointly owned world is at least as robust as that of self-owning propertyless proletarians, who, unlike joint world owners, have no rights at all in external resources, and who also, therefore, lack real control over their own lives.[12]

Yet libertarians (as lovers of freedom) defend the existence of their pale freedom within capitalism. Cohen sums up this austere blow to the libertarian argument for capitalism:

> The resulting dilemma for Nozick is severe. Either capitalism does not confer consequential self-ownership, since [the person in the jointly owned world's] self-ownership is not robust enough to qualify as such; or, if it does so qualify, then genuine self-ownership allows the enforcement of equality of condition, since [the person in the jointly owned world's] self-ownership is at least as robust as the proletariat's, and no inequality follows from self-ownership in the [imagined scenario].[13]

[11] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 92-102.
[12] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 92-102.
[13] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 100.

So if self-ownership and equality of condition are hypothetically compatible, than libertarianism could gain moral integrity as a social theory if it adopted that idea of a jointly owned world, while still being able to maintain its fundamental precept – self-ownership. They could have their ideological cake and eat [freedom] too. *Or* the libertarian would have to admit that they *don't* have the most robust version of freedom. We learn from this exposé, that capitalist libertarians have failed to provide the freedom that they so lust over, rather, what Nozick really means by 'freedom' is "…the freedom of private property owners to do as they wish with their property."[14] Cohen thinks that a more robust (and widely shared) type of freedom is possible, he calls it, "autonomy", which would be genuine control over one's life. He elaborates:

> …although it indeed turns out that the freedom of which Nozick speaks can be reconciled with equality, that is only because it is a very confined freedom, and it remains to be shown that equality can be reconciled with a freedom more worthy of the name. Such freedom…is not self-ownership, but autonomy, the circumstance of genuine control over one's own life. Universal self-ownership with the world up for grabs fails to ensure autonomy, since it tends to produce proletarians, who lack it. Universal self-ownership does not, indeed, produce proletarians when it is conjoined with joint ownership of external resources, but the latter breaches autonomy in a different way… the right conclusion is that, for real freedom, or autonomy, to prevail, there have to be restrictions on self-ownership, and that is ironical, since it is autonomy that attracts us to self-ownership, through a disastrous misidentification.[15]

As stated at the end of the above quote, Cohen's solution then, is to put limits on the principle of self-ownership (from both the Right and the Left) so that it is no longer the frail foundation of our normative political theories. He thinks that true freedom, or autonomy, could be gained if we (perhaps ironically) rid our social theories of this universal self-ownership. In the next section, I will outline Cohen's critique of Marxists who, likewise, use self-ownership in their own political theories, but ultimately to their detriment.

1.2 Self-Ownership Within Marxism (What is Exploitation?)

Marxists adopt this notion of self-ownership from, what Cohen calls, the "bourgeois thought structure" of "left-wing libertarianism", which is distinct from "right-wing libertarianism" (like Nozick) in that, while both agree that all people have a fundamental entitlement to full

[14] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 90.
[15] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 102.

property in themselves, the right-wing faction adds that "self-owning persons can acquire similarly unlimited original rights in virtually unrestricted unequal amounts of external natural resources."[16] In other words, the Right adds the Lockean principle of original acquisition of property. Marxists apply this notion of self-ownership in their handling of the idea of exploitation, where the capitalist takes some rightful property of the proletariat. Or as Cohen articulates it,

> …the appropriation without recompense by capitalists of part of what workers produce, derives entirely from the fact that workers have been deprived of access to physical productive resources and must therefore sell their labour power to capitalists, who enjoy a class monopoly in those resources. Hence, for Marxists, capitalist appropriation is *rooted* in an unfair distribution of rights in external things.[17]

So the root of injustice done to the proletariat is that they don't get their fair share of private property. This is why it is so difficult for Marxists to argue the rightness of their case to a capitalist libertarian because Marxists use this fundamentally libertarian notion of self-ownership to condemn exploitation.

The idea of *personal* freedom, individual freedom, or self-ownership is a shared normative foundation for many across the political spectrum: socialists, liberals, conservatives, and free-market libertarians. But by holding on to self-ownership, any fight for equality, can only be achieved at the cost of injustice – a violation to the right of self-ownership. If the goal is to retain both equality *and autonomy*, then Marxists need to separate themselves further from 'left-wing libertarians' (anarchists) who, while advocating an equal division of resources, also maintain complete self-ownership. This is because, as Cohen explained, a world of self-owning persons, even with equal shares, would lead to, "a world in which differential talent allows self-owning individuals to be class-divided into buyers and sellers of labour-power."[18] Marxists must not simply reject Capitalism when it contains a dirty history of resource acquisition, they must also reject the mechanisms that jumpstart a class system.

Marxists typically say that exploitation occurs when the wage of the worker matches only part of the time she spends working; this is a theft of the worker's labor time, a theft of the hours

[16] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 118.
[17] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 119.
[18] This would be an improved alternative to capitalism – it would manifest as "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work"; but the ideal scenario would be: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." The former would also run the risk of being ableist. A further analysis of this distinction would have to be pursued in another thesis.

and the corresponding compensation from what should have belonged to the worker. This is also known as surplus value or profit – the portion of value that the worker creates that is appropriated by the capitalist. The unequal distribution of resources is unjust, specifically because it forces some to do unpaid labour for others.

Marxist base this exploitation critique of capitalism on a notion of self-ownership, and a Lockean notion of property, so we can't reject self-ownership if exploitation is defined as the appropriation of the labor time of a self-owned worker. But Cohen imagines a situation where the use of someone else's labor would seem justified. He does this to demonstrate that self-ownership could still be restricted while remaining just. He calls on the reader to imagine a worker who enjoys both their work and their wages, and who works for an infirm neighbor who, unlike the worker, has managed to possess a reserve of capital. The infirm capitalist appropriates only as much of the worker's product to keep himself alive. Suppose that if it weren't for the imbalance of capital, the worker would produce for himself alone and coldly let his infirm neighbor die. And we could also suppose that, had it not been for the power over the worker that capital provided, the infirm man knew he would die, and for this reason, decided to exercise this power.[19] A Marxist might be committed to saying that this relationship was an unjust exploitation of the worker's labor-time, but Cohen thinks that this example shows that we can't count *every* appropriation as unjust. Being devoted to such a principle "contradicts the idea that there should be an equality of benefits and burdens among people" Cohen continues,

> Marxists are, of course, very friendly to the [egalitarian] idea: it occupies a larger place in their hearts than does the principle of self-ownership, which they should reject. The egalitarian idea suggests that the infirm person's possession and use of his capital is blameless, which implies that there is no injustice in it, and that implies that the Marxist doctrine of exploitation is an overgeneralization if it relies heavily on a principle of self-ownership. The egalitarian thing to say about the case is that no person should be left to die and that it is a piece of luck for the worker that he has sufficient labour capacity to sustain both himself and someone who, if unsupported, would die. It is also a piece of luck for the infirm capitalist that he has the power, through his ownership of capital, to exact support from the worker, and, in the given idiosyncratic circumstances, there is nothing wrong with his having and using that power. Exploiting a person is taking unfair advantage of him. The infirm capitalist takes advantage of the joyful worker, but not an unfair one.[20]

[19] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 149-150.
[20] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 151.

The reason why this might not seem unfair is because we agree that the life of a human being has more value than the labor power of a human being. Labor seems a smaller price to pay for a life.

Another example of an instance where the Marxist adherence to self-ownership contradicts their commitment to egalitarianism is in the case of welfare and taxes. Cohen explains,

> According to libertarianism, the welfare state does to tax paying workers exactly what, in the Marxist complaint, capitalists do to workers: it forcibly extracts product from them, and libertarians would add, without benefit of the contract that workers sign with capitalists. Since Marxists regard that contract as a sham, they need not agree that welfare state extraction is *worse* than capitalist extraction. But their theory of exploitation makes it hard for them to regard it as *just.* For they cannot deny that the welfare state makes the productive worker do by force of law what he does for the capitalist by force of circumstance.[21]

Cohen points out that Marxists must be careful to not fall into the same trap that left-wing libertarians do by affirming the foundational principle of the philosophy it is trying to combat. So he makes this necessary critique against Marxists: "The old image of the working class, as a set of people who both make the wealth and do not have it, conceals, in its fusion of those characteristics, the poignant and problematic truth that the two claims to sustenance, namely, 'I made this and I should therefore have it' and 'I need this, [and] I will die or wither if I do not get it' are not only different but potentially contradictory pleas. The libertarian trick is to turn the first plea against the second."[22] It seems plausible that the Marxists adopted this notion of self-ownership as a type of leverage to appeal to the common liberal sentiment that you own what you mix your labor with. But this has backfired, according to Cohen, and in fact weakens the Marxist plea.[23]

The lack of means of production is not the whole cause of exploitation, if it was, then simply enforcing equal resource distribution would hold off any chance of exploitation. Instead, exploitation comes from the clever but mistaken idea that capitalists have some special claim to external resources.[24] So, according to Cohen, to prevent the manifestation of exploitation we have to deny capitalists of this "special claim" to resources by uprooting the self-ownership principle they are appealing to to aquire said resources. Cohen points out that we cannot fully own ourselves

[21] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 151.
[22] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 154.
[23] An exception to this interpretation is Allen Wood's reading of exploitation, which he says, doesn't derive from a misdistribution of property but from creating the conditions that prevent the worker from their essence as a creative being. I agree with this alternative definition of exploitation, and it helps me in forming my own theory of distributive justice. All of this work and this discussion occurs in chapter 4.
[24] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 121.

(in the libertarian way) if we think it is, not only morally permissible, but also morally obligatory that sometimes, "people have to have claims on the fruits of the powers of other people"[25] – in instances of human need. However, this is where even left-wing libertarians (specifically, individualist anarchists) tend to drop out, because they want to hold on to both, self-ownership (as a cornerstone of libertarianism) *and* equality of distribution. But as Marx points out in his 1844 manuscripts, "Even the *equality of wages*, as advanced by Proudhon, would only convert the relation of the contemporary worker to his work into the relation of all men to labor. Society would then be conceived as an abstract capitalist."[26]

Cohen shows in *Self-Ownership, Freedom & Equality,* the importance of restricting the principle of self-ownership for the sake of true freedom and full equality. I think he is ultimately correct in his skepticism of self-ownership, but furthermore, I don't simply think this principle needs to be restricted, but rather re-conceptualized. This is because I think it is an ontologically defective concept as it is. It paints an incomplete picture of what the human being is. It is premised upon the wrong conception of the "self". This will be elaborated in chapter 2. But first, in this next section, I will explain why discarding self-ownership would *seem* to be dangerous from a feminist point of view (why they tend to defend this principle), and then I will follow with a direction that feminists could take (in fact, have taken) to avoid the pitfalls of self-ownership.

1.3 Self-Ownership within Feminism

In order to reply to the feminist worry, that dismissing self-ownership is dismissing a very important component to the feminist project, we must reexamine the concept of "property" that we are using when we speak of owning one's self. In the following paragraphs, I will explain how the notion of self-ownership finds its way into liberal feminism. Then I will consider Ann Cudd's reevaluation of the relationship between libertarianism and feminism. I will explain why this relationship cannot be mended given their two contradictory definitions of the "self" and "property" within either's concept of self-ownership. I discuss Marx's critique of capitalist family relations to illustrate how a socially embedded notion of property can corrupt family relations and specifically the role of the woman. Finally, I will point to an alternative feminism that, I think,

[25] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 121.
[26] Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)," in *Writings of the Young Marx in Philosophy and Society*, ed. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 283–337.

further addresses the problem by elaborating on an alternative understanding of oneself as "property" (much like Cudd's "connected self" & "relational autonomy"). We will find that these alternatives, known as *womanism* or *mujerista*, are able to solve this problem of maintaining autonomy while dismissing self-ownership, and they do this by modifying what it means to own one's self, after a recognition that this self is not the same as the one presupposed by libertarians (and classical liberals).

If self-ownership is that I have exclusive possession and discretion of use for my bodily powers, then it seems at face value, that this principle would be very appealing to feminists. Affirming self-ownership would seem to protect women's bodies from the interference that comes with harassment, assault, healthcare decisions made on their behalf, and cultural pressures of body image. Lisa Schwartzman says, "The ideals and concepts of liberalism have been used in feminist struggles for liberation throughout recent history. From the time of the women's suffrage movement to the more recent battles over abortion, women have formulated their demands in terms of equality, autonomy, and individual rights,"[27]

Feminist Philosopher Ann Cudd gave a presentation at the 2017 central APA meeting titled, "Feminist Critique of Libertarian Self-Ownership", and later re-titled "Towards a Feminist Libertarian Metaphysics". In this presentation, Cudd recognized the metaphysical pitfalls of libertarianism – that they are lacking an adequate picture of the ontology of the self. She claims that the metaphysics of the self for libertarians must be atomistic – where the self is something separable from all external influences (like the "pure Kantian will" or Rawls' "Original Position"). Meanwhile, from the feminist perspective, Cudd wants to insist that we are necessarily connected, we depend on the pain and labor of others, and our subjectivity is necessarily relational. Even the genesis of selves requires more than one self: bodies come together to create new selves, and mothers host other bodies – that of their children. Likewise, even one's genetic makeup is *socially* determined (for example, by the nutrition one's mother had access to). Cudd recognizes that the consequence for having the wrong metaphysical conception of the self is costly to the libertarian. She says, "If libertarianism has the wrong conception of the self, then they have the wrong

[27] Lisa H. Schwartzman, *Challenging Liberalism: Feminism as Political Critique* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006), 1.

conception of liberty."[28] So the question she poses is: can feminism be compatible with libertarianism? Can there be a revised version of self-ownership that accepts our necessary relatedness? In my view, the necessary metaphysical relatedness of feminism and the self-ownership of libertarianism are incompatible.

Even if the libertarian wants to deny the metaphysics of atomistic individualism and claim that it is just an ideal or heuristic for use in political theory, then the libertarian is starting out with a problematic ideal that ignores the very consequential relations that occur in the real/non-theoretical world[29]. There are real power differences among genders, races, nationalities, classes, and many other social groups that will skew the results of any attempt at achieving fairness through individual effort. To not recognize this inequity is to give those already advantaged an *additional* advantage. In other words, the moral presuppositions of this atomistic-individual-starting-point, are privileged and androcentric[30]. So either atomism, as a heuristic, is unhelpful for practical politics or it is purposefully racist and sexist, and intends to keep a particular power dynamic in place.

So at face value, it seems that this principle of "self-ownership", of owning of one's body, is a neutral starting point for a normative ethics. But what I am arguing here is that, it is *the particular way that this principle has been understood* (its metaphysics and its implementation) that makes it problematic. In other words, there is nothing wrong with the concept of having possession and discretion of use for one's bodily powers, but we must ask, "what is the social situation that this principle is being implemented in?" How does racism or patriarchy affect the implementation of self-ownership? How does capitalism affect the implementation of self-ownership? Just as no human can exist in a vacuum, no ethical principle can exist in a vacuum because ethical principles necessarily involve humans. We may be able to think of mathematical or metaphysical abstractions, but to think of an ethical (social) abstraction, and then expect to be able to implement it is bound to fail if the multitude of social factors are not considered. People,

[28] Ann Cudd, "Towards a Feminist Libertarian Metaphysics," In *Invited Symposium: Feminist Critique of the Libertarian Ideal of Self-Ownership* (Kansas City, MO: American Philosophical Association, Central Division Meeting, 2017).
[29] This is very similar to the criticism posed against John Rawls' "Original Position" – it is a common criticism against Liberal theories generally. For instance, see: Michael Sandel in *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982) or Susan Moller Okin in *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (1989)
[30] Ann Cudd, "Towards a Feminist Libertarian Metaphysics," In *Invited Symposium: Feminist Critique of the Libertarian Ideal of Self-Ownership* (Kansas City, MO: American Philosophical Association, Central Division Meeting, 2017).

and even more so society (multitudes of people), are *complex systems*. So self-ownership, as it stands, is a privileged position to assume as a starting point because this "self" needs to own property and power already in order for the person in question to truly own themself. The original position that the libertarians (and liberals) rely on, perhaps unintentionally, ignores, and therefore cannot accommodate for, actually existing social inequities that outright prevent adequate personhood to entire groups of people. There is no self-ownership for many of these ignored populations. Even if we make the preliminary assumption that because they are human, they *ought* to have the right to self-ownership, this becomes an empty platitude when the laws and structures that are put in place, that declare to protect such rights, undermine this particular right to many.

This line of reasoning is a large part of what Charles Mills and Carole Pateman have argued for in their respective books, "The Racial Contract" and "The Sexual Contract". Mills doesn't see much value in maintaining these popular principles within political philosophy, instead, we need to replace them with principles and theories that "better position… us to tackle the pressing issues of "non-ideal theory" that, far from being marginal, in fact determine the fate of the *majority* of the population."[31] So in response to social contract theory generally and Rawlsian normative theory in particular, Mills says the following:

> "Pateman and I are saying that the history of gender and racial subordination requires a rethinking of how we do political theory, that it cannot be a matter of some minor, largely cosmetic changes – a few "she's" sprinkled in where there were previously only "he's," a pro forma (if that much) deploring of the racism of Enlightenment theorists – before continuing basically as before. As such, *the goal is a revisioning of the tradition* that we both want the white male majority of practitioners in the field to accept and to incorporate into their own work." (emphasis added).[32]

In the same way that Mills revised the tradition of social contract theory into his own theory of the "domination contract", so too am I attempting a *revised* theory of self-ownership because of the problems stated throughout this dissertation. But despite the metaphysical and androcentric problems, Cudd sees value in the self-ownership thesis, particularly in its implications for bodily autonomy/integrity in order to avoid violence and forceful incursions on the female body. Autonomy is important, Cudd claims, because violation of bodily autonomy makes one's self no longer feel connected (alienated), no longer able to trust other selves, and one's sense of safety is

[31] Pateman and Mills, *Contract and Domination*. 80
[32] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination* 79

diminished[33]. This then hinders one's ability to connect to a community. And if we are defining the self as essentially social, then this disconnect may make us loose our own sense of self. Therefore, the autonomy or bodily integrity of the self must be defended; and it is unclear whether Cudd sees a difference between self-ownership and our "right to bodily autonomy", but in this case, I think it is fair to say that she considers them to be interchangeable. Consequently, Cudd attempts to reconcile feminism and the self-ownership thesis by revising the concept of "self". She calls this revised version of self the "connected self". So far, I absolutely think this is the right first move. First, we must recognize that the libertarian self is an isolated, atomistic (perhaps abstract) individual, then we see the absurdity in that reality and suggest instead that the self is a complex interweaving of relationships – i.e. the "connected self".

Connected self-ownership entails that one owes a debt to community, it must maintain social connections, and it gives up the freedom of isolation in order to uphold the community. Cudd defends this view of "connected self-ownership" by saying: There is a clear *physical* boundary between our self (our bodies) and others, but the fact that you can't speak of yourself (physically and socially) without collective dependence doesn't mean that the former isn't also true. We are *both* physically and socially dependent *and* clearly demarcated from others.[34] We are both relational and individual. She finds the coexistence of these claims metaphysically sound, acceptable by feminists, and still indicative of libertarianism[35]. While I agree with the metaphysical soundness of these claims, and their acceptability by feminists, I (and I think some libertarians) would disagree that this was still indicative of libertarianism if, by "relational" or "connected self-ownership" one implies that this entails that one owes a debt to community. This alteration to self-ownership would no longer be libertarian.

Libertarians would be hesitant to endorse a view like "connected self-ownership" where an individual "owes a debt to community". Even if *left*-libertarians are drawn to Cudd's idea of connected self-ownership for egalitarian purposes, they would have to concede to a weakened version of traditional self-ownership; and how weak can self-ownership get, or how many responsibilities to the community must one have, before it is no longer libertarian? So to summarize, Cudd believes that we should *not* drop self-ownership because of the protections it

[33] Ann Cudd, "Towards a Feminist Libertarian Metaphysics"
[34] Ann Cudd, "Towards a Feminist Libertarian Metaphysics"
[35] Cudd did admit during the "question and answer" period that whether her view still counts as libertarian is questionable, and is something she is still working through.

provides for women – I agree. And the "self" that she is referring to in her concept of "self-ownership" is a *connected self* not an atomistic self – I also agree with this alteration and it is the subject of this dissertation. Then she says that one *owns* a connected self through *bodily autonomy* (of a connected self) in the sense of "relational autonomy" – whereby one's body is both separate from others and physically and socially connected to others. I also think that this last move is correct (although metaphysically complex and needing more explanation). And finally, I agree with her jump from the metaphysics to the normative, namely that we owe a debt to our communities (normative) precisely *because* of our connected self (the metaphysics of a person). But I disagree that any libertarian (in the pure sense of the ideology or *by definition*) would be able to make this final normative jump to requiring obligations from the individual (even the "connected individual") to the community. Because the rights of the individual (connected or not) must always necessarily come first. Philosopher, Tibor Machan points out that Libertarians "insist on the importance of unrestricted personal freedom, and on the absolute character of the individual's right to life, liberty, and property…Libertarians agree that liberty should be prized above all other political values."[36]

Nevertheless, I commend Cudd for making these initial and necessary first moves, that is, recognizing that something in the ontology of libertarianism and self-ownership needs to change. It is easier to see how we can jump from the metaphysics to the normative if the metaphysics shows that person #1 is connected to, and even constituted by, person #2 – the responsibility is then apparent given the metaphysics (her concept of "connected self-ownership" and "relational autonomy"). Whereas, an atomistic ontology (the affixed commitment of the libertarian) leaves no room for (non-contractual) responsibility to another. In describing our non-contractual responsibilities to the environment, for instance, Mary Midgley points to our social *ontology* – in this case our interconnected biology. She begins by describing the atomistic model of liberal social contract theory as adopted from antiquated seventeenth-century physics where "the ultimate particles of matter were conceived as hard, impenetrable, homogeneous little billiard-balls".[37] Midgley continues:

> On this physical—or archaeo-physical—model, all significant moral relations between individuals are the symmetrical ones expressed by contract. If, on the other

[36] Tibor R. Machan, ed., *The Libertarian Reader*, Philosophy and Society (Totowa, N.J: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982). (vii)
[37] Mary Midgley, "'Duties Concerning Islands.,'" in *Environmental Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.), 92.

> hand, we use a biological or 'organic' model, we can talk also of a variety of asymmetrical relations found within a whole. Leaves relate not only to other leaves, but to fruit, twigs, branches, and the whole tree. People appear not only as individuals, but as members of their groups, families, tribes, species, ecosystems, and biosphere, and have moral relations as parts to these wholes.[38]

In other words, in the natural world, relations are not always symmetrical; sometimes generosity extends asymmetrically to this larger biosphere that we are a part of.

Ultimately, I think these two views, 'unchosen obligations to others'/a moral responsibility for the collective, and on the other hand, self-ownership, are incommensurable—as incommensurable as seventeenth century physics is to modern biology (or even modern physics). Consequently, a feminism that can take into account our responsibilities to others and that can truly be universalized by being able to account for the diverse and entangled web of power relations (including gender identity, sexuality, race and class), will be incompatible with libertarian self-ownership.

Rights of an individual only make sense if *other* selves and *systems* of legality exist. Rights and duties cannot exist (or would be effete) for a man alone on an island – who would these rights be protecting him from? So, in the same way that Cohen criticizes some Marxists for falling into the trap of endorsing libertarian self-ownership, I think the [liberal] feminist project would be better off abandoning this same self-ownership view as well. Liberal feminism plays dangerously close to the bourgeois thought-structure of libertarianism, that relies too much on a concept of the human that does not, and cannot, account for any persons in oppressive circumstances (including women). I think this reliance on the principle of self-ownership is a case example for Clenora Hudson-Weems' critique of feminism as being philosophically rooted in Eurocentric principles.[39] And as Lisa Schwartzman claims, liberal feminism's loyalty to moral individualism and ideal theory makes it incapable of analyzing and criticizing the oppression of women.[40]

Schwartzman claims that part of the problem is that "liberal concepts are indeterminate and thus can be used in different sorts of arguments—arguments by feminists and antiracists, on the one hand, and arguments by those who seek to maintain and uphold structures of power,

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[38] Mary Midgley, "Duties Concerning Islands." *Environmental Ethics* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 92.
[39] Layli Maparyan, *The Womanist Idea* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 26-27.
[40] Lisa H. Schwartzman, *Challenging Liberalism: Feminism as Political Critique* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2006).

domination, and privilege, on the other"[41] This is precisely why I think that the solution is to clarify what we (Marxists and Feminists) mean by "ownership" of the self. How does our conception of "self-ownership" differ from the liberal concept? Or, in other words, what is this *self* as "property"? In the following paragraphs, I show what Marxists do *not* mean by the self as "property" or "owned" by recapping Marx's critique of the family and women as property; and then I will give a brief introduction to Womanism and Mujerista to illustrate a metaphysically accurate (and consequently more ethical) rendition of the self as "owned".

1.3.1 Marx's Critique of Self-Ownership in Capitalist Family Relations

It is a misconception that communists want to abolish the family and make children communally owned. Rather, the point that Marx is trying to make in the "Communist Manifesto" is that industrial capitalism is what tears working-class families apart as each member becomes a mere means to producing household income. The relations between working-class family members become a division of labor for the sake of utility and survival rather than a relation as a human bond. And likewise, the bourgeois family is based on the foundations of capital and private gain.[42] In both instances, a true human bond is lacking. Marx's claim is that capitalism, with its liberal ideology of contractarianism, is responsible for corrupting the family into a useful mechanism for the production of more capital and for turning human bonding to relations of hierarchy, relations of consumption, and relations of inheritance. Contractarianism atomizes the family from other families and the members from each other.

Liberal contractarianism – with its presuppositions of humans as equal, rational, self-interested and atomistic – corrupts the relationship between men and women as well. Marx's notes that "The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production."[43] Women, in this relation, are the subordinate proletariat gender to Men as owners [and self-owners].[44] This point has been

[41] Lisa H. Schwartzman, *Challenging Liberalism: Feminism as Political Critique*, 2.
[42] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *The Communist Manifesto.* Edited by Phil Gasper. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005), 65.
[43] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto.* 66; And the bourgeois man need not *believe* that she is a mere "instrument of production" (he may claim to love her), what matters is that she *functions* as such.
[44] Frederick Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Marxists.org) https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/ch02d.htm; "In the great majority of cases today, at least in the possessing classes, the husband is obligated to earn a living and support his family, and that in itself gives him a position of supremacy, without any need for special legal titles and privileges. Within the family he is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat." Here we are speaking of cases where women don't work, but even now, while many women work outside of the home, they are still doing twice as much household work as men.

developed further in recent years under the name of "Social Reproduction Theory" where it is recognized that women are the freely-laboring reproducers of labor power, with the home as the site of production. Lise Vogel and Tithi Bhattacharya explain this theory as such:

> The most historically enduring site for the reproduction of labor power is of course the kin-based unit we call the family. It plays a key role in biological reproduction – as the generational replacement of the working class – and in reproducing the worker, through food, shelter, and psychical care, to become ready for the next day of work. Both those functions are disproportionately borne by women under capitalism and are the sources of women's oppression under the system.[45]

What these Marxist analyses of the family and women show, is that within capitalism (as a liberal economy founded upon contractarian relations, that rely on the principle of self-ownership), the relationships between people mirror that of property relations. The body becomes owned as property in relation to exchange. Suddenly the body has a use value and an exchange value in the same way that a commodity does.

What we prefer is a conception of self-ownership where the self in question is not property in relation to exchange or utility, but property in being worthy of nourishing, revering, and preserving. The self as one's property in this latter sense would be the grounds for rights to nutrition, education, and housing, for instance. The libertarian body, on the other hand is not necessarily property to be nurtured, but property to be defended. This understanding of property contains a very colonial logic of an inside-outside binary or an owned vs. up-for-grabs mentality. The colonial understanding of property is that it is static and limited, and so, it can be collected, used, and then discarded. But what we want is a more accurate understanding of property as "resource" – something that cannot be collected as static things, but that requires constant maintenance, because rather than being static the human being "grows". For a more detailed description of this concept of property and how it arises out of my theory of "organicism", see chapter 3.

The sentiment behind our ownership of our selves ought not be the same as our ownership of a plot of land. I think that the feminist theories of Womanism and Mujerista, could assist Cudd's

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See: American Time Use Survey (ATUS), from the United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics. https://www.bls.gov/TUS/CHARTS/HOUSEHOLD.HTM

[45] Bhattacharya, Tithi. "How Not to Skip Class: Social Reproduction of Labor and the Global Working Class," Viewpoint Magazine, October 31, 2015. https://www.viewpointmag.com/2015/10/31/how-not-to-skip-class-social-reproduction-of-labor-and-the-global-working-class/#container

goal of constructing a "connected self-ownership". They have a refreshing take on what it means for a woman to be *both* a self-owning person (but with a completely different metaphysics – perhaps a decolonial one) *and* responsible to others and the community.

1.3.2 Womanism and Mujerista

This section is meant only as an illustration of an alternative perspective that we could take when claiming ownership of our self (one that does not rely on the libertarian notion of the self as atomistic) *and* that can successfully defend the interests of oppressed populations. This saves us from our worry that restricting self-ownership would put women in a vulnerable position (since feminist arguments seem to rely on protecting the self in this classically liberal manner).

The author and poet, Alice Walker coined the term "Womanist". Much like black feminism, it places more emphasis on the overlap and complexities that race and class marginalization add to the experience of gender oppression. Laura Gillman describes how Womanism arose from Black Feminism historically: "While Black feminism has had a longer history in forging an activist and scholarly agenda, dating back to Black cultural nationalist projects of the '70s and '80s, womanist movement and thought, emerging in the early '80s, have absorbed Black feminist oppositional discourses and also carved out their own social theories."[46] While one of feminism's main goals is to end the subjugation of women, both Black feminism and Womanism see subjugation as a wider problem that includes the subjugation of races and ethnicities. This expansion on its own displays the expansion from the individual (sexism as a phenomenal experience of an individual woman) to the group (as ethnicities standing in a particular relation to colonial and class power).

But what distinguishes Womanism from Black Feminism is that the former considers itself a lifestyle and a spiritual identity, containing within it an ontology of womanhood and personhood rather than simply an academic theory and political movement. This ontology perceives of the self as fundamentally interconnected with, not only all people (of all genders, races, nationalities, etc.), but also fundamentally interconnected with the Earth and biosphere. As a direct consequence of their ontology of personhood, Womanists are fundamentally constructivists and not racial essentialists. There is a strong focus on the community over the individual and this brings attention

[46] Laura Gillman, *Unassimilable Feminisms: Reappraising Feminist, Womanist, and Mestiza Identity Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 61.

to the environment that black women inhabit (the natural and the social environment). It is a more holistic and widely encompassing feminism because it pays attention to women's relationships to each other, to their race, to those around them, to nature, and to their own spirituality.

In a parallel approach, professor emerita of ethics and theology, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz coined the term 'Mujerista', as the Latina-centric version of Womanism. Mujerista centers on the embodied mestizaje/mulatez[47] as epistemic lenses and hermeneutical tools for viewing, in her own words, the "…lived or enfleshed context of living between at least two cultures and racial economies."[48] And similar to the holistic approach of Womanism, Mujerista proceeds with "an analysis of the impact of [the] structures and ideologies of racism, sexism, and classism on Latinas and the[ir] communit[ies]."[49]

Womanists and Mujeristas don't use the word, "self-ownership" in their philosophies. This may be because it was European colonial powers that imposed the language of "rights" and individual dignity/"self-ownership" upon the global south, while at the same time, designating the American indigenous and African people as the antithesis of this humanization. In a world of competing power relations, only the privileged can be self-defined (although never self-made). But it was the colonizers that inflicted the world with this duality of competing power relations of us vs. the other, human vs. savage, civilization vs. uncivilized, inside vs. outside, domesticity vs. the wild, logic vs. superstition, religion vs. paganism, etc. Meanwhile, the ideologies of the colonized were predominantly holistic rather than dualistic, symbiotic rather than antagonistic.

Mujerista is a theology/ethics that sees all humans as one in the same. If the ontological core of human beings is the same – interconnected, inter-reliant entities – then Mujeristas and Womanists *cannot* be racial essentialists. Mujeristas say that their mission is "…to unearthing the history of those who have been abused and oppressed, it has been our way of saying to the powers that be, your victory is hollow: in attempting to destroy us you in reality have been destroying yourselves."[50] We can see from this statement that they recognize the falsity of racial essentialism because to oppress one race is to oppress all of humanity (which includes the oppressor as part of that universal).

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[47] Meaning, mixed race: *Mestizaje* as Spanish and Native American; *Mulatez* as Spanish and African
[48] Laura Gillman, *Unassimilable Feminisms: Reappraising Feminist, Womanist, and Mestiza Identity Politics*, 177.
[49] Laura Gillman, *Unassimilable Feminisms: Reappraising Feminist, Womanist, and Mestiza Identity Politics*, 178.
[50] Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society (Religion Race, and Ethnicity)* (New York; London: New York University Press), 265.

This same anti-essentialism appears in Womanism, but in this example regarding gender. Alice Walker says that Womanism "…is committed to the survival and wholeness of an entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically for health..."[51] Maparyan says similarly, "The *womanist idea* is really about a practice and a perspective more than an ethnic group or a gender, even though it is undeniable that Black women have had a special role to play in its propagation and promulgation."[52]

The perspective that Womanism and Mujerista teach us about the self is that the self is *always* situated in a living breathing, evolving context of power relations. The self emerges out of the history of our communities. A person's relationship to their self is one of self-love not of self-ownership[53]. This self-love is a facet of self-determination for individuals (whether they be women or Black or Latina…) who have a history of being *de*-humanized. The property model of self-ownership doesn't work when you are not considered human enough to have property. The white proletariat could presumably use the self-ownership plea to claim that a portion of the profit is rightfully his, but an American antebellum slave could not. The self-love view allows one to endow *themselves* with a sense of dignity (rather than it being bestowed externally); the humanization is *internally* granted even if the structural circumstances deny this humanization. This, of course, isn't a powerful enough move to change the actual material circumstances, but it isn't meant to do so on its own. Self-love isn't a prescription for liberation, rather it is a description of the Womanist and Mujerista version of "self-ownership" – it is a radically different self-reflexive relationship. If the notion of self-ownership involved a loving, nurturing, or caring for the self, and more importantly, actively/politically defending one's right to care, nourishment, etc., than this would be a more effective act of humanization and self-determination, than the property model – in this way, "self-love" has more of a potential to be universalized than "self-ownership", because self-ownership will always exclude the powerless or "propertyless".

The Mujeristas know that their right to "self-ownership" has limits, that they have to "live simply so others can simply live."[54] And they understand that "material richness is not a limitless right but it carries a 'social mortgage' that we have to pay to the poor of the world."[55] This "social

[51] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*, (New York: Open Road Media, 2011), xii.
[52] Layli Maparyan, *The Womanist Idea*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 8.
[53] Melanie L. Harris, "Womanist Humanism: A New Hermeneutic," in, *Deeper Shades of Purple*, ed. Floyd-Thomas, Stacy, (New York; London: New York University Press), 211-225.
[54] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. "My Name is Mujerista" https://users.drew.edu/aisasidi/essay.htm
[55] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. "My Name is Mujerista"

mortgage" derives from their sense of self/personhood - what Isasi-Diaz refers to as "critical subjectivity" whereby Mujeristas are critical of the predominant sense of subjectivity. She says:

> [We are] not in the illusion of someone standing in no place, with no worldview, with no personal interest in what is going on or in its outcome. Subjectivity has to do with accountability and responsibility to the community. Subjectivity is not a screen behind which to hide selfishness or a liberal individualism that has people so set in a competitive mode that they cannot even imagine any reality beyond their world. However, the only assurance we have of not falling into a selfish and antagonistic mindset depends upon our own specific ways of being accountable to specific communities, to specific persons within our communities.[56]

To own one's self is to own one's connections and communities, and consequently, to be a guardian to these – to own one's responsibilities. Subjectivity is inseparable from responsibility.

Layli Marparyan describes the project that Womanism takes up in regard to ownership: "…we have to move away from acquisition and ownership 'turf' models toward spiritually based 'affinity' models that recognize our fundamental human connecting tendency and respect/revere both individual and collective expressions of divinity that manifest as cultures and subcultures."[57] This quote also displays an understanding of the balance between the universal and the individual (the "…individual and collective expressions of divinity…"). It displays a merging of communitarian ethics with sensitivity to individual identity. Both Womanism and Mujerista recognize that liberation requires knowledge about an individual's "particular history… particular struggles…[and] particular lived experiences"[58] but it also requires a juxtaposition of that knowledge "with the shared or universal reality of how black and brown people have confronted the powers of domination..."[59] and an understanding of the universality of humanity. This struggle for power, recognition, and survival is globally and historically universal. As Marx said, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"[60]. But this focus on universal subjectivity does not eclipse individual (particular) interests. Maparyan explains, in her theory of

[56] Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society (Religion Race, and Ethnicity)* (New York; London: New York University Press), 267.
[57] Layli Maparyan, *The Womanist Idea*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 12.
[58] Daisy L. Machado, "Mining the Motherlode: A Latina Feminist Response", in ed. Floyd-Thomas, Stacey M. *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society (Religion Race, and Ethnicity)* (New York; London: New York University Press), 273.
[59] Daisy L. Machado, "Mining the Motherlode: A Latina Feminist Response", 273.
[60] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto.* Edited by Phil Gasper. (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005), 39.

"Commonweal", the metaphysical unity of the universal and the particular, which is both a value and objective of Womanism. She says:

> Commonweal involves both a state of collective well-being and a modality of collective thought/action that does not compromise individual well-being or freedom… it rests upon a universal acceptance of the integral oneness of the human collective and its integration with its Gaiaic medium of survival (i.e., Planet Earth) and only understands human individuality within this paradigm. This is different from the collectivism/individualism duality insofar as humanity and individual humans are not viewed as oppositional. Rather, this notion of commonweal is more related to … the African metaphysical principle "I am because We are and We are because I am."… Commonweal requires an understanding of the whole *within* each individual. Each individual simultaneously recognizes both the necessity of coordination with the whole and the role of one's own freedom and self-expression in the co-constitution of the whole.[61]

The ideological hegemony of economic liberalism *outside* of the academy reflects the hegemony found *within* political philosophy (with the cannon defined by: Kant, Mill, Locke, Rawls, etc.). It is not surprising at all that political philosophy and ethics is still dominated by Eurocentric individualism. Even one of the most popular quotes in the history of philosophy reflects this solipsistic dominance: "I think, therefore I am". But Descartes could only think because he had a mother that gave him life; and when his mother died a year after giving birth; he was raised (or taught how to be a person) by his grandmother; and at the age of ten his little mind was developed by a *community* of Jesuits. Meanwhile, the global south is reciting a different message with no delusions of grandeur: "I am, because we are".

1.4 Conclusion: Self-Ownership is a Faulty Principle

The principle of self-ownership is the normative foundation of entitlement theory. In other words, the rightness of self-ownership is what grounds the justification for someone owning the fruits of their labor (the acquisition thesis) and for someone to have the right to take another's property only with contractual consent; these are the main components of Robert Nozick's entitlement theory of justice. Therefore, self-ownership serves as the normative foundation for the claim that capitalists have a right to their property. But this normative foundation is faulty for a few crucial reasons. This chapter focused on 3:

[61] Maparyan, Layli. *The Womanist Idea* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 10.

1. Self-ownership does not provide a satisfactorily robust freedom, given the pale freedom enjoyed by the proletariat in an entitlement theory based system. Furthermore, this level of freedom (of the proletariat) does not even meet the libertarian's own standards. Because, as we saw, the freedom enjoyed by Cohen's hypothetical "joint owners of the external world, who have equal veto powers over its use", are at least as (if not more) free than the proletariat – yet libertarians would find this hypothetical scenario to be a violation of individual freedom.[62] So this chapter has shown that entitlement theory proponents cannot claim that freedom is at stake when self-ownership is questioned.
2. The self-ownership principle misleads us into thinking that injustice and exploitation comes from distinguishing between fair and unfair entitlement. In other words, injustice and exploitation occurs when an entitlement is *not* established through a contractual exchange of an individual's capital or labor. I disagree with this assessment, injustice and exploitation arise from distribution, or misdistribution, of *sustenance*. Marxists must make the distinction between, "I made this and I should therefore have it" and, "I need this, [or] I will die or wither if I do not get it"[63]. The claim that biological/organic wellbeing ought to be the yardstick for injustice or exploitation will be defended in chapter 4.
3. The self-ownership principle cannot account for certain populations in oppressive circumstances. The libertarian metaphysical presuppositions of personhood are atomistic individuals in ahistorical vacuums. Self-ownership (as it has been used in entitlement theory) *assumes* equality while disregarding evolving power relations throughout history. As the first mistake mentioned above reiterates, the proletariat holds less freedom, has less self-ownership, or less control over the direction of their lives. Similar to this class disparity, certain genders, races, nationalities, and other identities will have less self-ownership because of a lack of equal recognition.

So the remaining questions are: What principle *can* produce robust freedom, has a clear line of injustice based on sustenance and survival, and can account for all people, including those

[62] See overview of Cohen's argument in section 1.1
[63] Gerald Allan Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 154.

in oppressive situations? In other words, if we must deny self-ownership, what can we affirm instead? I think the root cause of the failure of the self-ownership principle is, as Cudd pointed out, a mistaken metaphysics – more specifically, a mistaken ontology of personhood/the self. If the metaphysics is wrong, then the derivative concept of liberty/freedom or liberation is wrong. While the three flaws of self-ownership listed above, point to consistency errors, the root of the mistake is the presupposition of the ontological "self" implied in self-ownership.

If we want a more robust and universal freedom, we need to know the preconditions for this freedom. And if we want to know these preconditions, we need to know who/what we are and what are the necessary conditions for our existence – we need to know the ontology, or the metaphysical constitution, of the human being. Cudd with her "connected self-ownership" and Mujeristas and Womanists had the right seedling of an idea regarding their theory of self. And Cohen was pointing in the right direction when he said that our claim to sustenance must shift from, "I made this and I should therefore have it" to "I need this, [or] I will die or wither if I do not get it".[64]

I think Cohen successfully demonstrated how the self-ownership principle doesn't deliver a satisfactory freedom if Nozick's "justice in acquisition" rule is followed, no matter whether we start with equality of condition (a jointly owned world) or with the Lockean "first come first serve" scenario. Now, I would like to contribute an elaboration of *why* self-ownership failed to provide the level of freedom that we want. The next chapter will reveal that the mistake was ontological – the 'self' that was presupposed in self-ownership was inaccurate. And with this inaccurate concept of the human being, we get a faulty normative theory and a problematic theory of distributive justice.

[64] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality,* 154.

CHAPTER 2. THE SELF AS A RATIONAL, AUTONOMOUS, INDIVIDUAL

"To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter." – Karl Marx,
Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right

Introduction

My goal for this dissertation is to find "the root of the matter". So my goal for this chapter is to uncover the "roots" of capitalism. Why would one believe in, not the pragmatic or the contractual, but the *moral* legitimacy or the moral rightness of capitalism? As we dig further down to discover the philosophical lineages, we see that a foundational part of capitalism is the entitlement to private property (Nozick recognized this). And beneath entitlement theory is the foundational normative belief of self-ownership (Cohen recognized this). But we can go further: beneath self-ownership is an ontological idea of the self, or a picture of the essential nature of the human being. We find, in this chapter, that the "self" in "self-ownership" refers to a "rational, autonomous, individual". I support this claim historically in the works of the political philosophers of the Enlightenment, where we see the concretizing of this conception of self through the working out of the human condition and its place in relation to authority and the State (section 2.1). The social contract theory that comes out of this era arises from this picture of the self and becomes the most dominant political theory on to the present day. Entitlement theory is, itself, a contractual theory of property. But the social contract has not come without its critics. So, in section 2.2 I review some of the literature of some of the well-known critics of social contract theory, specifically that of Charles Mills and Carole Pateman. Then I continue telling the history of social contract theory as it aligns with the birth of industrial capitalism (section 2.3) and the logic that is used to forge the marriage of the "rational, autonomous, individual", contract theory, and capitalism. This (section 2.3) is where we find "the root of the matter" – where we find the moral legitimacy of capitalism, *according to its own logic*, and how it is founded upon the Enlightenment project of liberal freedom. Finally, in section 2.4 I reveal the gaps in the aforementioned logical connection, as Marx so thoroughly exposed in many of his texts including the, *Communist Manifesto*, *Capital Vol.1*, and the 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*.

2.1 Human Exceptionalism and the Social Contract

Our capacity for rationality and autonomy is incredible, and it sets us apart from other animals. Philosophers have long noted the distinction between the human and other living beings; the two traits: a free will and having rational capacities have always been the focal point of our exceptionalism. The origin of these views extends all the way back to the ancient Greeks, where Plato and Aristotle claim that the essence of the human lies in its rationality. But this idea particularly took off in the Enlightenment where thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke agreed that these two traits (autonomy and rationality) were the distinguishing features of our humanity, and as such, we ought to organize our societies and politics to protect and foster these traits.

As one of the Enlightenment's most influential thinkers Jean-Jacques Rousseau describes our exceptional traits (both physical and metaphysical). Of the physical he says, "Men, dispersed among [the animals], observe and imitate their industry, and thus rise as high as the instinct of beasts; with this advantage, that, whereas every species of beasts is confined to one peculiar instinct, man, who perhaps has not any that particularly belongs to him, appropriates to himself those of all other animals…a circumstance which qualifies him to find his subsistence more easily than any of them."[65] Rousseau recognizes that, although we lacked certain physical traits for survival such as claws, teeth or fur, we had the ability to learn from the "industry" of the other animals around us and mimic their industriousness or particular skills through our creation of tools and strategize for survival.

Our autonomy is seen as a metaphysical difference.[66] While animals are an "ingenious machine", humans are also "machines" with this difference, that the beast "chooses by instinct," while man chooses "by an act of liberty; for which reason the beast cannot deviate from the rules that have been prescribed to it, even in cases where such deviation might be useful, and man often deviates from the rules laid down for him to his prejudice."[67] Our ability to oppose our instincts makes our will so much more formidable than any other animal on this planet. This ability to resist an instinct also allows us to strive for "higher", transcendental ideals of the "right", the "good", and the "sacred". A prisoner can deny their instinct to eat by going on a hunger strike; a priest can

[65] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, ed. Lester G. Crocker (New York, New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1967). 179-180.
[66] Rousseau. *The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* 186
[67] Rousseau. *The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* 186

choose to remain celibate; a soldier can be willing to die for their comrades. Our fixed instinctual patterns can be disrupted for purposes that we deem to be more noble, transcendent, for a "higher cause" or a "greater good".

Additionally, on the other hand, our rationality sets us apart from the plethora of living things because it gives us a capacity for imaginative, abstract, and symbolic thinking, planning and reflecting. Consequently, we are extremely adaptable to drastic changes in the environment. We can use our intelligence to find solutions to new problems by creating technologies - like shelters, clothing, and hunting weapons - which help us survive in all kinds of climates, from the deserts of the Kalahari to the tundra of Northern Russia.

> If the invention of the rifle and the plow demonstrates the vast chasm that separates the human being from his closest animal 'relative,' what can we say about the invention of the violin and the telescope! What bizarre 'animal' expends the energy for such an abstract and nonutilitarian purpose as examining the stars? The building of the pyramids is in its complex way a metaphor for all that is singular in the activities of the human species. The purpose for which the pyramids were built is unrelated to individual or species survival. It is a testament rather to the religious conviction, vanity, cruelty, wastefulness, aesthetics, imagination, and technology… This opportunity for creativity, this opportunity for glory that is also an open invitation to disaster, is not available to other species.[68]

Locke's perception of humans comes from his "Essay Concerning Human Understanding", as an empiricist, Locke believes that humans come to know the world through the experiences of the five senses and from our reflection on ourselves and our own mind's functions (thinking, willing, believing, etc.). Prior to this, we are, what he calls a *tabula rasa* or a "blank slate", therefore we have no essence and no innate traits according to Locke. Everything that we are arises from "nurture" rather than "nature". However, what we all have in common as humans is that we were created by God, as (allegedly) equals, and have a capacity for "reason" that was given to us by God. *This* is what forms the foundation for his natural law theory of political philosophy. The *tabula rasa,* I think, informs the idea individualism (both moral individualism and as a perspective of self) and informs future ideal theory liberalism (such as Rawls *veil of ignorance*). This is because the blank slate that each human begins with must necessarily erase the trauma or inheritance passed down from ancestors, it must erase the prenatal experiences of the mother, the material conditions of the family, and the history of the community that the person is born into

[68] Willard Gaylin and Bruce Jennings, *The Perversion of Autonomy: Coercion and Constraints in a Liberal Society*, Rev. and expanded (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2003). 94

from the identity and "essence" of the newborn. This *tabula rasa* allows each generation to start anew as pure individuals; it gives us a *veil of ignorance* at birth.

Additionally, his reliance on God as a bestower (of reason and life) and as an observer (to be pleased or revered), creates an obligation to use our rationality to preserve (*human*) life for His sake. But when put in conjunction with the inherent individualism of a *tabula rasa* theory, this creates more specifically an obligation to *self*-preservation. In this model of human nature, Locke gives us no reason to *actively* care for others. When individuals sprout out of their mothers without essence, without connection to family, community, or nature, self-ownership is natural and furthermore, bestowed by God himself. So out of respect for God, your most important duty is self-preservation, all else is secondary. Locke says,

> Every one, as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station willfully, so by the like reason, *when his own preservation comes not in competition*, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not, unless it be to do justice to an offender, take away or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another." (emphasis added)[69]

This quote above and the following also demonstrate a leaning toward negative rights, not necessarily at the expense of positive rights, but definitely at the expense of positive rights that require some amount of non-reciprocal giving to others (as evidenced by the italicized portion of the previous quote). Locke continues, "… all men may be restrained from invading others' rights, and from doing hurt to one another, and the law of nature be observed…"[70] Our God-given reason is what gives us knowledge of this law of nature, namely,

> …that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions: for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise Maker; all the servants of one sovereign Master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not another's pleasure: and being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us that may authorize us to destroy another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for ours.[71]

[69] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro, Rethinking the Western Tradition (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2003). 102
[70] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*. 102-103
[71] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*. 102

So for Locke, a human being is rational, independent, has dominion over nature in the same way that God has dominion over man, and equal to all other human beings.[72] His law of nature is what endows us with the inalienable rights meant to *protect* our individual independence/autonomy and rationality. Therefore, laws and governments are constructed with this purpose of protecting these rights, because another feature of human nature is "self-love" which makes "…men partial to themselves and their friends…ill-nature, passion, and revenge will carry them too far in punishing others; and hence nothing but confusion and disorder will follow…"[73] So, similar to Hobbes' argument for political authority, namely, that our self-interested natures make it so that we would not be able to trust each other in a state-of-nature, Locke claims that it is only *rational* that we would submit ourselves to a social contract of laws and government.

But more specifically, the rights protected by laws and government (the social contract) were meant to protect the property of individuals. Friend ascertains that, "Property is the linchpin of Locke's argument for the social contract and civil government because it is the protection of their property, including their property in their own bodies, that men seek when they decide to abandon the ." As evidence of this, Locke declares, "The great and chief end, therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property. To which in the state of nature there are many things wanting."[74] Unlike Hobbes, the state-of-nature is not "nasty, brutish, and short", because people in this state would still have a natural sense of morality according to Locke, but they would benefit more from being in society. Furthermore, God puts man "under strong obligations of necessity, convenience, and inclination, to…[be in] society."[75] So, as Locke claims below, the most rational thing to do is to renounce the privileges of the state-of-nature ("equality, liberty, and executive power") for the sake of a more convenient way to protect one's property:

> Thus mankind, notwithstanding all the privileges of the state of nature, being but in an ill condition, while they remain in it, are quickly driven into society. Hence it comes to pass, that we seldom find any number of men live in any time together in this state. The inconveniences that they are therein exposed to, by the irregular and uncertain exercise of the power every man has of punishing the transgressions of others, make them take sanctuary under the established laws of government, and therein seek the preservation of their property… But though men, when they enter into society, give up the equality, liberty, and executive power they had in the state

[72] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*. 100-106
[73] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration.* 105
[74] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration.* 155
[75] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*. 133

> of nature, into the hands of the society, to be so far disposed of by the legislative as the good of the society shall require; yet it being only with an intention in every one the better to preserve himself, his liberty and property.[76]

So in summary, according to Locke, our human exceptionalism, of being rational creatures, born as pure *tabula rasa* individuals, entrusted by God to seek our own self-preservation by the all the resources of the earth, but also naturally self-interested, is what gives us the inclination to construct social contracts that protect our life, liberty, and property. The social contract theories that arose out of the Enlightenment became the most accepted political theories from then to the present day. In referring to social contract theory, Celeste Friend claims that, "After Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are the best known proponents of this enormously influential theory, which has been one of the most dominant theories within moral and political theory throughout the history of the modern West."[77] Even Nozick's arguments for the minimal state (a Lockean social contract theory) and his consecutive argument for entitlement theory (a contract theory of property) rely upon a particular picture of the human being. Nozick's theories rely upon a "root idea" of individualism – "…there are different individuals with separate lives and so no one may be sacrificed for others…" – and on particular valuable human characteristics.[78] These particular valuable human characteristics are what justify the constraints that humans have in their treatment of each other. Nozick points to "rationality, free will, and moral agency" as the human traits in question, but then adds to them, "… the ability to regulate and guide [one's] life in accordance with some overall conception [one] chooses to accept…to act in terms of some overall conception of the life one wishes to lead…"[79] In other words, *because* humans have this ability to act according to their own personal interpretation of a "meaningful life", in alignment with their own interpretation of their personal identity, then they ought to be allowed to do so. Or phrased another way, the distinct *ability* to do as one wills, is what justifies the protection of the person to not be prohibited from doing so. Paraphrased once more, in Cohen's words, "each person is the morally rightful owner of his own person and powers, and *consequently…*is free (morally

[76] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration.* 156-157
[77] Celeste Friend, "Social Contract Theory," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed June 29, 2020, https://www.iep.utm.edu/soc-cont/.
[78] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 33, 48
[79] Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia.* 49-50

speaking) to use those powers as he wishes, provided that he does not deploy them aggressively against others" – this is the thesis of self-ownership.[80]

So, the libertarian ideal of self-ownership derives historically from these Lockean ideas and the general sentiment of the Enlightenment, since the goal, purpose, and function of self-ownership (granted by God or not) is to have the right of sovereignty over one's self and property. Entitlement theory is essentially a contractual theory of property. Nozick's "principle of just acquisition" is essentially Locke's theory of property, and the "principle of just transfer" is essentially contractarianism. My hope is that this overview of Locke's philosophy, as the primary influence for Nozick and as a representative of Enlightenment political thought, historically and philosophically shows that the ontological essence of a human for Nozick, for Locke & for liberalism in general, is a rational, autonomous, individual. *This* is the ontological core of a human which serves as the explanation for pulling ourselves out of a "state-of-nature", into contracts, and into the current economic and political system we find ourselves in today.

2.2 Those Excluded from Rationality, Autonomy, and Individuality (i.e. Humanity)

Ideas are shaped by history as easily as history shapes ideas. During the time of Locke's writing, Britain was in the middle of its colonial conquest. This consecutive birth of liberalism with colonialism meant that there would be internal contradictions within liberalism meant to benefit those who held power. Contract theory would then be used against the colonized in an insidious twist of definition, or rather exclusion of the colonized from the status of human. Being excluded from humanity (being *less than* a rational, autonomous, individual) meant being excluded from social contracts and property. Carole Pateman and Charles Mills argue that liberal contract theory is actually just exploitative of subjugated persons.

Charles Mills famously wrote "The Racial Contract" (1997) as a criticism of the social contract. He claims that prior to the social contract there was the "racial contract" which was embedded in European society, and this racial contract determines who gets included into personhood in the first place. He describes it as,

> …that set of formal or informal agreements or meta-agreements (higher-level contracts *about* contracts, which set the limits of the contracts' validity) between the

[80] G. A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cambridge ; New York : [Paris, France]: Cambridge University Press ; Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1995). 67

> members of one subset of humans… designated…as "white," and coextensive with the class of full persons, to categorize the remaining subset of humans as "nonwhite" and of a different and inferior moral status, subpersons…[81]

Since the social contract only applies to human persons, if anyone was considered less than human, they would not be able to participate in the social contract and hence denied any of the corresponding benefits of freedom, equality, rights and property. The racial contract divides these categories of human and subhuman along the lines of "white" and "nonwhite" people, so that white people, as subjects of pure personhood, have the power to make or be subject to contracts, while nonwhites are the mere objects of agreement. As Mills says,

> …the moral and juridical rules normally regulating the behavior of whites in their dealings with one another either do not apply at all in dealings with nonwhites or apply only in qualified form… the general purpose of the Contract is always the differential privileging of whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them.[82]

Rather than being in contradiction to colonialism, the social contract was invoked to justify colonial conquests by masking the racial contract beneath the dichotomy of civilization vs. "the state-of-nature". The social contract was allegedly meant to transform,

> abstract raceless 'men' from the denizens of the state of nature into social creatures who are politically obligated to a neutral state…the crucial human metamorphosis is from 'natural' man to 'civil/political' man, from the resident of the state of nature to the citizen of the created society… But in all cases the original 'state of nature' supposedly indicates the condition of *all* men, and the social metamorphosis affects them all in the same way.[83]

What the colonial project presupposes, is that the colonized people never had a civilization to begin with. The idea that they live in a "state-of-nature" implies a savage or barbarous nature with "deficient societies", "deemed childlike" and "incapable of self-rule", this in turn gave Europeans the justification for their conquest "for the 'benefit' of the nonwhite natives".[84] Mills talks about how there are subsidiary contracts of the overarching Racial Contract that were designed to allow white people to exploit the land, resources, and the inhabitants. These are: the expropriation contract, the slavery contract, and the colonial contract.

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[81] Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). 11
[82] Mills. *The Racial Contract.* 11
[83] Mills. *The Racial Contract.* 12
[84] Mills. *The Racial Contract.* 13

The expropriation contract allowed for the justified seizure of land from the Native Americans because they did not rightfully own the land as property and dominion, they were mere occupants who used the land only for their "temporary and fugitive purposes…as if it were inhabited only by brute animals"[85] Despite so many claims to human equality, the slavery contract allowed for the enslavement of Africans and Native Americans because they were seen as inherently inferior, as Mills' quotes Chief Justice Roger Taney (1857 *Dred Scott v. Stanford* U.S. Supreme Court decision):

> [blacks] had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit… This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics, which no one thought of disputing, or supposed to be open to dispute.[86]

And finally, the colonial contract allowed for European rule over nations in Asia, Africa and the Pacific because the inhabitants were seen as inferior, which justified the conquest for the betterment of the natives' race and civilization. Here, Mills quotes the French imperial theorist Jules Harmand,

> it is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilization… The basic legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic, and military superiority, but our moral superiority. Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity.[87]

Carole Pateman looks at the concept of *terra nullius* a law of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that justifies whether a piece of land can be rightfully occupied and claimed. If the land is "empty, vacant, deserted, uninhabited…it belongs to no one…it is waste, uncultivated, virgin, desert, [or] wilderness"[88] and is therefore available for claiming. It was an extremely useful theoretical device and "political fiction" that the English could use to bypass complications of consent and the controversies of conquest. She says that apologists for colonization in North America invoked two senses of *terra nullius;* one was through what she called the *right of*

[85] Mills. *The Racial Contract.* 24
[86] Mills. *The Racial Contract.* 25
[87] Mills. 25
[88] Pateman and Mills, *Contract and Domination*. 36

husbandry, and the other was by virtue of their arguments that the natives had no recognizable form of sovereign government.[89]

As the central figure at the intersection of contract theory and property theory during the England's colonial period, Pateman spotlights Locke and claims that he has two problems to confront if he wants to justify the settlement of America: 1) "…how does communal property legitimately come to be divided up into private property…" 2) how does land get appropriated without consent? Pateman notes that after Locke makes his well-known arguments about property arising from the labor involved in hunting and gathering, he then extends this line of reasoning to "the earth itself" or land.[90] Then he claims that common land in England is different from that in America due to their being in different stages of civilization; Pateman quotes parts of the Second Treatise to show this, "The condition of America is that of 'the beginning and the first peopling of the great Common of the World' where the 'Law Man was under, was rather for *appropriating'* (II, ¶108). America is still at the stage of history where it is nothing more than 'wild woods and uncultivated waste…left to nature, without any improvement, tillage or husbandry' (II, ¶37)."[91] Finally, Locke argues that enclosure is legitimate if the land is cultivated because it not only prevents wasted land, but it also makes everyone (English and Indians) better off when "land is turned into private property and used productively".[92] For Pateman, however, the real point worth emphasizing is the significance of money in a *terra nullius* to create "a new civil society that includes an 'economy'."[93] Once again, Pateman quotes Locke:

> [Locke] asks what is the worth to a man of a hundred thousand acres of cultivated, well stocked land isolated "in the middle of the in-land Parts of *America*," where there is no hope of commerce with the rest of the world "to draw *Money* to him by the Sale of the Product?" (II, ¶48). The "in-land, vacant places of *America*" (II, ¶36) must be brought into a system of states, and thus into a national and international trading system, before their worth can be realized.[94]

So another reason why Native Americans could not be considered "owners" was because they did not use *money* - this argument containing within it claims to their lack of civilization *and* their waste of land as, not only an opportunity for sustenance, but now also as a source of profit.

[89] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 36
[90] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 51
[91] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 51
[92] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 52
[93] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 52
[94] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 52

Furthermore, the political was always tied together with money and property (i.e. with the economy) for Locke and the philosophers who followed after him. He considered civil government to be the only proper political form, and the purpose of civil government is to protect private property.[95] Pateman says, "…such a government must be constitutional, limited, and representative, acting within the rule of law as an 'umpire' between conflicting societal interests."[96]

But it wasn't just the lack of a semblance of a civilization, government or the use of money that allowed for the denial of Native American ownership, and it wasn't just the doctrine of *terra mullius* that gave justification for the expansion of empire. It was also the scientific racism embedded into the Racial contract to reinforce its agenda. In the late 18th Century, Immanuel Kant released his lectures on human anthropology and human history which claimed that racial differences are real, natural, permanent, and arise from descent, causing hereditary predispositions.[97] But in addition to claiming that there are innate and fundamental differences among races, he also claims that not all the races are of equal value. He claims that it is only the white race (white men) who possess the rational capacities required to, as Pateman says, "grasp the universal principles fundamental to civil society and thus the capacities to govern others."[98] In other words, non-white people *from their very nature,* regardless of their civilization, monetary structure or relationship with the land, were unfit to govern others. They were deemed unable to understand the universal principles that defined the Enlightenment and gave Kant his claim to fame in ethics. As Kant said, these universal principles are understood through the use of *reason.* But only the white race had the capacity for reason.

Carole Pateman also points out that women were also denied the capacity for reason, and that the submission of the non-white races and all women was necessary for the maintenance and accumulation of wealth and power for white men. This was achieved by all the political maneuvers mentioned above, and a particular order of operations. She cites Theodore Allen in saying that "The 'white race' – that is, a social category based on skin color whose members exercised power over, and enjoyed superior standing to, all those with black skins – came into being in the early

[95] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 54
[96] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 54
[97] Immanuel Kant, "Of the Different Human Races (1777)," in *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott, trans. Jon Mark Mikkelsen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000); Immanuel Kant, "On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy (1788)," in *Race*, trans. Jon Mark Mikkelsen, 2001b ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2001).
[98] Pateman and Mills, *Contract and Domination*. 137

part of the eighteenth century."[99] Racial hierarchy became established as a social norm, previously free Africans were deprived of rights, excluded from trade, and indentured Africans were turned into property.[100] Only white men were legal "persons". Under coverture, white women shared the privileges of white men, but they were not considered legal persons.[101] A combination of white supremacy *and* patriarchal rule allowed for an increase in laborers/slaves (and consequently, further production and profit) as Pateman describes so explicitly here:

> White men were husbands, "persons," and citizens and, as I have stressed, their extramarital choice of women was unconstrained, especially if they were slave masters. Slaves were property; that is, they were mere factors of production to be used in the plantations and great houses. They were factors that could be replaced or increased by breeding but, unlike the breeding of livestock, the slave masters themselves could participate directly in their reproduction. Indeed, the paradox of slavery…is perhaps most evident in the case of female slaves. They were property, but it was their humanity that made their reproduction possible and made them sexually attractive to white masters.
>
> Initially, the slave master's part in breeding led to a problem. On the one hand, children of slave mothers were property at the disposal of the master/father who could sell them at will. On the other hand, descent was patrilineal under common law. Race trumped patriarchy to solve the difficulty. In Virginia in 1662 it was decreed that slave mothers would pass their lifetime bondage onto their children. The ruling also meant that, notwithstanding their paternity, all such children were to be treated as "black.[102]

So in all aspects of capital gain and political power, from the use of racialized bodies as labor and production to the *re*-production of those bodies by women, the Racial Contract and the Sexual Contract played a vital role. Moreover, Pateman describes how these two contracts extend into the present day as neoliberalism continues the project of colonialism in a globalized economic form. The subjugation of non-whites and women has only taken new forms. In both Britain and the United States, the majority demographic of the poor are women and non-whites; and this ratio extends globally as well.[103]

> Women's plight is summed up in the well-known statement that women do two-thirds of the world's work, earn 10 percent of the income, and own less than 1 percent of the property. Most of the world's refugees and displaced persons are women and children. Girls and women are likely to be less literate, less well

[99] Pateman and Mills; Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 1: Racial Oppression and Social Control (New York: Verso, 1994).
[100] Pateman and Mills, *Contract and Domination*. 142
[101] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 142
[102] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination*. 144
[103] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 157-158

> nourished, and to receive less medical care than men and boys; they are also less likely to survive.[104]

The emigration of women who work as maids and nannies to send home remittances to support their family, and women who emigrate to work in (or are forced into) the sex trade are predominantly from the global south and emigrate north to work.[105] Domestic violence and rape continues to be a global problem. But as Pateman says, "No emergency or 'war on terror' has ever been declared because of the scale of violence against women."[106] This is because the Sexual Contract, like the Racial Contract fosters indifference to the lives of women and non-whites. Their suffering is non-consequential. "It is easier to be indifferent to the misery of others if those involved are seen as having brought their distress upon themselves, or are perceived as very different, as alien, as worth less, as inferior, as barely human or as another 'race'."[107]

It's important to note that racism and patriarchy were not, as Mills put it, "anomalous…mysterious deviation[s] from European Enlightenment humanism. Rather, it needs to be realized that…*European humanism usually meant that only Europeans were human*" and women and nonwhites were not.[108] Whether openly admitted or not, whether explicitly or implicitly intended by the proponents, the foundational ethical and political theories that we still adhere to this day were restricted to a subpopulation of the human species.[109] This is very important for my project because, as I deconstruct the presupposed *ontology* of entitlement theory, I need to keep in mind that its humanist roots were racist, sexist and exclusionary from the start. The social ontology of liberalism was never neutral and inclusive of all humans. Mills explains, "A partitioned social ontology is therefore created, a universe divided between persons and racial subpersons, *Untermenschen,* who may variously be black, red, brown, yellow—slaves, aborigines, colonial populations—but who are collectively appropriately known as "subject races."[110] But Mills believes that this was a mistake, and that there still exists a pure liberalism containing all the ideals it pledged to in theory. Egalitarian liberalism is not the problem, he says, "Rather the problem lies in a gender- and race- evasive liberalism which, in assuming sameness of status, has

[104] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 158
[105] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 158-159
[106] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 162
[107] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 162
[108] Mills, *The Racial Contract*. 27
[109] Mills. *The Racial Contract.* 17
[110] Mills. *The Racial Contract.* 16-17

not been egalitarian, presupposing as long since accomplished an egalitarian goal that has yet to be achieved, thereby conceptually eliding the ongoing barriers to its realization."[111] So the solution is not to reject the abstraction itself of liberal humanism, but to "reject *evasive* abstractions – that obfuscate the crucial social realities that need to be mapped – in favor of non-idealizing abstractions – that reveal them." (emphasis added)[112] The racia-sexual contract does this work of serving as an addendum, complicating and deepening liberalism to account for "how race and gender position people differently, in complex asymmetrical interrelations, rather than pretending that we are featureless atomic individuals in egalitarian contractual relations with one another."[113] The racia-sexual contract "attempts to fulfill the normative mission which that [liberal social] contract has in effect abandoned: contributing to the creation of a society that would realize the egalitarian ideals of liberalism for the whole population, and not just the white male subsection of it."[114]

I am skeptical as to whether liberalism can be redeemable when so many of its core assumptions impair its honorable aspirations. But perhaps, following Mill we can preserve those aspirations but take a different route. As it stands, liberalism, when conjoined with the racia-sexual contract (an historically undeniable conjunction according to Mills), faces a contradiction. To review the story, according to liberalism our rationality, as a fundamental component of humanity, is what draws us out of a state-of-nature, but the discovery that some populations (Indigenous and Africans) exist *in* a state-of-nature and haven't pulled themselves out means that they must not be rational, and therefore must not be human. This particular picture of our humanity (this ontology) is what is responsible for civilization. It is precisely *because* the 'rational, autonomous, individual' is ontologically tied to the core of our humanity (with the exclusion of other aspects of our self that we will uncover in chapter 3) in conjunction with the antagonism between civilization and 'state-of-nature', that makes liberalism inherently racist and sexist. Liberalism will always reinforce a dehumanization if it relies on an oppositional duality between civilization and state-of-nature (a topic for chapter 3).

If we recall from the first chapter of this dissertation, one of the problems we found with self-ownership, as it appears in libertarianism and arguably in the majority of contemporary

[111] Pateman and Mills, *Contract and Domination*. 177
[112] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 176
[113] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 176
[114] Pateman and Mills. *Contract and Domination.* 199

American culture, was that it, as a principle, could not account for populations that were marginalized because it did not take into consideration their lived experiences of oppression (Cohen showed the futility of self-ownership to the proletarian.[115]). This chapter has shown the futility of self-ownership to women and non-whites given that some populations have been denied self-ownership because of the racia-sexual contract that has been affixed to liberalism from the start, consequently, these populations are excluded from the contracts that make up the foundation of civil society. This section's segue into contract theory is warranted because entitlement theory *is* a social contract theory - specifically regarding property. So entitlement theory remains blind to recognizing the Sexual Contract and the Racial Contract (and all its subsidiaries – the expropriation-, slavery-, and colonial contracts) and the role that they played in early modern American history, the residual effects of that history (the unequal inheritance of property and capital), and the role that the racia-sexual contract continues to play in American life, economy, and politics.

2.3 The Building Blocks for Capitalism

All of these excluded populations of "nonwhites" – the colonized Asians and Indians, the enslaved Africans - and the new land taken from the Indigenous Americans, served to be useful in the construction of capitalism. The sanctioning off of property for only those considered human enough to claim it, the seizing and collecting of land and resources, and the accumulation of capital by the free labor of slaves meant that wealth would pool into the hands of specific people. But before we get to that point, let's review from the ground–up to get a solid grasp of the logic that starts from human ontology to the construction of political theories to the current dominant political-economy: capitalism & liberalism. There is a traceable progression of reinforcement (from ontology to liberal capitalism) where each layer seems to support and justify the next.

The first step is to separate humans from nature, to separate the "civilized" from the "savage". And to point out all the ways that humans stand in an exceptional position to nature and other animals in their rationality and autonomy, as explained in section 2.1 of this chapter. In the process of removing one's self from nature, this "self" becomes abstract – a mere *concept* of the

[115] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*. "For the propertyless proletarian who cannot use means of production without a capitalist's leave suffers a lack of effective self-ownership. …since libertarians regard proletarianhood as consistent with all the rights that they think people have, the self-ownership that they defend is much thinner and far less attractive than it appears, at first sight, to be." 94.

self. When separated in this way, one can then, theoretically, perceive one's self as an object to be *owned*. The subject becomes objectified by themself. At this point, a person has the ability to "own themselves", which is the beginning of step two.

The second step is to invent ownership or property. The separation from nature creates the conditions for self-ownership. Once self-ownership is established, ownership can be extended to all that one produces in the process of laboring. We are granted a Midas touch, of sorts, except instead of turning everything we "touch" or labor upon into gold, it is turned into property.

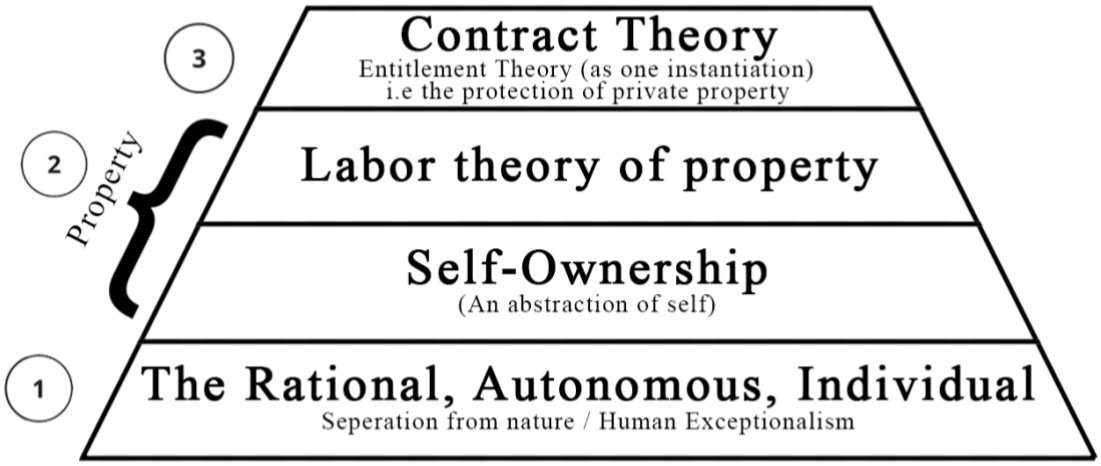
Because of step one and two, we have created conditions where all of the world is "up for grabs" – capable of exclusive ownership - and there is the tacit understanding that resources are not unlimited. Now, under these conditions of eventual scarcity, we are left wanting protection for the property that we have gathered. So step three is to create contracts. The primary purpose of government is to protect private property. As Locke himself says, "The great and chief end, therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property."[116]

As we gathered from the historical retelling of social contracts (in section 2.1 and 2.2), this third step (creating contracts) is related to the first step of removing humans from nature – here, we are removing ourselves from a state-of-nature into a civilization of contractual agreements. The former is ruthless, unforgiving, lawless, "nasty, brutish, and short". The state-of-nature is pre-contractual and thus undesirable because, according to Locke, there is no common consent of right and wrong, no indifferent, unbiased judge and executioner, and no regular and certain exercise of power[117]. Nozick argues for a minimal State by relying on the same state-of-nature theory as Locke – noting the same reasons why such a state (as a state-of-nature) would be undesirable. So, Nozick explains how the State arises via. an *invisible-hand* explanation, whereby, taking inspiration from Adam Smith, individuals are led to establish a protective agency (the minimal state) without intending so and merely through their own self-interested actions. Nozick says, "…without anyone having this in mind, the self-interested and rational actions of persons in a Lockean state of nature will lead to single protective agencies dominant over geographical territories…"; these protective agencies have the unique ability to "enforce correctness", and as the state proper, they have "the right to enforce rights, prohibit dangerous private enforcement of justice, pass upon such private

[116] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*. 155
[117] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government.* 155

procedures, and so forth."[118] But *all* of this impulse to protect private property and the fear of the viciousness of a state-of-nature presupposes steps one and two.

These three steps can be visualized in this way:



The final step, connecting this political theory of enlightenment-born liberalism to serve as the foundation of the political-economy of capitalism occurs because of a shift in industry. The enlightenment ideals of individual autonomy, freedom and rationality occurred at the same time as the technologies of labor were shifting. The industrial revolution and the birth of capitalism in western Europe also brought with it new ways of understanding society. And while the ideas of this time period (such as those written in the constitutions of America and France) were influential in changing the political landscape and material reality, so too were the material conditions (such as new technologies of industry) influential in changing the ideas we have as a society. Liberalism and industrial capitalism matured together as historical siblings, and in doing so, the growth of the ideas of liberalism entangled with the growth of the material realities of industrial Europe. This fusing together of idea and matter, ideology and technology, solidified even further the hegemony of what was real and possible. So, any threat or questioning of the legitimacy of the industrial capitalist model (the material reality) was a questioning of, and threat to, the corresponding

[118] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 118-119

freedom of individuals to engage in contracts of employment and exchange (the reality of ideas). To question the ideology of free exchange was insulting to the dignity of man since we start with the premise that all men are equal, autonomous, and rational.

So, after that first ontological premise (the rational, autonomous, individual), self-ownership becomes converted to property in the form of labor (as a person owning their own labor power), which in turn is converted into a product or service to be sold in the new industrial capitalist market. Marx explains this process:

> …labour-power can appear on the market as a commodity only if, and in so far as, its possessor, the individual whose labor-power it is, offers it for sale or sells it as a commodity. In order that its possessor may sell it as a commodity, he must have it at his disposal, he must be the free proprietor of his own labour-capacity, hence of his person. He and the owner of money meet in the market and enter into relations with each other on a footing of equality as owners of commodities, with the sole difference that one is a buyer, the other a seller; both are therefore equal in the eyes of the law. For this relation to continue, the proprietor of labour-power must always sell it for a limited period only, for if he were to sell it in a lump, once and for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from an owner of a commodity into a commodity. He must constantly treat his labour-power as his own property, his own commodity, and he can do this only by placing it at the disposal of the buyer, i.e. handing it over to the buyer for him to consume, for a definite period of time, temporarily. In this way he manages both to alienate his labour-power and to avoid renouncing his rights of ownership over it.[119]

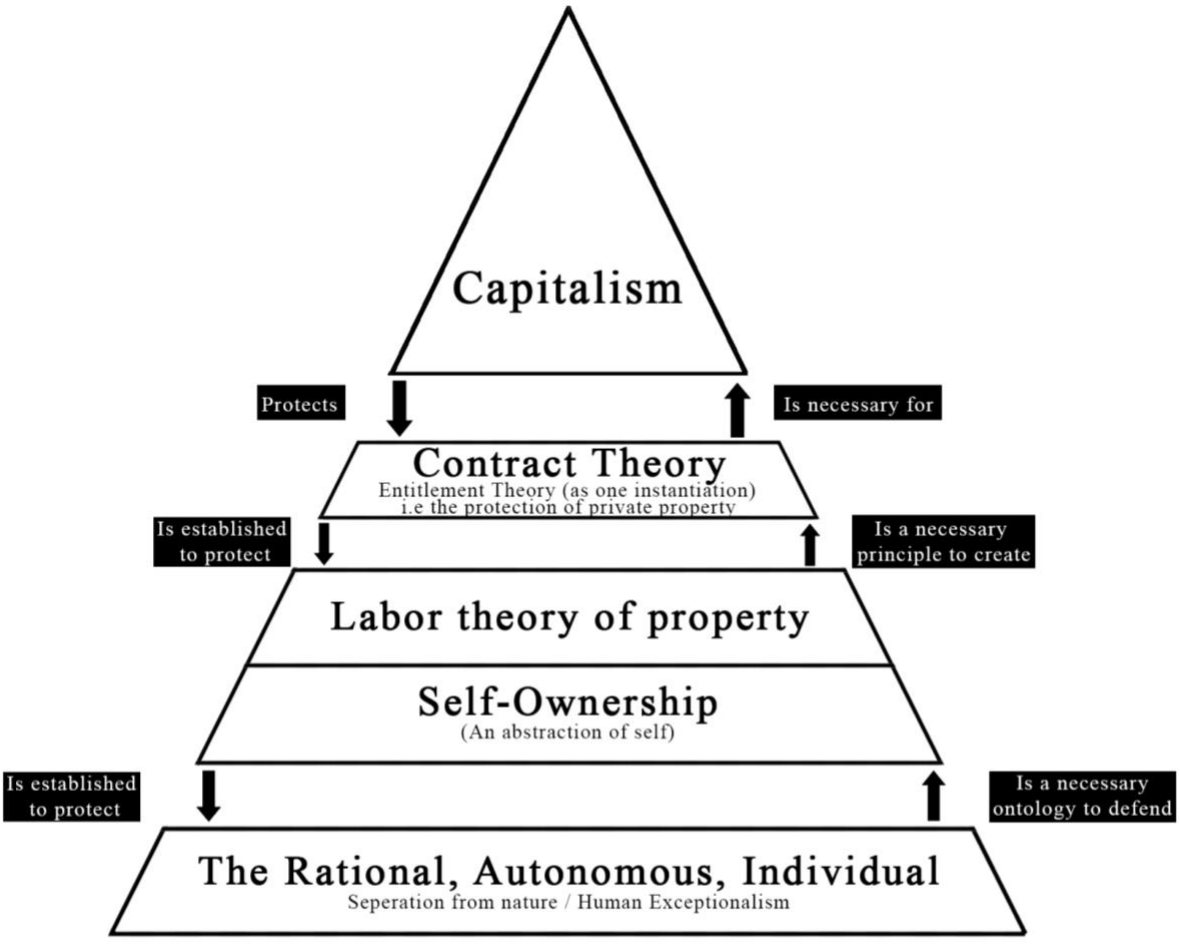
That is the final step of the process according to a liberal capitalist logic. And any distribution of wealth that arises therefrom, is justified as long as the wealth is produced and distributed according to this very process. As we recall Nozick's assertion,

> On the entitlement conception of justice in holdings, one *cannot* decide whether the state must do something to alter the situation [of material conditions] merely by looking at a distributional profile or at facts such as these. It depends upon how the distribution came about… If these distributional facts *did* arise by a legitimate process, then they themselves are legitimate.[120]

We will ignore the circular logic of this picture: The 'rules of the game' produce the end-result of a capitalist structure and its consequent distribution; and the moral justification for this distribution depends upon whether the 'rules of the game' were followed. Capitalism is defended as a morally legitimate economic system if entitlement theory ensures justice between persons and their relation

[119] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes, V. 1: Penguin Classics (London, England: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1990). 271
[120] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 232

to property; entitlement theory (essentially Lockean property acquisition, and a contractarian transfer of property) is a morally functional theory of property if the self-ownership principle is valid[121]; and the self-ownership principle could only be valid if the "self" in question is a "rational, autonomous, individual". Capitalism *requires* a theory of entitlement to private property. Entitlement theory *requires* that individuals own themselves and by extension, their labor. Finally, this self-owning, property acquiring, individual must also be rational and autonomous because rationality and autonomy is required for a legitimate transfer of property, i.e. for legitimate contracts and voluntary agreements. In other words, the entitlement theory provisos presuppose the ontological traits of rationality, autonomy, and individuality. Now the whole picture with all its constituent elements, or building blocks would look something like this to the liberal capitalist:



[121] But as Cohen pointed out, it wasn't just the self-ownership principle that was problematic for entitlement theory, it was also the groundlessness of the premise that the unowned world was "up for grabs" rather than "held in common". Because to assume, instead, that the world was "held in common" we could hypothetically end up with a situation where equality was possible *along with* the same amount of, if not more, freedom that the proletariat holds. (See chapter 1, sec. 1 of this manuscript: "G.A. Cohen on Nozick: Problems with the Libertarian Argument")

This marriage of capitalism with liberalism/liberal ideals would continue for centuries after. Even in the midst of crisis, capitalists would find ways to regain faith in the public – retelling the tale that liberal democracy and freedom would be found in the free, competitive, market. In the early 1930s America was in its own crisis. The country was in a depression and many workers were laid off from their jobs. Consequently, consumers stopped purchasing goods that they didn't need. Capitalism was in a crisis. President Franklin D. Roosevelt attempted to help Americans out of the depression through his New Deal program, through making concessions with labor, and taxing the wealthy. This plan was obviously unpopular among big businesses and banks, and 1936, when he was reelected with the platform of further control over big business, corporations decided to fight back. As described by to Stuart Ewen, Historian of Public Relations:

> Following that election, business people start to get together, and start to carry on discussions, primarily in private. And they start talking to each other about the need to… carry on an ideological warfare against the New Deal and to… reassert the connectedness between the idea of democracy on the one hand and the idea of privately owned business on the other. And so, under the umbrella of an organization that still exists, which is called the National Association of Manufacturers, and whose membership included all the major corporations of the United States, a campaign is launched specifically designed to create emotional attachments between the public and big business.[122]

This campaign was led in part by Edward Bernays – inventor of the field of "public relations". Bernays was a central advisor for the 1939 New York World's Fair, and as a strategy to aid the corporate businessmen, he saw to it that the theme of the fair be: the link between democracy and American businesses. Ann Bernays, daughter of Edward Bernays, retells of her father's motives years later: "To my father, the World's Fair was an opportunity to keep the status quo that is capitalism and democracy…that marriage, that linking… he did that by manipulating people and getting them to think that you couldn't have real democracy in anything but a capitalist society…"[123]

This ideological hegemony of the inseparability of capitalism and liberal democracy continues to this day. As the popular, Nobel Prize winning economist, Milton Friedman argues in his widely read book, *Capitalism and Freedom*, "a free private enterprise exchange economy…

[122] Adam Curtis, "The Century of the Self," television documentary series (BBC Two, 2002). S1.E1. "Happiness Machines"
[123] Curtis. S1. E1. "Happiness Machines"

[that is] competitive capitalism" is necessary for the achievement of political freedom.[124] In line with everything discussed in this chapter, Friedman claims that, "As liberals, we take freedom of the individual, or perhaps of the family, as our ultimate goal in judging social arrangements."[125] Co-operation is achieved without coercion due to bi-lateral, voluntary and informed transactions; and, the basic requisite for a government supporting liberal capitalism "is the maintenance of law and order to prevent physical coercion of one individual by another and to enforce contracts voluntarily entered into…"[126] Friedman states transparently, "In [a free] economy, there is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game… Few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very *foundations* of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as possible." (emphasis added)[127] When businesses adhere to their sole responsibility to produce a profit, Freidman (inspired by Adam Smith) claims that, in pursuing their own interests, they will be led by an invisible hand to unintentionally promote the interests of society more effectively.

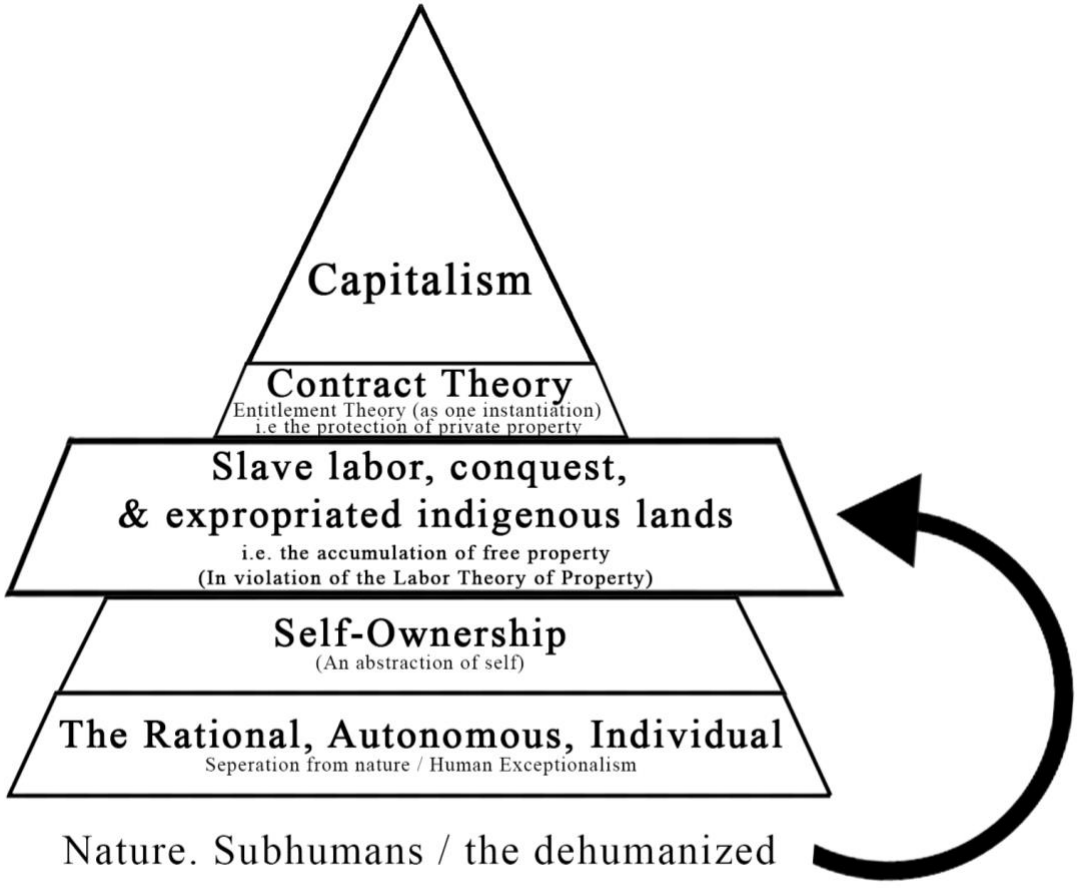
So, as we can see, this system of justification for the entitlement of private property within capitalism, and its underlying presuppositions regarding the self as property and as rational, autonomous and individuated, is a story that has been told time and time again for the past three centuries. It is, at least, *internally* coherent. The ontology justifies the normative claims of entitlement; and in reverse, we have discovered the base ontology by asking, "what are these normative principles defending?" But there is an incompleteness to this picture. If we return to the sentences that opened this section on "The Building Blocks for Capitalism", we are reminded of all those excluded populations – the savage Native, the Black slave, and domestic women. Where do sub-humans and non-humans fit into this schema, and into the above illustrated pyramids of the liberal capitalist structure?

2.4 The Invisible Mechanisms of Capitalism

There are a couple invisible layers in the pyramid of liberal economy that I illustrated above. Between the abstraction of the self (the invention of the idea that one can own themself as

[124] Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 40th anniversary ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
[125] Friedman. *Capitalism and Freedom,* 12.
[126] Friedman. *Capitalism and Freedom,* 13-14.
[127] Friedman. *Capitalism and Freedom,* 133

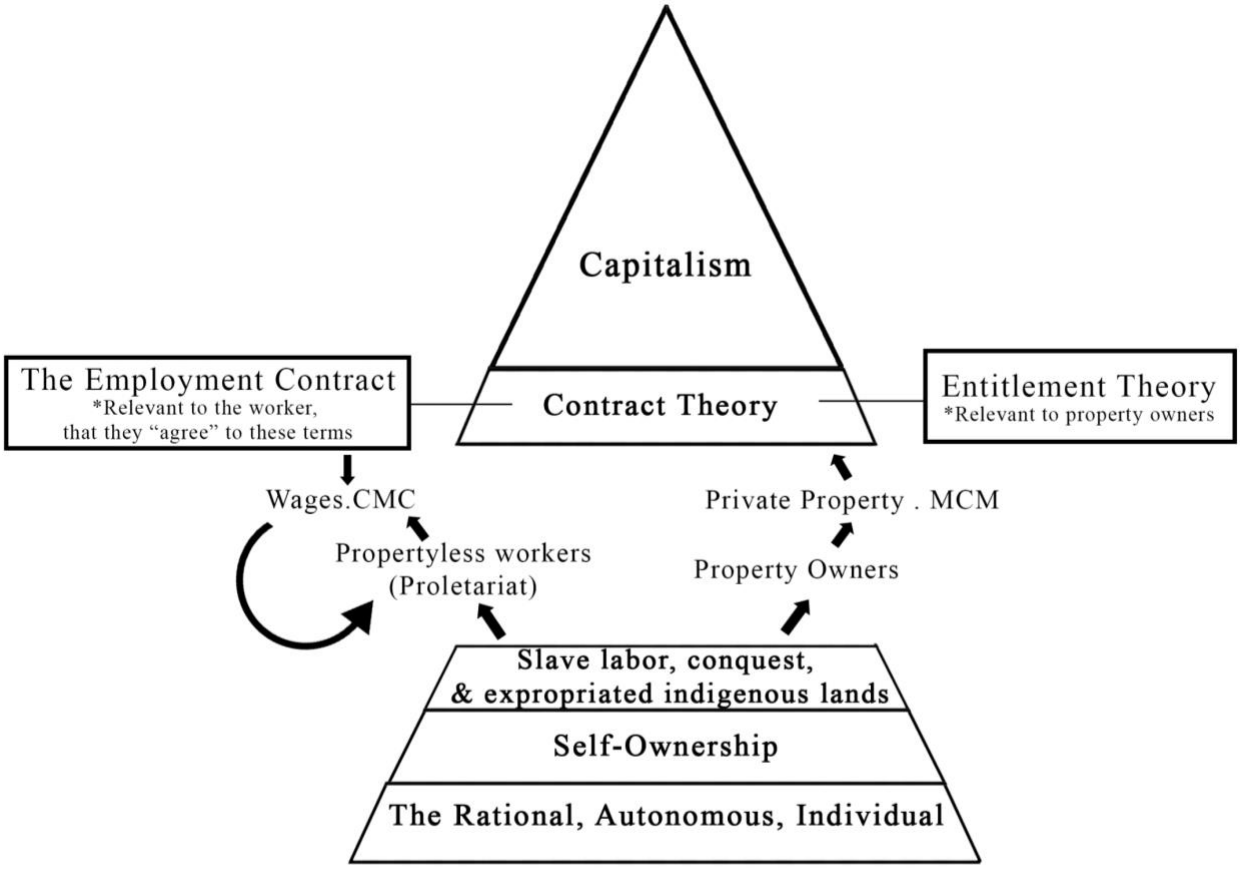
one would own a commodity, i.e. the principle of self-ownership) and private property of goods and capital *outside* of the self, is labor. Labor is the essence of private property – this is recognized by the liberal political economists. But what is unseen in this layer is the labor (and land) of the people excluded from humanity. This is where the excluded populations fit into the picture. Labor precedes private property *except* where there is "empty", unclaimed, and uncultivated land; and in instances where the laborer is not considered fully human. If subhumans don't own themselves then they cannot sell their labor on the market. The expropriation of lands and the use of slave labor was necessary to establish the first stages of division between capitalist classes. Dehumanization was the first step to establish an unequal distribution of everything needed to flourish in the capitalist process – property, wealth, capital, land, sustenance, etc.



Once these classes are established – the property-owning class and the propertyless workers – the mechanisms of capitalism proceed forward in a way that perpetuates and exacerbates this split, this class division as a necessary component for the functioning of capitalism. This split of the classes and the rules that pertain to each them differently is the invisible mechanism. This

invisible layer, the one containing this split, is the part of capitalism that was exposed by Karl Marx's writings. He showed us that for those who already own an abundance of property, the market is a place where they can invest this property and money in a way that produces more money and property. Meanwhile, for those who do not already own an abundance of property they can rely on their bodies and their capacity to work as something that they can sell in the market. This is the split that happens by virtue of simply being born into one class or another: The property owner survives in the market through the process of MCM (money → commodity → money), and the propertyless worker survives in the market through the process of CMC (commodity → money → commodity). Rather than generating property out of the labor they expended (as promised by Lockean principles), the workers instead generate a wage. And the property owners (defying the laws of Locke) magically produce more property without participating in the labor process. Marx says, "Political economy proceeds from labor as the very soul of production and yet gives labor nothing, private property everything….we also perceive that *wages* and *private property* are identical: for when the product, the object of labor, pays for the labor itself, wages are only a necessary consequence of the alienation of labor. In wages labor appears not as an end in itself but as the servant of wages."[128]

[128] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)." 298



This split is interesting because it warps the very notion of labor and property that it presumably originated from. Marx makes this criticism in the *Communist Manifesto* where he says that the development of industry has actually destroyed property – "property as the fruit of a man's own labor…Hard-won, self-acquired, self-earned property"[129]. He reiterates how wage labor does not create any property for the laborer, it creates capital, or private property for the capitalist through a process of extracting a surplus value, as thoroughly explained in *Capital Vol. 1.* And even earlier, in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, Marx points out this gap of explanation that I have been describing as a split from a Lockean understanding of property, "Political economy proceeds from the fact of private property. It does not explain private property. It grasps the actual, *material* process of private property in abstract and general formulae which it then takes as *laws*. It does not *comprehend* these laws, that is, does not prove them as proceeding

[129] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Road Map to History's Most Important Political Document*, ed. Philip Gasper (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2005). p.60, ¶14-15

from the nature of private property."[130] In other words, the political economists of Marx's day understood private property abstractly as laws, but they and their predecessors have yet to justify private property as capital. As Marx continues, "Political economy *does not disclose* the reason for the division between capital and labor, between capital and land. When, for example, the relation of wages to profits is determined, the ultimate basis is taken to be the interest of the capitalists; that is, political economy assumes what it should develop".(emphasis added)[131]

So what is hidden, what is not disclosed, from the picture of capitalism is that in order for capitalism to work, that is, in order for individual capitalists to continue to accrue wealth, workers must contribute their labor to the production of commodities that the capitalist can sell at a profit while paying the worker a wage. This split of classes and their different functions is *necessary* for the existence of capitalism. And the exploitation of one of these classes by the other is a mandatory procedure. As Marx says, "Capital" therefore, "is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion."[132] But the *benefits* of the united actions must also split along class lines so that the capitalist continues to receive more capital (i.e. wealth that can be invested to make more money), while the workers receive wages that must never exceed the amount that would eradicate the profit of the capitalist. In this way, one class will necessarily always be wealthier and more socially and politically powerful.

Humanity, which was meant to be seen as being composed of equal, free individuals according to the liberal promise, is now split between two classes with, not only differing, but antagonistic interests. Here, equality no longer contains any substance. As even Nozick points out, what is important is an equality at the moment of contract agreement, not in the outcome of this capitalist process. Furthermore, this split between classes also leads to a split in the usefulness of contracts. Entitlement theory is useful to the property owners for obvious reasons – to protect their private property. But to the worker, the employment contract is important because it sets the terms of his or her wage. The question that remains is whether agreeing to the terms of the employment contract was done on the grounds of a *voluntary exchange.* This issue will be addressed in the next section – 2.5.

[130] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)." 287-288.
[131] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 287-288.
[132] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. p.60-61, ¶18

An unequal distribution of wealth (the outcome of the capitalist process) is not important to Nozick or to any economist, businessman or philosopher who adheres to this capitalist picture for contractarian and voluntarist reasons. The inconsistency, however, is that they pledge allegiance to the liberal ideas that built, and now are being eroded by, the capitalist process. But this inconsistency doesn't matter, in the sense that it doesn't pose a threat to the capitalist process itself, as long as certain mechanisms remain invisible. The story is consistent as long as we don't reveal the hidden layers within the pyramid that are necessary yet morally egregious (or at least contradictory to the original liberal ideals). What undergirds "entitlement theory" to uphold properly functioning "capitalism" is a (necessary) hidden layer of all the labor of the working-class people.

So the invisible mechanisms of capitalism are the humans whose labor never produces ownership of that that they are creating. These invisible or excluded people are a category of the population that we don't see. They are a category of explanation for the functioning of the social structure that we call capitalism. They are the people for whom the rules of property suddenly change: from labor being the source of property, to owning laborers as being the source of property; from one's labor producing ownership to one's labor producing wages. An extra step is added to Locke's formula – you don't own anything until you own other people. And those who are owned (by an employer, by credit, by a master) are the invisible category of explanation for making the whole system function – Marx would call them, the proletariat.

Furthermore, Carole Pateman and Charles Mills have explained why on a global scale, these lines of invisibility are disproportionately made up of women and non-white people from the global south. This is merely the Racial and Sexual Contract in play. Pateman says,

> It is easier to be indifferent to the misery of others if those involved…are perceived as very different, as alien, as worthless, as inferior, as barely human or as another 'race.' Their sufferings can then be seen as of little or no account. Charles Mills argues that the racial contract requires that the distress of whites count for a great deal more than that of nonwhites. The sexual contract plays just as large a role in fostering indifference. Prevailing conceptions of masculinity and femineity cultivate and sustain indifference. The lesson that little girls and women are worth less than little boys and men (that women exist *for* them) is conveyed in a multitude of ways…[133]

[133] Pateman and Mills, *Contract and Domination*. 162

So racism and sexism were not only important for paving the way to Capitalism (as seen in the previous sections), but they continue to play an important role in maintaining the invisibility of the proletariat for capitalism.

Within the abstract realm of legality and rights, however, *all* humans are purportedly seen as equals, at least "on paper". There didn't always exist legally binding or internationally recognized documents to uphold the equal rights of all humanity. And with this recognition in the eyes of the law, there is *now* an assumption that all proletariat – of all races, genders and nationalities – are rational, autonomous, individuals. *Everyone* possesses self-ownership, so now everyone can play the entitlement game. The message is that, "you too can have private property!" Yes, there *are* still obstacles that some may face and not others, but no one is permanently or necessarily excluded – any race, gender or historically oppressed identity can "rise to the top". The ultimate goal is to be on the capitalist side of the employment contract. But is the worker/the proletariat really making a rational and/or autonomous decision when agreeing to the terms of the employment contract?

2.5 Questioning Our Rationality and Autonomy

David Hume was probably right, that reason is merely a slave to the passions – most of the time. There is empirical evidence for this claim. There is the psychology of motivation and will-power, how the nutrients we intake from food affect our brains, how stress affects our mental capabilities and how emotional appeal is often much more influential than rational appeal. Autonomy doesn't fare well under modern scientific scrutiny either. The majority of our day-to-day life is simply a repetition of habits rather than conscious, deliberately chosen, actions. Furthermore, much of or our motivation to act on our autonomous thoughts/decisions is based on the quantity and quality of the functioning of chemicals in our bodies such as hormones and neurotransmitters. Judging by the results of experiments, juxtaposed with the work culture we currently live in, there is a clear disconnect between the reality of our psychology and the political economy we have set up for ourselves. There is also historical evidence that suggests that this disconnect has been purposely manufactured.

Here is one of many examples in the research that shows how easily our rationality is influenced. Neuroeconomics researcher, Baba Shiv conducted a behavioral experiment to determine how our rational decision-making capacities can be compromised. In the experiment,

Dr. Shiv had participants divide into two groups. One group was told to memorize a two-digit number, while the other group was to memorize a seven-digit number. Then, the participants had to walk down a hallway and choose one of two snack options – chocolate cake or fruit salad. "[The chocolate cake] associated with more intense positive affect but less favorable cognitions, compared to the second (fruit salad) associated with less favorable affect but more favorable cognitions."[134] It turned out that 63% of the people who were told to remember a seven-digit number chose the chocolate cake. On the other hand, only 41% of the people who were told to memorize a two-digit number, took the chocolate cake. The researchers concluded that this showed that people are less likely to make rational decisions when their mental capacities are taxed/overburdened. "…if processing resources are limited, spontaneously evoked affective reactions rather than cognitions tend to have a greater impact on choice. As a result, the consumer is more likely to choose the alternative that is superior on the affective dimension but inferior on the cognitive dimension (e.g., chocolate cake)."[135] And what American *doesn't* feel like their mental capacities are taxed/overburdened (not to mention the less-privileged countries as well)?

Furthermore, regardless of our conscious *will*, our decision making (whether that's rational or emotional) is also affected by the state of our health. We mistakenly imagine autonomy as this disembodied force, but everything that is happening in our brains, from emotions to rational calculating is affected by our overall bodily health. There has been a recent flood of literature on the connection and influence of the health of our gastrointestinal tract and our brain functioning such as: *The Mind-Gut Connection: How the Hidden Conversation Within Our Bodies Impacts Our Mood, Our Choices, and Our Overall Health* by Emeran Mayer, MD. Or, *Bugs, Bowels, and Behavior: The Groundbreaking Story of the Gut-Brain Connection*, edited by Teri Arranga, Claire I. Viadro, Lauren Underwood, among many other books and countless scientific articles that share the vastly accepted evidence that the microbiota of our gut has a great impact on our brain. The International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research published an overview of all the current evidence that diet and nutrition is a "central determinant" for, not only physical but also mental health. They say, "… the emerging and compelling evidence for nutrition as a crucial factor in the high prevalence and incidence of mental disorders suggests that diet is as important to psychiatry

[134] Baba Shiv and Alexander Fedorikhin, "Heart and Mind in Conflict: The Interplay of Affect and Cognition in Consumer Decision Making," *Journal of Consumer Research* 26, no. 3 (December 1999): 278–92, https://doi.org/10.1086/209563.
[135] Shiv and Fedorikhin. "Heart and Mind in Conflict…"

as it is to cardiology, endocrinology, and gastroenterology. Evidence is steadily growing for the relation between dietary quality (and potential nutritional deficiencies) and mental health…"[136] For example, a diet rich in antioxidant micronutrients (ß-carotene, vitamins C, E and selenium and zinc), and B-vitamins helps to maintain cognitive function, while a deficiency in these micronutrients can contribute to cognitive impairment[137]. But the SAD – the Standard American Diet – exceeds the recommended intake levels of calories from fats and added sugars, refined grains, sodium and saturated fat, but is "inadequate" in micronutrient requirements gained through the recommended intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and oils.[138][139] As data gathered from the US Department of Health and Human Services and US Department of Agriculture states, "About 75% of the US population (ages ≥1 year) do not consume the recommended intake of fruit, and more than 80% do not consume the recommended intake of vegetables."[140]

While the effects of nutrients obtained through a person's diet demonstrate the materialist origins of our rationality, another environmental factor is stress. It has been shown that emotional, psychological and physical stress has deleterious effects on our cognitive functioning. For example, some studies show that the socioeconomic conditions of childhood effect cognitive function and old age.[141] And how early life stress (both intra-uterine development and after birth) can contribute to a higher risk of poor mental health and behavioral disorders.[142] High levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) can damage the brain cells that are crucial for memory.[143] And other hormones, controlled by stress, affect a whole host of other cognitive functions: "The stress hormones dopamine and epinephrine are also neurotransmitters widely active in enabling communication among brain cells. Directly and indirectly, they act on numerous neural networks

[136] Jerome Sarris et al., "Nutritional Medicine as Mainstream in Psychiatry," *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2, no. 3 (March 2015): 271–74, https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(14)00051-0.
[137] Hans Konrad Biesalski et al., *Sustainable Nutrition in a Changing World* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-55942-1. (p. 75-98)
[138] President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition, "Facts & Statistics," Text, HHS.gov, July 20, 2012, https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/resource-center/facts-and-statistics/index.html.
[139] Oregon State University Linus Pauling Institute, "Micronutrient Inadequacies in the US Population: An Overview," Linus Pauling Institute, April 20, 2018, https://lpi.oregonstate.edu/mic/micronutrient-inadequacies/overview.
[140] Linus Pauling Institute.
[141] R. S. Wilson et al., "Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Community in Childhood and Cognition in Old Age," *Experimental Aging Research* 31, no. 4 (October 2005): 393–407, https://doi.org/10.1080/03610730500206683.
[142] Nadine Provençal and Elisabeth B. Binder, "The Effects of Early Life Stress on the Epigenome: From the Womb to Adulthood and Even Before," *Experimental Neurology* 268 (June 2015): 10–20, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.expneurol.2014.09.001.
[143] John Carpi, "Stress: It's Worse Than You Think," Psychology Today, accessed September 21, 2020, http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/199601/stress-its-worse-you-think.

in the brain and throw off levels of other neurotransmitters. Stress, it's now known, alters serotonin pathways. And through effects on serotonin, stress is now linked with depression on one hand, aggression on the other."[144]

Another experiment attempted to see whether dopamine effects how much effort we invest in reaching a goal. The experiment involved seeing whether rats in a maze would choose a more difficult pathway to get a higher reward (more food) or an easy pathway with a smaller reward (less food). Scientists observed one set of rats who had surgically blocked, and thus diminished, dopamine with another set who maintained normal dopamine levels. The results showed that the rats with the diminished dopamine were less motivated to work for that higher reward.[145] They also found that the dopamine levels continued to play a role in the outcome even when the rats were separated by those that were hungry and those that were sated.[146] While the hungry were more likely to take the difficult but high reward path, those numbers were still diminished among rats with low dopamine.[147]

In a human environment, dopamine levels could drop due to drug abuse, depression, or diets high in sugar and saturated fats. We could imagine how these situations might arise disproportionately among certain socio-economic demographics. But also, people in *all* socioeconomic situations can feel the stressful effects of the hyper-productivity of late-stage capitalism.

So, if the food we eat and the stressors in our environment, affect our rationality and other cognitive processes, where does willpower come into the picture? Can we will our way into healthy lifestyles and de-stressing techniques which would then allow us to regain control over rational capacities? The answer to this is yes, but as seen in the previously mentioned experiment, the ease or difficulty of having willpower is fully dependent on the exact same plethora of determinants for rationality – our stress levels, our diet and nutrition, our socioeconomic environment, in an all-encompassing phrase: our material conditions.

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[144] Carpi. "Stress: It's Worse Than You Think"
[145] Bettina Mai, Susanne Sommer, and Wolfgang Hauber, "Motivational States Influence Effort-Based Decision Making in Rats: The Role of Dopamine in the Nucleus Accumbens," *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 74–84, https://doi.org/10.3758/s13415-011-0068-4.
[146] Mai, Sommer, and Hauber.
[147] Bettina Mai, Susanne Sommer, and Wolfgang Hauber, "Motivational States Influence Effort-Based Decision Making in Rats: The Role of Dopamine in the Nucleus Accumbens," *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience* 12, no. 1 (March 2012): 74–84, https://doi.org/10.3758/s13415-011-0068-4.

Additionally, our ability to maintain willpower (or autonomy) over our choices requires enough repetition to develop a habit (whether that be a habit of action or a habit of thought). Our will is more like a muscle than it is an innate trait. Our willpower to do something outside of our comfort zone is only strengthened when it is repeated enough times to become habitual or "muscle memory", but at this point (paradoxically) it becomes mindless, thus no longer requiring a willpower. In fact, ironically, people generally identify their sense of self more with their nonhabitual actions than with their habits[148]. Humans spend approximately 45% of their day's activities repeating habits they have built and strengthened throughout their lives (for better or for worse) – habits of hygiene, speaking, eating, interacting, and even thinking[149]. Habits can develop into addictions as commonplace as caffeine and sugar, to more extreme drug addictions that clearly bar our autonomy; even cellphone use and social media has become an addiction in the *literal* sense of the term. However, the whole range of habits, from the mild to the pernicious, will be a testament to the fact that much of our waking lives are spent repeating daily habits that are familiar, comfortable, or instinctual. Our willpower, or our intentions, will always be weaker than habits which is why we need so much external help - cues, rewards, accountability, etc. – to make or break them. "Habits keep us doing what we have always done, despite our best intentions to act otherwise."[150]

The history of advertising and public relations shows us that, although the language of 'consumer choice' and 'freedom of employment' is flaunted around in free market societies, capitalists and producers *know* that the human mind is manipulative and subject to outside forces (as evidenced by the very existence of advertising firms and public relations specialists). Edward L. Bernays became known as "the father of public relations". As the nephew of Sigmund Freud, Bernays learned from his uncle's studies and findings in psychoanalysis, that irrational forces drive human behavior – forces such as emotion or sexuality – and that one could use such forces to make people desire products. Bernays wrote *Propaganda* in 1928 where he claimed that one could manipulate people's behavior without them being aware of it, in other words, one could literally, as Bernays put it, "engineer consent". The opening lines of his book, *Propaganda* state, "The

[148] Wendy Wood, Jeffrey M. Quinn, and Deborah A. Kashy, "Habits in Everyday Life: Thought, Emotion, and Action.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83, no. 6 (2002): 1281–97, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1281.
[149] Wood, Quinn, and Kashy. "Habits in Everyday Life…"
[150] David T. Neal, Wendy Wood, and Jeffrey M. Quinn, "Habits—A Repeat Performance," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 15, no. 4 (August 2006): 198–202, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2006.00435.x.

conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country."[151] And even if people became privy to this manipulation, adjustments could be made:

> Undoubtedly the public is becoming aware of the methods which are being used to mold its opinions and habits. If the public is better informed about the processes of its own life, it will be so much the more receptive to reasonable appeals to its own interests… If the public becomes more intelligent in its commercial demands, commercial firms will meet the new standards. If it becomes weary of the old methods used to persuade it to accept a given idea or commodity, its leaders will present their appeals more intelligently.[152]

In practice, humans are rarely rational, and respond more to emotional appeal.[153] Psychiatrist, Willard Gaylin, M.D. and political scientist, Bruce Jennings, highlight this fact: "…most human beings are more likely to respond to emotional forces--intimidation, compulsion, coercion, shame, pride, threat, or reward--than to appeals to reason."[154] As mentioned above, the advertising industry and politicians are already well aware of this fact, given the continual attempts to invoke an emotion as a tactic for persuasion. So Gaylin and Jennings notice this disassociation between what is fairly well known about human psychology, and yet this unrealistic expectation/reliance on human rationality and free will. They write:

> Despite an enormous body of psychological knowledge of motivation, our leaders and our public policies continue to aspire to a radically voluntary society, a social order based virtually on rational will and voluntary consent alone. This voluntary society would impose no legal or moral requirements that are not ultimately rooted in the concepts of autonomy and consent.[155]

Our rational decision-making capabilities are influenced by everything, from scare tactics in political campaign ads, to manipulative advertisements, bright logos, and the lighting in department stores. Ironically, the manipulative tactics of marketing firms, and political campaign

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[151] Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (Brooklyn, N.Y: Ig Publishing, 2005). Chapter 1, "Organizing Chaos"
[152] Bernays. *Propaganda*, Chapter 11, "The Mechanics of Propaganda"
[153] My attempt to de-emphasize the role of rationality in our everyday decision making and instead bring to the forefront the roll that our physical condition plays is compatible with Care Ethics. Emotional appeal, recognition, and coercion is what our mothers used in order to teach us right from wrong as children. It may even be a feminist critique to analyze why emotions are valued less than rationality. It seems that our capacity for complex emotions (much more so than other animals) is just as distinctive and dignifying as our capacity for rationality. Our rich emotional life should be seen as just as important to who/what we are as our rationality.
[154] Gaylin and Jennings, *The Perversion of Autonomy*. 117.
[155] Gaylin and Jennings. 9

strategists are fairly well known by the public – this doesn't make them less effective – and yet they exist in a country that prides itself on the freedom of its citizens.

We put so much emphasis on the uniqueness of our rationality when our capacities extend so much more beyond that. Humans also have the capacity for shame, guilt, conscience, and other emotional directives. And any reader of literature or connoisseur of dramatic film can tell you that complicated passions and circumstantial contingencies, that are a part of the human experience, can all interfere with our ability to make autonomous, rational decisions. *Part* of our exceptionalism as humans stems from our capacity for autonomy through rationality. But the important takeaway should be that, having the *capacity* for rationality or autonomy does not guarantee the *use* of rationality or autonomy.

So, let's return to the question that closed the previous section – 2.4. – is the worker/proletariat really making a rational and/or autonomous decision when agreeing to the terms of the employment contract? According to Nozick, "Whether a person's actions are voluntary depends on what it is that limits his alternatives. If facts of nature do so, the actions are voluntary…Other people's actions place limits on one's available opportunities. Whether this makes one's resulting action non-voluntary depends on whether these others had the right to act as they did."[156] Nozick uses the example of marriage partners. If there are a limited number of partners, and each person freely chooses a partner then the options will diminish as each person is married off. Someone who chooses later than others might have less options, and their ultimate choice may not have been their most ideal choice, but this choice was free nonetheless – it was voluntary. In other words, if everyone in society (capitalists and workers) acted within their rights, then whatever employment choice a worker makes, given the options left available, is voluntary.

My response to this is, first of all, the metaphor of the marriage partners is not sufficiently comparable. It is not as if the core concern, in determining if an employment contract were truly voluntary, is whether all the good jobs were taken by other workers who simply 'got to them first'. But I think Nozick was wise enough to understand this. More accurately, Nozick might be implying that the result of a series of free choices made by other people in the past and present doesn't diminish the free will of our protagonist now. But this view of free will is too wide and naïve. It is too wide because it claims that our autonomy is *only* compromised when other humans enact force upon us without our consent. But our autonomy is compromised in *many* other ways.

[156] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 262

It is true that constraint (like limited choices) is not coercion (force), but constraint will *of course* affect our range of possibilities, especially in comparison to others with less constraints. And the range of possibilities seems just as important for determining whether someone is making a voluntary decision or not; and it seems it *should be* important for someone like Nozick or Friedman who believe in equal *opportunity*. Furthermore, Nozick's view is naïve for all the empirical reasons stated above. There are plenty of instances (as seen above) where the material conditions of a person (their physical, emotional, interpersonal, and nutritional environment) will affect their volition. And the political economy has a direct effect on the material conditions of a person – these are the 'end results' or the 'patterns' that Nozick's theory intentionally disregards (in turn disregarding their effects on volition).

The decision to take a low-paying job, the decision to send your child to an underfunded school district, or the decision to eat nutrition-less food, all look like perfectly volitional decisions when you disregard the material conditions that coerced such a "decision". When we consider the *outcome* or *end-result* of distribution to be inconsequential to our political theory we, in a very unscientific manner, disregard any of the *effects* of these "end-results". It is not enough to be concerned about the range of choices a person has (like the range of choices for a spouse, to use Nozick's example); what is worse is that these ranges of choice do *further* damage by eroding the very human capacity of rationality and undermine our volition itself.

2.6 Consequences

This chapter finds the ontological core of self-ownership – the self as a "rational, autonomous, individual". It shows that, in order for the normative theories and principles underlying capitalism (entitlement theory and the principle of self-ownership) to be valid, they must be premised upon this ontological core of personhood as rational and autonomous. It is certainly true that the human being has a profound capability to disregard its instincts and act from pure rationality, and beyond that, we can think of plenty of achievements that set humans apart from any other creature on earth. The Enlightenment philosophers articulated and solidified this belief of exceptionalism and wedded to it, social contract theory as a "natural" and "rational" progression out of the "state-of-nature". This picture of the human has become the foundation for all our liberal theories to date.

The problem, however, is twofold. First, this picture of the human as a rational, autonomous, individual, is not universal – it has not and does not apply to everyone (although that is a goal that we have yet to meet). The birth of these liberal ideas of human exceptionalism and the binary between "nature" and "civilization" coincided with colonial conquest, so that the colonized and the indigenous were conveniently excluded from personhood on the grounds of "state-of-nature" theories and racism. This resulted in an ever-widening rift between a property-owning population and one not human enough to have such a right; this would be continued through generations of family inheritance. Then, once capitalism arrives on the scene, we have a sudden shift in the rules of property acquisition, which serves to conceal alienated labor – the essence of private property. As Marx says himself, "Political economy conceals the alienation in the nature of labor by ignoring the direct relationship between the worker (labor) and production."[157] Secondly, we also have enough empirical evidence to suggest that we aren't as rational or autonomous as we would have hoped. This has become more accepted and less controversial, but our political economy and the legal system that protects it, still makes all decisions *as if* we acted out of pure autonomy and rationality.

The consequence of this is serious. If our rationality and autonomy is in question, then we cannot conduct a "just transfer of holdings" in good faith – in fact the justice of *any* contract would come into question. This is because, in order for a transfer or any other contract to be considered just, each member of the transaction must voluntarily agree to the contract (*and* be considered fully human). Nozick says that "some people steal from others, or defraud them, or enslave them, seizing their product and preventing them from living as they choose, or forcibly exclude others from competing in exchanges. None of these are permissible modes of transition from one situation to another."[158] All of these impermissible ways of transferring holdings involve either force or deception – or, in a word that implies both force and deception: coercion. So how can we voluntarily agree to contracts if our rationality is always compromised – coerced in some way? Capitalism breeds *more* persuasion and more perceived (and actual) needs too. The upshot of all the empirical evidence shown in sec. 2.5 is that, given the fact that these are obviously not *all* the ways that our will is compromised and coerced, even this is enough to be apprehensive about the level of trust voluntarism puts on individual actors within a *definitionally* free society like ours. In

[157] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)." 291
[158] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 152

essence, it doesn't appear that our ontological core is really a "rational, autonomous, individual"; so this "self", referred to in "self-ownership", and its property, is not actually legitimated with entitlement theory because there are coerced relationships of transfer (or people excluded from the relationships of transfer) happening all the time.

There is an ironic consequence that the freedom of markets (when equated to the freedom of individuals) creates conditions (market coercion, malnutrition, and stress) that inhibit our autonomy and rationality. This ironic consequence comes about because the libertarian ideal, not only oversimplified what it is to be a human being, but also oversimplified freedom (or their simplification of the human being lead to the unintended consequence of oversimplifying freedom). Cohen already elegantly showed that the type of freedom defended by Nozick resulted in a pallid freedom in practice. But while he demonstrated this through an argument via. a hypothetical situation, this chapter illustrated *why* the concept of self-ownership (where the self is autonomous and rational) also fails to support capitalist liberal freedom, as promoted by Nozick, because (the history of exclusion and dehumanization aside) humans are not always autonomous and rational thinkers.

CHAPTER 3. BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL: INTRODUCING ORGANICISM

The moment when, after many years
of hard work and a long voyage
you stand in the centre of your room,
house, half-acre, square mile, island, country,
knowing at last how you got there,
and say, I own this,

is the same moment when the trees unloose
their soft arms from around you,
the birds take back their language,
the cliffs fissure and collapse,
the air moves back from you like a wave
and you can't breathe.

No, they whisper. You own nothing.
You were a visitor, time after time
climbing the hill, planting the flag, proclaiming.
We never belonged to you.
You never found us.
It was always the other way round.

-- Margaret Atwood

Introduction

If one of the requirements for entitlement to ownership (i.e., "justice in holdings") is "the principle of justice in transfer"[159] (essentially voluntarism) and this requires that both parties are acting with reasonable autonomy, then it seems, from the previous chapter that many exchanges occurring in the contemporary political economy are unjust. Empirical science, and even simple observation, shows us that the "self" as it manifests in this contemporary milieu, is not as rational and autonomous as we would like to believe, therefore casting doubt upon the voluntarism of the market.

This chapter discusses the third element of the libertarian picture of the self: individualism. This chapter shows how we are also not as individuated as we would like to believe either because

[159] Nozick. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* 151.

the boundaries of an individual are unclear both biologically and ecologically (sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3). With the ecological awareness that comes with various "green movements" over the past few decades, we have come to understand that we play a crucial role in affecting our earthly ecosystems. Our actions *upon* the earth, are coming under more scrutiny. But to reverse this subject-object relation, that is to say, that *we* are the objects being affected by the environment is a more humbling perspective, and one that shifts our understanding about ourselves from being a self-sovereign agent acting upon the world, to a member working within the world. The consecutive section (3.1.3) discusses how this ecological identity continues *inside* our bodies as well, with the microbiota that make up various bodily systems and upon which we are entirely dependent. Finally, section 3.1.4 looks at our dependencies upon other humans. In all these instances, of what I am calling "blurred boundaries of the self", I am not only pointing to our dependencies, but moreover, making the radical claim that these dependencies are literal parts of our *self*. This picture of the human as having blurred boundaries is a core component to my definition and explanation of "organicism" – my proposed ontology of the human being.

3.1 Blurring the Boundaries of the Individual: Defining Organicism

Rather than claiming that humans are, at their core, "rational, autonomous, individuals", I propose "Organicism" as a "new" ontology of subjectivity that starts from our embodiment, corporeality, and somatic experience; it includes our organic functions, our biological processes, our physical abilities and limitations, and importantly, the ecology that all this is a part of[160]. The root word, "organic" originates from *organikos* (Greek) which means, relating to, or serving as, an organ or instrument. It is also interestingly related to the word "organize", that is, to form a whole consisting of interdependent or coordinated parts (which in turn is derived from the Latin *organum*, meaning instrument, organ, or tool). As an adjective, organic is synonymous with "natural" and "unadulterated", but also "harmonious", "coherent", and "structured". An organism is a bundle of functions that form and sustain life. These functions are biological, chemical, energetic, and physical processes that work symbiotically between the micro and macro level in order to facilitate the survival and flourishing of the organism. So, a human being is an organism

[160] I use the term "new" in quotes because organicism is perhaps more accurately considered a combination of a handful of theories of self. It is inspired from a variety of sources including Marx, Hegel, Aristotle, and ecological theory, just to name a few.

that is made up of organs and limbs and bones and neurological functions that, in turn, on a micro-level, have *their own* chemical and physical processes. We are the sum of these processes and symbioses within and without our organic body; and the function of these processes is to facilitate, not only our survival, but also our flourishing. Organicism is not a *complete* picture of the human being, but it is the essence.

It is important that I define the scope of this ontology. I do not make any metaphysical promises that I cannot keep, according to our epistemological limits. The scope is limited to *this world and life*. I do not make any claims as to the essence of humans as we *may* exist beyond this world and/or lifetime of perceived phenomena. However, the ontology of organicism is not mutually exclusive to a variety of transcendental theories of self, *but* it must exclude transcendental theories of morality. This is because, when we reach the ceiling of our epistemological limits regarding our theories of self, for example, in pondering the existence of a soul, we must also see it as the limit point of our moral theories. To speculate about a morality that is based upon a metaphysics outside of our knowability, opens up a Pandora's box of potentially repressive and dangerous moralisms. I don't believe this agnosticism weakens my ontology – I am claiming that this theory of human essence (and its corresponding ethics) is the best we have so far.

So, organicism is a naturalistic materialism, but one that remains flexible to the contingencies of social conditions. It is an expansion of Marxist materialism by extending concern and agency into the non-human world as well as incorporating new scientific discoveries of microbiology and ecological consciousness. It incorporates both the natural world in addition to the industrial/man-made world as constitutive of the human being. Individuals cannot be explained, defined or understood without reference to the whole system they take part in, therefore organicism is also necessarily a type of holism.

The ontological question that organicism is trying to answer is, "What type of *being* are we?" "Being" is both a noun and the present participle of the verb "to be". Our *activity* – our be-ing – is inseparable from our being. Our activity (our be-ing), and the mutability it provides, affects and is affected by, our fixed nature (our being). Organicism is dialectical in this sense, in that it contains both being and becoming. We have the ability to create and manifest things into existence, including aspects about ourselves, in a way that no other creature on earth can. Furthermore, we are conscious of this ability, conscious of ourselves, and of the abstract idea that we must somehow "meaningfully" (or not) construct the existence we find ourselves in. Organicism acknowledges

this creative capacity, this be-ing, this becoming. But our *being* (noun) is also a biological organism with defined boundaries to our capabilities. We are both fluid and fixed. Philosophers have done an excellent job in magnifying the wonders of human existence, what we are capable of in the realm of the abstract and our seemingly unlimited potential – all of this is true and important. But organicism grounds us and reminds us that without this other half of our story - the fixed essence of our selves - we risk overlooking why some people are more capable than others (either permanently or situationally) to reach full human potential, and importantly, we risk losing the very possibility to reach full human potential if society is structured in a way to prevent it. Organicism is both an ontological picture of the human being and, consequently, an ethical system that aims to promote the flourishing of such a being.

From a grand perspective, one of the broad aims of the project of organicism is to break down dualisms - one of these, already discussed is the dualism of the body and the mind, or of our organic body and our rationality, or of being and becoming. Another false dualism is that of an individual and that individual's environment, or the internal and external self. This can be discussed in terms of the dualism of human and nature, but also of self and other. And finally, there is the politically normative dualism of freedom and constraint. None of these are mutually exclusive, but rather, they exist simultaneously in a relationship of dependency. This anti-dualist disposition of organicism is Hegelian in nature.

Hegel says universality is not binarily opposed to the particular. In the instance, of organicism, we can think of this particular as an individual human. If a particular is outside/separate from the universal, then the universal is not universal by definition. Finitude is internal to the infinite. For Hegel, what really exists is a mean between nominalism (where only spatial concrete particulars exist) and the Real as Platonic universality (where the universals are what are really real). Reality is neither purely abstract nor purely physical, but *we* create the split. If the Absolute, or the infinite, or even on a smaller scale, humanity, or "we" is an abstraction, from the concrete particular of "I", then this is only because we have created this split. But there is no actual split because, as Spinoza has shown, it is metaphysically impossible.

Additionally, organicism brings to our attention that this split is *biologically* impossible. The "I" of ontogeny is inseparable from the "we" of phylogenetics. Whether we are talking about the developmental history of a single organism, or the evolutionary history of a species. The individual is a culmination of its species' phylogenetic history, and the phylogenetic history would

not exist without the individual organisms that make it up. All life on earth is part of a single phylogenetic ancestry; and ontogeny is simply "the process through which each of us embodies the history of our own making"[161].

We can think of an object, a person, or humanity as an aggregate of pieces or as a "bundle of properties". An object is red, and *also* solid, *also* round. A person is a boundary of skin, *also* a brain, *also* a lung. Humanity is person *x*, and *also y*, and *also z*. This re-conception of the thing in question as an "also" causes a problem. If a specific entity is only a collection of "also" then the determinacy disappears. The object, colloquially, has a status of being "one"; but being an "also" *and* a "one" creates a dizziness. The emptiness of the "one" becomes apparent. How can we tell the difference between one and another one? For this, you need abstraction: this one is *not* all the other ones, but its identity *depends* on the other ones. Consciousness then, for Hegel, is an oscillation between the "One" and the "also", or the "in itself" and the "for another". Another area where we can see this dialectical interplay, in terms of organicism, is between the duality of human and nature.

The interaction between the human and nature is mediated physically by "metabolism" – a process of turning the materials of one organism into the energy of another. This process helps to grow and maintain the life-energy of an organism. From the Greek *metabolē,* meaning *change,* this metabolic interaction between humans and nature is the source of change. This constant energy exchange is the be-ing or the becoming of our Being. Children grow by consuming and converting the life-energy of a piece of fruit from a tree, into their own life-energy, and in the process, they change both themselves and the tree. This change through "metabolism" is another instance of dialectical movement – life and energy is the synthesis or sublation that arises out of the consumption or negation of the other organism. Marx also describes the "movement" of human production as a catalyst for changing both nature and the human itself, he says, "Labor is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature…Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature."[162] The relationship between human and nature is not binary but dialectical – you can't

[161] Toren, Christina. "Comparison and ontogeny". In Richard Fox and Andre Gingrich (eds) *Anthropology, By Comparison* (London: Routledge, 2002) 187.
[162] Marx, *Capital Volume 1.* 283

change yourself without changing your environment, and you can't change your environment without changing yourself. Humans are reliant upon nature, and have the ability to change it, thus altering the source of their subsistence. The consequence of this is that, in this process of alteration, humans could either appropriate the materials of nature in a way that benefits their own needs in the long-term or they could myopically destroy their very means of subsistence.

To interject for a moment to point out a caveat, I refer to the individual person, and "inside" vs. "outside", according to the common understanding of the "person" (the concrete individual) as being contained within the boundaries of their skin and sensory perceptions. But we will see that when we "zoom-out" (section 3.1.2) the individual human being is participating in a constant exchange of energy by using and metabolizing their external world, including other living organisms. And conversely, when we "zoom-in" (section 3.1.2) to *inside* and *on* the human, there are a multitude of living organisms, without which the human cannot function or even survive. In short, defining organicism requires the blurring of many preconceived boundaries, both on the micro and the macro scale. Because of this recognition of interconnectedness, organicism is biocentric, as opposed to anthropocentric. The human being rides on the intersection of 'I and we' because the dividing lines are "blurry" (movable, permeable, and contextual), and as such, organicism may be described as a sort of pan-corporeal holism. As a panpsychist would believe that mind or consciousness is in all things, and as a pantheist would see divinity in all entities, a pancorporealist recognizes that all bodies are of one body. But before we arrive at this grand interconnectedness, we must first understand organicism at its starting point for our understanding – the body.

What makes organicism unique is that, not only is it an ontology of subjectivity that (as we will see later) serves as a foundation for a particular political theory, but also that as a foundation for political theory, it centralizes the body. Political theorists have commonly discussed the body in terms of the imaginary and the symbolic – the "body politic", the body of the King, and the body of the masses, and democratic peoples – but they rarely talk about the corporeal, organic, body within the landscape of political theory. Daniel Krier and Kevin S. Amidon recognize and discuss this tendency in *The Social Ontology of Capitalism*. But they point out that Karl Marx's writings and theories were an exception. They claim that within Marx's post-1859 writings, especially *Capital, Volume 1*, the "Corporeal bodies of laborers in Capitalist industry were everywhere…[N]arration of workers' bodies was sometimes so dense and detailed that the pages

seemed saturated with sweat and blood."[163] Because Marx was able to see the corporeality of humans and was able to astutely recognize the effects that capitalism has on our nature, organicism adopts a substantial amount from Marx's materialism.

3.1.1 Marxist Materialism: the Flesh and Blood of Capital

Marx recognized that, despite there being an ontological essence to the human being ("species being"), this essence could nonetheless be disrupted, or rather we become detached and estranged from it. Marx's work describes the metamorphosis that occurs to our awareness of our ontological essence within capitalism. Krier and Amidon's thesis is that Marx reveals the alchemical power of capitalism when he says that living labor is "absorbed, crystallized, congealed or objectified" within products. They say that "Labor in capital is 'objectified' in commodities, and thus shifts from the ontic plane of embodied, organic existence into the ontologically imaginary world of products and the ontologically symbolic-social world of value."[164] The capitalist mode of production has a way of abstracting away from the organic body of the laborer in such a way that, according to Krier and Amidon, creates ontological shifts. They claim that capitalism generates ontological transformations across three planes: *socio-psyche-soma*. They explain this as such: "Capital absorbs living labor (ontologically somatic) and congeals/crystallizes/objectifies it into commodities (ontologically psychic as an object of desire), then through the process of realization, the absorbed labor undergoes another ontological transformation into money value (ontologically symbolic)."[165] But ultimately, capitalism is always "rooted in the natural powers of the working bodies"—in the ontologically somatic.[166]

Marx is one of the few philosophers of the western historical cannon who brings attention to the body. He importantly recognizes its limitations. He highlights the fact that the human body is dependent upon material subsistence – "the vital force must rest, sleep … feed, wash and clothe himself … [as well as have certain] intellectual and social requirements …conditioned by the general level of civilization."[167] This dependency is used by capitalists to determine the quantity of value to be placed on the laboring body. Labor-power is determined "by the labor-time

[163] Krier and Amidon, "The Body Ontology of Capitalism." 264.
[164] Krier and Amidon. 264.
[165] Krier and Amidon. 268.
[166] Krier and Amidon. 266.
[167] Marx, *Capital*. 341.

necessary for the production and consequently the reproduction of … labour, a definite quantity of human muscle, nerve, brain, etc. is expended, and these things have to be replaced"[168] The production and reproduction of labor-power requires "natural needs, such as food, clothing, fuel, and housing."[169] Without these necessities, the body dies, therefore the laboring body needs to be continually replaced. "The labour-power withdrawn from the market by wear and tear, and by death, must be continually replaced by, at the very least, an equal amount of fresh labour power."[170]

Krier and Amidon describe Marx's process whereby the organic bodies of workers are "burnt up" in the process of producing commodities: "Already dead labor (constant capital, as well as *dying* labor, the variable component!) buries itself in the commodities and capital it produces: it terminates in the body that emerges from the process as a product. This sacrificial death of the body is constitutive of capitalism, because no capital, fixed or constant, or natural material can produce value, only embodied workers."[171] In other words, capital grows *because* of the biopowers of organic laborers. Krier and Amidon point out the moments when Marx describes the folkloric "body-ripping qualities"[172] and vampiric thirst for the living blood of labor:[173] the "werewolf-like hunger for surplus labor"[174]; "Capital is dead labor which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks."[175] Marx describes the deteriorating effects of factory work: "Factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost; at the same time, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom both in bodily and in intellectual activity"[176]; "Every sense organ is injured by the artificially high temperatures, by the dust-laden atmosphere, by the deafening noise, not to mention the danger to life and limb…"[177] There is also a theme of premature (or unwarranted) death as the working bodies are "stunted, short-lived and rapidly replaced" or "plucked, so to speak, before they were ripe." – a theme that we will examine more in chapter 4.[178]

[168] Marx. *Capital*, 274-275.
[169] Marx. *Capital*, 275.
[170] Krier and Amidon, "The Body Ontology of Capitalism."
[171] Krier and Amidon.
[172] Marx, *Capital*. 353.
[173] Marx. *Capital*, 367.
[174] Marx. *Capital*, 353.
[175] Marx. *Capital*, 342.
[176] Marx. *Capital*, 548.
[177] Marx. *Capital*, 552.
[178] Marx. *Capital*, 380.

Marx clearly recognizes the raw corporeal, organic qualities of the human and the limitations to our human capacities. But Marx's materialism is unique in that it is not purely mechanical; and his idealism is unique in that it incorporates natural tendencies. The dialectic relationship between materialism and idealism is embodied in the human experience. The human is a delicate balance between being a particular species within the animal kingdom and being a product of history and social contingencies. We are both a part of nature and transcend it.

Evidence that Marx believes that human ontology is both derived from nature and from history can be found in a footnote of *Capital* where he criticizes the utilitarians for conceiving of utility as an essential ahistorical human drive:

> To know what is useful for a dog, one must investigate the *nature* of dogs. This nature is not itself deducible from the principle of utility. Applying this to man, he that would judge all human acts, movements, relations, etc., according to the principle of utility would first have to deal with *human nature in general, and then with human nature as historically modified in each epoch.*[179] (emphasis added)

In the same manner that Marx criticizes a drive for utility, he also criticizes a conception of the human as naturally selfish (as Kant or Hobbes did) because this is also just a by-product of the material conditions the subjects find themselves in. But the ahistorical common denominator can be found in Marx's earlier writings such as the *1844 Paris Manuscripts* – the human is essentially creative and self-conscious of this creativity. Moreover, we gain this power through our connection with nature – both as living *in* nature and being nature embodied. In Marx's own words, humans are,

> …a natural being…endowed with natural powers, vital powers. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities – as instincts. On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs – essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers. To say that man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous, objective being full of natural vigour is to say that he has real, sensuous objects as the object of his being or of his life, or that he can only express his life in real, sensuous objects. To be objective, natural and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing.[180]

[179] Marx.
[180] Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in General, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," archive, Marxists.org, accessed March 5, 2021, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/hegel.htm.

Organicism agrees with this ahistorical common denominator of all humans – this essence – of the human as first being "natural" and *of the earth*. Marx calls humans "objective beings" because we create objects and are *created by* objects that are a part of nature, rather than having been descended from a state of "pure activity" (as a pure subject) into the *creation of the object*.[181] Marx clarifies, "When actual, corporeal *man* with his feet firmly planted on the solid ground, inhaling and exhaling all of nature's energies *establishes* his actual, objective *essential capacities* as alien objects through his externalization, the *establishing* is not the subject but the subjectivity of the *objective* capacities whose action must therefore also be *objective*"[182] Marx describes his ontology of the human as a naturalism or humanism that is distinct from both idealism and materialism, but also a unification of both.[183] So, Marx's naturalism does not reduce and liken human activity to the crude materialism and mechanics of, say, planetary laws of motion; we are entities that can be self-reflective and willful. The historical contingencies of humanity arise *out of* this fundamental naturalistic ontology.

If there is a continuity between Marx's early work with his later volumes of *Capital*, then his overall (moral) project is, arguably, to show that Capitalism's conflict with humanity is rooted in its antagonism with our species being. Part of his strategy in *Capital* is to de-sanctify the economic science of the classical political economists who remove the human being from their analyses. They make the mistake of reifying all social human activity, while money and commodities are seen as deified subjects with causal powers rather than social constructions. His 'labor theory of value' is his attempt to put the human being back at the forefront of value-creation. But the fetishization of commodities shifts the attention away from the social relations and the "expenditure of human brain, nerves, [and]muscles"[184] that were needed to produce the commodity, toward the fixation on price, exchange value and money. This puts the science of the market *above* the control of individual human wills. So even within capitalism, the *transcendent* nature (or the "mystical character") of the market and commodities arises *out of* the *material* bodies of laborers. The bourgeois economists believe that they live in a "…social formation in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of the opposite, [such formulae] appear to the political economists' bourgeois consciousness to be as much a self-evident and nature-

[181] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."
[182] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."
[183] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."
[184] Marx, *Capital*. 164

imposed necessity as productive labour itself."[185] So liberation or emancipation for Marx comes out of a structural shift leading to the conditions necessary for the realization of our nature.

If there is a teleology in Marx, it is not an inevitability but a *tendency toward*, (or a realization, or liberation of) a true human spirit – an essential human nature. The species being is fundamentally productive/creative and communal. It is the particularity of our capacity to create that distinguishes us from other animals. Work or labor is the most primary feature of humans. But not just work to produce our means of material subsistence (although this is key to our nature as well). Labor also consists of our conscious life activities, and in this lies our exceptionalism.

Regarding the exceptionalism of humans, Marx says, "To be sure, eating, drinking, and procreation are genuine human functions. In abstraction, however, and separated from the remaining sphere of human activities and turned into final and sole ends, they are animal functions."[186] But the "remaining sphere of human activities" to Marx are our life activities that are done in consciousness and as an object of our will. Of the distinction between animals and humans, he says, "The animal is immediately one with its life activity, not distinct from it. The animal is *its life activity*. Man makes his life activity itself into an object of will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity… [which] distinguishes man immediately from the life activity of the animal… his own life is an object for him…."[187]

Humans also relate to themselves universally, meaning, as a species, or concerning "humanity" as a whole. They do this through their creative capacities, which also set them apart from other animals. Marx explains, "To be sure animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwelling places, like bees, beavers, ants, etc. But the animal produces only what is immediately necessary for itself or its young. It produces in a one-sided way while man produces universally."[188] In other words, our creative capacities exist so that we can meet the needs of others within our species (and even outside it). Marx continues by saying,

> The animal produces under the domination of immediate physical need while man produces free of physical need and only genuinely so in freedom from such need. The animal only produces itself while man reproduces the whole of nature. The animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body while man is free when he confronts his product. The animal builds only according to the standard and need of the species to which it belongs while man knows how to produce according to

[185] Marx. *Capital*, 175
[186] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."
[187] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."
[188] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."

> the standard of any species and at all times knows how to apply an intrinsic standard to the object. Thus man creates also according to the laws of beauty.[189]

However, the necessity of nature cannot be separated from labor-power because nature, including the soil, water, etc. (the raw material) is "the universal subject of human labour" that gets transformed into tools and commodities. When parts of nature get transformed into tools, they become, to a certain extent, an extension of the human body. Marx elaborates, "Thus Nature becomes one of the organs of his activity, one that he annexes to his own bodily organs…"[190] So there is a sort of metabolic relationship between humans and nature. Of this he says, "Labour is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs."[191] But organicism wants to radicalize this symbiosis and this metabolism further. This interaction between human and nature is so harmoniously seamless and becomes even more so as our science has developed since Marx's time, that the boundary separating the individual human from nature begins to blur. His naturalistic materialism serves as an important inspiration for organicism. Where my own theory diverges from, or perhaps expands upon, Marxist human ontology is at the boundaries of the self.

3.1.2 Zooming-Out: Ecology

The first boundary to be traversed is the boundary between the human being and the rest of nature. From the foundational texts of classical liberalism, there has been a discounting of the role of nature and a separation of humans from that nature. If we recall from chapter 2, the creation of contracts was seen as a way to remove ourselves from a "state of nature" i.e. a state of perpetual war. Marx says that this is "…the great civilizing influence of capital…"[192] Namely, that it was able to produce a stage of society that make the earlier ones appear "…as mere *local developments* of humanity and as *nature-idolatry.*"[193] He continues, "For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself;

[189] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."
[190] Marx, *Capital*.
[191] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."
[192] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 409
[193] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 409-410

and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production."[194] Here Marx explains that entry of capitalism creates the impression that precapitalist societies were not *proper* civilizations (instead, "mere local developments") because of their closer relationship to nature (their "nature-idolatry"); and it isn't until we distanced ourselves from nature and began to view it as an object for our use, that we have civilization proper.

This progression also leads to the dehumanization of not yet capitalist polities and people who reject the human-nature duality. But it's not just capitalism that creates the distinction between humans and nature. The era of Enlightenment, with liberalism, and contractarianism as it arose out of 'state-of-nature' theory, is also a culprit. As I said in the previous chapter, "Liberalism will always reinforce a dehumanization if it relies on an oppositional duality between civilization and state-of-nature." Religion has also played a role in the dehumanizing of older nature-based religions. Christianity for instance saw the previous nature-based religions of Celtic paganism or the variety of Native American belief systems to be idolatrous, vulgar, and heretical.

As another example of both discounting the role of nature and the separating nature from humans: the Enlightenment theory of value creation revolves around *human* labor, while *natural* resources are valueless on their own. John Locke says,

> …when any one hath computed, he will then see how much labour makes the far greatest part of the value of things we enjoy in this world: and the ground which produces the materials is scarce to be reckoned in as any, or, at most, but a very small part of it; so little, that even amongst us, land that is left wholly to nature, that hath no improvement of pasturage, tillage, or planting, is called, as indeed it is, waste; and we shall find the benefit of it amount to little more than nothing.[195]

This passage shows the sentiment that humans had (and still have) toward the land and nature in general - it is meant for conquering and optimizing. Locke believes that if it has no use to humans than it has no value in itself. It is only when it has been blessed by the touch of human hands that it becomes something valuable. Locke continues, "It is labour, then, which puts the greatest part of the value upon land, without which it would scarcely be worth anything: it is to that we owe the greatest part of all its useful products…nature and the earth furnished only the almost worthless materials, as in themselves."[196]

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[194] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 410.
[195] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*. 118.
[196] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government,* 118.

There are two mistakes here in Locke's assessment, one is the overlooking of the value that raw, uncultivated nature has for human beings – value that it is conferring upon us every day without our awareness. We use the basic elements of nature to literally keep us alive – air for breathing, water for drinking, fire for warmth and for cooking food that our digestive systems would not be able to metabolize otherwise, and of course soil where all of our food grows. There are over seven thousand edible plant species in the world[197] (and yet more than 50% of the calories consumed comes from three crops: rice, corn, and wheat[198]). Uncultivated land has fed humans (as homo sapiens) for over 190,000 of years.

The second mistake from Locke's quote is presupposing a subject object distinction between humans and nature – we, as the givers/producers of value and nature the tool. Believing that humans contribute value to the, otherwise worthless, earth through cultivation and labor presupposes that humans (as intrinsically valuable creatures) are separate from nature. And this presupposition is not only hubris, it is impossible. We are just as much carbon-based creatures as any other and we depend on them in the strongest sense for our existence. Humans are so materially inseparable from nature that pointing to an individual, especially as a producer of property via. labor (as a value-giving force), is actually a very difficult endeavor from a biocentric or eco-centric point of view.

Organisms require other organisms in order to survive. Sometimes this takes the form of metabolizing actual parts of another organism -- the consumption of meat, plants, grains or seeds. Or cooperating with another organism, such as with work animals like horses, oxen, or dogs. Or, one of the most important cooperations for our survival: the exchange of oxygen from plants for the CO2 that we exhale. This metabolism and cooperation are a necessary relationship for survival.

Paul Burkett argues in his book "Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective" that Marx saw nature as an equal contributor to the productive process as much as humans. This means that nature has a critical role to play in producing the goods that we need to survive. If nature is an equal critical contributor to the productive process, then we are indistinguishable from it. This means that we are not above it, and more important than it, but that we simply have a unique set of capabilities that sets us apart from other organisms in the ecosystem. We just play a particular

[197] Tiziana Ulian et al., "Unlocking Plant Resources to Support Food Security and Promote Sustainable Agriculture," *PLANTS, PEOPLE, PLANET* 2, no. 5 (September 2020): 421–45, https://doi.org/10.1002/ppp3.10145.
[198] Danny Hunter et al., "The Potential of Neglected and Underutilized Species for Improving Diets and Nutrition," *Planta* 250, no. 3 (September 2019): 709–29, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00425-019-03169-4.

role that we have decided to call "exceptional". But our exceptionality would not exist without each component of nature that constructs us. Organicism is a holism - the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. A whole human is able to surpass the scope of capabilities of each of its organs. But the parts are equally necessary. We don't claim that water is less valuable than a willow tree because water is incorporated into the process of the tree's flourishing. We could imagine that the willow tree could feel as if it was an exceptional species because it provides a habitat to other creatures, it provides carbon dioxide and because it is taller than any other organism in its surroundings. But the water it uses and the fungi that grow on its roots contain worlds within themselves and a multitude of effects beyond themselves. *There is no exceptionality in pictures like this, only dependence. And where there is dependence, exceptionality cannot occur without violence*. Right now, our existence threatens many natural ecosystems (and species within them). But ultimately, this violence affects everyone, and in harming nature, humans harm themselves.

Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess says that we are an ecological self – this is a type of self-consciousness. The smaller conception of the self sees good behavior toward the environment as altruism/doing good for the other, but if you have a conception of the self as an *ecological self* then any good you do for the earth/environment is in self-interest. This is the type of self-consciousness that organicism necessitates. Clint Jones makes similar arguments in his book, *Ecological Reflections on Post-Capitalist Society.* He claims that the ecological crisis must be solved with: a reconceptualization of our metaphysical selves in relation to the environment; we must reject the 'logics of oppression' and separation of the self from the Other; and have an understanding that the ecological is necessarily political, and thus, necessarily intersectional.[199] Jones claims that our new ontological orientation must be one of "egalitarian biocentrism and a metaphysical ontology of holism".[200]

But it isn't just a perspective shift that needs to take place, rather there needs to be a recognition of the *objective reality* of our biological condition, that is, that all living things must take something from their environment – something or some energy must be exchanged, used, consumed or metabolized. Peter Godfrey-Smith says in *Philosophy of Biology,* "Organisms physically *transform* their surroundings, by consuming resources, depositing waste, and

[199] Tiffany Montoya, "Book Review for: Clint Jones. Ecological Reflections on Post-Capitalist Society," *The North Meridian Review: A Journal of Culture and Scholarship* 1, no. 1 (September 2020): 139–41.
[200] Clint Jones, "Ecological Reflections on Post-Capitalist Society" (Stevens Point, Wisconsin: Cornerstone Press, 2018) 34.

rearranging objects around them. The oxygen-rich atmosphere around the earth, for example, might appear to be a "given," but it is the product of the metabolic activity of photosynthetic organisms…"[201] He goes on to talk about how this affects humans: "…a huge amount of the environment confronted by any human now is the product of the activities of humans at earlier times. This includes both the social setting in which we live –"environment" in a special sense, as each of us is environment to the other—and the collection of enduring artifacts and reshaped parts of the physical world around us."[202] What is a human without food, without material objects with which to create tools (i.e. technologies), without hydration, or even without the solid ground and the magnetic/gravitational force of the earth to simply stand? So organicism can also be described as a type of pan-corporealism (as inspired by a Spinozistic pantheism) where all individual living cells, organisms and bodies are components of a single whole living body. Maybe that body is the earth itself – "mother nature", "Gaia", or maybe it's bigger than that. This can be left open to speculation. But I can claim, at the very least, a wholeness made up of all the bodies of nature; and humans are only one piece to this puzzle.

The pan-corporealism that organicism is committed to implies that an individual's body, and its associated biological processes, is not bound to everything within our skin. So similar to Naess' "ecological self" as a type of self-consciousness. Pan-corporealism is an understanding of one's body as extended to an ecology of processes – an "extended body" thesis, if you will – only, *we* are the extension, and have been so longer than our use and creation of tools and technology as extensions to *our own* bodies.

When we ask the question, "what is a body and where are it's edges" the important follow up question to ask is, "according to who?" Hegel warns in the *Observing Reason* section of the Phenomenology of Spirit, that the natural sciences tend to "carve nature at the joints", but they (we) tend to see joints only where they carve. There are legitimate reasons why biologists, and medical and social scientists delineate between individuals, populations, herds, body parts, species, or organs. We understand how things work by isolating, focusing, and dissecting. But we can also understand how things work by zooming-out, by seeing the big picture, and how all the individual parts interrelate and contribute to the whole. This is what the field of "systems thinking" does, and

[201] Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Philosophy of Biology*, Princeton Foundations of Contemporary Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). 56.
[202] Godfrey-Smith. *Philosophy of Biology*, 58.

it helps us to understand, not simply how things work on a macro scale, but how to solve complex problems (such as ecological destruction, widespread poverty, or economic or political decisions involving many private and public interests)[203]. So, demarcating the edges of an individual body is a movable, permeable and contextual act according to who we ask.

So, another important aspect of organicism is that humans are more than just the boundaries of their skin. Organicism takes a holistic biological stance where the boundaries of the biological individual (the organism) dissolve into other biological individuals. In Peter Godfrey-Smith's book, "Philosophy of Biology", he explains the difficulty of identifying an individual within biology. He says that in an intuitive or folk-biological sense, "an organism seems to be something that does two things. An organism maintains itself – keeps itself alive – and reproduces, makes more things of the same kind."[204] Organisms, or living things, maintain their organization, grow, and multiply. But there are many discordant cases where defining the individual organism was unclear. These cases first started appearing in the late 18th and early 19th century, particularly in botany. Take oak trees as an example, "As small parts of [an oak tree] can often regenerate a whole, these parts seem to have a kind of autonomy. Perhaps the shoot or the bud is the true 'vegetable individual', and a tree is a population of them."[205] In another example, "In 'quaking aspen' (Populus tremuloides), what appear to be hundreds or thousands of trees scattered across many acres will be connected by a common root system from which they have grown (Mitton & Grant 1996)."[206] Just going off of these two examples, we can see that oftentimes in biology, what looks like many organisms could just be one, and what looks like one could actually be many.

There are many external environmental factors that *contribute* to the existence of an individual person. But one could rightfully argue that contribution is different from *constitution* - what a person is *made of* is different from the things that contribute to this makeup. This is true, but as I mentioned in this section, all of the contributions are existentially necessary. Regardless,

[203] Systems theory and systems engineering is a relatively new field of transdisciplinary study that is gaining popularity as seen by the formation of academic programs and international councils such as the Council of Engineering Systems Universities (CESUN) and the International Council on Systems Engineering (INCOSE). "systems thinking" or "systems theory" can be defined as, the practice of perceiving, communicating, and affecting the boundaries, inner relationships, perspectives on, and effects of an arrangement of parts or elements that, together, exhibit behavior and/or meaning that the individual constituents do not. See: INCOSE - International Council on Systems Engineering, "Physical and Conceptual Systems," incose.org, accessed July 1, 2020, https://www.incose.org/about-systems-engineering/system-and-se-definition/physical-and-conceptual.
[204] Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Philosophy of Biology*. 66.
[205] Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Philosophy of Biology*. 67.
[206] Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Philosophy of Biology*. 67.

even if we were to focus on the *constitution* of an individual person (as we will see in the next section – 3.1.2), we would discover that the boundaries of said individual are equally as "blurry". So that, in the end, perhaps "constitution" can be understood as a mosaic of contributions.

3.1.3 Zooming-In: The Human Microbiota

When we zoom into the boundaries of the individual human being, we see a similar process of exchanges of energy, use, consumption and metabolization of various entities in an entire ecosystem comparable to the ecosystem "outside" of us. So, this vital dependence that we have on nature not only exists on the macro-scale, but we are also dependent upon micro-scale ecologies. There are around 100 trillion microbial organisms on us and within us; we contain 10 times more microbial cells than human cells and 100 times more microbial genes than human genes.[207] When contemplating the concept of an individual human, with numbers like these, we start to question the notion of clearly demarcated individuality and realize what little independence we have left. These microorganisms are just as important for keeping us alive and functioning as the elements and living organisms *outside* our bodies; they protect us from germs and disease, they help us digest foods, and produce essential vitamins for our bodies. If we don't have enough microorganisms or we don't have the right diverse population, we face various health problems such as a whole host of inflammatory disorders, which lead to diseases that are collectively the leading cause of mortality worldwide.[208] Researchers David Furman, et. al. concur that, "chronic inflammatory diseases have been recognized as the most significant cause of death in the world today, with more than 50% of all deaths being attributable to inflammation-related diseases such as ischemic heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes mellitus, chronic kidney disease, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and autoimmune and neurodegenerative conditions."[209] Many doctors are trying to learn about the different variations of microbial communities so that they can understand when and how deviations from the norm (*dysbiosis*) occur. One reason for this is because, as Furman, et. al. report, one of the most common triggers of systemic chronic

[207] Ruth E. Ley, Rob Knight, and Jeffrey I. Gordon, "The Human Microbiome: Eliminating the Biomedical/Environmental Dichotomy in Microbial Ecology," *Environmental Microbiology* 9, no. 1 (January 2007): 3–4, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1462-2920.2006.01222_3.x.
[208] David Furman et al., "Chronic Inflammation in the Etiology of Disease Across the Life Span," *Nature Medicine* 25, no. 12 (December 2019): 1822–32, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-019-0675-0.
[209] Furman et al.

inflammation include intestinal dysbiosis (along with diet, chronic stress, and xenobiotics such as air pollutants, hazardous waste products and industrial chemicals).[210]

Researchers Luke K. Ursell, et al. cite multiple sources that say the human microbiota does not look the same for all people, meaning that the particular set or arrangement of microbes that a person has is highly variable, not only on different body sites, but also at different time periods in a person's life. They go on to note that there are also high levels of variation among different groups of people because of the effects that the environment will have on the composition - like a groups particular diet based on their culture or geographic location (a fact that reinforces the thesis of the previous section – the effects of external/macro-level environmental material conditions on the individual). Furman et al. give an example of a difference in microbiota composition between people living in industrialized countries compared to those who don't and the resulting difference in inflammatory markers:

> Indeed, humans coevolved with a variety of viruses, bacteria and other microbes... For instance, populations of hunter-gatherers and other existing non-industrialized societies such as the Shuar hunter-gatherers of the Ecuadorian Amazon, Tsimané forager-horticulturalists of Bolivia, Hadza hunter-gatherers from Tanzania, subsistence agriculturalists from rural Ghana and traditional horticulturalists of Kitava (Papua New Guinea)—all of whom are minimally exposed to industrialized environments but highly exposed to a variety of microbes—exhibit very low rates of inflammation-related chronic disease and substantial fluctuations in inflammatory markers that do not increase with age.

The ontological upshot of this fairly new science of the human microbiome is that, to answer the question of, "what is a human being, on a fundamental ontological level?", we can not only point to the *contributions* of the environment, but now we must also point to the *constitution* of a human being as a plethora of miniscule contributions that make up the whole of what we are biologically.

The 'metabolic view of organisms' is also concordant with my view of *organicism*. The metabolic view states that,

> organisms are systems comprising diverse parts that work together to maintain the system's structure, despite turnover of material, by making use of sources of energy and other resources from their environment…organisms are essentially things that persist, using energy to resist forces of decay and maintain their distinctness from their surroundings, and only contingently things that reproduce.[211]

[210] Furman et al.
[211] Peter Godfrey-Smith. *Philosophy of Biology* 76-77.

This framework relies a lot on symbiosis and points out the fact that most, if not all, plants and animals rely on symbionts. One of the most prevalent symbiotic relationships that we have been talking about is with bacteria within and on animals. These symbiotic partners are acquired both "vertically" and "horizontally". Vertical transmission of bacteria occurs between parent and offspring as a part of reproduction. For example, through a vaginal birth (as opposed to Caesarean delivery), the mother transfers a vaginal microbial community that has been shown to be an important defense mechanism against infections.[212] Horizontal transmission of bacteria occurs from the environment. So, the metabolic view of organisms can make the following argument: "the organism – the metabolic unit – is a *system* comprising a familiar animal (e.g. a human) *plus* its microbial symbionts. This argument can be made by noting the metabolic integration of the partners, how they help each other stay alive…" (emphasis added)[213] But Godfrey-Smith thinks that this metabolic view of organisms can lead to some strange conclusions. He says that these "tightly bound symbiotic combinations" can be considered an organism if one partner lives inside the other, when the normal functioning of metabolism requires both partners. But, he says, "what if metabolically integrated partners live at some distance, each making use of the products of the other? Is *that* 'consortium' an organism? If so, what about ourselves and all the photosynthetic organisms making the oxygen we need to stay alive? Where does this stop?"[214] He mentions the "Gaia hypothesis," as an "extreme" example of this view where the whole earth is considered a living organism – a view proposed by James Lovelock in 1972.

My own response to Godfrey-Smith's concern is that the strangeness of this proposal - that life could possibly be something wider than we once realized - is because we are used to thinking like scientists. We perceive the world through calculated logic by *dividing* and *categorizing*; this actuarial way of thinking is important if we want to make sense of the world and how it works. But categorization is contextually dependent and ultimately ambiguous. The lines we use to divide, and the boundaries we use between categorizations, especially in the natural world are simply for utilitarian purposes – such as, for isolating a testable subject. But organicism is not a biological *science*, it is a metaphysical starting point from which to understand who/what we are. So an

[212] Luke K. Ursell et al., "The Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Diversity of Human-Associated Microbiota in Key Body Sites," *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* 129, no. 5 (May 2012): 1204–8, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaci.2012.03.010.
[213] Peter Godfrey-Smith. *Philosophy of Biology* 77.
[214] Peter Godfrey-Smith. *Philosophy of Biology* 78.

"extreme" theory such as the Gaia hypothesis has some merit to it because, on a *fundamental* level, we are inseparable from our symbiotic partners. We have only separated ourselves from other organisms and the planet itself because it was useful in order to understand how each separate symbiotic element or organism worked (and also because it seemed useful for us to use, optimize and exploit the environment for our own industrial purposes). In the same way that a scientist dissects an animal in a laboratory, the entire scientific community dissected life itself, in all its forms, to understand how each of the individual parts fit together. But the bottom line is that, in the end, it all fits together. Godfrey-Smith entertains this idea: "Maybe [the symbiotic combinations as an organism] 'stops' nowhere, and we have made a mistake to think of life as a feature of living *things*, definite objects separated one from another in space. Rather, living activity is a more spread-out affair, one in which a range of physical parts interact to maintain metabolic patterns."[215]

But Godfrey-Smith's reply to this idea is that "more and more distant [organisms] become less and less metabolically important to any given biological object."[216] I agree that this is true, and in cases like this we wouldn't be able to consider these two pieces or organisms as one single or unified organism. But they would be part of a system on which both of them depend and to which both of them contribute. So, it is a less "extreme" view than the Gaia hypothesis which says that the world is an organism and, rather, my view might state the obvious – that the whole world is a (eco)system consisting of living and non-living parts that, when these parts are functioning properly, they all contribute to the flourishing of life on the planet. But then again, isn't that what the human body (and all its living and non-living parts) does as well? This is why I believe that *pancorporealism* may be a useful term to use here because all of the living and non-living body parts of a human or of an ecosystem contribute to the functioning and flourishing of the whole; and even bodies that are more distant with no direct influence on the metabolic needs of each other, will still have effects on bodies and organisms around them, eventually effecting and reaching those that are distant.

A counterargument would be that not every part of an ecosystem is contributing to the flourishing of that system. For instance, some plants are invasive and can kill off other (more cooperative plants) within the same region. Or within human bodies, cancer cells definitely don't

[215] Peter Godfrey-Smith. *Philosophy of Biology*, 78.
[216] Peter Godfrey-Smith. *Philosophy of Biology*, 78.

contribute to the overall functioning of a flourishing body. But in instances like these, we consider these to be outliers, defects, accidents, or abnormalities.

One could also say that death is a natural part of an organism's life, and in many instances, it is not only necessary, but beneficial to the overall functioning of an ecosystem. For example, death makes way for new life either by decomposition into useful organic material for the growth of another life, or by simply decreasing a population and thus creating balance between the predator and prey (or food supply) populations. My reply to this is that, while this is true, this view needs to be distinguished from premature death. Death as a natural biological process has a neutral (if not positive) normative value. Death as premature has a negative normative value – in other words, it is ethically wrong. In the next chapter "The Ethical Implications of Organicism" I discuss this idea of premature death (as "necro-being") in more detail.

3.1.4 Blurring the boundaries of the individual Socially: From Individual to Collective Consciousness

The African humanism known as *Ubuntu* is a philosophy that can be roughly summarized into, "I am, because we are". It is both an ethical and ontological maxim. It means that there is an ontologically fundamental and inseparable interconnectedness between me as an individual and the collective of all individuals. Ubuntu meaning "humanness" in the Zulu language, has also been defined as granting all people respect and dignity, universal brotherhood.[217] It is an ethic that says that "what is morally good is what brings dignity, respect, contentment, prosperity to the others, self and the community at large" by sharing in all forms of communal existence.[218] As far as Ubuntu's particular ontological framework More Mabongo states,

> Fundamental to African political philosophy and ontology is the view that an individual is not a human being except as he or she constitutes part of a social order, a conception of the self as intrinsically linked to and forming a part of, the community/nation. In this communal orientation the self is dependent on other selves and is defined through its relationships to other selves. This dependency on the other is epitomized by the expression: 'Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang" (Sotho) or 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (Xhasa, Zulu) meaning, 'a person is a person through other persons'. 'I am, because we are'.[219]

[217] More P. Mabogo, "African Philosophy in South Africa," *University of Durban-Westville, South Africa*, n.d.
[218] Mabogo.
[219] Mabogo.

Claire E. Oppenheim claims that Ubuntu is not a state of being but rather a prescriptive, moral directive.[220] But it is one that is teleological in that in actualizing Ubuntu, one actualizes their humanness. She says that the less Ubuntu a person has in their conduct toward their fellow human, the less they might be considered a genuine human being.[221] Therefore it is a goal to be reached that remains an ability within all of us.

Organicism, likewise, is an ontology with a corresponding ethical imperative (the latter of which will be expounded upon in the next chapter). As an ontology, we have thus far described how it works as a holistic monism with regards to the concept of a self. Particularly, we have shown its pancorporealism; the self is constituted by a plethora of contributions from the environment and other life forms. We have blurred the boundaries of the individual physically. Now we will blur the boundaries of the individual *socially*. Like Ubuntu, organicism claims that personhood is dependent upon the relations that one has with other people. It is an ontological symbiosis and unification of the "I" and the "we". This is not a contradiction, as Hegel and Marx have also described. But like Ubuntu, it is a directionality or goal in action and consciousness.

Carol Gould gives a solution to the problem that seems like a contradiction in Marx's philosophy: that Marx insists on the full self-realization of the individual and at the same time, the full self-realization of the community. The individual and the community do not conflict, Gould says, but rather, enhance each other. Gould wants to show that Marx's ontology of being is both of real individuals and real relations, and that these are not mutually exclusive. She accomplishes this by showing that the concepts 'individual' and 'relation', "are not separable concepts"; she points out that Marx thinks that if you separate these concepts, you have yourself, "a conceptual abstraction from the concrete reality"[222] Both capitalism and liberalism assists in this abstraction by interpreting "individuality" and "community" as the oversimplified narrative where society is an "external constraint standing over and against individuality."[223]

Gould explains that Marx resolves this contradiction through the activity of labor – the activity of appropriation from nature and the transformation of objects. But this is a historical process "in which labor as productive activity and the social relations within which this activity is

[220] Claire E. Oppenheim, "Nelson Mandela and the Power of Ubuntu," *Religions* 3, no. 2 (April 26, 2012): 369–88, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel3020369.
[221] Claire E. Oppenheim.
[222] Carol C. Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: M.I.T. Press, 1978).
[223] Carol C. Gould. *Marx's Social Ontology* (xii)

carried out take on specific forms at different stages of development."[224] But through these stages, there is a directionality whereby the individual is sublated into the community (and vice-versa) so that the act of objectification (the creation of objects) becomes the catalyst for one human being recognizing themselves in the other and recognizing their own role in self-creation. Self-recognition occurs alongside recognition of the other. 'Knowing thyself' requires knowing the other in relation to your self.

3.1.4.1 On Recognition

We have thus far illustrated the blurred social boundaries of the individual through the insights of Ubuntu humanism, and Marxist historical materialism; now I will describe this process of human realization through Hegel's theory of recognition. Recognition theory analyses the social processes and structures that construct our selves (and our communities). Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen say that recognition is a necessary condition for the construction of a person, or more specifically, for the building and maintenance of "harmonious or flourishing personal identities and self-conceptions"[225] The final component of organicism is that humans are essentially social animals, but more so than a character trait, our sociality is ontologically constitutive for us. Ikäheimo and Laitinen affirm this through Hegel's philosophy, they say: "recognition is not merely a phenomenon that has psychological, social and political importance in the lives of more or less fully fledged human persons and societies, but also an *ontologically* important phenomenon in that it is a part of what constitutes human persons and their social and institutional world in the first place."[226]

One aspect of recognition theory that is familiar to liberals is the push for equal dignity inherent in each autonomous human being (we see these ideas espoused by Kantians, for instance). The Hegelian theory goes further, however, because it radically reconceives the individual subject. The freedom of a subject is not a given, but rather it is dependent, or rather co-dependent, upon social relations – more specifically, upon equal recognition of and from all parties involved. Our freedom and individual dignity is both made possible and limited by others; it is not generated within a solitary individual ex nihilo.

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[224] Carol C. Gould. *Marx's Social Ontology*.
[225] Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, eds., *Recognition and Social Ontology*, Social and Critical Theory : A Critical Horizons Book Series, v. 11 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011). 5.
[226] Ikäheimo and Laitinen. *Recognition and Social Ontology*, 5.

If humans can only flourish in meaningful relationships of mutual recognition, and in such relationship the freedom experienced and expressed by the other is an experience an expression of all parties' freedoms (their social freedom), then an individual can only experience freedom and a sense of self, if and when they act in collaboration with a community of individuals. So conversely, we experience a *lack* of freedom when our focus is self-centered – on individual freedom and not on mutual recognition of and from all members. For Hegel, freedom arises from intersubjective recognition, which actualizes rights, not the other way around.

Recognition is also person-making for both myself and others. In quoting from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Wood reminds us that, "Universal self-consciousness is the affirmative knowing of oneself in another self, so that each self has *absolute self-sufficiency* as free individuality; … each is thus universal [self-consciousness] and objective, and has real universality as reciprocity, in such a way that it knows itself as recognized in the free other, and knows this other insofar as it recognizes it and knows it as free." If recognition is person-making, then if it is not given to others, we then have an instance of *dehumanization.*

If mutual recognition is absent either explicitly or by virtue of societal norms and institutions, then the misrecognized will also perceive of themselves as subordinates. This is Frantz Fanon's thesis as he recognizes this as the common psychological plight of the colonized and victims of racism. The desire for recognition is a fundamental drive for all human beings. This drive can also be thought of as a desire for social relationships/ for community. Hegel thinks that even in a state of nature, conflict arises out of a desire to affirm one's own freedom. This conflict leads to either, death or a master and slave relationship. In this relationship the slave is not the only one without adequate recognition. According to Hegel, the master also lacks adequate recognition, as well because the recognizer – a mere slave – cannot be a proficient judge. But the master needs adequate recognition from an equal 'other' in order to gain self-understanding and even freedom. Thus, sufficient recognition can only be achieved through a system of enforced egalitarian principles. Systems of domination such as capitalism, will never be able to provide adequate recognition.

The ecology that the human being exists in includes other humans. But, according to organicism, the way that *other humans* constitute our self is not the same as our physical constitution of macro and micro ecological contributions (as we saw in section 3.1.2 and 3.1.3). Rather, humans constitute one another's humanness through recognition, which Allen Wood

summarizes succinctly as, "…I can have an adequate consciousness of myself only if I am recognized by others, and recognition can be adequate only if it is fully mutual."[227] Therefore, what is required for recognition (this final component of organicism) to happen is "a community of persons, standing in mutual relations of abstract right."[228] Wood continues, "Universal self-consciousness arises only under certain social conditions. Individuals must belong to a community in which they are socialized mutually to claim and grant to each other the right to exercise their freedom within a limited external sphere."[229]

3.1.5 Essentialism within Marxism and Why it's Important

In the discussions of human nature, there is a debate as to whether human nature is an undefinable multiplicity and a process of becoming vs. fixed with an essence. I argue that this question is misguided because it's assumption that being and becoming are mutually exclusive is not dialectical enough. Organicism argues that there *is* a fixed core essence of the human being, and that is simply, our material, organic, symbiotically interconnected selves. Organicism claims that we can't escape certain configurations of biology and the limitations of our organic body and brain. This still leaves room for the evolution of the body and brain (since we can affirm that nature itself evolves) as well as the evolution of technological creations and their effects on us. So, it doesn't deny that humans are constantly changing, but this change is not a change in our essential, ontological nature, but rather in the expression of that essential nature.

Norman Geras responds to the theorists who deny that Marx's system required a fixed, universal human nature or essence. Geras claims that the only place in Marx's corpus where he implies that there is no essential nature of the human being is in his 6th *Thesis on Feuerbach* where Marx says (as Geras quotes):

> Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man. *But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.*
> Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is hence obliged:
> 1. To abstract from the historical process and to define the religious sentiment by itself, and to presuppose an abstract – isolated – human individual.

[227] Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). 78.
[228] Wood. *Hegel's Ethical Thought,* 91.
[229] Wood. *Hegel's Ethical Thought,* 91.

2. Essence, therefore, can be regarded only as "species", as an inner, mute, general character which unites the many individuals in a natural way. (emphasis added)[230]

From this passage, Geras considers that Marx could mean that the "essence of man" refers to either 1) "human nature" or 2) "the nature of man". "Human nature" would be: "a constant entity, namely, the set of all (relatively) permanent and general human characteristics"[231] whereas "the nature of man" is "the all-round character of human beings in some given context."[232]

If Marx is talking about "the nature of man" (option 2), then Geras interprets Marx as saying, "In its reality *the nature of man* is *conditioned* by the ensemble of social relations" or that, "In its reality *the nature of man* is *manifested* in the ensemble of social relations" but neither of these deny human nature. When interpreting that third sentence of Marx's passage on Feuerbach ("In reality it is the ensemble of the social relations") Geras says that Marx is "…accentuating for contextually obvious reasons the sociological dimensions of the nature of man, whilst at the same time taking for granted other factors on which the latter depends, taking for granted, for example, certain permanent features of man's *biological* constitution…" (emphasis added)[233]

If, on the other hand, Marx is talking about "human nature" in the passage on Feuerbach, then Geras thinks that this re-interpretation of the third sentence is plausible: "In its reality *human nature* is *manifested in* the ensemble of social relations"[234]. The ensemble of social relations doesn't explain/determine human nature, it just discloses/reveals/manifests what it is. He explains,

> ...a social totality subject to historical alteration might incorporate, and upon examination disclose, the invariant we are interested in, human nature. Why should Marx want to assert that it is disclosed in the social totality? Perhaps in order to draw attention to the circumstance that some of the constants of which it consists are disclosed only there, that some aspects even of the human nature general in humankind are not visible, so to speak, in the focus with which he taxes Feuerbach, upon 'each single individual', but only on the whole terrain of the social relations.[235]

So Marx's sentence: "In its reality it [the essence of man/human nature] is the ensemble of the social relations." is just pointing to the domain that must be studied in order to understand human

[230] Norman Geras, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (London: New Left Books, 1983).
[231] Norman Geras. *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend.*
[232] Norman Geras. *Marx and Human Nature.*
[233] Norman Geras. 41
[234] Norman Geras.
[235] Norman Geras. 43

nature, i.e. the social domain. It is not an attempt to *deny* human nature or subsume it to the contingencies of social relations.

There are three reasons, according to Heikki Ikäheimo, why we ought to take normative essentialism of humanity seriously: 1) the "Need for immanently critical social philosophy to be 'globalized', so that it can appeal, not merely to this or that society, but to humanity more broadly, or humanity at large." 2) it gives our philosophical intuitions (and those of philosophers past) credence because of their continuous re-emergence. For example, Marx's vocabulary of 'species-essence', 'truly human relations', 'dehumanization' to our everyday intuitions and discourses on 'humanity', 'humaneness', 'inhumanity' etc. And 3) it contributes to "social transformation by developing an intuitively appealing, philosophically coherent, and scientifically sound alternative to the implicit ontology of the human life-form prevalent in contemporary capitalism."[236] The hope is that organicism can provide a valid human ontology that can answer to these needs.

Conclusion

The ontology of organicism adheres to naturalistic materialism whereby our distinctly human traits—of rationality, autonomy and the concept of ourselves as individuals—arise out of specific and necessary configurations of the natural world. These necessary configurations involve notions of health, balance and the harnessing of energy (to be discussed in chapter 4). We will see in the next chapter how the aspects of ourselves that we consider as transcending beyond the confines of the natural world (art, spirituality, philosophy, etc.) are all capacities that emerge, or reveal themselves from the nurturing of the body. In this way, organicism does not deny the exceptionalism of our rationality, autonomy and individualized self, it just denies that this is a given, or a sufficient starting point from which to constitute rights. The liberal picture of the human being is an instance of placing the cart before the horse. Marx's labor theory of value has shown us that the root of value creation is nature and the laboring body, but rather than protecting these *sources*, capitalism "protects" an abstraction of a rational, autonomous individual – a state of being that will never be acquired without the proper social and material conditions.

[236] Heikki Ikäheimo, "The Old Hegel, the Young Marx, and the Normative Ontology of the Human Life-Form," in *Being Human - Foundation, Imperative or Platitude?* (10th Congress of the Austrian Society for Philosophy, Innsbruck, Tyrol, Austria: University of Innsbruck, 2015).

CHAPTER 4 – THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ORGANICISM

Introduction

One doesn't truly know what one wants or needs until they know who they are. The diversity of human experience and individual personalities is too vast for comprehension. There are an estimated 7.7 billion "worlds" in existence right now, as in, 7.7 billion individual phenomenological realities[237]. But this doesn't necessarily mean that the world is composed of pure difference. What organicism does is unite all these realities into an essential commonality of humankind. Chapter 3 delineated the scope of that which we call human, noting primarily that the demarcation of individuals, both physically and socially, is symbiotic not only with other humans, but also with macro and micro scale ecologies. Moreover, this symbiosis is not metaphorical, but meant in the strong sense of being a necessary component of our very existence, as a type of monism of bodies and their co-functioning (a *pancorporeal* monism). So now we need to understand the implications of this theory. Now that we know what we are, what is it that we need?

Organicism commits to a naturalistic-objectivist account of morality, at least in the sense that there are objective facts about natural life and our being that would give us justification *for at least some* of our moral beliefs. We can remain agnostic about living in a "non-moral universe" in the sense that there will be no ultimate retribution or punishment for "wrongdoing", and yet still be able to construct a universal, non-culture-specific morality that is based on natural and objective facts that apply to all living creatures. If organicism puts the heft of ontological importance on the body, and morality is informed by the types of beings that we are, then the heft of moral importance ought to be directed to ensure the protection and flourishing of our bodies. Health, therefore, is a central metric of evaluation for an organicist ethics. In this chapter I define health as "flourishing through balance" (section 4.1) and argue that, if we wish to restore our trust in human rationality and autonomy (as necessary traits for engaging in civil society), then health ought to be prioritized in the polity (section 4.1.1). Once this standard of evaluation is set, and we can determine what counts as harm (section 4.2), then our moral situation can be measured against existing social conditions.

[237] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and Population Division, *World Population Prospects Highlights, 2019 Revision Highlights, 2019 Revision*, 2019.

I claim that there are two types of harm: "corporeal death" and "alienated death". *Necro-being* is a state of awaiting corporeal death; it is a condition of existence whereby the premature death of some is beneficial to the life of others. Racism is one form of necro-being, as is the functioning of capitalism, and I illustrate why. These instances of necro-being are examples of violations to my definition of health, and therefore count as moral harms (section 4.2.1). The second type of harm, "alienated death", is the systematic or willful prevention of flourishing. It is more akin to an existential disease, as in, a dis-ease with one's life due to a detachment from one's species being. This final section regarding what counts as harm reminds us of how capitalism generates these two types of death. Showing, finally, how capitalism is ontologically (and if one is a moral naturalistic-objectivist: ethically) unsuitable for our species.

4.1 Defining Health: Flourishing Through Balance

There is a decent amount of existing literature on what counts as disease and illness, but there is less philosophical attention paid to "health". One common way to define health is in *relation* to disease. In this definition, health is simply the absence of disease, where disease is seen as a "biological malfunction or abnormality"[238]. Under this "simple objectivism" view, "…a healthy individual is just someone whose biology works as our theories say it should."[239] But for organicism, this simple objectivism, "absence of disease" definition is merely a point of neutrality; I would consider this to be the definition of "survival" rather than "health". My definition of health is much more robust. As opposed to being neutral, health is a positive state. I agree with the way that the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health, as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO 1948). Or Caroline Whitbeck's definition (or in her words, "the good of health") as, "having the psychophysiological capacity to act or respond… in a wide variety of situations… in a way that is supportive of, or at least minimally destructive to, the agent's goals, projects, aspirations, and so forth."[240] This understanding of health *beyond* the mere absence of disease is

[238] Dominic Murphy, "Concepts of Disease and Health," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2015 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2015), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/health-disease/.
[239] Dominic Murphy. "Concepts of Disease and Health,"
[240] Caroline Whitbeck, "A Theory of Health," in *Concepts of Health and Disease: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Arthur L. Caplan, Hugo Tristram Engelhardt, and James J. McCartney (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, Advanced Book Program/World Science Division, 1981), 611–26.

akin to Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* ("eu" meaning "well" and "daimon" meaning "spirit"). Combining the similarities of all these sample definitions of health, one can see that I define health as synonymous with well-being (a view that I recognize will be linguistically tricky since they are typically distinct according to our common use).

There are other views that define health in a way that *incorporates* a type of well-being. Whitbeck, for instance, incorporates a 'desire fulfillment' view of well-being within her definition of health because health is instrumental to an agent's goals. Such views might be called "embedded instrumentalist" theories which claim, as Dominic Murphy summarizes, "…that health is indexed to goals: how healthy you are depends on how well you can fulfill your goals."[241] While this view is close to my own, in that it incorporates a theory of well-being, I am not so much "incorporating" as much as I am "equating". This is because I think that the psychological experience of well-being is so deeply tied to the physiological that they inform each other as a unified system.

The metaphysics of organicism necessitates a substantial connection between the physical and the mental, as well as an interconnectedness of bodies, therefore, the physiological health of an individual body will affect its own mental state *and* the functioning of ecosystems around it. In other words, health necessarily involves the physical, the mental, and the social. Someone who is otherwise physically fit, obtaining all the necessary nutrients and incorporating the proper amount of movement into their lives, may fall into depression if they become disconnected from a loving and supportive community. That depression, in turn, could affect the physical functioning of appetite (overeating or appetite loss), constrict blood vessels, or induce fatigue, to name only a few possible physical effects. Similarly, the inverse is also true: someone who is mentally stable could fall ill to some physical affliction, which in turn alters their mental wellbeing, including the mental wellbeing (and by extension, physical wellbeing) of someone who cares for them. There are now fields of study such as psychoneuroimmunology that examines the connection between psychological processes (our moods and mental states) and the nervous and immune systems. For all these reasons, to distinguish between "health" (as purely corporeal) and "wellbeing" (as phenomenological) is a false dichotomy.

So, my definition of health is: a habit of maintaining balance (homeostasis) in a way that creates the conditions for survival and the potential for flourishing. This definition needs to be examined in four parts: habit, balance, survival, and flourishing.

[241] Murphy, "Concepts of Disease and Health."

Habit

Health is a trajectory that is maintained through habitual actions not a state that is achieved.

One of the biggest difficulties for my definition of health is that, if health is a habit, then it will always be in flux. Health is a *process;* it is not something that is static and fixed. It is not a "state of being" but a state of perpetual becoming. So, to be healthy is to be in a state of movement *toward,* and more specifically, always moving toward balance, as balance nourishes growth. Because health is a process specific to organic, biological and ecological bodies, it is something that must always be *maintained,* not something that is an end-state or goal. Habit, as a practice of health is cyclical not linear; just as the natural world is habitually cyclical, not linear. Seasons exist in a mode of repetition, as do days and nights, high and low tides, moments of rest and wakefulness, the hormones in a menstrual cycle, the tearing and recovery of muscles when building strength, or the psychological waves of grief and acceptance. There is a rhythm to health. Habit and repetition (whether automatic or willful) are necessary for the *maintenance* of health because the environment of a body (whether that be a human body, the body of a plant, or a body/ecosystem of water) will always be altering the homeostasis, or balance, of said body.

Health requires that one adapt to a constantly fluctuating (decaying and growing) environment. If a plant doesn't receive water habitually, the leaves will wilt; if a human's muscles are not experiencing resistance regularly, they too will "wilt" due to muscle atrophy. Eating is a repetition. Breathing is a repetition. Life and health require repetition. Yogis strive for a regular practice of stillness (meditation) and movement (asanas) – this repetition of opposites creates balance. All of these repetitive actions, whether consciously habitual (like a yogi's "practice) or not (like breathing or a heartbeat), maintain our health. So, in the same way that the cultivation and continuous practice of virtues makes one virtuous and more capable of living a *eudaemon* life, so too does the cultivation and continuous practice of maintaining one's health through habit/repetition contribute to the flourishing life.

Habit is not passive. Socrates writes about *hexis* (habit) in Plato's *Theaetetus* when he talks about knowledge and how it cannot be something that is simply stored in our memories the way birds are put in cages. That kind of possession is *ktÎsis.* But *hexis* is always working - it requires effort and repetition of concentration. For example, knowledge of a foreign language requires

continuous use and practice. Knowledge actively holds itself in our minds. Likewise, Aristotle identifies moral virtue as *hexis* (habit) in Book II Chapter 4.

Balance

The telos of health is to maintain balance or homeostasis

Health is a habit of maintaining balance or homeostasis. All living things and natural ecosystems seek a state of equilibrium whereby the conditions are just right to allow for their survival. Homeostasis is "the ability of ecological systems to maintain stable system properties despite perturbations"[242]. For example, the human body has a variety of mechanisms that work to maintain the proper body temperature – sweating, shivering, and blushing are all mechanisms for the body to regulate its temperature. A common ecological example of homeostasis is the population balance of predator and prey. "Balance" on its own implies movement, because it implies constant adjustment and re-adjustment. This oscillation is normal. Both external and internal, accidental and willful, factors have the ability to create instability. Health is the constant harmonious counterbalancing of opposite extremes. This is similar to Aristotle's doctrine of the mean regarding the practice of virtues. For Aristotle, balance and habit (or repetition and maintenance) are important for living a flourishing life. One must cultivate the virtues by practicing the actions and temperaments that fall within a mean between two extremes of excess and deficiency. Virtue is an active and habitual pursuit of constant adjustment and readjustment of a mean – a balancing act. Similarly, my concept of health is one where balance and habit play crucial roles. Physical health requires a balance of nutrients that get metabolized into energy; it requires a balance between an excess and deficiency of sleep; it requires a balance of conditions in the natural environment, and a balance between excessive and deficient physical movement. But over 4500 years before Aristotle, this concept of balance and harmony was intuited in the ancient texts of Ayurveda which profess that optimal human health comes from living in harmony with nature's (including the body's) natural rhythms and cycles.

The ancient texts of Ayurveda demonstrate that the practitioners had an awareness of the role of balance in health. The system of Ayurveda recognizes that imbalances in the body often

[242] S.K.M. Ernest, "Homeostasis," in *Encyclopedia of Ecology* (Elsevier, 2008), https://www.sciencedirect.com/referencework/9780080454054/encyclopedia-of-ecology#book-info.

result in illness and disease (dis-ease), and it used a variety of techniques to regain balance. It recognizes that like increases like, so an opposite is required for a change of state, whether that be mentally or physically. For example, one technique is to recognize that food has "cooling" and "heating" properties, so if, for instance, one's body was "overheated" whether because of a fever or a skin rash (as an instance of *inflammation* in the body, from the latin *flamma* – flame, blazing fire), the remedy would include, among other things, consuming cooling foods and herbs such as peppermint, or cucumbers. It also recommends eating seasonally, because nature's timing of producing food is naturally homeostatic to the body (not to mention, better for the environment). In the summer when fresh fruit is abundant, its lightness serves to cool the body, while root vegetables, such as potatoes and squash, are not only harvested in the fall, but are also heartier and more nutrient dense for maintaining the body in the colder months. This ancient medical science (*Ayur* – life, *Veda* – science or knowledge) has been practiced in India for thousands of years and is still being written about, studied and practiced today as passages such as the following are found in contemporary research journals:

> We see various changes in the bio-life around us, such as flowering in spring and leaf-shedding in autumn in the plants, hibernation of many animals with the coming of winter, and so on. As [the] human being is also part of the same ecology, the body is greatly influenced by [the] external environment. Many of the exogenous and endogenous rhythm[s] have specific phase relationship[s] with each other; which means that they interact and synchronize each other. If [the] body is unable to adopt itself to stressors due to changes in specific traits of seasons, it may lead to *Dosha Vaishamya*, which in turn may render the body highly susceptible to one or other kinds of disorders... As adaptations according to the changes, is the key for survival, the knowledge of *Ritucharya* (regimen for various seasons) is thus important.[243]

Ayurveda also perceives health, not as an absence of disease or illness, but as a system of maintenance for reaching one's full potential as a human being, and furthermore that health encompasses attention to both the inner realms of the human psyche (the mind) to the "external" realm of the environment.

> [Ayurveda] considers the human body as an indivisible whole with a network of interrelated functions, mind and consciousness, wherein a disturbance in one part will have repercussions in other parts as well. The key to health is for these factors to maintain stability since disease is seen as a perturbation in this network.

[243] Jayesh Thakkar, S. Chaudhari, and Prasanta K. Sarkar, "Ritucharya: Answer to the Lifestyle Disorders," *Ayu* 32, no. 4 (2011): 466–71, https://doi.org/10.4103/0974-8520.96117.

> Ayurvedic treatment aims not only at removal of disease, but also at the restoration of the equilibrium of bodily functions.[244]

In the *Charaka Samhita,* one of the foundational texts on Ayurveda, it is described not only as a science of the body but also as a normative science – an ethics: "That is named the science of life, wherein are laid down the good and the bad of life, the happy and the unhappy life, and what is wholesome and what is not wholesome in relation to life, as also the measure of life."[245] Similar to Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia/*flourishing, Ayurveda does entail a notion of a "good life". But this "good life" is more than just good character virtues, as Aristotle highlights. It centralizes the body as the vehicle for reaching a more phenomenological sense of wellbeing that the mind (and spirit) experiences. And the wellbeing, or health, of the body requires an "equilibrium", or a balancing of the different "body elements".

> The mind, spirit, and body are together, as it were the tripod; the world endures by reason of cohesion and on that are all things established. The aggregate of the mind, spirit and body is man; he is the conscious agent. He is regarded as the subject matter of this science, and it is indeed for his sake that this science has been promulgated. The action here is establishing the equilibrium of the body-elements and the procedure of maintaining the equilibrium of the body elements is the objective of this science. The body and that which is called the mind are both considered to be abodes of disease, likewise of well-being [as] harmony.[246]

For Aristotle, goodness is never in the action but only in the doer. An action is not good in itself. There is no fixed principle or duty, but rather an action is flexible to the situation in order to regain balance. As Joe Sachs interprets Aristotle, "An action counts as virtuous when and only when one holds oneself in a stable equilibrium of the soul, in order to choose the action knowingly and for its own sake."[247] Likewise, there is no fixed principle of health, but rather health requires flexibility to the situation in order to regain balance. Just as knowledge for Socrates, and virtue for Aristotle requires *cultivation,* so too does health.

It is no accident that the language that I use to describe health is the same language used to describe the care we provide for a garden. Plants are intelligent, they "know" how to survive. But

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[244] Jayasundar R. "Healthcare the Ayruvedic Way" *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* 2012; Vol.9(#3):177-179. DOI: https://doi.org/10.20529/IJME.2012.060

[245] Mishra, Lakshmi-chandra, Singh, Betsy B., and Dagenais, Simon. "Ayurveda: A Historical Perspective and Principles of the Traditional Healthcare System in India", *Alternative Therapies* March 2001; Vol.7, (#2); 36-42.

[246] Mishra, Lakshmi-chandra, Singh, Betsy B., and Dagenais, Simon. "Ayurveda: A Historical Perspective and Principles of the Traditional Healthcare System in India", *Alternative Therapies* March 2001; Vol.7, (#2); 36-42.

[247] Joe Sachs, "Aristotle: Ethics | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy," accessed February 22, 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/aris-eth/.

if the goal is to have the plant flourish, then the conditions have to be "just right" or in balance and appropriate to its particular species. So when you are attempting to grow a plant from seed it must be watered, but not overwatered. Some plants need a lot of sunlight, some need very little. Vine plants need plenty of space to crawl across the floor or climb upward, while others can be planted very close together. All of these nuanced details of care ensure that the plant not only survives but flourishes. The human *cultivates* the plant in the original sense of the word "cultivate", that is, (Latin) *cultus* – 'to care for through labor', or (Latin) *colere* – 'to till, to inhabit, to frequent, practice, respect, tend, guard'. Likewise, cultivation is required for health. It requires an *inhabiting* of one's body; it requires returning to (frequenting) it again and again with respect, practice, and labor. Similarly, the word "nurture" carries significance in its meaning for both plants and human health. It derives from the Old French word, *nourreture*, meaning 'food, nourishment' and 'education, training'. We nurture a plant, we nurture human bodies, and we nurture our minds, not simply with the goal of survival but for flourishing.

Survival

Survival is a necessary, though not sufficient condition for health.

So, according to my definition of health, there are two tiers: "survival" as the base, and "flourishing" above. Survival is the bare minimum a body requires to stay alive. All living beings, consciously or not, have a drive for self-preservation. Humans have a *will to live* – a conscious psychological desire to stay alive, but we (and other living creatures) also have unconscious biological operations that function for the purpose of maintaining life. But as Timothy Morton points out, survival is "a rigid and thin separation between life and death"; it is sheer "living on" between "trying not to be dead, and waiting to be dead"[248]

Morton makes a distinction between capital "L" Life, as survival, as a thin, rigid life-non-life boundary, and on the other hand, regular "life" as "a hesitancy between two different kinds of death: blind machination and total nonexistence"[249]. Morton is pointing out here that there is a gray area of indistinct space between life and death. He uses the example of Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* as an illustration of the 'space between' where *Müsselmäner* is used to describe those

[248] Timothy Morton, *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People* (London ; New York: Verso, 2017). 43.
[249] Morton. *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People,* 43.

who were technically, scientifically, and logically alive but emaciated, exhausted, and apathetic to their surroundings. But this ambiguous gray zone of "life" is discordant with the black-and-white "Life" of agricultural age logistics – the logic that resulted in the utilitarian calculus of neoliberal capitalism. According to this logic, "more existing is always better than any quality of existing. This eventually generates the population paradox [where]… to have trillions of humans living in a state near to that of Primo Levi's *Müsselmäner* is always better than to have billions of humans living in a state of absolute ecstasy".[250] But this is our default way of thinking.

Furthermore, this default "life at all costs" logic only applies to humans (it is anthropocentric), and thus, cannot be compatible with an organicist ethics of health. Morton aptly points out that in addition to being anthropocentric, this logic is also patriarchal: "Control over birth and the birthing body and subjection of women is tied to the default [life-at-all-costs logic] and its existence-no-matter-what utilitarianism. Patriarchy intertwines with speciesism and anthropocentrism."[251] What Morton means here is that what our current hegemonic logic is interested in is *only* (capital "L") Life, and this is the "pro-life" logic of forcing women to birth babies regardless of the quality of life that will arise from the situation for both the mother and the child. But it is not only the patriarchal anthropocentrism inherent in this conception of Life that makes it undesirable, it is that the *Müsselmäner*-esque quality of life (the state of mere surviving) is not worth living on its own.

Flourishing

Flourishing is the ultimate potential for all healthy beings

Health occurs above the horizon of mere survival. To say that health is merely the absence of disease is to reiterate the same neoliberal capitalist, "agrilogistic"[252], thin, rigid line between disease and the absence of disease, like the one created between "Life" and death (as the stopping

[250] Morton. *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*, 44-46.
[251] Morton. *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People* 46.
[252] Pertaining to agricultural age logic

of all bodily functions). I agree with Morton that there is more than one way to be dead. The dividing line of disease does not exist on a point at all, but rather, is a wider ambiguous grey area of dis-ease. So, my definition of health exists above the line of survival and above the line of lacking disease at the point where one is capable of creating their own expression of self-actualization. Health, as the ethical metric of organicism, does not value life for its own sake but for its capacity to flourish.

This is a particular philosophical account of well-being. Organicist ethics, and it's prioritizing of health, is a *perfectionist* account because it adheres to a particular and objective account of the human good in terms of the development or realization of human nature which informs a particular account of ethics and politics[253]. It places normative value on living in accordance with one's nature. With our notion of "the good" being the development or realization of organicism (as human nature), we have the benefit of being able to look at nature for models of well-being. If we return to our metaphor of caring for and cultivating a plant, we see that once the conditions are "just right", the plant not only survives, but it flourishes by flowering or producing fruit. The word "flourish" derives from the Latin word, *flor* – 'a flower', and from *florere* – 'to bloom or blossom'. A healthy plant is not simply one that we are able to keep alive, but one that flowers, or produces fruit or simply grows to it's fullest potential for its particular species.

At first glance, what this appears to be translating to for humans is that our purpose and aim is to reproduce offspring. But this organicist theory of health, although a naturalistic theory, is not a crude naturalism. As I mentioned in the previous chapters, organicism does not deny our distinctly human traits and our capacity for the complex traits of rationality, autonomy, and the profound uniqueness of each individual's experience and expression of life. We are not so much interested in life for the sake of life, or the life-at-all-costs mentality, but rather, a life that allows for flourishing into our species essence. Unlike other living things, humans produce more kinds of "fruit" than just children, we also blossom into artists, politicians, and engineers; we produce music, technologies, and ideas. A healthy human is not simply one that is kept alive but one that is able to produce an expression of their own unique existence.

[253] Steven Wall, "Perfectionism in Moral and Political Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2019 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/perfectionism-moral/.

This theory of well-being – an organicist, perfectionist account - differs from hedonistic and desire fulfilment theories of well-being in that the latter two are subjectivists about the 'good' whereas this theory of health is objectivist because it recognizes what is good based on the way it suits our nature.[254] According to the desire satisfaction view, a thing is good if and only if you achieve your desires. And for a hedonist, what is good and desirable is simply that which makes us feel good (a kind of mental state theory). But this view runs into problems when we remember that we are not always the best judges for what is good for us. We know that sometimes pleasurable experiences are not always good for us. Or, as Anna Alexandrova explains, we could be "uninformed, or indoctrinated, or perhaps [our] desires are only for things that have nothing to do with [us]… or [our] desires are for trivial things…"[255] The benefit of an objectivist view is that "well-being can encompass goods that benefit a person no matter what her attitudes, life plans, or tastes are."[256] It does not run the same risk that subjectivist accounts of well-being do, that our preferences could be mistaken because it relies on an external unit of measurement.

One crucial challenge that human nature perfectionism faces is whether there really is only one way of living that is best for all human beings.[257] This sounds extremely draconian and implausible. But there is actually a lot of room for variation. Steven Wall points out that, "it could still be true that for different human beings, different activities and pursuits would best promote their good. This could be true, since different people may be able to best develop different aspects of human nature. Given their temperament and talents, some do well to concentrate on artistic pursuits, while others do well to focus on theoretical studies or athletic achievements. Moreover, even those who do well to focus on the same type of perfection, may find that some activities and goals serve this end better for them than for others."[258] He goes on to say, "Nothing said here, of course, rules out the possibility that there is only one way of life that is maximally best for human beings. The point pressed is merely that perfectionism is consistent with value pluralism…To be sure, a plausible perfectionism will recognize that pluralism has its limits….It implies that some ways of living are not valuable for human beings, even if they are fully

[254] Anna Alexandrova, "Well-Being," in *Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction*, ed. Nacy Cartwright and Eleonora Montuschi (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014). 18
[255] Anna Alexandrova. 19
[256] Anna Alexandrova. 19
[257] Steven Wall, "Perfectionism in Moral and Political Philosophy."
[258] Steven Wall. "Perfectionism in Moral and Political Philosophy"

embraced."[259] In other words, value pluralism is compatible with human nature perfectionism and naturalistic-objectivism *within a range of limits*. If we agree upon a very basic checklist of desiderata for well-being that *all* humans require by virtue of their objective biological needs, then this doesn't exclude the possibility that many humans can lead very different lives within these bounds, especially once we have moved beyond the state of mere survival and into our individual expressions of flourishing.

To conclude, health must be the normative measure for an organicist theory of human nature. Health is defined as a habit of maintaining balance in a way that creates the conditions for survival and the potential for flourishing. I described balance as the desire that all living organisms and ecosystems have to maintain a state of homeostasis. Ayurveda is one example of a medical practice and lifestyle that seeks to maintain balance within the body and with its relation to the outside world. There are two levels that must be obtained to reach a state of good health. At base is survival; this is of course necessary, although it is not sufficient to constitute health. The next level is flourishing; this is where growth occurs, and where one is able to pursue the fullest extent of their individual capabilities. This view of health is value pluralist to the extent that a naturalistic-objectivist, human nature perfectionist, account of well-being can be. The next question is, what good arises out of health?

4.1.1 The Importance of Health

Flourishing, as an outgrowth of health, seems like a worthwhile goal from its description above, but why would someone like an entitlement theorist, or someone interested in the protection of rationality, autonomy and individuality be interested in it? The answer is that rationality, autonomy and individuality are traits that arise out of a state of flourishing. Once health is in place, then we can begin to discuss the use of our rational capacities and the protection of our individual freedoms.

Rationality, autonomy and a self-reflective sense of individuality are abstract, or even transcendental, features of the human experience. They are not materially measurable. But organicism, despite its emphasis on nature and material reality, claims that they exist and are possible. To reinforce what was already said in the previous chapter, organicism is not a crude

[259] Steven Wall. "Perfectionism in Moral and Political Philosophy"

materialism or naturalism, because it embraces the existence of the *super*-natural or the transcendental (or within physics, the "energetic", perhaps?). But these things *emerge* out of specific and necessary configurations of the material world. The skeletal and fleshy frame of our body is what houses the site and location of experience. Within "this world", that is to say, as far as we can tell within our epistemological limits, our access to these distinctly human, super-natural, transcendental capabilities of self-reflective, autonomy and rationality only occurs *through* our bodies. The specific and necessary configurations that allow this emergence to happen are something that evolutionary biologists and psychologists (among others) have been working to discover. This is essentially the question of consciousness.

But the rational, autonomous, individual is a state-of-being more advanced than that of being merely conscious. There is, no doubt, a miraculous moment of perfect orchestration between natural objects whereby consciousness comes into existence. But this is mere existence or *survival.* What we are interested in, is not the specific and necessary configuration for *consciousness* but the specific and necessary configurations for the rational, autonomous, individual. And that specific and necessary configuration is *health* as we have described it above. For our purposes, all we need to know is that rationality and the ability to make autonomous decisions diminishes when the body is under physical/environmental stress, in other words when the body is in a state of dis-ease or a state antithetical to health. *This* is why someone like an entitlement theorist – or someone interested in the protection of the rational, autonomous, individual – ought to be concerned with health and flourishing as an ethical metric. The rational, autonomous, individual *is* the fruit or flowering of a human; it is the telos. Although these traits may be *immanent*, they are not *imminent* (the transcendental is *emergent* rather than a priori). To use a metaphor from the natural world, it is an inherent possibility for an apple tree to produce apples, but it is not guaranteed.

Therefore, if morality exists to protect that which we find valuable (whether that's the inherent dignity of an individual, or the self-actualization of our function, or eudemonic happiness) then health must be the primary moral concern. Although we can define health, the real difficulty lies in demarcating the point at which health is absent – especially since health is so context-specific to individual bodies and environments. If health is the moral yardstick, then how will we know when have we reached a point of immorality?

If we are considering health as an ethical metric of evaluation, then ideally there would be a way of determining what is "healthy" and what is not. Unfortunately, we cannot have a universal

measure because health is not only contextual (given environmental factors), but it is also highly individualized. Up until now, organicism has emphasized how united and similar we are with each other and nature, but when it comes to health, each individual human body is as unique as each individual tree or flower as they grow and survive in different environments. The same amount and type of care cannot be duplicated across individuals while expecting the same results. The variability of health is similar to Aristotle's ethical theory where the implementation of virtuous acts depends upon the conditions of the right degree, the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way. What we can distinguish with more clarity, however, is what is *not* healthy, or what counts as harm.

4.2 What Counts as Harm?

"There is something about poverty that smells like death. Dead dreams dropping off the heart like leaves in a dry season and rotting around the feet." - Zora Neale Hurston

The opposite of flourishing would be to wither or die; and a moral harm could be said to have occurred when this withering or dying was premature and preventable. The same value pluralism that we granted to ways of living, can likewise be granted to ways of dying. There are multiple types of death. There is the death of one's ambitions and dreams, death of one's *joie de vivre*, death of self-sovereignty, and physical death of one's body. According to our definition of health, *all* of these types of death would be seen as antithetical to health, that is, antithetical to flourishing, and therefore the causes of them can be considered harm. But the types of death, in all their variety, can be separated into two different categories: corporeal death and alienated death. Both categories become morally reproachable when they are avoidable and premature. Section 4.2.1 will discuss corporeal death. This is the situation where death sits alongside the living as a constant and unnecessary threat. This condition of existence, where people are killed and their next of kin prevented from being born, is what Leonard Harris calls "necro-being". And although Harris' work focuses on analyzing racism as a form of necro-being, the theory is useful for my purposes because it serves as an example of the antithesis of health and can be applied to a variety of subjugated groups, whether of race, gender, class, etc. It is a form of harm that puts the body at the focal point of consideration. Section 4.2.2 will discuss alienated death. This is the *ennui* or the

Müsselmäner of a person who is only surviving. So, for organicism, moral harm occurs in instances of anti-health (or dis-ease) that is, when a body is prematurely killed or prevented from flourishing.

4.2.1 Necro-being: Awaiting Corporeal Death

According to Leonard Harris, necro-being is a condition of existence where the immiserated suffer shortened lifespans and poor health while benefiting dominant groups; it is a situation where, "dominant groups acquire longer, lives, assets, and high senses of self-worth at the cost of the extinction or sustained subordination of the subjugated."[260] He calls his theory of necro-being an "actuarial account" of harm (whether racism or others) in that it is looking at statistics, numbers, and probabilities. Consequently, this account is *illustrative* not causally explanatory. The aims of such a theory are rhetorical, namely, to illuminate a pattern that is often lost or kept in the shadows. That pattern being, the transfer of life itself (poor health and lifespans) from subjugated to dominant groups. The goal of such an illumination would be to expose a clear instance of moral harm by the standards of *any* moral theory. As Harris says, "A paradigm of evil, once seen, provides a platform for moral judgements—that is, we can think of it as totally unacceptable using a range of conceptions that would consider undue death morally wrong."[261]

While Harris focuses on racism as one form of necro-being, I am here using necro-being's rhetorical strategy to highlight the harms of entitlement theory (the precept of property justice for capitalism). And while Harris asserts correctly that undue death via. racism could occur in any social formation, I am here focusing on the particular social formation of capitalism and its consequent undue death via poverty. The legal or institutional threshold of poverty is not important here—that threshold has always been complicated at best, and problematic at worse, given nuanced contextual differences relative to location, culture, cost of living, and even individual needs. For our purposes, we will see poverty as a condition of living in material deficiency relative to one's needs. And I am taking it as an axiomatic starting point (some of which was explained in chapter 2) that capitalism needs and creates inequality, and therefore poverty is a necessary component of its functioning and existence. Harris' examples of necro-being can occur in both instances of

[260] Leonard Harris, "Necro-Being: An Actuarial Account of Racism," *Res Philosophica* Volume: 95, no. Issue: 2 (April 3, 2018): Pages: 273-302, https://doi.org/DOI: 10.11612/resphil.1617.
[261] Leonard Harris. "Necro-Being"

racism as well as poverty: "shortened lives, starving children…", "High blood pressure, kidney failure, obesity, and early-onset breast cancer…", "stress… [or] fetal alcoholism…".

According to the Brookings Institute, "More than 53 million people, or 44% of all workers ages 18 to 64 in the United States, earn low hourly wages…Slightly more than half are the sole earners in their families or make major contributions to family income. Nearly one-third live below 150% of the federal poverty line (about $36,000 for a family of four)…"[262] These low income workers are forced to make decisions that sacrifice various aspects of health and well-being. They end up choosing between either spending more time with their children or getting a second or third job. Desperation forces you to take the jobs that nobody else wants, like the night shifts. In 2007, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified night shift work as a "probable human carcinogen"[263] One suspicion of researchers is the disruption of human circadian rhythms: "Circadian rhythms occur in hormone levels, hunger, sleep, body temperature as well as in a variety of other physiological aspects of health"[264] This is a perfect example of a disruption of health where health necessitates the homeostasis of natural, habitual cycles, such as the circadian rhythm. Researchers have since found epigenetic alterations (biological and environmental changes that affect the expression of DNA genes) "in two of the most important circadian genes found in the body's 24-hour biological timekeeping system…They discovered that women in Denmark who work at night have the same changes previously observed in women with breast cancer."[265]

Poverty forces one to decide whether going to the doctor is more important than buying food, or decide if one could live without heat or live without electricity. They have to live in low-income neighborhoods, with low-income schools, and when their child receives less than a standard education and needs to contribute to the family income, higher education is not an option. They must go into the same workforce that kept their family immobilized for generations. As described in chapter two, this lifestyle, although wretched and substandard is a necessary component for capitalism to function - there must be a whole sector of the population that remains poor enough to be immiserated (the "reserve army of labor" or the "relative surplus population")

[262] Martha Ross and Nicole Bateman, "Meet the Low-Wage Workforce," *Brookings* (blog), November 5, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/research/meet-the-low-wage-workforce/.
[263] Grace Rattue, "Night Shift Working 'A Probable Human Carcinogen,'" Medical News Today, October 28, 2011, https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/236731.
[264] Rattue.
[265] Rattue.

but has no other option of escape, because to not participate in the game is to literally starve. In this situation of material lack, wealth is created for the lucky few by the majority, and whatever scraps the privileged have left over from their feasts will not flow, but merely *trickle-down* to the impoverished and their kin. Out of fear (and practicality) the poor must remain obediently in their station to avoid losing their job, to avoid financial debt passed on to their families, incarceration, and other consequences of insubordination. Nearly, every major metropolitan city in the U.S. has gentrified and/or ghettoized neighborhoods, where premature death from violence, drug use, or alcoholism is present.

Poverty prevents children from getting the proper nutrition they need for their bodies and minds because their family can only afford "junk food". Poverty means hypertension, cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, obesity, tooth decay and inflammation because one lives in a "food desert" where there is limited access to supermarkets and affordable healthy food. Poverty means lack of healthcare because one's job does not provide proper benefits. Poverty means depression, anxiety, and suicide, where personal assessments of self-worth are low because pop-cultural media images (the only pastime one can afford) portray a spectacle of the people they can never be and the life they could never attain. Poverty means chronic respiratory infections and cancer because of toxins in municipal water, in the air, and in food from cheaply produced livestock and agriculture. A community-wide outbreak of Legionnaires' disease (a lethal pneumonia) occurred in Flint Michigan because of contaminated water. COVID19 cases have often been concentrated among "essential workers", many of whom are low-wage workers in industries such as childcare, sanitary workers, agriculture and food production, grocery retail, and transportation. In North Carolina, there are more industrial pig farms in areas with both high poverty and a high percentage of nonwhites[266]. Clint Jones explains the consequences of this:

> Research has shown that these pig farms are responsible for both air and water pollution, mostly due to the vast manure lagoons they create to hold the enormous amount of waste from the thousands of pigs being raised for food. In North Carolina, it has been said that the number of pigs on factory farms exceeds the total population of people in the state. The contamination from [these] farms has yielded dangerous concentrations of groundwater nitrates, a leading cause of blue baby

[266] S Wing, D Cole, and G Grant, "Environmental Injustice in North Carolina's Hog Industry.," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 108, no. 3 (March 2000): 225–31.

> syndrome—babies born with heart defects. Hydrogen sulfide has also caused noticeable increases in respiratory ailments near these sites.[267]

There is also a stretch of roughly 150 miles along the Mississippi River, with primarily Black and low-income residents, that has come to be known as "Cancer Alley". Jones reports that in this area,

> there are more than 150 petrochemical companies and 17 refineries releasing dangerous levels of toxic chemicals into the air and water. In the predominantly Black community of Mossville, 91% of residents said they are experiencing health complications attributable to the 14 facilities that manufacture, process, store or discharge toxic or hazardous substances...[268]

Studies have shown that, "Higher income was associated with longer life at all income levels."[269] The graphs of various studies show an obvious incline in life expectancy as income increases. We know that there is no inherent biological difference between the bodies of rich people and poor people, but rather it is simply their differences in environment, lifestyle, and access to health, namely, their material conditions, that make it so that they exist in a state of necro-being. Their bodies become premature corpses as the vampiric forces of capitalism transfer, not only wealth, but *health* from the proletariat to the capitalist.

4.2.2 Alienated Death

In addition to corporeal, the second form of death is "alienated death." Harris often speaks of the "unborn" by which he means progeny (particularly of the "unborn children who do not exist because their conceivable parents were sterilized, castrated or suffered undue incarceration…"[270]), but in addition to children, our progeny could include our creative, intellectual and social legacies. These things were metaphorically correlated with the fruit or flowering of a plant earlier, and it was this final stage, this telos, or grand aspiration that indicated the flourishing of the plant's life. So, another consequence of premature death is the prevention of such flourishing. But being kept in a state of mere survival also prevents such flourishing. There is no time to develop and experience the greatness that one can achieve if you are constantly trying to maintain a state of

[267] Clint Jones, *Ecological Reflections on Post-Capitalist Society: Lectures in Radical Ecological Awareness*, 1st edition, The j. Baird Callicott Environmental Humanities Series (Stevens Point, WI: Cornerstone Press, 2018). P 69-70
[268] Jones. P 70-71
[269] Raj Chetty et al., "The Association Between Income and Life Expectancy in the United States, 2001–2014," *JAMA* 315, no. 16 (April 26, 2016): 1750–66, https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.4226.
[270] Harris, "Necro-Being."

survival or if your body is exhausted from all the stresses that come with the accelerated lifestyle of late-stage capitalism, and that is a tragic loss as well. It is a loss of one's sense of purpose and connection with something "greater" (though not necessarily theological). This is an "alienated death" because one is alienated or disconnected from their full potential as a human. There is an awareness of something lacking that ought to have been there, and a generalized sense of frustration that their circumstances prevent them from producing or expressing some true essence of themselves—from flowering, not into something greater than themselves, but into some greatness that immanent.

Marx speaks of the alienation that occurs in capitalism in his 1844 manuscripts. He explains that when society is not organized "humanly", as in, aligned with our essence as socially productive creatures, then our natural urge to create and produce a human *common life* [*Gemeinwesen*] appears in the form of alienation[271]. Our activity and work for society appears as torment. Marx's language almost describes this experience as a sort of death or dying: "[a human's] life appears as the sacrifice of his life, the realization of his nature as the diminution of his life, his production as the production of his destruction, his power over the object as the power of the object over him; the master of his creation appears as its slave."[272] Although some of this language could be seen as metaphorical, it is also oftentimes literal. Alienated death *can* lead to a state of necro-being and corporeal death through a gradual decline in health. Alienated death and necro-being is only separated by a thin line: the precarious whims of the labor market.

Capitalism induces a dis-membering on multiple fronts. It severs the relationship between human and nature; it disjoins the body from the product of the body's labor; it divides humans from a community of other humans and other organisms. Marx details this same observation of the worker being disassociated from the results of their labor, he says, "…the object which labor produces, its product, stands opposed to it as an *alien thing*, as a *power independent* of the producer… What the product of his work is, he is not."[273] Then he describes humans becoming disconnected from nature: "…the sensuous external world gradually ceases to be an object belonging to his labor, a *means of life* of his work… [and] it gradually ceases to be a *means of life* in the immediate sense, a means of physical subsistence of the worker."[274] Finally, Marx describes

[271] Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)."
[272] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)"
[273] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)"
[274] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)"

how humans become alienated from the trait that makes them human, that distinguishes them from other animals – their creative capacity:

> …the worker does not affirm himself in his work but denies himself, feels miserable and unhappy, develops no free physical and mental energy but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind… Its alien character is obvious from the fact that as soon as no physical or other pressure exists, labor is avoided like the plague… the activity of the worker is not his own spontaneous activity. It belongs to another. It is the loss of his own self.
>
> The result, therefore, is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions—eating, drinking, and procreating, or at most in his shelter and finery—while in his human functions he feels only like an animal. The animalistic becomes the human and the human the animalistic.[275]

The result of human's becoming disconnected from the product of their work, from their life activity, and from their species essence is the estrangement of humans from other humans. This is how we end up with the anti-social pathologies of late capitalism, like envy, distrust of the Other, jealousy, judgement of one another's "productivity", judgement of one another's "leisure", competition, undercutting or sabotage of our peers, obsession with status, narcissism, anxieties about everything, depression, apathy, and the irony of boredom in a world of excess. This alienation is also what causes environmental destruction, as our current consciousness undergoes an amnesia of our affiliation with the earth. This is not living, but rather an existential crisis that has become casual.

4.2.3 Exploitation

Allen Wood makes a distinction between morality and justice. Justice involves a concern for rights, and "a person's right is a valid claim on society to be protected in the possession of something…"[276] Wood claims that *immoral* exploitation does not derive from a misdistribution of property, nor from involuntariness or coercion, but rather, "Proper respect for others is violated when we treat their vulnerabilities as opportunities to advance our own interests or projects"[277]. The *moral* wrongness of exploitation cannot be reduced to distributive justice, but to the

[275] Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)"
[276] Allen W. Wood, "Exploitation*," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 12, no. 2 (ed 1995): 136–58, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052500004702.
[277] Wood. "Exploitation*"

distribution of power.[278] Wood takes it as an obvious, indisputable fact that "capital virtually always exploits wage labor… the fundamental bargaining advantage of capital over labor is an ineradicable structural feature of the modern capitalist (or so-called "free market") economy."[279] But it is a separate question, whether this relation is just or unjust. What makes particular instances of exploitation *unjust* is, "when it involves a violation of the worker's rightful freedom." It is not so much that the workers need higher wages, but rather that they need to be freed from the capitalist wage system entirely as it is a coercive relationship whereby the worker is necessarily at the mercy of capital. Wood says, that in this situation the workers "are deprived of the basic right to be *sui iuris* [one's own master] in their laboring and productive lives. This happens when the capitalist owns the conditions of the worker's productive life. The worker has no choice but to sell his labor-power to some capitalist or other who then exercises coercive authority over the whole of his working life, sometimes over the worker's life more generally."[280] Capitalist wage labor is unjust because it is a form of servitude.

Wood comes to this conclusion by taking his conception of justice from the early modern tradition including Locke, Rousseau, Kant and Fichte. "Justice" he says, "involves giving each person that to which he or she has a *right*. In this tradition, people have rights, originally and fundamentally, not to welfare, but only to *freedom.* Rights, according to this tradition, are about protections of *freedom*. Freedom is understood by this tradition as a *social* relation: freedom is *independence of constraint by the will of another*… 'freedom as nondomination'."[281] According to this line of reasoning, it ought to be the case that even liberals should be able to recognize that capitalism leads to unjust exploitation because, as Cohen said, the freedom of the proletariat hardly seems free according to the relevant liberal (and libertarian) terms of effective self-ownership[282].

So, capitalist exploitation is harmful on multiple fronts. I agree with Wood's account of its injustice, but I think it is also immoral for a reason he neglected to state. Capitalist exploitation is both unjust and morally wrong for separate but layered reasons. If it is unjust because it violates freedom, then it is also immoral for consequentialist reasons of the sort mentioned above: It creates conditions of necro-being and alienated death. In other words, it prevents the flourishing and

[278] Wood. "Exploitation*"
[279] Wood. "Exploitation*"
[280] Allen Wood, "Unjust Exploitation," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 54, no. Spindel Supplement (2016): 92–108.
[281] Wood. "Unjust Exploitation" 98.
[282] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*.

manifestation of our species essence. The harms of capitalism demonstrate that it is an unsuitable economic system for our species.

Conclusion

Moral theories and principles are typically created to protect something inherently valuable, whether that is utility or the inherent dignity of each individual. The principle of self-ownership, as we saw in chapter two, protects a rational, autonomous, individual. Organism sees dignity in each individual as well. But humans are not valuable *because* they possess the traits of rationality, autonomy and individuation, they are valuable because of the simple fact that they are alive (along with everything else in nature). More specifically, they are valuable because of the *potential* to express the traits of their species, including rationality, autonomy and individuality, through creative acts that transform their environment. Other moral theories of individual dignity *based on* rationality, autonomy and individuality would exclude other life forms. But organicism values the potential expression of flourishing for all living things. If rationality, autonomy, and individuality are *not* seen as emergent properties that arise *after* care for the organic body, then these dignity-based theories will have a propensity to either exclude or exploit lifeforms, including humans, that do not or cannot express those traits. And the result is necro-being and alienated death.

Necro-being is awaiting death—it never moves past survival; it never reaches flourishing. Consequently, there is no flowering, no next of kin, no legacy, no transcendence. Harris has claimed that, "There is no viable moral or explanatory theory that makes undue loss of life and death other than intuitively heinous." The problem is that we live in a society that adheres to a theory that does to *not* view undue death as morally wrong. This includes *any* theory that merges capitalism with a supporting moral principle, such as the claim that the freedom of markets equates to the freedom of individuals. The next and final chapter will attempt to disassemble this hegemonic idea by conducting a close examination of the concept of property, after which we will speculate on how we can reimagine a political economy with a fundamentally different perspective on property – one that perpetuates health and nurtures flourishing.

CHAPTER 5 – TO EACH ACCORDING TO THEIR NEED: PROPERTY, FREEDOM AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

Introduction

I have developed a theory of human ontology that is a pancorporealist, naturalistic materialism whereby morality is judged by health, that is, the preservation of all the lifeforms and ecosystems that constitute a human being's survival and contribute to its ability and potential for flourishing. This is a very different picture than the rational, autonomous, individual. So, if the latter ontology served as a foundation for the principle of self-ownership, which was the crucial premise for entitlement theory, which in turn served to justify capitalist entitlement, then what does organicism serve as the foundation for? In this final chapter, I examine the notion of property and freedom to see what organicism would consider to be justified property and how this leads to true freedom. And I conclude with a sketch of how all these factors congeal into a new political economy.

In section 5.1, I examine how property is supposed to, allegedly, work today. Then I consider the historical situations that allowed for the distortion of this original concept. Lastly, I take a closer look at Nozick's adoption of Locke's theory of acquisition of property to point out that he doesn't actually adopt Locke's principle, as is commonly thought. And as a proponent of capitalism, it is an interesting move on his part to direct attention instead to the *consequences* of private property rather than the *process* by which it is acquired.

I respond to both of these justifications for private property – both Locke's (the original, liberal theory of property) and Nozick's (the neoliberal justification of property). I respond briefly to Nozick's justification on his own grounds using statistical economics by referring to the groundbreaking work of French economist, Thomas Piketty. Then I spend the remaining portion of this section responding as an organicist to the original liberal theory of property.

The second half of this chapter (5.4 and 5.5) states what an organicist-based theory of property would look like and how this alternative theory of property could lead to the freedom that Nozick's theory was lacking by using Hegel's distinction between concrete and abstract freedom. Finally, I conclude with speculations on what all of this could look like when implemented on a large scale as an alternative political economy.

5.1 Property and Its Negation through Capitalism

According to Locke, we have a natural right to property. It is not simply an artificial construct of society or a creation made by the State as Hobbes and Hume supposed. This natural right, according to Locke, comes from God who originally gave all men common endowment to the world. But God also endowed men with the private ownership of their own bodies (i.e. self-ownership). Thus, Locke presumed that the physical labor that each of us holds as a potential, is part of this endowed self-ownership, therefore whatsoever we mix our labor with becomes ours as private property. He says,

> Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself. The labor of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state nature hath placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men.[283]

But Locke saw this simple idea of acquiring property through labor evolve with the expansion of the use of money and with the expansion of appropriated land. However, it wasn't so much that private property was destroyed by money and scarce land, but that the *justification* for holding property had to shift and become reliant on contracts, whereas in the beginning it was purely reliant on labor. He describes this shift as such,

> Thus labour, in the beginning, gave a right of property wherever any one was pleased to employ it upon what was common, which remained a long while the far greater part, and is yet more than mankind makes use of… and though afterwards, in some parts of the world, (where the increase of people and stock, with the use of money, had made land scarce, and so of some value) the several communities settled the bounds of their distinct territories, and by laws within themselves regulated the properties of the private men of their society, and so, by compact and agreement, settled the property which labour and industry began...[284]

What we see here is the historical and social conditions for the legitimation of private property. When land and resources were plentiful, they were seen as common property. But when these became scarce because of population, the creation of stock, and the use of money, (and I

[283] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*. (p. 111 – 112. Para. 27)
[284] Locke. *Two Treatises of Government.*

would add to this list: modern agriculture, as a means for producing stock, and the expansion of empire) people had to construct laws and regulations to which they would agree upon by contract. So, while the acquisition of property lies within the purview of enterprise, the transfer, regulation, contracts, and ultimately protections of property lie within the purview of the State.

Locke's view is probably the most common, best known sentiment regarding property and the moral justification for its acquisition. Jeremy Waldron, however, finds Locke's view, and the labor-mixing view of property as unconvincing analytically, and more accurately he sees it as simply rhetorical. He says,

> That something I have worked on embodies a part of me is a common enough sentiment, but it is difficult to give it a[n] analytically precise sense. That an object is shaped the way it is may be an effect of my actions; but actions don't seem to have the trans-temporal endurance to enable us to say that they remain present in the object after the time of their performance. The idea of mixing one's labor seems to be a piece of rhetoric which enhances other arguments for private property rather than an argument in its own right.[285]

By the time we get to Marx, we have a different understanding of the evolution of private property as it became distorted within capitalism. Marx did not disagree with everything that Locke said in regard to property acquisition. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx addresses the common concern regarding communism: that the system would not allow for the right to personally acquire property as the fruit of man's own labor. This fear is based on the understanding that property "is alleged to be the groundwork of all personal freedom, activity, and independence"[286] – a view that Marx agrees with. But communism is not to blame for this destruction of private property, rather, Capitalism has already steadily destroyed "hard-won, self-acquired, self-earned property", the old forms of small property ownership, such as the "property of the petty artisan and of the small peasant".[287] This is because, within capitalism ownership is reserved for one out of the labor of many. It is no longer the labor of a single worker producing something, that they can then call their own property. That type of private ownership (Lockean ownership) is dead.[288] This capitalism-produced form of property is what Marx and Engels call, the *bourgeois form of property*, or *capital.*

[285] Jeremy Waldron, "Property and Ownership," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/property/.
[286] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto.*
[287] Marx and Engels. *The Communist Manifesto,* 60.
[288] Of course there are still craftspeople and artisans today who produce things themselves, as well as the new category of "solopreneurs" – business owners who have no employees – and participants of the "gig economy" or

What makes capital so different from the private property that Locke talked about is that it is not the result of the labor of the "owner" of the firm but the result of the collective labor of the many workers within the firm. Capital is socially produced wealth, not an individually produced product, and yet it is treated as if it were the rightful private property of a single owner. According to Locke, labor ought to create property for the laborer. But *wage* labor does not create property for the laborer, it just creates capital for the capitalist. As Marx and Engels express it, "But does wage labor create any property for the laborer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property, which exploits wage labor, and which cannot increase except upon conditions of begetting a new supply of wage labor for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage labor."[289] Consequently, private property (as it manifests within capitalism) has *not* proven to be the condition of individual freedom but becomes their enslavement. This is a reversal of what Locke thought, namely, that the institution of private property would be the means by which the rights of an individual are expressed.

Despite the fact that it has been distorted by capitalism, the average layperson continues to conceptualize property in a Lockeanesque quality: they think that those who have property must have worked hard to get it and that those lacking property have simply made poor use of the resources at their disposal.

5.2 Regarding Nozick's Interpretation of Locke's Proviso

Nozick is not very clear in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* whether he fully adopts every aspect of Locke's position on original acquisition, even though he heavily relies upon Locke in this text. Waldron offers the critique that "Nozick offers no detailed argument at all for a Labour (or a First Occupancy) Theory of acquisition."[290] Nozick expresses skepticism of the labor mixing model of ownership:

> But why isn't mixing what I own with what I don't own a way of losing what I own rather than a way of gaining what I don't? If I own a can of tomato juice and spill it in the sea so that its molecules (made radioactive, so I can check this) mingle

"freelance economy". Arnobio Morelix, "Introducing the Inc. Entrepreneurship Index: 2017 Was Good to Solopreneurs, Not So Much for Job Growth," Inc.com, March 6, 2018, https://www.inc.com/arnobio-morelix/inc-entrepreneurship-index.html.

[289] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.

[290] Jeremy Waldron, *The Right to Private Property* (Oxford [Oxfordshire] : New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1988). 4.

> evenly throughout the sea, do I thereby come to own the sea, or have I foolishly dissipated my tomato juice?[291]

Instead, Nozick *seems* (at first) more sympathetic to the work that Locke's *proviso* does in securing justification for private property based on *negative rights*. Locke states that after one justly acquires property, no other person can have a right to it, with the proviso: "..at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others."[292] But Nozick makes it apparent that he doesn't believe this caveat to be utilitarian in intention. The utilitarian interpretation is that one cannot hoard property, but this also means that, in Nozick's words "laboring on something improves it and makes it more valuable; and anyone is entitled to own a thing whose value he has created…"[293] so long as (according to Locke's caveat) the appropriated object creates more value for others, then it is justified in its appropriation. *However* Nozick *also* expresses his skepticism of this value-based justification for property: "Why should one's entitlement extend to the whole object rather than just to the *added value* one's labor has produced?...No workable or coherent value-added property scheme has yet been devised, and any such scheme presumably would fall into objections."[294] So, in another divergence from Locke, Nozick does not believe that adding value is what justifies the acquisition of property. Rather, the conclusion that Nozick comes to regarding what counts as a justified instance of acquisition is simply one that does not violate the non-aggression principle (also known as, the 'principle of non-coercion'). In other words, property isn't justified by the value it *adds*, but rather by whether it violates a negative right. He says,

> The crucial point is whether appropriation of an unowned object *worsens* the situation of others…Locke's proviso that there be 'enough and as good left in common for others' is meant to ensure that the situation of others is not worsened… It does not include the worsening due to more limited opportunities to appropriate…and it does not include how I 'worsen' a seller's position if I appropriate materials to make some of what he is selling, and then enter into competition with him…I believe that the free operation of a market system will not actually run afoul of the Lockean proviso. (emphasis added)[295]

Notice that Nozick's interpretation technically allows hoarding to be permissible: "…[Locke's proviso] does not include the worsening due to more limited opportunities to appropriate…" So

[291] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 175.
[292] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*. 112, para. 27.
[293] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 175.
[294] Nozick. 175.
[295] Nozick. 175-182.

Nozick's theory of original acquisition looks more like John Stewart Mill's limitations on rights (the harm principle), where one's rights end where another's begin, and where emphasis is placed on direct harms rather than incidental or collateral harms. Of course, this is perfectly in line with the standard understanding of the libertarian ethos.

Nonetheless, this begs the question, therefore, as to whether "the free operation of a market system" constructed through acquisition and private property *can* actually worsen an other's situation. Nozick recognizes this need for empirical evidence and for a need to agree upon what counts as a worsening of another's situation. He says, "The difficulty in working such an argument to show that the proviso is satisfied is in fixing the appropriate base line for comparison. Lockean appropriation makes people no worse off than they would be *how*?"[296] Although he admits that this question needs more detailed investigation than he is able to give it in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia,* he makes the claim (and I think this is the prevailing way of thinking of property today) that the base line for comparison for a measurement of "worse off" ought to be the *economic value* that the acquisition of a property produces. In other words, the justification for the acquisition or the right to property is not based upon the mixing of one's labor, or the added value infused in the product, or even its contribution to the ethical development of an individual. Rather, today it seems that the justification for private property is merely based on its *instrumental* value (a consequentialist argument) toward the growth of the economy or its efficiency.

Waldron agrees that this is the most prevalent ways of viewing the justification for private property today. He says,

> The most common form of justificatory argument is consequentialist: people in general are better off when a given class of resources is governed by a private property regime than by any alternative system. Under private property, it is said, the resources will be more wisely used, or used to satisfy a wider (and perhaps more varied) set of wants than under any alternative system, so that the overall enjoyment that humans derive from a given stock of resources will be increased.[297]

And as Nozick stated,

> Here enter the various familiar social considerations favoring private property: it increases the social product by putting means of production in the hands of those who can use them most efficiently (profitably); experimentation is encouraged, because with separate persons controlling resources, there is no one person or small group whom someone with a new idea must convince to try it out; private property

[296] Nozick. 177.
[297] Waldron, "Property and Ownership."

> enables people to decide on the pattern and types of risks they wish to bear, leading to specialized types of risk bearing; private property protects future persons by leading some to hold back resources from current consumption for future markets; it provides alternate sources of employment for unpopular persons who don't have to convince any one person or small group to hire them, and so on.[298]

Putting aside the equivocation of "well-being", namely, equating the well-being of people with the well-being of an economy, there is an empirical problem to this view. Even if we take contemporary economists at their word, that there is no deeper value to private property than the instrumental value it provides for the economy (a circular argument that the mechanisms of capitalism are good because they ensure the functioning of capitalism), there are still empirical reasons why we can take issue with this. We know now from the data and analysis of groundbreaking economic research, such as Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, that the practices of "the free operation of a market system" does *not* always lead to beneficial economic outcomes. As Piketty shows, the overarching economic pattern in capitalism is that returns on capital tend to exceed the rate of economic growth.[299] Meaning that the economy at large is not necessarily better off because of capitalism, rather the small percentage of individuals with the highest rates of return on capital benefit at the economy's expense.

Nozick's defense of his very first rule of entitlement theory: the 'principle of justice in acquisition', has left many readers unsatisfied, which is partially why I decided to analyze Locke's theory of original acquisition along with, or perhaps in lieu of, Nozick's best attempt to justify the original acquisition of private property. But he challenges (or perhaps deflects to) opponents of private property to do the same: "We should note that it is not only persons favoring *private* property who need a theory of how property rights legitimately originate. Those believing in collective property, for example those believing that a group of persons living in an area jointly own the territory, or its mineral resources, also must provide a theory of how such property rights arise…"[300] This is the challenge that we will attempt to work through in the next section.

[298] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 177.
[299] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).
[300] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. 178.

5.3 Organicist Ownership: (Re)membering Property

So, we can concede that Locke's theory of property is perhaps analytically ungrounded, as Waldron thought. Despite it being the most familiar theory of original acquisition and to this day is appealed to (at least rhetorically), Marx has shown us that capitalism has inverted its functioning. Finally, Nozick's (and contemporary economists') justification for property, based on its instrumental value in being the best possible system for the efficient functioning of the market and society, faces continuous empirical (and moral) strain. Still, even if we grant validity to *any* of these theories of justified property acquisition, there are facts about human ontology that can inform a more accurate theory of property that is not just valid but soundly grounded in facts about our species. Waldron says similarly,

> there might be facts about the human condition or our agency as embodied beings that provide philosophical premises for an argument that property relations should be established in one way rather than another. Clearly, there is at least one material object with which a person does seem to have an intimate pre-legal relation that would bear some philosophical analysis—namely, that person's body. We are embodied beings and to a certain extent the use and control of our limbs, sensory organs etc. is indispensable for our agency.[301]

This has been attempted with notions of *self-ownership* (within both liberalism and libertarianism), but as we have seen, their theory of *self* has been unveiled as faulty. So now, equipped with organicism, as the authentic theory of self, we can proceed to see what *ownership* of this self really means.

Ownership of the self clearly means ownership of one's bodily powers. But the extent and boundaries of our self have been shown to be immensely wide and inclusive according to organicism. So naturally, our ownership would extend much further beyond the boundaries of our own skin. But so too would the ownership of others. With our current understanding of ownership, this prospect seems terrifying, with both anarchic and authoritarian potentialities. But In order to understand this we must completely purge from our minds the deeply ingrained understanding of ownership as equivalent to master and slave, and the view that my property is completely under my discretion to use, consume or dispose of in any way I desire. Property and ownership must be completely redefined to the same extent that we have redefined the self.

[301] Waldron, "Property and Ownership."

What organicists prefer is a conception of self-ownership where the self in question ought not be seen as property that can be disposed of according to one's own discretion, but a property that is in need of nourishing, revering, and preserving, using the analogies to caring for a plant as seen in chapter 4. The self as one's property in this latter sense would be the grounds for the ethical imperative to health and the rights to (for instance) nutrition, education, and housing. The libertarian/liberal "body" (the abstract rational, autonomous, individual), on the other hand is not necessarily seen as property to be nurtured, but rather property to be defended. This understanding of property that prioritizes negative rights, or the *non-aggression* principle, contains a very colonial logic of an inside--outside binary, an owned vs. up-for-grabs mentality, and an us vs. them antagonism. The colonial understanding of property is that it is passive and limited, and so, it can be collected, used, and then discarded. But what we want is a more accurate understanding of property as *resource* – something that cannot be collected as a static thing, but that requires constant maintenance in order for it to continue to produce. The human being is far from a static thing – we are continually growing (as everything else in nature).

Property is an extension of our essential human ontology. Property is not acquired or claimed, rather it is created or received. As such, it is an *expression* of our true human nature – our *creativity* and our *sociality*. True property recognizes both directions of affect: We change the earth and the materials around us by "mixing our labor" into it; but also, the product of this labor forms and shapes our individual self. Waldron talks about this incorporation of the self into the object and the object into the self when summarizing Hegel's work, where he says, "there was a suggestion that owning property helped the individual to 'supersede the mere subjectivity of personality'…in plain English, it gave them the opportunity to make concrete the plans and schemes that would otherwise just buzz around inside their heads, and to take responsibility for their intentions as the material they were working on—a home or an sculptor's block of marble—registered the impact of the decisions they had made."[302] He says that owning things, for Hegel, "is a basic human interest which everyone has: owning property contributes immensely to the ethical development of the individual person."[303] But on the Lockean approach, property is only deserved or respected on the basis of what one has done or what has happened to them.[304] In the

[302] Waldron. "Property and Ownership."
[303] Waldron, *The Right to Private Property*.
[304] Waldron. *The Right to Private Property*.

latter, property is a special right that arises out of particular rules of acquisition. In the former, property is a general right based on the fact that there is an ethical (and I would say perfectionist) purpose to property, namely that it provides an opportunity for an evolution into the realization of an individual self. And if we recall from chapter 4, this 'evolution into the realization of an individual self' or this act of *flourishing* is the normative goal of the organicist self. We are deserving of property because we are living, biologically functioning organisms; essentially, we are deserving of property because we need it to keep us alive (for our survival), and because it provides the substance for our flourishing. This was the point that Cohen was trying to get across when he said that Marxist must make the distinction between, "I made this and I should therefore have it" and, "I need this, [or] I will die or wither if I do not get it."[305] Understanding this difference is crucial for distinguishing between property as it is understood in liberal/libertarian terms and the way Cohen thought Marxists *ought* to understand property. Cohen says, "Marxists have, then, exaggerated the extent to which what they consider exploitation depends on an initial inequality of rights in worldly assets."[306] Rather exploitation of workers comes from the clever but mistaken claim made by exploiters that they somehow have a special advantage of exclusive ownership over external resources.[307] So the problem with capitalism is not property per se, but an understanding of property (especially of goods that are necessary for survival) as something that can be exclusively owned.

This mode of acquiring property (Locke's/the original Liberal theory of property) is the mechanism that Marxists appeal to when they claim that the "rightful" property of the proletariat – the commodities that they produce - are taken from them by the capitalist when these commodities are sold on the market for the capitalist's profit. But Cohen was right, and the proper interpretation of Marx is not, "I made this, therefore I should have it" but "I need this, therefore I should have it". Marx has a much more perplexing and unconventional view of property. He considers the standard [liberal] view of property, as private property, to be *externalized property* when it is put into a circulation of exchanges. This is because, as he says, "When I yield my private property to another person, it ceases being mine. It becomes something independent of me and

[305] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*.
[306] Cohen.
[307] Cohen.

outside my sphere, something *external* to me."[308] What makes people want to externalize their private property is *need* and *want*. The other person, as a private property owner, has some object which I lack, and which I either want or need. And it is *this* other object in the other person's possession that gives us a clue into what property actually is for Marx.

The wanted or needed *object* in the other person's possession with which I am trading seems to be, Marx presumes, "something *needed* for the redintegration of my existence and the realization of my nature."[309] If the possession of this object *redintegrates*, meaning, 'to make whole again' or 'to restore to a perfect state', then this object is/was *a part* of my existence. In a sense, it already belongs/belonged to me. It is already my "property", in the sense that it is *a property* of my existence. And the use of this object is also needed or used for the "realization of my nature". This means that there is, as he says, "another *essential* relationship to objects outside of property and that [the human] is not the particular being he takes himself to be…" The being that humans took themselves to be was stated earlier in the text by Marx as, "*property owner,* that is, as exclusive possessor who maintains his personality and distinguishes himself from other men and relates himself to them through this exclusive possession. Private property is his personal existence, his *distinguishing* and hence essential existence."[310] This includes property in himself, his self-ownership, as distinguished from other men's self-ownership; as such, a purely autonomous individual. But Marx continues: this *other* "essential relationship to objects outside of property" is rather, "a *total* being whose wants have a relationship of *inner* property to the products of the labor of the other person. For the need of an object is the most evident and irrefutable proof that the object belongs to *my* nature and that the existence of the object for me and its *property* are the property appropriate to my essence. "[311] *Need* is what constitutes our inner ownership to all products, because it shows us that we cannot survive without such products and therefore they must in some way be a part of our essential nature. Another translation of the same passage phrases it this way: "For the need of a thing is the most evident, irrefutable proof that the thing belongs *to my* essence, that its being is for me, that its *property* is the property, the

[308] Karl Marx, "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844," in *Writings of the Young Marx in Philosophy and Society*, ed. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 265–77.
[309] Marx. "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844", 273
[310] Marx. "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844"
[311] Marx. "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844"

peculiarity, of my essence."[312] This latter translation makes it clearer that the very being of the other object is a metaphysical property of my essence.

Another component of organicist property is that it is essentially social in nature through the process of mutual exchange and externalization where it ceases being "the product of labor and being the exclusive, distinctive personality of its owner… it has been removed from the owner whose product it was and has acquired a personal significance for the person who did *not* produce it." At this moment of exchange, private property becomes an *equivalence* or a *substitute* of the other. Marx says, "Instead of its immediate self-unity it exists only in relationship to *something else*."[313] According to Marx, all of this is natural human activity, it is a part of our essential nature. True property requires the recognition of the other human and their human activity or labor as mutually beneficial. It is the recognition that what I have produced is for you, and what you have produced is for me.

Within capitalism, of course, we only view this relationship of exchange as a self-interested act where "each of us sees in his product only his *own* objectified self-interest and in the product of another person, *another* self-interest which is independent, alien, and objectified."[314] *True* property, on the other hand, *includes* the other human being. True property as it is produced by labor is a *manifestation* of life and an enjoyment of life. But under the presupposition of private property, Marx says, it is "an externalization of life because I work *in order to live…*" and "my individuality is externalized to the point where I *hate* this activity and where it is a *torment* for me"[315] Private property makes it so that working is *not* living. But *true, "active property"* is the type of labor where the "*particularity* of my individuality would be affirmed because my *individual* life is affirmed."[316]

The anti-dualism of organicism becomes apparent in property, in the fact that it both affirms the particularity of an individual through its creation and use, and that it affirms the relationship that I have with other humans with which I am trading and with nature from which my materials come. So, the anti-dualism of organicism manifests in, not only our relations to other people *through* property, but in our relations to nature through the creation of property and the

[312] Marx. "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844"
[313] Marx. "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844"
[314] Marx. "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844"
[315] Marx. "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844"
[316] Marx. "From Excerpt-Notes of 1844"

acquiring of property for our subsistence. Hence, organicism uniquely recognizes that there are things that set us, human beings, apart from other creatures on earth but it doesn't fall into the anthropocentrism or speciesism that has one believe that a human has "dominion" over the plants and animals – a view that mirrors individualism and its error of a false dichotomy that separates the individual from the community. So, our ontology directly informs our theory of property. The dialectic nature of our human ontology as being both one and many overcomes the dualism (and the seeming contradiction) between an individual and their community and the antagonistic dualism between the human and nature. Private property, then, must also overcome this dualism and be understood as *both* for me and another.

The right to property therefore arises out of a normative obligation for wholeness, or as Marx describes it, for a "redintegration". As we saw in the previous chapter, wholeness can equate to health. The striving for health is the normative implication of the ontology of organicism. As Marx described it above, what I *need* is my property because this needed object or sustenance adheres itself to me through a metabolism, that is, through an *assimilation*, that allows me to survive, to exist. Property is existential. The creation, the exchanging, and the consuming of property is an alchemy resulting in the *total* human. It is a re-membering, a putting-back-together, a redintegration of our whole self. Exploitation, as we saw in the previous chapter, is a separation, a dis-membering, or a withholding of the objects needed for human existence so that one lives in a state of necro-being or a sub-par (non-flourishing) state of living. Cohen seems to define exploitation in the same way but describes it from the inverse angle: exploitation is when the exploiters illegitimately claim ownership over resources. In his words, "…the exploitation of workers comes from deft use by the exploiters of their self-owned powers on the basis of no special advantage in external resources."[317] He says the lack of the means of production is not the whole cause of exploitation. It is not that we need to distribute property evenly so that everyone has exclusive ownership over pieces of private property, but rather we need to recognize that *both no one* and *everyone* has a claim to external resources. Cohen makes the radical statement (that both liberals and even left-wing libertarians would deny) that "To block the generation of the exploitation characteristic of capitalism, people have to have claims on the fruits of the powers of other people."[318]

[317] Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*. 121
[318] Cohen. 121

The intuitively difficult claim that both no one and everyone has entitlement to external resources can maybe be clarified by juxtaposing this organicist notion of property with the popular Lockean notion and recognizing that there are other civilizations that had *completely* different definitions of property. Organicism has two responses to Locke's theory of acquisition. One response emphasizes our unity with nature, and the second is by recognizing our uniqueness within nature.

First, regarding our unity with nature, organicists find impossibility in the statement: "Whatsoever then he *removes out of* that state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with…"(emphasis added)[319]. We have seen, from the previous chapters, the deep interconnectedness (internally and externally) that organicism entails, therefore it is physically impossible to separate ourselves from nature. We cannot remove something from a state (environment or mode of being) that we ourselves cannot be removed from. Granted, Locke's point here is to show that cultivation by humans *changes* the state of land. But this power to change, this alchemy, is everywhere in nature. When melting glaciers create rivers and streams, this changes the state of the land. There *is* a conscious willing within humans that does not exist in a glacier when creating this change to nature of course. But whether we are talking about a piece of enclosed cultivated land, a steel skyscraper, or a wooden table, all of this is nature altered, or even dismembered, from its original state. But it is not nature removed from nature. The consequence of the rhetoric that something could be *removed* from a state of nature is a false consciousness rooted in anthropocentrism as well as allowing for a dehumanization of any civilization that does *not* "remove" themselves from nature.

Property occurs through a working *with* nature. Even Marx himself says that labor is not the source of all wealth. Our "ownership" of nature in the Marxist (not the liberal) sense—as property that is a *property* of our being, as belonging to us inherently—is what gives us use value (objects that are useful for our subsistence and flourishing). And hence, it is through *this* kind of ownership that we gain liberation. Earth is the mother and labor is the father of all wealth. The passage where Marx expresses this claim is worth quoting in full:

From, *Marginal Notes on the Programme of the German Workers' Party*:

> Labor is *not the source* of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use-values (and surely these are what make up material wealth!) as labour. Labour is itself only

[319] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*.

> the manifistationof a force of nature, human labour power. This phrase… is correct in so far as it is *assumed* that labour is performed with the objects and instruments necessary to it… Man's labour only becomes a source of use-values, and hence also of wealth, if his relation to nature, the primary source of all insturuments and objects of labour, is one of ownership from the start, and if he treats it as belonging to him. There is every good reason for the bourgeoisie to ascribe *supernatural creative power* to labour, for when a man has no property other than his labour power it is precisely labour's dependence on nature that forces him, in all social and cultural conditions, to be the slave of other men who have taken the objective conditions of labour into their own possession. He needs their permission to work, and hence their permission to live.[320]

If, according to the political economists, a piece of cultivated nature belongs to any individual who has mixed their labor with it, we would find that there were countless individuals who participated in the cultivation of this particular piece of land that we are calling property. For instance, if I leveled an acre of "untouched" forest land so that I could grow corn, I would not be the only individual mixing my labor with the land. Not only are there millions of microorganisms helping me to metabolize the food that I just ate into the mental and physical energy that I need to swing an axe, but also another set of microorganisms are allowing me to continue working because they are in the process of fighting an infection threatening to disrupt my progress. Meanwhile, within the soil are worms and insects that have been cultivating the fertility of this acre of soil before I even arrived. Likewise, the waste of the animals who hunted and grazed on this acre, and the trees who gave shade for the flourishing of the ecosystem beneath them all cultivated this land before I arrived. So, shouldn't all these creatures not only meet Locke's labor-mixing criteria, but also Locke and Nozick's criteria for a "first occupancy" theory because they were not only (collectively) the first user of this natural resource, but they used it "productively" by cultivating it?[321] It seems, according to Locke's principle of acquisition, it ought to belong to all of those individuals. Locke says,

> He that is nourished by the acorns he picked up under an oak, or the apples he gathered from the trees in the wood, has certainly appropriated them to himself…if

[320] Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in *The Political Writings* (London ; New York: Verso, 2019), 1023–43.

[321] For Locke (and for Nozick) the first occupier was not so much distinguished by the fact that he did not displace anyone to take possession of a natural resource, but more because he was the first to cultivate or use the resource productively. This is how Locke could deny native Americans from ownership of the lands, because although they did not dispossess anyone, Locke did not believe the indigenous or nomadic were "productive" with the land. So, their original acquisition may prejudice other's interests if the appropriation was not productive, i.e. increasing the amount of goods available in society for others. -Waldron, "Property and Ownership."

> the first gathering made them not his, nothing else could. That labour put a distinction between them and common: that added something to them more than nature, the common mother of all, had done; and so they became his private right.[322]

But don't *all* creatures mix their labor with nature in this way? Do squirrels not gather acorns the same way? Do birds not gather twigs for their nests? The reason that they do *not* have this same right to property is because, according to Locke and Nozick, these creatures are not self-owners. Locke and Nozick say that they don't have property in themselves, and so have no labor of their own to mix with the world. The majority of philosophers speak of rights (and in this case rights to property) from an anthropocentric starting point. For instance, the following passage would be contradictory to Locke's own view if he was not anthropocentric: "Thus the grass my horse has bit [and] the turfs my servant has cut…in any place, where I have a right to them in common with others; become my property…" Technically, according to Locke's acquisition rules, these grass and turfs ought to belong to the horse and servant, but since horses and servants don't have any property in themselves, they are excluded from property in nature.

Organicism however, in understanding that anthropocentrism cannot be the correct starting point if our very ontology is composed of and constituted by non-human entities, must grant property rights to nature as well. If the self has a moral right to health, that is survival and flourishing, and that 'self' extends beyond the human individual, then even this "larger self" would have a moral right to health. Nature is a property of our very existence, and our existence is a property of nature. If we recall that Marx, in his early writings, said that private property is necessarily externalizable and social, we can apply this same concept to nature as an owner. Nature also externalizes property. For instance, the fruit may belong to a tree as the individual manifestation of its essence as a particular tree. But as soon as this fruit is picked, this piece of property is externalized, and it becomes my own – incorporated into my being metabolically and ontologically. But in the anthropocentric model, much like Marx's criticism of *capitalist* private property, nature is collectively produced but individually appropriated. So, if it is unjustified for capitalists to be the exclusive appropriators of the labor and profit of many workers, then it is unjustifiable for humans to be the exclusive appropriators of the labor of countless other species.[323]

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[322] Locke 112

[323] Ironically, even if someone was steadfast in maintaining anthropocentrism for any variety of normative reasons, they would find, after an analysis of organicism, that to be anthropocentric is ultimately detrimental to humans, precisely because of their interconnectedness with the rest of nature. It would work in our species own best interests to be biocentric or eco-centric. But this is a level of eco-consciousness that we cannot, in fairness, expect Locke to

These rules seem to put us in a very restrictive situation. How are we to use the products of nature if we are of equal ontological and hence moral footing? If we change our understanding of property in the ways described above, and our relation to our property is one of stewardship and not selfishness, then we can understand how to relate to earth as property. We must think of it as something to be nurtured, or something to be cultivated as in the original Latin *cultus* – to care, to labor for; or *colere* – to till, to frequent, to inhabit, respect, or tend". We must use it in a way that is received and not taken. We must ask, "how do the things that we create out of nature serve the interests of others, the earth, and ourselves as nature?" At times, these things may unavoidably come into conflict (as many ethical theories face paradoxes). But the benefit of a theory that takes its inspiration from Aristotle is that we can turn to *balance* (or the doctrine of the mean). The correct decision may not always look the same in every situation, for every person, at every time. But the core understanding of what requires consideration must remain: that the health (survival *and* flourishing) of the self must take precedence. We will speculate about more concrete examples in the final section of this chapter.

An example of this relationship of stewardship (as opposed to liberal ownership) can be seen in the relationship between the Anishinaabe/Neshnabé (Ojibwe, Odawa, Potawatomi) tribe of North America and a piece of land that produced wild rice.

> Waterfowl showed the people that wild rice is edible and guided them to habitats of low-lying waters where wild rice grows best and different plants, animals, and insects flourish. The people studied wild rice habitats as webs of interdependent responsibilities. Ecologically, wild rice is responsible for feeding humans, birds, and animals; for providing protective cover for fish and birds; for supplying material for muskrat lodges; and for supporting clean water. Water is responsible for giving life to wild rice. The people then developed their own responsibilities to harvest in ways that leave enough wild rice for nonhumans and to work out diplomatic protocols for sharing or respecting the wild rice beds needed by other human communities, thereby securing justice for all beings. They delegated special responsibilities to women and certain clans to develop expert knowledge of water quality and wild rice habitats and to provide leadership to guide harvesting and habitat conservation.[324]

have had. For we were not only ignorant of the vast effect that humans would have on the environment, but also the world in the 17th century – particularly the New World – seemed exceedingly available for the taking.

[324] Kyle Whyte, "Critical Investigations of Resilience: A Brief Introduction to Indigenous Environmental Studies & Sciences," *Daedalus* 147, no. 2 (March 2018): 136–47, https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00497. 137

This type of relationship to natural resources is only similar to Locke's to the extent that there was a proviso that the amount of wild rice that could be taken would be limited to leaving enough for others to enjoy. But "others" for the Anishinaabe not only included other humans, but also non-human communities. As one can see, this project pushes, even Marxists, to conceive of a seemingly more radical way of understanding property and ownership. We simultaneously own everything and nothing. So, to answer Nozick's question: how do collective property rights arise? – Out of the types of beings that we are.

The complete reimagining or re-membering of property calls for a view of our claim to it as, not arising out of our labor, but rather out of our need for it. It arises out of a remembering of the types of beings that we are: beings with biological needs, that when flourishing, can alter nature to create unique expressions of our individuality. These creations become our true private property, but only momentarily. They are eventually externalized into something that is either consumed or used by us to maintain our survival and promote flourishing, or externalized into a needed object for an other's (human or other lifeform's) consumption for the realization/flourishing of *their* nature.

5.4 From Abstract to Concrete Freedom

I promised very early on in this dissertation that we would be able to arrive at a much richer sense of freedom than what has been provided for by the libertarian. As Cohen revealed, the experience of "freedom" enjoyed by the proletariat within capitalism, hardly seems worthy of such a categorization. So, what can a reorientation of our human ontology towards organicism and its corresponding ethical implications provide in regard to freedom? I claim that an organicist ethics (and a political economy that takes such ethics into consideration) has the advantage of providing the conditions that are absolutely necessary for the freedom and autonomy of the individual, rather than the abstract type of freedom that only provides the semblance of autonomy despite the material reality of servitude.

The theses that have already been established in earlier chapters are:

1) The ontology of the human is necessarily organically embodied and thus confined by such a situation (chapter 3).

2) Although freewill is the distinctive characteristic of humans, it is nonetheless an emergent property that only arises *through* nature, that is, through and after conditions of health are met in the body and mind (chapter 4).
3) Capitalism *bypasses* concern for the organic body in its assumption of individual autonomy and rationality (chapter 2). Through this logic, capitalists are able to then claim that the appropriation of property has not only occurred through legitimate means (either by enclosure and an alleged labor-mixing model or through some rationalization of the instrumentalism of private property); and they are also able to accuse those without property as lacking in industriousness because it is assumed that they ought to have been "free" in all the relevant ways.

Allen Wood describes this view of freedom as rooted in the liberal modernist thinkers who conceived of "…self-determination itself chiefly as the inner volitional disposition of individual human agents, their mastery over their impulses and passions through rational self-knowledge and moral fortitude."[325] This individualistic, moralistic, and spiritualistic understanding of freedom leads to the justification for inequality and immiseration. If rationality, autonomy, and individuality are *not* seen as emergent properties that arise *after* care for the organic body, then these individual dignity-based theories of human ontology and human rights will have a propensity to either exclude or exploit lifeforms, including humans, that do not or cannot express those traits.

So, from thesis 1 and 2, and the recognition of the mistaken assumptions of capitalism revealed by thesis #3 we are left with the task of imagining a different political economy that does *not* bypass concern for the organic body – we will lay out the details of what this could look like in the final section (5.5). This section (5.4) shows that if one has the wrong concept of the human being (as a rational, autonomous, individual as opposed to organicism), then they are going to have the wrong concept of freedom. Any theory that designates the 'rational, autonomous, individual' as the normative base of human value, will logically end up with a theory of freedom that represents *abstract freedom*. An abstract depiction of the human being will only end up in an abstract depiction of freedom. I will show how using organicism as the normative base of human value will lead to a true, more robust, freedom – *concrete freedom* – because it aligns with the types of beings that we are, and as such, allows for human flourishing.

[325] Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx*, The Arguments of the Philosophers (London ; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981). 51

Freedom according to Nozick is the ability of the human person to act without restraints or interference from others so long as the act does not transgress an other's "state of nature claim-rights". As a voluntarist, our only obligations to others are those that were agreed upon by all parties involved, a non-contractual obligation would be tantamount to slavery. For libertarians, freedom is a "freedom from…" – a freedom from coercion, a freedom from interference, or a freedom from determination. Freedom is more so a mechanism of protection rather than an experience or state-of-being. And what is to be protected here is one's self and one's property. So, freedom is: a mechanism of protection from interference or coercion to an individual person and their property.

Voluntarism is a principle that reinforces this protection-based-freedom by ensuring that each party voluntarily consents in an interaction of exchange (i.e. a contract). The morality of a situation is based on a trust in the legitimacy of the agreement made by the persons involved. This presupposes the equal moral status of these persons and their capacity for rational autonomous agency, not as a potentiality (as with organicism), but as a given.

This type of freedom is exactly what Hegel was referring to when he spoke of "abstract freedom". Abstract freedom/abstract rights are the system of rights and rules based on reciprocity and a minimal restriction to safeguard life, limb and property. You can do what you want as long as you don't impose or interfere with another. It is the belief that we can be free from all that determines us. It is the freedom of an individual will, it comes in the form of choice for the determinate objects of one's desire. This is also known as "formal freedom" or "natural freedom" (according to a Hobbesian state of nature). An example of this freedom is the "freedom" to choose between purchasing a more expensive t-shirt that was made with all organic cotton in a factory of unionized workers or purchasing an affordable t-shirt made in an ethically questionable factory in Bangladesh. To a libertarian, as long as you were not forced by the state or by violence to choose one over the other, the consumer in this situation is perfectly free. Here is another example: As much as Juan desired to, he did not attend college because he could not afford the tuition. But he is excellent at working with his hands after his experience constructing furniture with his dad. When looking for a job he has the freedom to choose between working at a local factory on the production line, putting together parts for cars, or in the kitchen of a fast-food restaurant. His inability to view college as an option is not a hindrance to his freedom. Abstract freedom is the ability to choose among options - sometimes those options are limited in number, but the existence

of *some* option constitutes freedom. So, even the option of having a job at all or else be unemployed, would still constitute a free choice (even if the of the only other option – unemployment – is a threat to your survival).

These choices become more and more determined by social-economic forces rather than by individuals within capitalism's normal functioning. In *The German Ideology*, Marx describes this detachment from real choices as "alienation" as "the positing of social activity, the consolidation of our product as a real power over us, growing out of our control". Alan Wood points out that,

> …in capitalism, the large scale consequences of all this 'free' behavior, the market mechanism and economic system resulting from it, will fall outside anyone's control, and may react catastrophically on each or all of us in a manner which we are powerless, both individually and collectively, to prevent… The alienating feature, however, is not just that the market system leads periodically to disastrous results [as a trade crisis]. What is alienating is more basically that under capitalism human beings cannot be masters, whether individually or collectively, of their own fate, even within the sphere where that fate is a product solely of human action.[326]

So, people *appear* to be free in a capitalist society because everything occurs "accidentally" so to speak. People are not controlled by a despotic ruler like a king or an authoritarian government. But ironically, they are nevertheless controlled by unregulated economic decisions. As Wood quotes Marx: "In imagination (*vorstellung*), individuals under the dominion of the bourgeoisie are freer than before, because their conditions of life are accidental to them; but in reality they are more unfree, because they are more subsumed under a reified social power (*sachliche Gewalt*)."[327]

For Marx, abstract freedom and abstract rights are the rights of the "egoistic man" that is in effect separated from other humans and from community. He quotes the constitution of 1793:

"Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Art. 2. "These rights (the natural and imprescriptible rights) are: *equality, liberty, security, property.*"[328]

Here, Liberty means:

[326] Wood. *Karl Marx,* 49
[327] Wood. *Karl Marx.*
[328] Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *Writings of the Young Marx in Philosophy and Society*, ed. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 216–48.

> "*Art. 6.* "Liberty is the power belonging to each man to do anything which does not impair the rights of others," or according to the Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1791: "Liberty is the power to do anything which does not harm others."[329]

So, liberty is essentially the principle of non-interference. It is the freedom from interference from others, so long as one avoids interfering with others' freedom. Marx calls this, "the liberty of man viewed as an isolated monad, withdrawn into himself… liberty as a right of man is not based on the association of man with man but rather on the separation of man from man. It is the *right* of this separation, the right of the *limited* individual limited to himself."[330] This individualism, as the hegemonic ideology of civil society, creates the dismembering of humans from other humans and from community. Therefore, according to organicism, as an understanding of the community as *part of* the self, it creates in humans, a dismembering ultimately from themselves.

This act of separation is applied practically, Marx says, in the right of private property. He again quotes the Constitution of 1793: "The right of *property* is that belonging to every citizen to enjoy and dispose of his goods, his revenues, the fruits of his labor and of his industry *as he wills*."[331] This, Marx says, is the right of self-interest, meaning, the right to disregard other humans and society with respect to one's own property. Finally, the individual and their property is protected by *security* (the police): "*Art. 8* (Constitution of 1793): "Security consists in the protection accorded by society to each of its members for the preservation of his person, his rights and his property."[332]

All of this – the right to liberty, through property, and protected by security – engenders a paranoia among humans in society, a paranoia that their rights are in danger of being taken away, that their "freedom" will be stripped from them. Marx describes the effects of this individual freedom and its application as, "It lets every man find in other men not the *realization* but rather the *limitation* of his own freedom."[333] It pits people against each other as threats to one another's fullest human experience rather than allies or comrades in achieving it.

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[329] Marx. "On the Jewish Question"
[330] Marx. "On the Jewish Question" 235.
[331] Marx. "On the Jewish Question" 236.
[332] Marx. "On the Jewish Question"
[333] Marx. "On the Jewish Question"

By examining the French Revolution as one of the triumphs of Liberalism, Marx observes that the "freedom" achieved by these liberal revolutions is nothing but the freedom of movement for the "material elements forming the content of [the human's] life." This was the genesis of the idea that the freedom of markets equates to the freedom of humans/individuals, the explanation for why, today, Milton Freidman's book, "Capitalism and Freedom" resonates so widely as true. The *egoistic* man (as Marx calls him) – the individual of civil society – is the *result* of these liberal revolutions, and yet appears as *natural.* In his own words, "The *egoistic* man is the *passive* and *given* result of the dissolved society, an object of *immediate certainty* and thus a *natural* object." In other words, liberalism *created* the egoistic individual and then alleged and believed that such an individual was natural. This is an inverted consciousness where the end (individual) appears as the means (liberalism) and the means as the end. He continues, in referring to the French Revolution/the "bourgeois revolution": "The *political revolution* dissolves civil life into its constituent elements" of religion, trade, and property, essentially the realm of needs, labor, private interests and private rights, "without *revolutionizing* these elements themselves and subjecting them to criticism."[334] Then, this liberal revolution considers civil society and all its elements as "the *basis of its existence,* as a *presupposition* needing no ground, and thus as its *natural basis*."[335] And what this means for humans is that, as they exist in civil society, they are seen as natural and authentically human in this state; "Finally, man as a member of civil society is regarded as *authentic* man, *man* as distinct from *citizen*, since he is man in his sensuous, individual, and *most intimate* existence while *political* man is only the abstract and artificial man, man as an *allegorical, moral* person. Actual man is recognized only in the form of an *egoistic* individual, *authentic* man, only in the form of *abstract citizen.*"[336] This is how the true nature of our selves is hidden or viewed as an abstraction. But in reality, *this* liberal freedom is only *abstract freedom* and actual, *concrete freedom* is what true emancipation and true liberation would look like.

Political emancipation, the focus on abstract rights (to the neglect of *sittlichkeit* – ethical freedom) is merely the dismembering the individual human from their membership with other humans as a unified species and social power. It creates a rift between the *egoistic independent* individual (the rational, autonomous, individual) on the one hand and the "citizen, a moral person"

[334] Marx. "On the Jewish Question"
[335] Marx. "On the Jewish Question"
[336] Marx. "On the Jewish Question"

on the other, as if the relation can somehow be separated from the object. *Full* emancipation, Marx says, "is *restoration* of the human world and the relationships of *men themselves*… Only when the actual, individual man has taken back into himself the abstract citizen and in his everyday life, is individual work, and his individual relationships has [he] become a *species-being*, only when he has recognized and organized his own powers as *social* powers so that social force is no longer separated from him as *political* power, only then is human emancipation complete."[337]

The problem with abstract freedom is that it does not actualize freedom in the *content* of one's choices, therefore one's will is still heteronomous (still determined by other powers outside of me), and therefore it is not actually free. So, the question becomes: how can we be in control of not only the choice (choices as a consumer or worker) but also the *content* of the choices? How do we move from heteronomous freedom to autonomous freedom?

Objective freedom is achieved through the recognition of rights. This is the recognition that no man is an island. There are people who are affected by my choices within a socio-economic system (what Hegel would call, an "institution"). Ideally, this socio-economic system promotes self-determination/freedom in the form of rights. Recall, from the previous section how property is a general right that everyone is entitled to, and that property is necessarily externalized when it leaves the workers hands. So, property is externalized freedom in objects/property/commodities. But these objects/property/commodities don't simply magically appear, they come from other people, other workers. So, if I want society to continue to recognize *my* rights - my externalized freedoms as well as my needs – I have to make sure that my choices continue to allow for the rights of others because *they* are making the food/objects/commodities that I am consuming (that I am exercising my formal freedom upon). With each of my choices/actions, I am making a world of rights for other individuals – a rational system of wills. This is how I can be in control of the content as well as the choice – through a rational system of wills, by recognizing others' rights by involving myself in the political/ethical community (*sittlichkeit*).

This ethical freedom through community (*sittlichkeit*) is such that a person has certain contextualized responsibilities according to their social role or occupation. But these responsibilities (or duties) are not constrictive. There is no paradox or contradiction in the coexistence of responsibility and freedom, but only of abstract freedom. Through acting for the common good of the community, the individual actualizes their own freedom and their own

[337] Marx. "On the Jewish Question"

essential nature as not simply a particular (a rational, autonomous, individual), but as a universal, communal being (an organicist being).

Heikki Ikäheimo describes concrete freedom as "reconciliation with what necessarily determines us (external nature, internal nature), i.e. overcoming its alienness or hostility."[338] What I take this to mean is that concrete freedom is a coming to terms with our symbiotic relationship to nature itself (nature as external to us and our internal nature). It is the harmonious balance of individual and community, where we can include the community of humans as well as our ecological community. Ikaheimo also describes it, using Hegelian terms as, "consciousness of oneself in independent otherness" or the "unity of unity and difference"[339].

Marx picks up on what Hegel is trying to achieve here in the balancing of freedom and responsibility, individuality and community. True freedom for Marx requires that people be in conscious control of their *social relations*, which can only be achieved in community, not by retreating into one's territorially guarded 'private domain' of 'non-interference'.[340] And yet, at the same time, Wood says, "…Marx does not neglect to emphasize the complementary point that no society can be free unless it 'gives to each the social room for his essential life expression'… There can be no doubt that for Marx individual liberty is necessary to a free society. But it is equally evident, to Marx at least, that the liberty proclaimed by the bourgeois liberalism is not sufficient for genuine (that is, positive) freedom."[341] So, individual freedom is necessary but not sufficient for true, full freedom.

If you put the cart before the horse, neither one moves forward. If the protections of abstract freedoms are defended before and in exclusion of concrete freedoms, freedom never arises. As Jeremy Waldron noted, "We cannot take seriously the good that property rights do in regard to moral recognition without also considering the inherent harm of [the] *absence* of such recognition in the case of those who own nothing." (emphasis added).[342] The freedom that an organicist-based ethics can provide is one that matches with its own ontology – individual freedom achieved through its synthesis with the whole. The human self, whose 'rationality, autonomy, and individuality' must be revered and protected, can only achieve such freedom and self-

[338] Ikäheimo, "The Old Hegel, the Young Marx, and the Normative Ontology of the Human Life-Form."
[339] Ikäheimo. "The Old Hegel, the Young Marx, and the Normative Ontology of the Human Life-Form."
[340] Wood, *Karl Marx*.
[341] Wood. *Karl Marx*.
[342] Waldron, "Property and Ownership."

determination through particular social conditions that are collectively (that is, democratically) created by a community.

5.5.1 Speculations on an Organicist Based Political Economy

"Philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point, however, is to change it" – Karl Marx

All political and economic systems have ethical presuppositions. Even in the instances where the principle of state neutrality is upheld, as in our existing liberal state, the ethical presupposition of respect for citizens' individual autonomy is underlying the desire for neutrality. They are simply valuing 'consensus' as a good over other goods, which is a valuation nonetheless. States like our own will uphold a notion of justice and injustice but only where their notions of justice are not themselves tied to any conception of the good (except, as mentioned, the good of autonomy and consensus).

Value pluralism is desirable in any democratic society, but I don't believe that *any* society is totally value-neutral. And as stated in chapter 4, when discussing the normative obligation to health as a 'human nature perfectionist' view, value pluralism *is* compatible with perfectionism. The claim is not that there is only one way of living the good life – there are many. But at the same time, we can maintain that there are *definitely* some ways that are detrimental to human good. In other words, there is a base-level threshold, beneath which would constitute as unacceptable, and a plethora of options above the threshold.

Furthermore, because we have already established that the current liberal state presupposes a set of values (rules of good and bad) based on a conception of the human as a 'rational, autonomous individual', we could technically argue that the current liberal state *is* enforcing *this* perfectionist account of the good (which is essentially what chapter 2 implied when we showed the progression from this ontology to its normative claims regarding the political economy). So, what I have tried to do here in this dissertation is to find the most rudimentary, and (hopefully) uncontroversial, ontological essence of the human because from there, a consensus of *this* ontology can be foundational for the structuring of society. And I believe that it is uncontroversial that we are organic beings, that we have particular biological needs according to our species, and that a disruption or hinderance to these needs (resulting in necro-being, premature death or mere

survival) is irrefutably unacceptable. As Harris says, "There is no viable moral or explanatory theory that makes undue loss of life and death other than intuitively heinous."[343] This last section speculates on what a society that is founded upon this basic ontological picture with its corresponding values could look like. One thing that is certain is that capitalism would be ineffective, and as parts of this dissertation have shown, detrimental to achieving these ends in the interest of human wellbeing. Philosophers are, of course, limited to being trained in ideas; the full manifestation of the following speculations require insight from scientists, both social and natural.

The first method to revealing what a society truly values is to see where resources are allocated. As an example, in 2019, the United States spent over half of its discretionary spending—$676 billion—on defense, while *all other* sectors took portions of the remaining half (Education, employment, social services: $95B, health: $66B, transportation: $94B, etc.)[344]. If concern for health (as both survival and flourishing of the human body/mind) is at the top of our moral priorities, then it would only be logical that healthcare and education would be highest priority for resource allocation. But less obviously, this would also include the sustenance required for health, so food systems would also be prioritized and examined. They would need to be examined or evaluated under the criteria of health (both of the environment and of the consumer) rather than gross output (an impossible standard if the economic system is incentivized through profit).

Because food systems are so environmentally dependent, this particular sector would require extensive *local* input *and* collaboration with both state and non-governmental institutions for the proper management and planning of such complex systems. It would be in alignment with an organicist ethics to take the wider ecosystems and its biodiversity into account. This would also mean that a transition from commercial agriculture to local and subsistence farming would be required for sustainability of the land. When done correctly, that is, supported at a large scale, and managed locally, these small farms, community gardens, and urban gardens are both better for the environment, better for human health, and, particularly the urban gardens, help to eliminate food deserts and provide affordable healthy food to those who previously could not access it.

This balance of both small-scale local planning and large-scale state planning mirrors the many facets of dialecticism that pervade our existence as organicist beings, as we have seen many

[343] Harris, "Necro-Being."
[344] "Discretionary Spending in 2019: An Infographic," Congressional Budget Office, accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.cbo.gov/publication/56326.

examples throughout this dissertation: the individual and the collective; the symbiotic factors of health (of our being) both within the body and without; our embodiment and transcendence of nature; and our freedom being constituted by individual will and its forfeiture for others. This need for large-scale planning is necessary because local and regional changes will only be snuffed out by competitors, whether those changes are environmental standards or cooperative businesses. We have definitely seen this scenario pan out regarding environmental standards on the international level where the benefits of opting-in were counterbalanced with the resulting competitiveness of each country's market. But the inescapable holism of the earth and all its ecosystems pays no regard to international borders. As Nancy Holmstrom illustrates, "The whole planet shares the air; particularly bad air pollution in California a few years ago was traced to Asia. Deforestation in Latin America affects our air in North America and contributes to melting the polar ice caps. Dirty water in China leads to contaminated soil that leads to contaminated food that is then exported around the world. This is why climate scientists call for *planet-wide* curbs on emissions…"[345]

Another important factor to determine in a speculation like this, is in making the distinction between collective property and private property by first dispelling some myths. One of the reasons why Locke and many others thought that North America was justifiably taken and partitioned into private property is because they thought that the existing inhabitants never "properly" claimed the land because they didn't enclose, cultivate, and trade it using money so the land was "*terra nullius"* uncultivated and therefore unclaimed land. Locke said, "…yet there are still great tracts of ground to be found, which (the inhabitants thereof not having joined with the rest of mankind in the consent of the use of their common money) lie waste, and more than the people who dwell on it do or can make use of, and so still lie in *common*; though this can scarce happen amongst that part of mankind that have consented to the use of money." (emphasis added).[346] But this land, as Locke admitted, was nonetheless "common property". And as Holmstrom cleanly points out, "…common property nevertheless involves an *individual* right to property."[347] This is one of the myths we need to demystify: the equation of property with private property. Holmstrom explains,

> …property is not a thing (consider property in stocks), but rather a set of rights. The defining right of private property, which differentiates it from common property, is the right to exclude others, hence the fences, hedges, and laws that

[345] Nancy Holmstrom, "The Dialectic of the Individual and the Collective: An Ecological Imperative," *Radical Philosophy Review* 21, no. 1 (April 4, 2018): 77–101, https://doi.org/10.5840/radphilrev201833083.
[346] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*.
[347] Holmstrom, "The Dialectic of the Individual and the Collective: An Ecological Imperative."

> constituted the enclosures. [But] Each individual who is part of the group that owns something collectively has the right to use it, hence not to be excluded. Hence both collective property and private property are kinds of individual property.[348]

So, it is a violation of many individuals' rights to this property. Communal or collective property does not run counter to individual rights.

As far as what ought to be designated as common property and private property, I agree with Holmstrom who says that there should always be *personal* property, that is where the producers own the means of production and hence their own their product for personal consumption or trade. But common property ought to be the *default*, and without eradicating private property completely, it is private property that carries the burden of justification[349]. This is because, "when the question of privatizing something is raised, taking away rights from all those who had hitherto had a right to its use, what is being considered is commonstock, so both *logically—and temporally—*commonstock is prior. Hence privatization should have to be justified… the burden of justification [should] be on those who would exclude, i.e. defenders of private property[.]"[350]

Logically, and according to rules of justice (regarding the rights of the individuals who own some set of collective property), any decision to privatize, to exclude from the many individuals of the common, ought to be made democratically. This would ensure *truly* individual rights, as the rights of all true stakeholders would be taken into consideration. Consequently, collective planning regarding property protects individual autonomy, but only if it is truly democratic—done by the people—not by capitalists or state bureaucrats. Institutions and practices can be put in place to ensure that people have control, and not just consultation, over their representatives[351]. Real democracy requires equality, not only in the eyes of God and the law, but also in our workplaces and in the decisions of our institutions.

The way that organicism serves as a foundation to a new political economy is by first recognizing the ontological interconnectedness of nature. Humans *are* nature. We are dependent upon its rules and laws governing our body; we are dependent upon it for the sustenance we need to survive and the materials we need to build the massive global civilizations we have created. We

[348] Holmstrom.
[349] Holmstrom.
[350] Holmstrom.
[351] Holmstrom.

are dependent upon one another as fellow humans because an isolated person cannot provide themself with every material, emotional, and spiritual need. (Even hermits find support from either monasteries, or alms from followers.) Our labor is a perfect manifestation of our interdependence with nature and other humans; as earth provides the material, humans provide the need for and the appreciation of the things I produce. It is through this process of labor and interaction with the other (under conditions of freedom) that I become aware of myself. I become aware of the alchemist-like capabilities I have to manipulate nature, to create the reality of material conditions around me and for others. And through my sharing and exchanging of property with others I come to see the enormity of our collective powers.

Capitalism strips the vast majority of the world from the autonomy to determine the direction of their lives. Even capitalists are captive to the whims of the market. Now, as we have seen, freedom as *complete* non-interference does not exist. It is simply a law of existence that nothing in nature is unconstrained by something or someone else. But to live in *cooperation* with all that determines us leads to the most amount of freedom for all. And because of the holism of existence, it is possible (though not guaranteed in their lifetime) that even the most privileged of capitalists will receive karmic retribution of environmental destruction, social isolation, neuroses of character, or the uprising of the gravediggers that they themselves produced. No matter how much we have internalized this way of being, humans don't have to live according to the whims of the market. If liberals trust the coordinated efforts of the individuals in bureaucratic governments, and libertarians trust humans generally as isolated individuals to make rational decisions, then both should trust humans enough (both individually and collectively) to make decisions regarding their social conditions. Who better to consult about how to democratically structure a political economy than the people whose interests (their very survival) are directly at stake?

One of the most widely influential counterarguments of collective planning or communal ownership is the "tragedy of the commons" (an idea put forward by Garrett Hardin in 1968 and inspired by an 1833 pamphlet by economist William Forster Lloyd). The story goes, that

> natural resources held in common were inevitably subject to overuse…Individuals act to maximize their self-interest without regard to the long-term effect on the resource. This inevitably ends in the tragedy that they have destroyed what they depend on… The conclusion drawn from the tragedy argument is that resources cannot be held in common but must be privatized. Only when they are privately

> owned and the costs as well as the benefits accrue to the owner, will resources be protected.[352]

But his theory was not based on empirical research. (many conservative economists and theorists like to use oversimplified allegories, like imagining a man shipwrecked on an island, or, in this case, "Picture a pasture…"). I agree that this is certainly plausible, but it is definitely not inevitable. For [libertarians and liberals] having so much trust in human rationality, this view is certainly not giving people much credit for seeing beyond their own immediate self-interest. The complex rationality of humans also includes the ability to plan ahead. Additionally, as Holmstrom points out, "Both historically and today there are countless cases of resources held in common that have been managed in sustainable ways, sometimes for centuries. Groups as well as individuals can consider the long run, can cooperate and plan and negotiate and abide by formal and informal rules that they devise." She continues, "The claim that only private property can conserve natural resources would be laughable if the result were not so tragic…capitalists' need to generate profit in the short term, their imperative to grow or die, makes it much more likely they will disregard long-term sustainability."[353]

Conclusion

Philosophers need to be brave enough to trust their imaginations. We can debate about theories of justice, ponder the meaning of freedom, refine the concept of feminine empowerment, scrutinize the hidden biases that make up racism, but we must not forget to question the water in which we *all* are swimming. It is a truism in this historical epoch that capitalism is global. This statement isn't meant to imply a reductivist account of political philosophy or ethics. In fact many social/political ethical problems are overdetermined. But within the finite category of humans and their social relations, there *are* things that we all share in common. The theory of organicism attempted to describe our material ontology as one commonality, global capitalism is another reality we all share in common. But while the former is inescapable, the latter is malleable and not a necessary fact of reality. The questions I am interested in asking are: what happens to justice, freedom, feminism, racism, and *all* the variety of social and ethical issues both because of capitalism, but also in the absence of it?

[352] Holmstrom.
[353] Holmstrom.

But here, in this dissertation, I am only interested in the metaphysical roots of capitalism. And I believe, after much scrutiny, *there is none*. There was no such thing as an abstracted rational, autonomous, individual. It is more likely that we are biologically-based, pancorporeal beings who are having billions of individual experiences. But as Marx showed, capitalism alienates us from ourselves, from our life-activity/the products of our labor, and from each other. Translated into an organicist theory, the products of our labor constitute our *flourishing* and our relation to/cooperation with each other ensures our *survival*; but capitalism dis-members us. It pulls us apart, limb-by-limb, from our [capital 's'] *Self*, that is, the self that is both I and we.

When you have a crisis, like the COVID19 pandemic, when you strip away the frivolous out of necessity, you suddenly find out what is *truly* essential. All those industries that produced, shipped, and sold food and other essential goods—the farmers, the delivery drivers, and the grocery store clerks—along with the medical industry with all of its nurses on the front lines, the sanitation, and maintenance workers, *these* are the industries that were the last ones standing in a crisis. These all involve building, fixing, or maintaining our health and our basic biological needs. These were/are considered the "essential workers". And yet these workers are often the least paid, the least respected, and their jobs the most precarious. In this crisis, we were forced to remember our bodies. We were forced to recognize the primacy of health. But it is unfortunate that we had to learn this lesson the hard way. How would this crisis have been different if health, both allopathic *and* preventative (well-being), had been a financial priority of our society?

I believe another world is possible.

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