



# Karl Marx on Technology and Alienation

Amy Wendling

For Marx, technology exemplifies the interaction between human beings and nature. Marx's description of this interaction is in transition throughout his works. An older, humanist and vitalist paradigm sets the human being against nature as a qualitatively different type of force. A newer, thermodynamic paradigm sets the human being and nature in continuity. Marx's work occurs at the juncture of these paradigms and contains elements of each. This affects his deployment of the concept 'labor'. Labor is demoted from its status as a meaningful human activity that confers political status and mastery of the natural world, and it becomes a mere nodal point where energy is transferred. Against this backdrop, Marx increasingly appealed not to meaningful labor but to the abolition of labor as the culmination of human freedom. He also shows how the labors of members of the working class, including women, are interpreted in the old and new paradigms.

"Prof. Wendling's project is an important one, and it is developed very well, in very interesting ways, and it will attract anyone who is interested in Marx's philosophy, philosophy of technology, and/or the critique of capitalism. Wendling demonstrates very well the ambivalence toward the human being and the human subject in Marx's work, and indeed she fills out this problem in ways that are remarkable, fascinating, and provocative" -- Bill Martin, DePaul University

"This is a scholarly and well argued treatment of some fundamental and central issues of Marxist theory which will be of great interest to readers in a wide range of disciplines. It presents what will be, to most readers, original and thought-provoking ideas and arguments in a lively and stimulating way" -- Sean Sayers, University of Kent, UK

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