The *Grundrisse* (The 1857-58 Manuscript)

The Chapter on Capital: Part 8

Surplus Value (pp. 321-326)

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If there is a surplus value at the end of production, a surplus value realised in exchange but presupposed to it (that is, determined before commodities enter into it), then this means that the labour-time objectified ("*vergegenständlichte*" (Marx 1973, p. 237)) in the product is greater than that present in the original components of capital.[1]

The labour-time objectified in capital consists of (1) that objectified in the raw material; (2) that objectified in the instrument of labour; (3) that objectified in "the price of labour". In the case of (1) and (2), this labour-time remains unchanged: in production, the only change they undergo is a change of form, not of value. It is only with respect to (3) that capital exchanges one thing for something qualitatively different: objectified labour (exchange value; money) for living labour.

> If living labour reproduced only the labour time objectified in the labour price, this also would be merely formal, and, as regards value, the only change which would have taken place would have been that from one mode to another mode of the existence of the same value, just as, in regard to the value of the material of labour and the instrument, only a change of its mode of material existence has taken place. (Marx 1973, p. 321)

In this case, in that of a change of material existence with no change in *value*, capital would not have functioned *as* capital. For the worker, she would have received from the capitalist the full product of her labour, other than that the capitalist would have paid her the price of her product in advance of its realisation. (This is how "the economists" who "construct a legitimation, an apology for capital by explaining it with the aid of the very process which makes its existence impossible" see it: "[y]ou pay me for my labour, you exchange it for its product and deduct from my pay the value of the raw material and instrument which you have furnished. That means we are *partners* [...]."[2] (Marx 1973, p. 322)

Marx now cuts to the chase.

[1] "[E]xpressed passively, the magnitude of labour appears as an amount of space; but expressed in motion, it is measurable only in time". (Marx 2006, p. 321)

[2] "[T]the product is transformed into money, and the money is divided in such a way that you, the capitalist, obtain

What the worker sells to the capitalist is his “capacity [“*fähigkeit*”] of disposing over” his labour: he “alienates” (“*entäussert*” (Marx 2006, p. 239); Nicolaus says “divests”) it. What he receives in return is the value of this alienation (“*Entäusserung*”).[3] This value is determined by “the objectified [“*vergegenständlichte*”] labour contained in his commodity”. This commodity is the worker’s “vitality”: “he has to consume a certain quantity of food, to replace his used-up blood etc. He receives no more than an equivalent.”[4] (Marx 1973, p. 323)

(Marx notes that here is dealing with “labour in general”, i.e. “simple labour” (“*einfache Arbeit*” not “any *particular* qualified labour: “we are here not yet concerned with the fact that there is more labour objectified in his immediate existence than is contained in his mere vitality—i.e. the labour time necessary to pay for the products necessary to maintain his vitality—namely the values he has consumed in order to produce a specific labouring capacity, a special skill.” (Marx 1973, p. 323-4)

> If one day’s work were necessary in order to keep one worker alive for one day, then capital would not exist, because the working day would then exchange for its own product, so that capital could not realise itself and hence could not maintain itself as capital. [...] If, however, only half a working day is necessary in order to keep one worker alive one whole day, then the surplus value of the product is self-evident, because the capitalist has paid the price of only half a working day but has obtained a whole day objectified in the product; thus has exchanged *nothing* for the second half of the work day. The only thing which can make him into a capitalist is not exchange, but rather a process through which he obtains *objectified labour time*, i.e. *value*, without exchange. Half the working day costs capital *nothing*; it thus obtains a value for which it has given no equivalent. And the multiplication of values can take place only if a value in excess of the equivalent has been obtained, hence *created*. (Marx 1973, p. 324)

Surplus value is therefore a result of production, not of circulation. “Surplus value in general is value in excess of the equivalent. The equivalent, by definition, is only the identity of value with itself. Hence surplus value can never sprout out of the equivalent; nor can it do so originally out of circulation; it has to arise from the production process of capital itself.” (Marx 1973, p. 324)

Surplus value is surplus *labour*:

> The matter can also be expressed in this way: if the worker needs only half a working day in order to live a whole day, then, in order to keep alive as a worker, he needs to work only half a day. The second half of the labour day is forced labour; surplus-labour. What appears as surplus value on capital’s side appears identically on the worker’s side as surplus labour in excess of his requirements as worker, hence in excess of his immediate requirements for keeping himself alive. (Marx 1973, pp. 324-5)

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the price of your raw material and your instrument, while I, the worker, obtain the price which my labour added to them. The benefit for you is that you now possess raw material and instrument in a form in which they are capable of being consumed (circulated); for me, that my labour has valorised [Nicolaus says “realised”] itself.”

[3] Marx here inserts a parenthetical note. Frédéric Bastiat, Marx suggests, argues that wage labour is nothing more than a “formal form” which is in essence has nothing to do with the labour-capital relation. Workers are as much capitalists as capitalists are: wages and profits are in essence the same, even if they differ in *form*. This is the basis for his (Bastiat’s) call for “economic harmony”.

[4] “[W]e are not yet dealing with the working class, i.e. the replacement for wear and tear so that it can maintain itself as a class, since the worker here con fronts capital as a worker, i.e. as a presupposed perennial subject.”

It is the "great historic quality" of capital to create this surplus labour; its "historic destiny" ("'*historische Bestimmung*", "historic mission", perhaps) is completed when " the development of the productive powers of labour,which capital incessantly whips onward with its unlimited mania for wealth, [...] have flourished to the stage where the possession and preservation of general wealth require a lesser labour time of society as a whole [...]." (Marx 1973, p. 325)

This "historic mission" is real, and has real significance.

> Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness ["*Naturbedürftigkeit*", perhaps better "natural need"], and thus creates the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also therefore appears no longer as labour, but as the full development of activity itself, in which natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared ; because a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one. *This is why capital is productive; i.e. an essential relation for the development of the social productive forces*. It ceases to exist as such only where the development of these productive forces themselves encounters its barrier in capital itself.[5] (Marx 1973, p. 325)

[5] Marx cites a letter from the *Times*, in which an outraged Caribbean planter admonishes how the free "blacks" of Jamaica shun the possibility of becoming wage labourers, and live contented with a life of small peasant subsistence production. Unlike wage-workers, these producers do not confront capital as such ("capital as capital"), because "autonomous wealth as such can exist only either on the basis of *direct* forced labour, slavery, or *indirect* forced labour, *wage labour*." (Marx 1973, p. 326) Wealth confronts direct forced labour not as capital, but rather as "relation of domination", and, as a consequence, cannot create "general industriousness". (Marx promises to return the question of wage labour and slavery further on.)

References

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