The *Grundrisse* (The 1857-58 Manuscript)

The "Introduction"

April 30, 2026

The "Introduction" ("*Enleitung*") was written at the end of August 1857, a month or so before Marx started to write the actual 1857-58 Manuscript itself.[1] Although it is an important text, it is not easy to say what it is the "introduction" to, exactly. The 1857-58 Manuscript was never intended for publication, but seems to have been an exercise whereby Marx could set out his ideas in written form. The "Introduction" is clearly not an introduction to this manuscript. When Marx did publish a version of his economic theories, at least in part, in the form of the 1857 *Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, he wrote a "Preface" to it, in which he remarked that a "general introduction [to my work], which I had drafted, is omitted, since on further consideration it seems to me confusing to anticipate results which still have to be substantiated, and the reader who really wishes to follow me will have to decide to advance from the particular to the general." (Marx 1987b, p. 261) It is generally agreed that the "general introduction" that Marx refers to in the 1859 Preface is the August 1857 "Introduction", although it is not entirely clear to which specific "results" Marx's comment makes reference.

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1 Production, Consumption, Distribution, Exchange (Circulation)

(1) Production

The "object before us," Marx tells us, is "*material production*". "Individuals producing in society—hence socially determined individual production—is, of course, the point of departure." (Marx 1973, p. 83)

That production is carried out by individuals is a truism. What is pertinent here is that production is always carried out by individuals *in society*. The isolated individuals that feature,

[1] For reasons I have already addressed, of the two full English translations of the 1857-58 manuscript, Marx 1973, and Marx 1986 and Marx 1987a, respectively the Penguin edition and the *Collected Works* edition, I have chosen to read the former, the Penguin edition. With regard to the "Introduction" alone, there are two other English translations that I am aware of: Marx 1975, and that to be found in Ehrbar 2010.

for example, in the depiction of early societies in the writings of the early political economists ("[t]he individual and isolated hunter and fisherman" (Marx 1973, p. 83)) are the product of the eighteenth-century fashion for "Robinsonades".[2]

But this vision of the human being as primordially an individual is itself a product of the reification of the individual in that takes place in *bourgeois* society, a "society of free competition [in which] the individual appears detached from the natural bonds etc. which in earlier historical periods make him the accessory of a definite and limited human conglomerate." (Marx 1973, p. 83) Bourgeois society sees the defining characteristic of the human being as their *individuality*; and then because classical political economy takes bourgeois social relations to be the result of human nature it retroprojects this ideology of bourgeois individualism onto past—precapitalist—social structures (which where the political economic Robinsonade narrative comes from).[3]

Against this, Marx points out that, the isolated individual in history is a myth. "The more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole [...]." (Marx 1973, p. 84) But in addition to this, the *bourgeois* individual is also a myth: it is no less the case that bourgeois individuals produce within a "larger whole" than any other individual. What is (unwarrantedly) retroprojected back into history by the "political economists" is not a false reading of *pre*-bourgeois societies but a false reading of the *bourgeois* one.[4] "The human being is in the most literal sense a political animal,[5] not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Production by an isolated individual outside society [...] is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living *together* and talking to each other." (Marx 1973, p. 84)

Hence, production is *always* production within a given social configuration ("production at a definite stage of social development—production by social individuals" (Marx 1973, 85)). *All* production, in *all* social epochs, has determinate features common to it: "production in general", in this sense, is an *abstraction*, but it is a "*reasonable* abstraction" (Marx 1973, p. 85, italicisation added).[6] It is "reasonable" in that "it [...] brings out and fixes the common element and

[2] "Robinsonades" is that literary genre characterised by the separation of the social individual from society—as exemplified by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The term itself was coined by the writer Johann Gottfried Schnabel in 1731 in his enormously popular novel *Insel Felsenburg* (published in English under the title *Palisades Island*), a tale of a shipwrecked seaman washed up on an island where he sets up a utopian society. For a critical discussion of the application of the Robinsade phenonmenon in economics, see Steve Hymer 2011; for the use of the concept particularly in *Capital*, see WSheasby n.d.

[3] Interestingly, Marx excepts James Steuart from this procedure: "Steuart avoided this simple-mindedness because as an aristocrat, and in antithesis to the eighteenth century, he had in some respects a more historical footing." (Marx 1973, p. 84)

[4] The notion that the premise of human activity is the isolated individual can be seen clearly in modern neoclassical economic theory, as too in modern neoliberal political thought, as in, for example, Margaret Thatcher's dictum (the second couplet of which being routinely forgotten) that there was no such thing as society, only individuals and their families. "[...] [W]ho is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first." (Thatcher 1987)

[5] Marx puts the term in Greek, referencing Aristotle.

[6] Marx says "*verständige Abstraktion*"; "reasonable" is how Marx 1986 (p. 23) puts it. Marx 1975 (p. 51) and Ehrbar 2010 (p. 13) have "sensible", while Marx 1973 (p. 85) has "rational". Insofar as "*verständige* suggests prudence, perspecacity and judiciousness, the word suggests the utility of the abstraction, its usefulness as a way of speaking, hence my preference for "reasonable". The word here does not seem to me to imply that a particular *type* of abstraction is being invoked; I thus find David Harvey's "categorical" contrast between

thus saves us repetition." (Marx 1973, p. 85) Those determinations that all epochs of production have in common are those that in their absence would make production itself unthinkable; but failure to distinguish what is common to all manifestations of production and what is specific to certain epochs (the bourgeois epoch being in the case at hand), Marx argues, is what leads the political economists to claim the transhistorical nature of *present-day* determinations.

(Marx says at this point that "in order to talk about production [...] we must either pursue the process of historic development through its different phases, or declare beforehand that we are dealing with a specific historic epoch such as e.g. modern bourgeois production [...]." (Marx 1973, p. 85) I read Marx's point as being that we might do either one of these—trace the historical development of production, or investigate one specific historical period—but we cannot simultaneously do *both*: we cannot take the historically common features of production and imagine they individuate a given historically specific period; but neither can we take the individuating features of a given period and take them as common features of production in different historical periods. And it is this latter misconception that is the error of the political economists.)

If "production in general" is an abstraction (albeit a "reasonable" one), then so too is "general production"—the totality of productive activities at a given moment.[7] This latter too is an abstraction, for, in the concrete, "[p]roduction is always a *particular* branch of production—e.g., agriculture, cattle-breeding, manufacture, etc. [...]." (Marx 1973, p. 86)

(Marx now says, a little cryptically: "But political economy is not technology. The relation of the general characteristics of production at a given stage of social development to the particular forms of production to be developed elsewhere [...]." (Marx 1973, p. 86) I presume that the "general characteristics of production" here referred to are *technological* relations, which do not belong to (because they are secondary to) an account of *social* relations.)

In addition to all this, if production is always a particular branch of production, it is also what Marx calls a "social subject" (Marx 1973, p. 86). Production is *social* process—i.e. it is far more than the black-box combination of "inputs" and "outputs" that sits at the heart of neoclassical economics. (Marx again signals that he will return to this point.)

For the political economists, Marx says, what is posited in their work is (1) the general conditions of production, i.e. those conditions without which production cannot take place, and (2) the conditions which promote production (i.e. the circumstances within which production occurs and which are propitious to its continuation). (Marx references, as examples, John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* and Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.) But in such a procedure we see again the projection of particular bourgeois characteristics onto the whole of history, thus reifying them: production is presented "as distinct from distribution etc., as encased in eternal natural laws independent of history, at which opportunity bourgeois relations are then quietly smuggled in as the inviolable natural laws on which society in the abstract is founded." (Marx 1973, p. 87)

Under the rubric of the conditions that promote production, Marx notes that the political economists identify, first, "property", and, second, the "protection" of this property (by "courts, police, etc."). (Marx 1973, p. 87) But, Marx notes, with regard to the first of these, to "property", "[a]ll production is appropriation of nature on the part of an individual within and through a

"rational abstraction" and "concrete abstraction" unhelpful (Harvey 2023, ch. 1 ("Marx's Introduction: Pages 83–111")).

[7] "If there is no production in general, then there is also no general production." (Marx 1973, p. 86)

specific form of society. In this sense it is a tautology to say that property (appropriation) is a precondition of production"; (Marx 1973, p. 87) production *without* property would therefore be a contradiction in terms. But again, to say this says nothing about the *type* of property that obtains at any given historical moment. With regard to the second, the "protection" of property, Marx notes that "every form of production creates its own legal relations, form of government, etc." (Marx 1973, p. 88) If "the bourgeois economists are aware [...] that production can be carried on better under the modern police than e.g. on the principle of might makes right [...] [t]hey forget only that this principle is also a legal relation, and that the right of the stronger prevails in their 'constitutional republics' as well, only in another form." (Marx 1973, p. 88)

Marx now summarises what he has said in this part of the text. "There are characteristics which all stages of production have in common, and which are established as general ones by the mind; but the so-called general preconditions of all production are nothing more than these abstract moments with which no real historical stage of production can be grasped. There are determinations which are common to all stages of production and are fixed by reasoning as general; the so-called general conditions of all production, however, are nothing but these abstract moments, which do not define any of the actual historical stages of production." (Marx 1973, p. 88)

(2) The general relation of production to distribution, exchange, consumption

The "obvious" (Marx also calls them "trite") categories that the political economists have identified are production, distribution, exchange and consumption.

> Production creates the objects which correspond to the given needs; distribution divides them up according to social laws; exchange further parcels out the already divided shares in accord with individual needs; and finally, in consumption, the product steps outside this social movement and becomes a direct object and servant of individual need, and satisfies it in being consumed. (Marx 1973, p. 89)

Understood like this, production, distribution, exchange and consumption "form a regular syllogism":

> production is the generality, distribution and exchange the particularity, and consumption the singularity in which the whole is joined together. [...] Production is determined by general natural laws, distribution by social accident, and the latter may therefore promote production to a greater or lesser extent; exchange stands between the two as formal social movement; and the concluding act, consumption, which is conceived not only as a terminal point but also as an end-in-itself, actually belongs outside economics except in so far as it reacts in turn upon the point of departure and initiates the whole process anew. (Marx 1973, p. 89)

This is the logical outcome of political economy. If we say that production is governed by "general" laws, operative over all historical periods, and we say that the distribution (including exchange[8]) of the product is governed by laws that are specific ("particular") to given social

[8] Note the dual nature of distribution here: distribution, Marx notes, is "twofold, since distribution is determined by society and exchange by individuals." (Marx 1973, p. 89) The distinction is an important one. "Distribution" in Marx is the allocation of the social product according to social class; under a regime of capitalist production relations, the social product is distributed in the form of wages and surplus-value (and then there is a further dis-

circumstances, then it can only be the *individual* act of consumption that binds the two other acts—production and distribution—together, that allows the three "moments" to form a whole. In that sense, and only in that sense, does the unity of these moments take on the structure of a syllogism, a syllogism in which the generality of production and the particurity of distribution are mediated by the singularity of consumption.[9]

It is important to be note here that Marx is not endorsing this syllogistic conception of the unity of production and its "moments": true, Marx says, the figure displays a "coherence", but it is "a shallow" coherence. Its limitations find expression in the critiques advanced by the "opponents" of the "political economists"—those thinkers and writers subsequent to the period of classical political economy ("whether inside or outside its [i.e. the political economists'] realm". On the one hand it is charged that the political economists place too much emphasis on production and ignore the significance of distribution (Marx must have in mind here the post-Ricardo Ricardians). On the other it is alleged that the very unity that the categories themelves form is ignored. But none of the schools referenced—neither the political economists themselves, nor the various subsequent schools of detractors—have been able to identify the real inner connections between and emergent unity of the categories of production, distribution and exchange, and consumption. That task is what Marx turns to next.

[Production and consumption][10]

To start, Marx takes the relation between production and consumption.

In the first place, he notes, they are the same thing "immediately"("*unmittelbar*" is Marx's word (Marx 2006, p. 27), that is, "unmediatedly"), i.e. they are the same thing in the one act. Firstly because "the individual not only develops his abilities in production, but also expends them, uses them up in the act of production"; secondly because of means of production, "which become worn out through use, and are partly (e.g. in combustion) dissolved into their elements again", and of raw material, "which loses its natural form and composition by being used up." "The act of production is therefore in all its moments also an act of consumption [...]: *determinatio est negacio*," says Marx, quoting Spinoza. (Marx 1973, p. 90)

Marx notes that the political economists, with their concept of "productive consumption", are already familiar with this identity between consumption and production *in production*,[11] but he

tribution of surplus-value in the forms of profit, interest and rent). Only *after* this distribution has been achieved, does market *exchange*—in which distributed social value is converted into commodities—take place. This conception stands counterposed to present-day mainstream economic theory, which holds that the distribution of the social product *only* takes place in the market, according to the laws of supply and demand. In reality, of course, what is distributed in market exchange is determined by the prior *class* allocation (distribution) of the total social product. "Distribution determines the relation in which products fall to individuals (the amount); exchange determines the production in which the individual demands the portion allotted to him by distribution." (Marx 1973, p. 89)

[9] A discussion of the syllogism, and the import of the notions of "generality", "particularity" and "singularity", is to be found in the Appendix below.

[10] Subheadings in square brackets are my own. (Marx subdivides this part of the text with the markings a^1), b^1) and c^1); in this part of the text these divisions coincide with my own headings.)

[11] Cf. Mill 1824, 214-15. "In productive consumption, three classes of things are included. The first is, the necessaries of the labourer, under which term are included all that his wages enable him to consume, whether these confine him to what is required for the preservation of existence, or afford him something for enjoyment. The second class of things consumed for production is machinery; including tools of all sorts, the buildings

suggests that the effect of this understanding leads them to separate off the consumption that production *necessarily* entails from "consumption proper" (this latter considered—by the "political economists"—as "the destructive antithesis to production"). But, notes Marx, this type of consumption is also production: "[i]t is clear that in taking in food, for example, which is a form of consumption, the human being produces his own body. But this is also true of every kind of consumption which in one way or another produces human beings in some particular aspect." (Marx 1973, pp. 90-91) This type of consumption Marx calls "consumptive production", and he charges political economy with illegitimately positing this type of consumption as a different *kind* of consumption. For Marx, "[t]he immediate unity in which production coincides with consumption and consumption with production leaves their immediate duality intact." (Marx 1973, p. 91)

Despite this identity (or perhaps, now, identities), Marx still insists that there is a "mediating movement" between production and consumption, for each provides the reason for the other to exist. "Production mediates consumption; it creates the latter's material; without it, consumption would lack an object. But consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates for the products the subject for whom they are products." (Marx 1973, p. 91)

Marx now explores the claim that consumption *creates* production. It does so in two ways, he says. First, "because a product becomes a real product only by being consumed. [...] Only by decomposing the product does consumption give the product the finishing touch; for the product is production not only as objectified activity, but rather only as object for the active subject."[12] (Marx 1973, p. 91) Second, consumption creates the need for new production. There is no production without need, and it is consumption that continuously replenishes that need.[13]

This second unity—that formed by the fact that consumption creates production—is belied by three further determinations, determinations which, in addition, indicate the *primacy* of production over consumption.

First, production supplies consumption with its object. "Consumption without an object is not consumption". (Marx 1973, p. 92) Second, in addition to supplying consumption with its "object", it also gives it its *form*; it gives it its "finish",[14] as Marx puts it. It provides the *mode* of consumption. "Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail and tooth." (Marx 1973, p. 92) Third, production, in addition to providing the object to fulfil the need, also creates the need that requires the object. The primacy of production over consumption is expressed here in the way that the former plays a determining role at the social level—the level of "culture", as it were—within which the latter occurs. "As soon as consumption emerges from its initial state of natural crudity and immediacy [...] it becomes itself mediated as a drive by the object. [...] Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object." (Marx 1973, p. 92)

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necessary for the productive operations, and even the cattle. The third is the materials of which the commodity to be produced must be formed, or from which it must be derived. Such is the seed from which the corn must be produced, the flax or wool of which the linen or woollen cloth must be formed, the drugs with which it must be dyed, or the coals which must be consumed in any of the necessary operations."

[12] "[A] garment becomes a real garment only in the act of being worn; a house where no one lives is in fact not a real house; thus the product, unlike a mere natural object, proves itself to be, *becomes*, a product only through consumption."

[13] "Consumption creates the motive for production; it also creates the object which is active in production as its determinant aim."

[14] Marx uses the English word (Marx 2006, p. 28).

Hence it is the case *both* that production produces consumption (in that it produces what is consumed, how it is consumed, and the persons who consume it), *and* that consumption produces production, in so far as it produces in the producer the inclination to fulfil the needs posed by consumption.

The unity formed by production and consumption is thus threefold. There is first an unmediated unity, i.e. the one is the other in the same act. Then there is how each stands as the mediation of the other: "[p]roduction creates the material, as external object, for consumption; consumption creates the need, as internal object, as aim, for production." (Marx 1973, p. 92) Finally, each creates the other *as* its other. It is consumption that turns the result of production into a product, and she who produces into a producer.

One might think, therefore, that nothing would be simpler ("for a Hegelian") than to declare production and consumption "identical". This is a view that Marx imputes to what he calls "socialist belletrists" (which might include Proudhon, or Karl Grün[15]), and also to Jean-Baptiste Say.

Why Marx wishes to argue in the "Introduction" that the identity between production and consumption cannot be reduced to a simple one now becomes clearer. If it really were the case that production and consumption were no more than the same act conceived of from different standpoints then of course there could be no crises. What was produced would be consumed automatically; by definition, as it were. This is the relevance of the reference to Say, who is of course best-known now (and probably best-known in Marx's day too) for the contention widely interpreted as implying that the supply of a product automatically and necessarily creates the demand for it (the notion known as "Say's Law"), a proposition that would seem to rule out the very *possibility* of crises.[16])

No, says Marx. Consumption and production are not two ways of perceiving the same act but *two moments of a single process* in which the production is both the point of departure and dominant moment. If society is analysed as if it were a single subject (as Say does[17]) then it is production which predominates. "The individual produces an object and, by consuming it, returns to himself, but returns as a productive and self-reproducing individual. Consumption thus appears as a moment of production." (Marx 1973, p. 94) But this is even more the case when society is viewed *as* society. Now the consumption of the product is *external* to the producer (i.e. it is consumed by somebody else). Between production and consumption there now appears *distribution*.

[15] Grün (1817-1887) was a German socialist and former young Hegelian, contemporary of Marx in his university days, and target of Marx and Engels' sarcasm in the *German Ideology*.

[16] In his 1803 *Traité d'économie politique* Say had argued that "the terms, to *consume*, to *destroy* the *utility*, to *annihilate* the value of any thing, are as strictly synonymous as the opposite terms to *produce*, to *communicate utility*, to *create value*, and convey to the mind precisely the same idea." (Say 1971, p. 391) Marx points out that among the flaws in Say's position was that if the entire product of a nation were consumed in a given period, there would be nothing left for the formation of means of production (an argument, Marx notes, already advanced by the Russian political economist Henri Storch). There is an interesting parallel here with Marx's subsequent (in *Capital*) critique of Adam Smith's "resolution" of the price of the commodity into "revenues", into wages, profit and rent, for here too there is no accounting for the formation of constant capital (see the discussion in Marx 1978, pp. 438ff).

[17] A procedure which Marx criticises as "speculative".

[Distribution][18]

Marx notes that in the works of political economy, categories seem to appear twice: once under the heading of *production*, and again under that of *distribution*. The list of "land", "labour", and "capital" and "interest" (as "agent[s] of production") seems to match that of "ground rent", "wages" and "profit" (as "source[s] of income"). (Marx 1973, p. 95)

But if we look closer we can see that "[t]he structure of distribution is completely determined by the structure of production." (Marx 1973, p. 95) Profit and interest presuppose capital; wages presuppose wage labour (not labour in general[19]); rent presupposes landed property (and not land in general[20]).

> Distribution is itself a product of production, not only in its object, in that only the results of production can be distributed, but also in its form, in that the specific kind of participation in production determines the specific forms of distribution, i.e. the pattern of participation in distribution. (Marx 1973, p. 95)

The categories of distribution are specific to the society, i.e. to the set of social forms, in which they appear. It is thus "altogether an illusion to posit land in production, ground rent in distribution, etc." (Marx 1973, p. 95) What is posited in production alongside rent is property in land.

Ricardo, who, Marx notes, is criticised in the field of political economy for only considering production, in fact sees the analyis of distribution as the principal task of political economy.[21] His reason for doing this is because he "instinctively conceived the forms of distribution as the most specific expression into which the agents of production of a given society are cast." (Marx 1973, pp. 95-6)

There is a basis for this. For an individual producer, it is distribution that appears paramount: distribution appears as the social law that determines her position within the system of production. Even on the social scale, it appears that it is the modes of distribution that determine and regulate production.

> A conquering people divides the land among the conquerors, thus imposes a certain distribution and form of property in land, and thus determines production. Or it enslaves the

[18] Marx's subdivision "b[1])". (The heading "Distribution and production" in Marx 1973 does not appear in the original.)

[19] "If labour were not specified as wage labour, then the manner in which it shares in the products would not appear as wages; as, for example, under slavery." (Marx 1973, p. 95)

[20] "[G]round rent, by means of which landed property shares in the product, presupposes large-scale landed property (actually, large-scale agriculture) as agent of production, and not merely land as such [...]." (Marx 1973, p. 95)

[21] Ricardo's *Principles* opens thus:

"The produce of the earth [...] is divided among three classes of the community; namely, the proprietor of the land, the owner of the stock or capital necessary for its cultivation, and the labourers by whose industry it is cultivated.

"But in different stages of society, the proportions of the whole produce of the earth which will be allotted to each of these classes, under the names of rent, profit, and wages, will be essentially different; depending mainly on the actual fertility of the soil, on the accumulation of capital and population, and on the skill, ingenuity, and instruments employed in agriculture.

"To determine the laws which regulate this distribution, is the principal problem in Political Economy [...]" (Ricardo 2004, p. 5)

> conquered and so makes slave labour the foundation of production. Or a people rises in revolution and smashes the great landed estates into small parcels, and hence, by this new distribution, gives production a new character. Or a system of laws assigns property in land to certain families in perpetuity, or distributes labour [as] a hereditary privilege and thus confines it within certain castes. In all these cases, and they are all historical, it seems that distribution is not structured and determined by production, but rather the opposite, production by distribution. (Marx 1973, p. 96, square brackets in original)

But before distribution takes the form of the distribution of products it first takes the form on the one hand of the distribution of the means of the production of products and on the other of the distribution of the people within the structure of the production of the products (the "[s]ubsumption of the individuals under specific relations of production" (Marx 1973, p. 96)). The distribution of products is subsequent to and a consequence of this double prior distribution of instruments of production and of people.

What is more, this latter distribution, that of instruments of production and of people, is not only a *precondition* for the distribution of products (which "follows by itself from this distribution") but is also itself a *moment of production*; because of this, analysis of production separate from it would be "empty abstraction". (Marx 1973, p. 96)

The error of the political economists then is to take production as historically immutable; this leads them to self-restrict themselves to the analysis of distribution, by "portray[ing] production as an eternal truth while banishing history to the realm of distribution." (Marx 1973, p. 97)

The analysis of distribution in this sense, as a moment of production, obviously belongs to the analysis of production itself, in which, insofar as production must proceed from a given distribution of instruments of production, the distribution of these is antecedent to production. But the distribution of instruments of production is itself dependent on the form of production: "[t]he application of machinery, for example, changed the distribution of instruments of production as well as of products. Modern large scale landed property is itself the product of modern commerce and of modern industry, as well as of the application of the latter to agriculture." (Marx 1973, p. 97)

The question of the role of distribution in production boils down to that of "the role played by general-historical relations in production, and their relation to the movement of history generally," and this in turn "evidently belongs within the treatment and investigation of production itself." (Marx 1973, 97) Marx pursues the matter no further.[22]

[22] Other than the following observation. In the cases described above of the "conquering people", which Marx describes as "trivial", he notes that there are three possible outcomes: either the conquerors impose their own mode of production on the conquered (as the English did to the Irish and, in part, in India), or they allow the old mode of production to continue as before and content themselves with the extraction of tribute (the "Turks" and the Romans), or the interaction between conquerors and conquered gives rise to new social formations (the Germans). In all these cases it is the mode of production that determines the mode of distribution that ensues. "Although the latter appears as a presupposition of the new period of production, it is thus itself in turn a product of production, not only of historical production generally, but of the specific historic mode of production." (Marx 1973, p. 98)

[Exchange, Finally, and Circulation][23]

("Circulation" is either no more than a moment of exchange, Marx notes, or it is simply a synonym for it. He pays the term no more attention.)

Exchange mediates production and distribution (the latter determined by production) on the one hand and consumption on the other. Since consumption (as we have established) is a moment of production, exchange is a moment of production too.

Within production, "the exchange of activities and abilities which takes place within production itself belongs directly to production and essentially constitutes it." (Marx 1973, p. 99) The same is also true for the exchange of products where this exchange is part of the means for the production of articles of unproductive consumption. Then there is what Marx calls the "exchange between dealers and dealers": this too is both "entirely determined by production, as well as being itself a producing activity." (Marx 1973, p. 99)

Only insofar as exchange involves the exchange of products for the individual consumer does it appear as something external to production, but even here (1) there can be no exchange without a division of labour in production; (2) exchange involving private individuals supposes private production; and (3) "the intensity of exchange, as well as its extension and its manner, are determined by the development and structure of production"; as a result "[e]xchange in all its moments thus appears as either directly comprised in production or determined by it." (Marx 1973, p. 99)

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In conclusion, this analysis of the *categories* of production, consumption, distribution and exchange has shown the following:

- the categories neither exist separately from one another, nor are they identical; rather, they stand as individual elements of a single totality;
- within this totality, production is the dominant moment, both with regard to itself as with the other elements;
- distribution, insofar as it involves the *agents of production*, is a moment of production itself;
- a given form of production both defines the forms of consumption, distribution and exchange and the relations of the different moments among themselves;
- production is, however, although the dominant moment, also determined by the other moments of the totality of which it forms a part: there is, as with any "organic whole", a "[m]utual interaction takes place between the different moments." (Marx 1973, p. 100)

[23] Marx's subdivision "c^1".

3 The method of political economy

[(1) Analysis and synthesis; inquiry and presentation]

With what should a political economic analysis begin?

It would seem to have to begin with "the real and concrete"; thus it would seem natural to start with the category of population, "which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production." (Marx 1973, p. 100) But this would be a mistake.

If no account is taken of the classes of which the population is composed, then "population", as such, would be an "abstraction". But then the notion of "classes" too would be abstraction unless account is taken of the "elements" (i.e. social relations) on which they are based (wage-labour, capital, etc.), for these social relations "presuppose" the economic facts of (for example) exchange, division of labour, prices, etc. "Population", unspecified, is an "abstraction".

If one "were to begin [one's analysis] with the population, this would be a chaotic conception of the whole [...]."[24] (Marx 1973, p. 100) It is in this sense that Marx calls population an "abstraction". Why is it an abstraction? Because it is conceived of without reference to (literally "abstracted from") the multiple determinations of which it is composed. Why would it be "chaotic"? Because what is being conceived is a complex of multiple determinations; but what these are, and how they collectively give rise to the totality, are ignored. The totality ("the whole" in the sentence quoted the start of this paragraph), which is the result of this complex of determinations, would stand in thought without having been, so to speak, "disentangled".[25] ("In thought", because what is "chaotic" here is not the *object under analysis* but precisely our *conception* of it; that is why the analysis is no more than a "conception" (*Vorstellung*). "Population" as it exists in the world is *not* 'chaotic', but *complex*; a representation of population *in thought* without taking account of its complexity is chaotic because it takes no account of this complexity).

How one *should* proceed is posited by Marx as follows. One should take the complex object and then examine it "by means of further determination, [to] move analytically towards ever more simple concepts", i.e. follow a movement from the *complex* to the *simple* along the lines of that suggested earlier; from, for example, population, to the classes of which it is composed, to the social relations on which those classes rest, and so on. In this way, Marx says, by "mov[ing] [...] towards ever thinner abstractions", one passes "from the imagined concrete" to "arriv[e] at the simplest determinations".

Let us examine this last sentence and its terms in a little more detail.

First, "imagined concrete". In the original text, this is "*vorgestellten Concreten*"; *vorgestellten*

[24] "Chaotic conception" is "*chaotische Vorstellung*" in the original (cf. Marx 2006, p. 36). "*Vorstellung*" is a word that does a lot of heavy lifting in classical German philosophy. In Kant, it covered the range of the faculty of thought from that most immediate to the senses ("intuition", or "*Anschauung*") to that which is furthest away, i.e. that in which reason is most implicated; for Kant, *Vorstellung* was the genus that encompassed the different species of thought: *Anschauungen*, *Begriffe* ("concepts"), *Ideen* ("ideas"). In Hegel, on the other hand, *Vorstellung* is itself a specific kind of thinking (rather than indicating "thinking as such"); for Hegel, *Vorstellung* is a kind of cognition (i.e. it is more than mere sensation or intuition), but it is immediate (or unmediated) cognition: preliminary and approximate. It would seem that Marx is using the term in this latter, Hegelian, sense.

[25] This is my metaphor, not Marx's.

is derived from the verb *vorstellen* (which is where *Vorstellung* comes from). *Vorgestellten* is "conceived" in the same sense as *Vorstellung* is "conception". The "concrete" here is concrete because of its real complexity; hence, if here it is "conceived" as a *Vorstellung*, then what Marx labels the "imagined concrete" is synonymous with the "chaotic conception" of earlier.

Second, the "ever thinner abstractions" that are applied to move away from this "chaotic conception" are "thin" in their *simplicity*,[26] in that they suppose increasingly fewer determinations.

Finally, if one follows this procedure, applying "ever thinner abstractions", one arrives at the simplest determinations possible, i.e. one arrives at a point beyond which one cannot simplify further. To continue my analogy, at this point the object which one is trying to conceptualise is now fully disentangled: the determinations stand exposed, but, as a consequence of this *analytic* process, their unity has been undone.[27]

Now begins the (opposite) work of *synthesis*: the object under consideration now needs the be reassembled *in thought* from the determinations already identified. But now, the object will not be a "chaotic conception" but will be comprehended in function of its actual—"real"—complexity. "From there [i.e. from the end point of *analysis*]," Marx tells us, "the journey would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations." (Marx 1973, p. 100)

The overall task thus consists of two cognitive stages: analytical decomposition; and synthetic reconstruction. The aim is to reproduce in thought the real complex object in all of its "rich totality of many determinations and relations". Once this is done—and only once this is done—it becomes possible to talk meaningfully about the object in question.

This procedure of course *exactly summarises* what Marx did in the previous section. He listed the set of determinations (as already identified by political economy) of production, distribution, exchange and consumption—a syllogistic figure, but a "superficial" one; a *Vorstellung*; a "chaotic conception". He then identified the set of mediations that operated between production and consumption, and established that the two form a unity, but a unity founded on "mediating movements", in which production is primary. He then distinguished distribution as a *further* moment of production, a moment which plays a determining role in it but which is *ultimately* determined by production itself. Then he examined the mediating role of exchange in the (emerging) conceptual totality, and discovered that it, in all its moments, is either subsumed *under* production or determined *by* it. He finally arrived at an understanding of production as a complex and multiply-determined totality, composed of moments and the interactions between them: in short no longer a "chaotic" superficiality but now "a rich totality of many determinations and relations".

It would perhaps be useful to compare what Marx writes here (in 1857) to what he would go on to write, commenting again on his "method", in the Afterword to the second edition of

[26] Marx 1975 (p. 83) and Ehrbar 2010 (p. 71) give "tenuous" for "*dünn*"; "thin" is preferable, since the import of Marx's argument is the *insubstantiality* (in the sense of simplicity) of the abstractions and not their *conceptual* weakness.

[27] "Analysis", in the western philosophic tradition in which Marx moved, means exactly the breaking down of something multifacted into constituent parts. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel put it like this: "The analysis of an idea, as it used to be carried out, was, in fact, nothing else than ridding it of the form in which it had become familiar. To break an idea up into its original elements [...] [and] to return to its moments [...]." (Hegel 1977, p. 18) In this sense, the "opposite" of analysis, the "(re)putting together" of the concrete, is *synthesis*.

Capital I in 1873. "[T]the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry," he would say. "The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyse its different forms of development and to track down their inner connection." (Marx 1976, 102) This is the stage of analysis, the work described in 1857 as the examination "by means of further determination [...] [to] move analytically towards ever more simple concepts", to "arriv[e] at the simplest determinations". "Only after this work has been done can the real movement be appropriately presented," he would go on in 1873. "If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is now reflected back in the ideas, then it may appear as if we have before us an a priori construction." This is evidently the analogue of the work of synthesis. The distinction Marx would make in 1873 between the analytical stage of inquiry ("*Darstellung*") and the subsequent one of presentation ("*Forschung*") *exactly* parallels that of the separation of the stages of analysis and synthesis he makes in 1857.

Let us return to the "Introduction". "The economists of the seventeenth century" followed the *analytical* approach described above ("[t]he former [...] path"): they "always begin with the living whole, with population, nation, state, several states, etc.; but they always conclude by discovering through analysis a small number of determinant, abstract, general relations such as division of labour, money, value, etc." (Marx 1973, p. 100) From here, "[a]s soon as these individual moments had been more or less firmly established and abstracted, there began the economic systems, which ascended from the simple relations, such as labour, division of labour, need, exchange value, to the level of the state, exchange between nations and the world market." (Marx 1973, pp. 100-101) This work of *synthesis* ("[t]he latter"), of (re)constructing in thought the complex social reality under consideration, building the single complex out of the multiple simple, "is obviously the scientifically correct method." (Marx 1973, p. 101)

"The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse," says Marx. (Marx 1973, p. 101) But the "concrete" here that he refers to is the concrete *in thought*, the real, complex, object, successfully reproduced in the intellect.[28] (The contrast here is with the "chaotic conception".) But the "concrete" in thought is not *given*, it has to be *constructed* ("synthesised"): "[i]t appears in the process of thinking," Marx says; it (the "concrete") appears "as a process of concentration, as a result", even if the *real* object "is the point of departure [...] and hence also the point of departure for observation [*Anschauung*] and conception [*Vorstellung*; perhaps better "perception"]." (Marx 1973, p. 101) It is from the real object, and the thinking subject's engagement with it, that effective thought comes.

Marx summarises what he has identified. "Along the first path [i.e. the step of analysis] the full conception [*Vorstellung*] was evaporated to yield an abstract determination; along the second [that of synthesis], the abstract determinations lead towards a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought." (Marx 1973, p. 101)

[(2) The "dialectical method"]

Marx now contrasts what he has said with the parallel process as described by Hegel.[29] The fundamental difference for him is that, for Hegel, the real is the *product* of thinking. "[...] Hegel fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing

[28] Marx cannot want to say that the *real* object is "concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse", for that would be simply trivial.

[29] He continues in the same (very long) paragraph, but nevertheless there is an evident shift of gear.

its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself [...]"; for Marx, on the other hand, "the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is [...] the way in which thought appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as the concrete in the mind." (Marx 1973, p. 101) Thinking does not produce the real, it *re*produces it, *in thought*.

In the 1873 Afterword cited above Marx contrasted his method and that of Hegel as follows.

> My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of "the Idea", is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.
>
> I criticised the mystificatory side of the Hegelian dialectic nearly thirty years ago. at a time when it was still the fashion. [...] The mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell. (Marx 1976, pp. 102-3)

Again, the consonance between his account in 1873 and that of the "Introduction" is clear.

The Marx of 1857 warns us, however, not to conflate the manner by which the real concrete is constructed in thought, and how the real concrete originates in the world. Take the simplest economic category, says Marx—exchange value, for example.[30] In the realm of the real, exchange value, the price of a commodity in terms of another, "presupposes population, moreover a population producing in specific relations; as well as a certain kind of family, or commune, or state, etc."; i.e. it is "an abstract, one-sided relation within an already given, concrete, living whole [i.e. population]." (Marx 1973, p. 101) As a "category", however, as a *mental* abstraction, its existence is "antediluvian", i.e. *pre-existing* of the social totality of which it forms a part. To an *idealist* consciousness (Marx calls it a "philosophical consciousness"), the *real person* (the active subject) is reduced to "conceptual thinking", and the real world to "the conceptual world", i.e. to the thinking mind's own consciousness of it. Here, in this worldview, the "real act of production" is reduced to "the movement of categories"; the real concrete is reduced to the conceived concrete, and the real totality to the conceived totality.[31]

Marx's argument here is directed at the idealism (if not the dialectic) of Hegel, but it is not *only* directed at Hegel;[32] such a worldview—in which concepts are given priority over what they are concepts *of*—does not *require* a Hegelian metaphysic, it only requires "the working-up of observation [*Anschauung*] and conception [*Vorstellung*] into concepts" (Marx 1973, p. 101), i.e. the taking of appearances, partial and one-sided, without having been subject to the kind of analysis described earlier, as good coin—"chaotic conception", instead of "rich totality of many determinations and relations".

Nevertheless, it remains the case that what is captured in thought, and what exists outside it—

[30] Exchange value being the relative price of a commodity in terms of another.

[31] "I do not proceed from 'concepts' [...]. What I proceed from is the simplest social form in which the product of labour presents itself in contemporary society [...]." (Marx 1989, p. 544)

[32] For this view "not in any way a product of the concept which thinks and generates itself outside or above observation and conception [...]." (Marx 1973, p. 101)

however the former be acquired—are different: what Marx calls "[t]he totality as it appears in the head" is "a totality of thoughts [...] a product of a thinking head, which appropriates the world in the only way it can."[33] (Marx 1973, p. 101) "The real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before; namely as long as the head's conduct is merely speculative, merely theoretical." (Marx 1973, pp. 101-2) In other words, the rejection of an idealist worldview, whether this be sanctified theoretically (as in Hegel) or simply existing *de facto*, does not gainsay the necessity of the theoretical appropriation of reality; it simply means that the theoretical appropriation undertaken be grounded on the separation of the object and its theoretical appropriation, and that that theoretical appropriation proceed according to the kinds of procedures described above.

[(3) The ordering of the categories]

"But," asks Marx, "do not these simpler categories also have an independent historical or natural existence predating the more concrete ones?" Maybe, he says. "Hegel, for example, correctly begins the *Philosophy of Right* with possession, this being the subject's simplest juridical relation." (Marx 1973, p. 102) The simple category (possession) historically predates the more concrete (and more complex) juridical conception of property. Then there is the example of money. "Money may exist, and did exist historically, before capital existed, before banks existed, before wage labour existed, etc." (Marx 1973, p. 102) In these two cases, "it may be said that the simpler category can express the dominant relations of a less developed whole, or else those subordinate relations of a more developed whole which already had a historic existence before this whole developed in the direction expressed by a more concrete category." (Marx 1973, p. 102) In both these cases, the order of historical development *coincides* with that of logical synthesis.[34]

On the other hand, there are also societies with a sophisticated level of social development who do not use money, or use it little. There was no money in pre-Columbine Peru, he notes, even though there was cooperation and a highly-developed division of labour. "Slav communities" mainly used money on their borders, rather than internally.[35] In antiquity money only played a dominant role in trading nations. "[E]ven in the most advanced parts of the ancient world, among the Greeks and Romans, the full development of money, which is presupposed in modem bourgeois society, appears only in the period of their dissolution." (Marx 1973, p. 103)

Hence it is not necessarily the case that simpler (i.e. less concrete) categories predate more complex (and more concrete) social totalities: it may be the case that "the simpler category may have existed historically before the more concrete" (even if "it can achieve its full (intensive and extensive) development [...] in a combined form of society"), but it may also be the case that "the more concrete category was more fully developed in a less developed form of society." (Marx 1973, p. 103)

Why the apparent indeterminacy? The matter is complex, for three things (and their interrelations) enter into it: the social reality of which a given category is an intellectual representation;

[33] "[A] way different from the artistic, religious, practical and mental appropriation of this world."

[34] "[T]he path of abstract thought, rising from the simple to the combined, would correspond to the real historical process." (Marx 1973, p. 102)

[35] In general, Marx comments, exchange "originally appears [...] in the connection of the different communities with one another, not in the relations between the different members of a single community." (Marx 1973, p. 103)

the category itself; and the social whole of which the particular social reality forms a single (simple and abstract) part. None of these elements is immutable.

Take, for example, the category of labour. On the one hand, labour is, at least on the face of it, "a quite simple category", for "[t]he conception of labour in this general form—as labour as such—is [...] immeasurably old." (Marx 1973, p. 103) On the other, as an economic category, labour is as "modern" as the relations that give rise to it. The notion that labour "as such" is the source of wealth is a notion that only emerges fully for the first time in the thought of Adam Smith ("an immense step forward," says Marx (Marx 1973, p. 104)). Previously, it had been thought that it was the precious metals that represented wealth in "pure" form (the "Bullionist" view, which is what Marx means when he refers to the "Monetary System" (*das Monetarsystem*)), while the Physiocrats had held that that it was only agricultural labour that could produce wealth.

On the one hand then, the understanding of "labour in general" as the source of wealth is simply an "abstract expression for the simplest and most ancient relation in which human beings—in whatever form of society—play the role of producers." (Marx 1973, p. 104) On the other, it is quite something else. The abstraction of labour in general—the presupposition that the specific form of a given labour is irrelevant to its nature as wealth-creating activity—is itself grounded in the actual nature of the society, in which of the actually existing "totality of real kinds of labour, [...] no single one is any longer predominant." (Marx 1973, p. 104) "[T]his abstraction of labour as such is not merely the mental product of a concrete totality of labours", but the real result of the actual "abstraction" of labour that occurs in a society in which the production of commodities predominates as a social form.

> Such a state of affairs is at its most developed in the most modem form of existence of bourgeois society—in the United States. Here, then, for the first time, the point of departure of modern economics, namely the abstraction of the category "labour", "labour as such", labour pure and simple, becomes true in practice. The simplest abstraction, then, which modern economics places at the head of its discussions, and which expresses an immeasurably ancient relation valid in all forms of society, nevertheless achieves practical truth as an abstraction only as a category of the most modern society. (Marx 1973, pp. 104-5)

Here we see clearly the tripartite dialectic noted above: that between the social reality being conceptualised, the conceptualisation itself, and the changing social-historical milieu within which the conceptualisation takes place.

> This example of labour shows strikingly how even the most abstract categories, despite their validity—precisely because of their abstractness—for all epochs, are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and within these relations. (Marx 1973, p. 105)

Marx now draws the following conclusions.

Bourgeois society is a result, and not a point of departure; it did not fall from the sky, but is, rather, the *product* of a prior process of development. This has consequences for how we understand it, and also for how we understand the societies that came before it. Thus, as "the most complex historic organization of production", "[t]he categories which express [bourgeois society's] [...] relations [...] thereby also allow[] insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up." (Marx 1973, p. 105)

Marx thus distances himself from the kind of teleology that would see bourgeois society as immanent to the historical process, the view that would see "development [as] founded, as a rule, on the fact that the latest form regards the previous ones as steps leading up to itself." (Marx 1973, p. 106) Such a view might be capable of a critical attitude towards prior stages of development, but it is entirely incapable of *self*-criticism. "[B]ourgeois society is [...] a contradictory form of development, [and as such] relations derived from earlier forms will often be found within it only in an entirely stunted form, or even travestied." (Marx 1973, pp. 105.6) Thus it is only superficially true that "the categories of bourgeois economics possess a truth for all other forms of society, [...] [for they] contain them in a developed, or stunted, or caricatured form etc., [...] always with an essential difference." (Marx 1973, p. 106) The key to the criticism of prior development is *criticism of the present*.

> The Christian religion was able to be of assistance in reaching an objective understanding of earlier mythologies only when its own self-criticism had been accomplished to a certain degree, so to speak, potentially.[36] Likewise, bourgeois economics arrived at an understanding of feudal, ancient, oriental economics only after the self-criticism of bourgeois society had begun. In so far as the bourgeois economy did not mythologically identify itself altogether with the past, its critique of the previous economies, notably of feudalism, with which it was still engaged in direct struggle, resembled the critique which Christianity levelled against paganism, or also that of Protestantism against Catholicism. (Marx 1973, p. 106)

Marx now turns to what all this means for the method of presentation of the critique of the economic categories of bourgeois society. As is the case with all social science, the examination of the development of economic categories requires that they not be taken on their own terms. The object of study,[37] modern bourgeois society, "is always what is given, in the head as well as in reality"; this means the existing categories themselves "express the forms of being, the characteristics of existence, and often only individual sides of this specific society, this subject [i.e. object], and that therefore this society by no means begins only at the point where one can speak of it *as such*." (Marx 1975, p. 106) One needs to distinguish between the understanding given by the categories and the understanding of the categories. This is important because "it will [...] be decisive for the order and sequence" of the material of the study of political economy.

Marx gives an example. "[N]othing seems more natural than to begin with ground rent, with landed property, since this is bound up with the earth, the source of all production and of all being, and with the first form of production of all more or less settled societies—agriculture." (Marx 1973, p. 106) But this would be wrong.

There is, says Marx, "[i]n all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others." (Marx 1973, pp. 106-7) In societies previous to bourgeois society this was agriculture. In the case of "pastoral peoples", the agricultural systems that sporadically emerge are based on communal property. In the case of settled agriculture, landed property predominates, and industry, for example, is completely dependent on it. Capital takes the form of landed property.

But in bourgeois society agriculture is reduced to a mere "branch of industry", and as such is "entirely dominated by capital." This is the distinction between bourgeois society, and all societies which precede it. "In all forms where landed property rules, the natural relation still

[36] "Potentially" is in Greek, referencing Aristotle.

[37] i.e. what is to be studied; Marx (confusingly) uses the word "subject" (Marx 1975, p. 106)

predominant. In those where capital rules, the social, historically created element." (Marx 1973, p. 107) Thus the starting point in the analysis of bourgeois society, where capital is "the all-dominating economic power": that it is *capital* which "must form the starting-point as well as the finishing point, and must be dealt with before landed property." (Marx 1973, p. 107)

It would not be appropriate therefore "to let the economic categories follow one another in the same sequence as that in which they were historically decisive. Their sequence is determined, rather, by their relation to one another in modern bourgeois society, which is precisely the opposite of that which seems to be their natural order or which corresponds to historical development." (Marx 1973, p. 107)

The question is not therefore "the historic position of the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society [...] but their order within modern bourgeois society." (Marx 1973, pp. 107-8)

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Marx concludes this section of the text by elaborating the following "plan" for the presentation of his work.

> The order obviously has to be (1) the general, abstract determinants which obtain in more or less all forms of society [...]. (2) The categories which make up the inner structure of bourgeois society and on which the fundamental classes rest. Capital, wage labour, landed property. Their interrelation. Town and country. The three great social classes. Exchange between them. Circulation. Credit system (private). (3) Concentration of bourgeois society in the form of the state. Viewed in relation to itself. The "unproductive" classes. Taxes. State debt. Public credit. The population. The colonies. Emigration. (4) The international relation of production. International division of labour. International exchange. Export and import. Rate of exchange. (5) The world market and crises.[38]

4 Production. Means of production and relations of production. Relations of production and relations of circulation. Forms of the state and forms of consciousness in relation to relations of production and circulation. Legal relations. Family relations.

What follows in this, the last, part of the "Introduction" are a series of notes of subjects to be covered. Marx lays out a numbered list of (eight) "points to be mentioned here and not to be forgotten"; (Marx 1973, p. 109) it is not always clear (at least not to me) what exactly he has in mind in each case.

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[38] Compare with the plan set out in his latter to Ferdinand Lassalle in February 1858. "The whole is [to be] divided into 6 books: 1. On Capital (contains a few introductory chapters). 2. On Landed Property. 3. On Wage Labour. 4. On the State. 5. International Trade. 6. World Market." (Marx 1983, p. 270)

Finally, in a well-known (but enigmatic) passage, Marx notes the disjunction between periods of artistic flowering and "the general development of society, hence also to the material foundation, the skeletal structure as it were, of its organisation." (Marx 1973, p. 110)

He notes that there are certain artistic forms (Marx cites the Epic) which can only appear in their classic form at an early stage of artistic development.

With regard to Greek art, Greek mythology is not only its "arsenal", it is also its basis. Marx asks: "Is the view of nature and of social relations on which the Greek imagination and hence Greek [mythology] is based possible with self-acting mule spindles and railways and locomotives and electrical telegraphs? What chance has Vulcan against Roberts & Co.,[39] Jupiter against the lightning-rod and Hermes against the Credit Mobilier?" (Marx 1973, p. 110, square brackets in original)

The basis of all mythology, Marx notes, is the suggestion in the imagination of the subjection and domination of the forces of nature; this basis disappears, however, when real domination is achieved. "What becomes of Fama[40] alongside Printing House Square?[41] [...] From another side: is Achilles possible with powder and lead? Or the *Iliad* with the printing press, not to mention the printing machine? Do not the song and the saga and the muse necessarily come to an end with the printer's bar, hence do not the necessary conditions of epic poetry vanish?" (Marx 1973, pp. 110-11)

Marx's point here is not that the fluorescence of Greek art belies the material conditions of its production; his question is as to why we attach so much importance to it in the present day. Marx's answer is that it gives us pleasure in the same way that the "naivety" of children does.

> A man cannot become a child again, or he becomes childish. But does he not find joy in the child's naivete, and must he himself not strive to reproduce its truth at a higher stage? Does not the true character of each epoch come alive in the nature of its children? Why should not the historic childhood of humanity, its most beautiful unfolding, as a stage never to return, exercise an eternal charm? (Marx 1973, p. 111)

At this point Marx breaks off, the "Introduction" evidently unfinished.

[39] The machine tool and locomotive manufacturers.

[40] The latinised name of Pheme, the personification of fame and renown (and hence rumour and gossip).

[41] The headquarters in London of the *Times* newspaper.

Appendix: A note on the syllogism

In the "Introduction" Marx refers to how the categories of political economy appear in its literature in the form of a "regular syllogism". (Marx 1973, p. 89) It might be useful, therefore, to look in a little detail at what a "syllogism" actually is.

A syllogism is a logical figure in which a conclusion follows deductively from a set of two of premises. For example:

> Socrates is human.
>
> Humans are mortal.
>
> Socrates is mortal.

That Socrates is mortal flows logically (deductively) from the preceding two premises.

A syllogism consists of three statements (two premises, and a conclusion), and three terms: a major term, a minor term and a middle term. The conclusion pairs the minor term (the subject of the conclusion) and the major term (the conclusion's predicate); the middle term only appears in the two premises (and never in the conclusion). The premise in which the major term occurs (along with the middle term) is called the *major premise* and that with the minor term the *minor premise*.

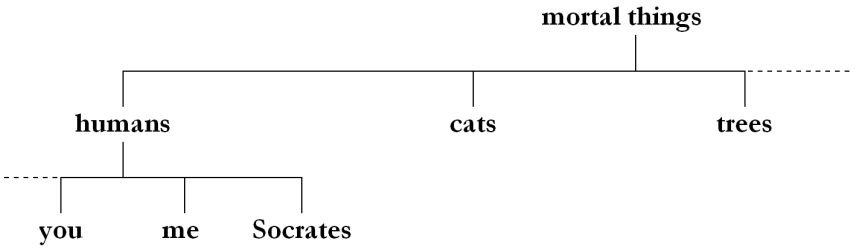
In the example above, the minor term is "Socrates", and the major term "mortal". 'Human(s)" is the middle term. "Socrates is human" is the minor premise, and "humans are mortal" the major premise.

In the the shorter *Logic*, Hegel defined the what he called the "qualitative syllogism" as that whereby "a subject as individual is joined together, through a quality, with some universal determinacy." (Hegel 2010, p. 256) Two important ideas flow from this definition.

The first is that any entity with which we are presented, any *object of knowledge*, will consist of the "moments" of generality (or universality), particularity, and singularity (or individuality). The second is that any proposition, any statement about something that exists in the world, can be taken as the concluding term of such a syllogism. Let us look at these two ideas in more detail.

Take Socrates in the example given above. Socrates is a singularity—he is an "individual" human being. And although all human beings may be differentiated by their diferences, all human beings also share characteristics (which collectively constitute "human-ness") in common. We—you, me, Socrates—are all individual members of a *species*. Taken at the level of *species*, what we see is what we have in common; taken at that of the individual, we see what makes us different.

But at the same time the species of human being also shares characteristics with other—non-human—living things. We are mortal; as are cats, and trees. Humans, cats, trees (and a very long *etcetera*) are individual members of a higher level species—a *genus*, of "mortal things". Here, the individuals (you, me and Socrates) represent the *singularity*; the different species (humans, cats and trees) the *particularity*; and the genus of "mortal things" the *generality*. We might picture it like this:



In Hegel, the unity expressed in the conclusion of a syllogism is achieved through the mediating action of the middle term (just as when we say that if $A = B$ and $B = C$, then we can infer that $A = C$, B being the mediating middle term[42]). When Hegel classifies syllogisms he does so by citing them in the order *minor term−middle term−major term*. Thus, in the example above, where Socrates is our minor term (the subject of the conclusion), mortal beings the major term (the predicate of the conclusion), and the class of human beings the middle term, given that these terms are, respectively, singularity, generality and particularity, Hegel would cite this syllogistic structure as *singularity−particularity−generality*, or $S - P - G$.

This schema (of singularity, particularity and generality) is naturally recurring. I am the singularity with regard to the particularity of "human" and the generality of "mortal things" in the example above, but I am also the "particularity" with regard to the fact that my body is made up of individual cells. And if we classify the cells of which I am made up (skin cells, bone cells, brain cells, etc.) I am also the generality (the "genus"). In this way, any given thing, any given object of knowledge, exists within a syllogist system of singularity, particularity and generality; but any given thing can also occupy *any* of the three positions (singularity, particularity and generality) of any other triadic syllogistic system we might wish to construct around it.

This is the sense in which Marx in the "Introduction" contrasted "production in general" (configured by the determinate features common to production in all historical epochs), "general production" (the totality of productive activity at a given moment), and production as a given *branch* of production (agriculture, cattle-breeding, manufacture)—the same term ("production") functioning respectively as generality, particularity, and singularity.

This brings us on to the second idea that flows from Hegel's notion of the qualitative synonym, that any statement that "X is Y" can itself be interpreted as the conclusion of a syllogism.[43] But given that the premises of a syllogism are themselves statements of this type, each may therefore be taken as the conclusion of another, logically prior, syllogistic step.

For example, in the above-cited syllogism, "Socrates is mortal" is the conclusion of the two premises "humans are mortal" and "Socrates is human". But we can take the first of these, "humans are mortal", as the conclusion of a prior syllogism. If we do, then "human" will be our minor term (the subject of the conclusion) and "mortal" our major term (the predicate). But "human" is the particularity in the original syllogism, and "mortal" the generality. The middle term of our new qualitative syllogism would have to be a singularity, and its structure, following Hegel's nomenclature, would be $P - S - G$. This might lead us to construct something like this:

> This living thing is mortal.

[42] In what Hegel calls "the quantitative or mathematical syllogism". (Hegel 2010, p. 260)

[43] Here, the "is" (the copula) could also be "is not", "might be", etc.

This living thing is a human.

Humans are mortal.

(The conclusion in this figure is of course valid *only* if the individuals are sufficiently numerous and of a kind as to preclude negative instances, i.e. non-human mortal living things.)

What about the other premise in our original syllogism ("Socrates is human")? Following the same procedure we arrive at a $S-G-P$ syllogism.[44] Perhaps we might construct something like this:

Socrates is a thinking animal.

Humans are thinking animals.

Socrates is a human.

This syllogism is now only valid if it can be stipulated that the defining characteristic of the particularity (the class of human beings) is exclusive to it and constitutive of the generality ("thinking animals"); if it can not, this syllogistic form can only serve to prove a negative.[45]

The procedure can be repeated *ad infinitum*, since each of the two premises in each of the two subsidiary syllogisms that we have just constructed may in turn be taken as a proposition in turn demanding syllogistic proof.[46]

[44] Minor term: "Socrates" (a singularity); middle term: a generality; major term: "human" (a particularity).

[45] For example: A cat is not a thinking animal; humans are thinking animals; a cat is not a human.

[46] "This contradiction of the syllogism expresses itself once more through an infinite *progress*—as the requirement that the premises be likewise demonstrated by a syllogism. But since the new syllogism has two equally immediate premises, this requirement—which constantly duplicates itself, of course-is repeated *ad infinitum*." (Hegel 2010, p. 258)

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