Abstract

If awarded the grant, I will spend four weeks in Berlin conducting research on Marx’s manuscripts from the 1850s, housed at the Marx archive in the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences. I will spend the remaining six weeks at home integrating this research material into an existing book project. A more precise timetable for the book project follows below. Here is a summary of its content:

Now commonplace, homologies between human, animal, and machine originate in concepts of embodiment that were new to the modern period. Nineteenth century science works aggressively to reinforce these homologies. This tendency of nineteenth century science is criticized in the theoretical work of Karl Marx. Marx wants to retain a metaphysical separation between the labors performed by animal, human, and machine. At the same time, Marx adopts the material continuities between these labors and the related concept of “energy”.

Drawing out the ambivalence between the unified concept of energy and the metaphysical specificity of human labor that we find in Marx, I show that the capitalist demand for limitless quantification drives a science that regards human, animal, and machine as indifferent energy resources to be used up. The medicalization and temporalization of human bodily life both respond to this form of science.

However, capitalism also requires a notion of the truly human, a status that is challenged by the very science that capitalism inaugurates. Because of this, capitalism offers humanist backlashes that virulently reinforce the boundaries of the truly human over against the dual threats of animal and machine. Racism, sexism, and social class are all deployed to buttress these boundaries.
I. Statement of the Problem

Homologies between human, animal, and machine intensify during modernity. These have today become commonplace, but they can still be accounted for historically, and tied to a precise historical phenomenon at that. Homologies between human, animal, and machine respond to the specifically modern phenomenon of the rise of commercial society, and their intensification over the course of modernity responds to the intensification of commercial society itself. Because of this, the nineteenth century, the apex of the bourgeois period, develops forms of scientific thought that work aggressively to reinforce these homologies, especially in ways that are conducive to viewing all working bodies indifferently, simply as resources whose energy is to be maximized.

The theoretical work of Karl Marx both consolidates and criticizes this tendency of nineteenth century science. Marx wants to retain a metaphysical separation between the labors performed by animal, human, and machine. At the same time, Marx recognizes material continuities between these labors: in particular, their unity as expressions of energy. The substitution of mechanical labor for human labor is the *sine qua non* of a liberated society, and such a substitution is not possible if the energies of humans and machines are not interchangeable. Energy itself is a new concept that develops during the latter half of the nineteenth century to reflect new constellations of embodiment.

II. Significance of the Problem

- Offers a specific and unusual scholarly reading of Marx that draws on archival material from his notebooks on women, technology, animality, and race: notebooks that have not all been published and are not widely available.
- Combines careful textual interpretation, rigorous historical and conceptual analysis, and philosophical critique of arguments.
- Shows the implications of Marx’s ideas today while being sensitive to their historical context.
- Interdisciplinary: of interest not only to philosophers of embodiment, 19th century historians, intellectual historians and Marx scholars but also to historians of technology, historians of medicine, critical race theorists, feminists, German scholars, and theorists in the social sciences.
- Shows the interrelation between developments in philosophy, politics, science, and technology.
III. Summary of Pertinent Literature

Following the lead of the thinkers detailed in the Reference section below, I seek to add not only to the literature about exciting new directions in Marx scholarship, but also to trace the influence of Marx’s work on broader philosophical themes such as the interpretation of machinery and animality in the modern period. In particular, my work jumps off from the value-theory debates over Marx’s work and connects these debates with questions of physiology, the interpretation of bodies in capitalist life, and the discoveries of feminist and critical race theories.

I have been deeply influenced by the critical reinterpretations of Marx offered by Moishe Postone in his 1993 work *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*. Postone is, in turn, indebted to a strain of interpretation begun in Isaak Illich Rubin. Both thinkers address the categories of physiology and embodiment as side issues to broader theories of how best to understand “value” in Marx’s work. I hope to build on their research, showing how we must understand physiology and embodiment not merely as natural categories, but also as historical categories: as forms of science peculiar to capitalism. As a theoretical aid to this project, I draw on the work of feminist philosopher of science and technology Donna Haraway, who works on the intersection of gender, race, and science in the modern period.

In May of 2006, I defended a dissertation entitled “On Alienation and Machine Production: Capitalist Embodiment in Karl Marx.” In September of 2006, I was invited to submit a chapter from this dissertation to an international competition in Berlin that celebrates pre-tenure Marx scholars. Based on my submission, I was invited to attend a ceremony for finalists that occurred in March of 2007. The Berlin ceremony included substantial feedback on my work from an international team of Marx scholars, social and political philosophers, and 19th century historians.

An article that derives from the work I presented in Berlin will emerge in the *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels Forschung*, one of the journals attached to the Marx-Engels collected works project, in November 2007. This article is expanded in chapter two of the book project as detailed in section V below.

In April of 2007, I presented part of chapter one at the annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Central Division, held in Chicago at the Palmer House Hilton. Based on this presentation, I was invited to give a lecture at Northwestern University’s Roberta Buffett Center for Comparative and International Studies on October 4, 2007.
My book project draws on feedback from the international committee in Berlin, the interdisciplinary audiences at the American Philosophical Association and at Northwestern, and the scholarly communities at work on various aspects of Marx’s philosophy.

IV. Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to resolve what first appears to be a tension between Marx’s metaphysical commitments and his scientific commitments, we must appeal to his critique of ideology, and apply this critique to aspects of his own thinking. Marx shows that all thought can only move in the horizon determined for it by material conditions. Marx’s own thought moves in the horizon of commercial, bourgeois society. This society simultaneously eliminates a notion of the truly human and, perceiving this elimination as a threat, restores and reinforces ideas of the truly human and programs for attaining this status.

Ideas of the truly human peculiar to commercial societies are not simply echoes from societies temporally and spatially removed from the commercial web, though they contain elements from both: classical conditions and the noble savage are both romanticized. Rather, the nostalgia of commercial societies is a specific response to the conditions of commercial society itself. Though cloaked in historical and anthropological forms, the nostalgia for the human derives from the threat of its erasure.

By applying Marx’s critique of ideology to his own work, we understand that the tension between humanism and science is itself a product of capitalism, and of a contradiction peculiar to capitalist societies. Capitalist demand for limitless quantification drives a science that levels human, animal, and machine to the common denominator of energy. At the same time, capitalism offers a series of humanist backlashes that virulently reinforce the boundaries of the truly human over against the dual threats of animal and machine. While capitalism removes humanity as a property of status, blood, or religious affiliation, it also distributes a new “humanity” in accordance with purchasing power: requiring buyers in addition to sellers, capitalism redeploy a notion of humanity that, in other respects, it disavows.

The intensification of racism during the capitalist period responds to the need to police the threat of the animal, to project this threat onto some bodies so that it may be disavowed by other bodies. The scrutiny of
upper and middle class sexualities during the period, especially those of women, also responds to the threat of the animal. The fear of the animal contributes to the heightened misogyny of the nineteenth century. Finally, the increased importance of intellectual, skilled labors to establishing bourgeois class status operates against the mechanization of bodies performing unskilled, manual labors.

I hope to explore some of the lingering consequences of the homology between human, animal and machine, the homology that forms the basis of capitalist embodiment. Norms of capitalist embodiment include the medical management of bodies, including the quantifications of bodily energy in units that are not distinguishable qualitatively, such as calories. Capitalism also manages bodies temporally. This temporal management means that we have become habitually aware of units of time conducive to capitalist labor. This habit affects not only our perception of small units of time, like the fifteen-minute break or the forty-hour work week, but also has deep implications for our notion of the life cycle, which is divided into productive years bracketed by youth and retirement. New configurations of gender, sexuality, and age, caught up with the idea of limitless bodily-transformation, derive from the medical and temporal norms of capitalist embodiment.

V. Designs and Methods

Marx’s original manuscripts are currently in Amsterdam at the International Institute of Social History, the site where I conducted my Fulbright-funded dissertation research in 2003-4. However, full photocopies of the manuscripts are available in Berlin at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, a research institute to which I have access and new scholarly contacts through the prize competition of 2006-7. At this point, there are also many more Marx scholars at work in Berlin than in Amsterdam. For this reason, I would like to do the primary research in Berlin rather than Amsterdam. Original manuscripts need only be checked when photocopies are illegible, and the physical proximity of the two cities makes this possible. I am proficient in the German and French I need to conduct research on the manuscripts, and in the Dutch I might potentially use to navigate the Amsterdam libraries. In addition, I am at work on improving my spoken German, a goal that a month-long residency in Berlin would aid.

In terms of content, I plan to look more deeply into Marx’s excerpt texts on machinery from the 1850s and to look for the first time for the themes of animal physiology, race, and sexual difference as these appear in these excerpts. I will draw on my contacts at the Berlin Brandenburg Academy
of Sciences, Gerald Hubman and Rolf Hecker, in order to gain access to the archive. At a meeting in March of 2007, Dr. Hubman, a historian of philosophy who works full-time at the Berlin archive, assured me that he would make himself available to help me with the resources of the archive whenever my own schedule and funding permitted it.

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The first two chapters will be fully revised by May of 2008. I hope to use the ten weeks of the Creighton grant to complete the research for chapters three and four and to draft chapter three. If awarded the grant, I will spend the first four weeks conducting research in the Marx archive in Berlin, using the resources not only of the archive, but also of the living scholars at work on related problems. I will spend the final six weeks back home, using the first four weeks to draft chapter three and the final two weeks to continue my research into potential presses.

VI. References

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Appendix A: Biographical Sketch (Abbreviated Vitae, followed by a short narrative)

Amy E. Wendling

Creighton University Department of Philosophy, 2500 California Plaza, Omaha, NE 68178, USA
phone (402) 280-3591 fax (402) 280-3359
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Employment
Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Creighton University, July 2006 to present.

Education
Ph.D. The Pennsylvania State University, May 2006. Major Field: Philosophy; Minor Field: Social Thought
Dissertation Title: “On Alienation and Machine Production: Capitalist Embodiment in Karl Marx”
B.A. Southwestern University, 1998. Major Field: Philosophy; Minor Fields: French, Women’s Studies
Thesis Title: “Guilty Subjects: The Radical Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas”

Honors, Grants and Awards
Finalist, David Rjazanov Prize. International research prize for 2006 honors a pre-tenure researcher on Marx. Prize was announced at a ceremony in Berlin, Germany on March 8, 2007. I was awarded second place of five finalists.

Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellowship to Amsterdam and Berlin, 2003-2004. Archival research on Marx’s unpublished texts at the International Institute of Social History (www.iisg.nl). Secondary literatures from the Staatsbibliothek Berlin. Award of $17,000 was subsequently lowered to $11,000 when I was awarded a Fulbright grant for the same year.

J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship to the Netherlands, 2003-2004. Provided a 1000 euro living allowance for nine months in Amsterdam.

Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities, 1998-1999. Provided portable graduate school tuition and a $15,000 living allowance.

Journal Articles and Book Chapters

“On Alienation and Machine Production: Capitalist Embodiment in Karl Marx.” Accepted for publication in *Beiträge zur Marx-Engels-Forschung: Neue Folge.* Forthcoming Fall 2007. (Peer Refereed)

“Rough, Foul-Mouthed Boys: Women’s Monstrous Laboring Bodies.” Accepted for publication in *Radical Philosophy Today.* Forthcoming Fall 2007. (Peer Refereed.)


“Are All Revolutions Bourgeois?: Revolutionary Temporality in Karl Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.*” *Strategies: Journal of Theory, Culture, and Politics.* 16:1, May 2003, 39-49. (Peer Refereed.)


Selected Presentations and Lectures

“Who’s Afraid of Karl Marx: New Directions in Marx Scholarship.” Invited Speaker, Northwestern University, Roberta Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies, October 4, 2007.


“The Dignity of Labor?: A Marxist Challenge to Traditional Marxism.” Society for Social and Political Philosophy, meeting in conjunction with the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), Salt Lake City, Utah, October 20-22, 2005.


“Are all Revolutions Bourgeois?: Karl Marx’s Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.” Murphy Institute of Political Economy, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 13-14, 2002.

Professional Service

Society for Social and Political Philosophy Executive Board 2007-2008. This is an elected position. Duties involve blind-reviewing papers for conference presentations of the society in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association Annual Meeting, Eastern Division and the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy Annual Meeting.


Languages

German, French, some Dutch
Narrative

Born in Houston, Texas, Dr. Wendling has also lived in Pennsylvania, Malta, and Amsterdam. She completed her Ph.D. and May of 2006 and joined the Creighton philosophy faculty that autumn. Her research interests are in 19th century philosophy, feminist theory, and social and political philosophy, as well as in interdisciplinary work, especially in the theoretical aspects of the social sciences. She is currently teaching an honors course on Social Theory that examines the work of Freud, Marx, Comte, Durkheim, Weber, du Bois, and Simmel. In the spring she will be teaching the Philosophy of Feminism, a course that will be cross-listed with Women’s and Gender Studies. She also regularly teaches the Philosophy of Law and courses in Creighton’s core curriculum. This year, she is also serving on the Creighton Faculty Senate and as the Creighton Fulbright Program Advisor.
Appendix B: Budget

Direct Costs of Travel and Stay in Berlin

I plan to use the direct cost allowance of $500 and also much of the stipend to fund my travel and stay to/in Berlin.

1. A round-trip airline ticket estimated for the dates of May 27, 2008-June 27, 2008 booked well in advance $1300 USD

2. Rented One-Room Flat stay in Berlin (1000 euros) plus self-catering allowance (500 euros)—Prenzlauerberg or Kreuzberg estimated for the dates of May 27, 2008-June 27, 2007 booked well in advance 1500 euros = $2125 USD

3. Internet Access 2 euros/day for 30 days 60 euros = $85 USD

4. Transportation: U-Bahn and S-Bahn 4 euros/day for 30 days 120 euros = $120 USD

Totals: $3630