

### The Real Answer

If Marx had considered all the properties of commodities enumerated above by von Böhm-Bawerk, he might have encountered more difficulty in reducing the possibilities to labor alone. We might single out a couple of the above properties as especially plausible: the fact that goods are the subjects of supply and demand, and the fact that they are produced at some expense to the producer (both in labor and in money, or "capital"). Indeed, a brief look at the real world, as opposed to Marx's abstract system, will tell us that those are precisely the factors that actually govern exchange value. Each of them is pertinent from a different perspective.

There are two ways of looking at exchange value; one is that the interaction ("dialectical" interaction) of supply and demand mainly determines the actual market price of a good.

Another way to look at it is to say that, for a *successful* product, one produced and sold on a continuing, profitable basis, the price obtained may be divided into three factors which the price goes to pay. These three factors are labor, rents, and profit. Thus from the entrepreneur's perspective, the price he receives for his product must cover his labor costs, any rents or costs for the physical plant, and a certain percentage left over for his own profit.\* In terms of his own calculations, the expense of producing the product is the starting point for determining how much to ask as a price for his product.

(That is not to say he will invariably get his asking price; he will not invariably make a profit. The response of buyers, the actions of other producers of similar goods, or in short, all the vagaries of supply and demand, will affect how much he will receive for his product.)

Thus these two "common properties" of goods – the fact that they are produced at a certain expense, and the fact that they are subjects of demand and exist in an economic environment of varying conditions of supply and demand – are influential in the determination of the exchange value of goods. They are and were just as good candidates for being the "common something" as the two things Marx actually considers – better, in fact, for they actually do determine exchange value. That is, they actually determine the market value of goods in the real world. But perhaps that is a matter of hindsight, or of reasoning outside Marx's system. Those two properties don't fit into Marx's abstract category, within his hypothetical and artificial fantasy world. It comes down to simply a matter of which kind of answer one prefers.

\* He also has such expenses as capital equipment to pay off; these costs can similarly be divided into labor, rents and profits – the three "basic particles" of exchange value. This analysis of Smith's is however somewhat outmoded in modern economic theory.

However, all this is an attempt to fit classical theory to Marx's theoretical framework. Actually, it is more realistic to discard his framework entirely, and not to express classical theory of exchange value in terms of the search for a "common something." It would be better simply to say that as a matter of empirical fact, the above-named considerations are the pertinent factors determining exchange value. *That is how the world really works*, and we don't derive it from any arbitrarily-constructed theoretical system, but from direct observation and empirical correlations among the named factors (together with a generous amount of insight enabling us, or rather Smith, to discern the quantitative relation implicit in the raw data). Each of us can actually verify classical theory from our own daily experience and from our knowledge of human economic nature as expressed in ourselves. We know human economic behavior because we know how *we* act; when buying, we wish to "buy low," and when selling we wish to "sell high." If producing a product, we want to get more for it than it cost to produce. This is perhaps a minimal expression of human economic nature, but as far as it goes it is surely accurate. Is it too much to think that the interaction of these contrary impulses (of buyer and seller), this "dialectical clash," might somehow help to determine what a good sells for? And as to broader economic factors, more impersonal and abstract ones expressed in such terms as "demand" – is it too much to think they are ultimately founded on human economic behavior?

Each of us is a source of real-life, common-sense data about economics, and these data support classical theory, not Marx's fantasy world.

### **What Kind of "Property"?**

*Antiphanes said merrily, that in a certain city the cold was so intense that words were congealed as soon as spoken, but that after some time they thawed and became audible; so that the words spoken in winter were articulated next summer.*

Plutarch, *"Of Man's Progress in Virtue"*

There is however one possible justification that might support Marx in eliminating all but the two possibilities he allows for the "common something." His viewpoint might be that not all properties are properties in the same sense. In other words, some properties can more reasonably be considered as actual physical properties *of* the commodity than others can.

The question then becomes, In what sense does Marx mean that labor is a property of commodities, or a common substance in them?

### Of the commodities

In looking for the identity of the "common substance," What Marx is looking for is a property which can truly be said to be a physical property *of* the commodity, a part of the physical makeup of the commodity itself. It is not, like the property or characteristic of being "the subjects of demand," something added on or imputed from outside. Demand for goods is something only loosely describable as a property of the commodity, and more accurately characterized as a property of people or society, or of people's economic behavior. As such it would not fit Marx's category; what he apparently envisions is a literal, physical property of the commodity.

Marx's language describing the mystery factor indicates that this is so. He says exchange values are equal because there are equal amounts of the common factor "*in* two different things". He says of goods that "they *have* a common property," meaning, if we take him literally, that it is a property of the goods themselves, not of external conditions. His entire analysis revolves around a minute examination, almost a dissection, of the commodity – the answer is to be found within the physical confines of the commodity, not in the institutions, economic arrangements, and external conditions of society at large.

Moreover his subject or method is "the analysis of a commodity," not the analysis of market forces or human economic behavior. It is plain that he considers the commodities as having all the answers within themselves – that they act almost as autonomous agents; and he slices into the commodity for the answers which it contains.

Later on in his text he will speak of labor as "embodied or materialised" in the commodity, and of commodities as "definite masses of congealed labor-time." (As the introductory quote above shows, it is amazing what sorts of things can congeal!) That is in fact the whole thrust of his "pre-Aristotelian" point of view – that some physical property of the goods, and not any external or social circumstance, determines exchange value. He can even go so far as to say, "...the bodies of commodities are combinations of two elements – matter and labor" (labor of course being the "common something").

Marx will even give us the testimony of the commodities themselves: "Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: Our use-value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects. What, however, does belong to us as objects, is our value." (Note in passing that he too describes use-value as something imputed to commodities from outside, a result of people finding them to be useful. Use-value is more personal, more perceptual, than exchange value, a point he is prone to overlook.)

The "common something" Marx is looking for, then, is a property *of* the commodity in a strict, literal sense. It is a characteristic of the goods in and of

themselves, and not a property in a loose or figurative sense, as for instance the "property" a certain commodity may have of being a subject of demand. The fact that goods are scarce in proportion to demand, that they are the subjects of supply and demand, that their production entails a monetary cost – these are loosely speaking "characteristics" of goods, but they are really characteristics of our own behavior toward goods. Thus the fact that the category of "somethings" Marx considers is a very narrow one – two properties only – may possibly be justified: the rest of the "properties" of goods do not really fit the category.

### **Nature of the Common Something**

The question then is, if those characteristics eliminated above do not fit the category, do the two properties which Marx actually considers fit it? Or to put it another way, just exactly what is the nature of the property or "substance" he is searching for?

The possibilities are limited. We have seen that there are only two basic types of "properties" of things. A characteristic or "property" of an object can be either an actual, physical property of the object; or, as discussed above, it can be a meta-characteristic, a characteristic of things that happen outside the object, as in commodities' property of being "subjects of demand." Marx has limited us to actual characteristics of objects, in the literal sense; these are called physical or natural properties. And they have a definite, known nature.

As delineated by the natural sciences, physical or natural properties are objective characteristics, which things possess in and of themselves. They are rigorously defined and quantifiable, and they are objectively observable and measurable. Natural properties are properties of an object *per se*. For example, objects have mass and volume; these are characteristics of objects in and of themselves – no one has to do anything to give objects their mass or volume. They are not characteristics imputed or supplied from outside (though they may be *measured* from outside). Whether anyone observes the object or not, its mass and volume are present as characteristics of it. This is different from a property like demand, or "the fact that goods are subjects of demand." Goods have mass, volume, and all other physical properties in and of themselves, as aspects of their physical nature or existence.

Natural properties are objective. This eliminates things like beauty, which, while it may be a "property" of an object in itself, is a matter of subjective judgment and thus not included among the physical properties. It is a matter of human judgment or perception, not an objective, measurable fact. (It will be evident that beauty is also "determined from outside," as well as being subjective. While it might be said that the beauty of an object lies within itself,

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or at least that the physical configuration of the object that constitutes its beauty lies within it, still the judgment that the object *is* beautiful, the pronouncement that there is indeed beauty there, comes from outside. It is not a mere objective summing of the parts of the object's physical configuration. So beauty as a physical property fails on two, closely related, counts.)

Moreover, physical properties are usually quantifiable, at least in principle – it is not always easy to do so in practice. Most natural properties, like mass, volume, specific heat, and so on, exist in definite, measurable amounts. If a characteristic is not quantifiable, it may fail to be a physical property just because it is not sufficiently precise as to be of any use in physical sciences.

For example, wavelengths of light are measurable; one can say what wavelength of light is reflected from an object when the full spectrum of sunlight shines on it. Wavelengths are precisely quantifiable. On the other hand, one could ask what color the object is. Color is too loosely-defined and subjective to be quantifiable. Colors like "blue," and even more specific terms like "cyan," are not standardized; each person may choose his own particular shade and call it cyan. Colors *per se* don't lend themselves to precise measurement. Thus color is not of as great interest to the physical sciences as wavelength (though it is of some interest: physics treats of such matters as supplementary and complementary colors).

In general, the less quantifiable a property is, the less use it is for the physical sciences.

(In addition, "what color an object is" might be categorized as a property supplied by external perception. It is sort of a hybrid; it is a subjective sensation of color, caused by an objective property.)

It is stated above that a physical property is *in principle* measurable. There are unique situations where, because of the situation and not because of the property itself, some things cannot be measured. For instance, according to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, it is impossible to measure both an atomic particle's position and its velocity at the same time; the measuring of one disturbs the other. However, one or the other can be measured.

The above characteristics define the physical properties, as has been determined by the natural sciences. And if we speak of properties *of* objects, characteristics found in them, then we can only mean physical properties. If a characteristic is not a physical property it is not a property "of" the object, but something external like beauty or "the fact that they are subjects of demand." These are the only two real alternatives.

There are a couple of hybrid or offshoot classes that should be discussed. There is the class of things that are actual characteristics *of* the object, but are transient and do not persist in their physical makeup.

For example, a rock may have a certain velocity at a certain point in time. That is an objectively-verifiable fact, and it is quantifiable. Moreover, one would have to say the velocity appertains to the rock in and of itself – it is not a matter of external reaction or perception. Once the rock has a certain velocity – whether by being thrown or because it is on a planet moving through space – it has velocity in and of itself. However, this velocity is not so much a property as *behavior*; it does not persist, it is not a part of the physical makeup of the rock. Thus such things as velocity, acceleration, even position, are not so much beneath the status of physical properties as beyond it – they're of a higher order of complexity, not a lesser order of rigor.

And again, on the subject of "position": one might be puzzled as to how to categorize such properties as, "This marble came from Italy," or "These boots were made in Spain." Surely the fact that a slab of marble was part of the earth in Italy is a characteristic *of* it; likewise for the fact that a certain pair of boots was made in Spain. Yet these things are not perceivable in the marble or in the boots. Their respective "Italian-ness" and "Spanishness" are not part of their physical makeup; they are more an element of their past history, and they fit in the category of an objects' behavior or transient nature.

And then there is a middle ground, occupied by characteristics that are a mixture. For example, color: color is hard to categorize. It depends, in a way, on perception from outside; someone has to see an object in order to see that it is red. Yet the color derives from a physical, objective property: the object absorbs light of certain wavelengths and reflects others. (Yet again, it is only the perception, or seeing, of these reflected wavelengths that causes the reflected light to be termed *red*.)

This middle ground is not a very cluttered one, and distinctions can be made, for the most part, between the factors that are objectively a part of the object's physical nature and those that depend on external reaction or perception – whether based or dependent on that physical nature or not.

### **The "Common Something" As A Physical Property**

The cumulative picture presented by Marx's description of the "common something" is that of a natural property. Everything he says about it adds up to that.

That is, each individual aspect of the "common something" which Marx describes adds up to that. On the other hand, Marx himself says that the common something is *not* a physical property. This should not disturb us, however. Marx says the common something cannot be "intrinsic," "inseparably connected with, inherent in commodities." It "cannot be...any... natural property of commodities."

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That is his *explicit* position; yet by implication, by the accumulation of the details of his description, a picture of the "common something" emerges which is that of a physical property.

At one point or another, Marx attributes all the characteristics of physical properties to his "common something." Thus while on the one hand he says flatly that the missing "something" cannot be a physical property, on the other he says that it has every *characteristic* of the physical properties. Let us examine these two sides of the issue in more detail.

As we have seen, the description he gives of something "in" and "of" commodities, something "embodied in" commodities, a "common property" of goods, and so on, adds up to a complete and detailed profile of a physical property. Therefore despite what he tells us out of one side of his mouth, he tells us out of the other side that the "common something" we are looking for is indistinguishable from a physical property in any respect. Just in the same way, a naturalist might say, "An animal just flew by, but it was not a duck. However, it was a heavy-bodied migratory waterfowl with a bill and webbed feet, of family *anatidae*, subfamily *anatinae*, and it was quacking," and so on listing all the identifying characteristics of ducks. We would then have to choose either the explicit denial or the implicit, cumulative sum of the descriptive detail; both couldn't be correct. The bird could not be both "not a duck" and at the same time a bird with all the distinguishing characteristics *of* a duck. There is a contradiction in terms, a logical fallacy, a canard in such descriptions.

(It is not, by the way, at all unusual for Marx to take both sides of an issue, one in his explicit remarks and another in the cumulative gist of what he says.)

Marx's refusal to consider his "common something" a physical property could be dismissed as simply an example of "Aesopean language". This type of nomenclature consists in simply giving things new names, that is, using incorrect terms for them (much as one thing stands for another in a fable or allegory). Another name for it is "Orwellian language". This type of capricious redefinition of words came to be a frequent technique of Bolshevik revolutionaries, who had to conceal their meaning in their correspondence. Terms in use today like "wars of national liberation" and "people's democracy" are of that class. As the saying goes, "It isn't the facts that matter, it's what name you succeed in attaching to the facts."

In the current instance, Marx's use of Orwellian language may represent simple willfulness or obstinacy – Marx simply didn't want to accept that he was describing a physical property. Or, it may represent scientific ignorance.

From another point of view this "two-faced" manner of exposition could be considered eminently "dialectical." Dialectically speaking, the truth (or rather the usefulness) of a statement is determined by whether it serves a particular pre-established aim; that is, as the dialecticians say, "Everything depends on the time

and the place." Thus one side of an argument can be "correct" (that is, useful) at one time, and the contrary side correct at another time. It's like the story of the man who was being questioned by a stranger about his horse. The stranger asked how much the horse was worth. The owner answered, "Why, I wouldn't take \$300 for that horse!" "Is it worth as much as that?" "Every bit of it!" "Well, I'm glad to know that. I'm the tax assessor." "Oh, I see what you mean. Well, for tax purposes it's only worth \$50."

That's dialectics; the validity of a statement depends on one's purpose at the time. And it's very much Marx's method in the current passage.

### **Possible Extenuating Arguments**

Another possible explanation of Marx's dual stance above is that what he means to rule out, in saying his missing "something" is not a physical property, is only the possibility that it might be one of the recognized, traditionally-identified physical properties, like mass, volume, chemical composition, etc. The common "substance" in other words, is not one of the previously-known physical properties; but once Marx identifies it, it will be a new physical property; or at least it will be like a physical property in every respect. Perhaps that is one way to make sense of what Marx says.

More likely, Marx simply had no clear idea of what constitutes a physical property. Thus he ruled out physical properties, meaning the recognized, known ones, and didn't recognize the implications of what he was saying when he portrayed his missing factor as in every respect like a physical property. There are people who "cannot tell a lie," people who "cannot tell the truth," and people who "cannot tell the difference." In this instance Marx probably fits in the latter category.

The consequence of his dual definition is this: Marx is either looking for a physical property, in which case, realistically speaking, labor itself doesn't qualify; or else he is looking for something which is a "characteristic" of goods only in a broad, general sense – not actually a physical property. In that case all the other properties listed above by von Böhm-Bawerk, and other properties as well, also qualify and should not have been ruled out of consideration as candidates for the "common substance."

Let's continue with the idea of labor as an actual, physical property of commodities: in actuality, labor doesn't become a physical property of commodities; it doesn't embed or embody itself as a physical entity within them. It is not "in" the commodity, and it can't be dissected out. It doesn't congeal, crystallize, or otherwise embody itself in physically-incarnated form within the commodity. Labor is rather something done to the commodity, a part of its



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history; it shapes the commodity, and its effects can be seen. In the sense that a certain amount of labor was expended in producing a commodity, in that sense the commodity represents or "embodies" a given amount of labor. But to take this subtle point and distort it in an idiotically reductionist manner, saying that labor is *physically* embodied in material form, is to display reasoning of almost unbelievable crudity.

Labor is effort, an activity, the expenditure of energy; it doesn't congeal or metamorphose into matter, or attach itself to matter as a physical property of that matter. Marx's eagerness to reduce the discussion to a simple-minded schema has led him out of the realm of science into fantasy and ignorance.

All the characteristics of commodities which Marx refused to consider, like their being "subjects of demand," their being produced at some financial expense, and so on, are properties *of* goods to the exact extent that labor is – no more and no less. Any of these properties is just as good a candidate for the "common substance" as any other. Marx's glib pronouncement that labor is the only remaining choice, then, is meretricious.

The complete picture Marx desires to present of his common property is that it occupies a sort of twilight zone between physical properties and other external or merely figurative "properties." He apparently conceives of a category that is enough of an actual physical property to exclude unwanted characteristics like being "subjects of demand," yet sufficiently *not* a physical property that it is not "intrinsic" or "inseparably connected with" the commodity. And it is not a traditionally-known physical property: labor and use-value must be able to fit into the category. Marx's category of "common properties" is like the pants offered by the Yankee peddler: "big enough for any man, small enough for any boy." In short, the category alters from moment to moment, adjusting itself to fit Marx's purposes. That's dialectics.

Marx's identification of two and only two properties as fitting into his category is typical of much of his work: it is a "non-reproducible result." That is, it is not based on any explicitly-stated principles and criteria which would enable a reader to judge for himself whether Marx's theory is valid, or enable him to retrace and reformulate each successive step. There is, so to speak, no way of "checking Marx's math," of verifying that each step along the way is justified within the terms of the discussion; for there aren't any explicit terms of the discussion. Everything in Marx's exposition of his theory is given on an *ad hoc* basis, and eventuates as it does for no better reason than Marx's idiosyncratic decision: it is so because he says it is so.

In the present instance, he makes no explicit statement about what kind of property he is looking for, or what criteria a characteristic must meet in order to be considered. He simply emits the decree that only two properties, use-value and labor, fit the category. He gives no justification of this in generic terms, nor

any strictly objective, *procedural* method of following his path of investigation to see if it actually leads where he says. Rather, he leads his readers by the nose and demands that they accept his personal assurances on everything. This is not science; it is "cult of personality."

This method has the advantage, for Marx, of allowing him to reach whatever conclusions he wants. But it means his text is not science, or even honestly-reasoned philosophy, but the arbitrary pronouncements of an idiosyncratic crank. There is no general or objective rule for guiding us through the discussion, no means of forming an objective judgment for ourselves as to which points and inferences are correct. At every fork in the road the reader must wait blindly and helplessly until Marx tells him which way to go and what conclusions to draw. There is no objective method for predicting what Marx will say next; we can only wait for his arbitrary fiat. No one could say why labor, but not the necessity of expenditure, should be considered as a common property of goods and a candidate for the role of "common something." We must await Marx's instructions. This very character of Marx's text, of being a non-reproducible result or non-verifiable theory, marks it as not science but a series of arbitrary pronouncements, or as the description of a fantasy world. Marx requires that his readers, or his followers, simply *abandon themselves* and their critical powers to him. To anyone the least bit literate in genuine scientific method, that is an unacceptable sacrifice.

Criticisms of Marx's method of seeking his "common something" should not make us lose sight of the larger point: his entire discussion, his very definition of the question in terms of such a common property, is bizarre and misleading. Once his investigation of exchange value reduces itself to the search for a "common property" inherent in all commodities, any hope of a sensible answer is lost. "Ask a foolish question, and you get a foolish answer." Thus, even more fundamental than the incorrect answers that Marx gets is the fact that his question itself is inappropriate.

### **What Kind of Labor?**

Marx now embarks on a strange journey, a side excursion in his analysis, whose purpose is hard to discern. The subject of the excursion seems to be, "Identifying the particular kind of labor that constitutes the 'common something'." But let's look at his text. He has said that the only remaining common property of commodities

[is] that of being products of labor. But even the product of labor itself has undergone a change in our hands. [Let's hope so,

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or else the labor will have been ineffectual.] If we make abstraction from its use-value, we make abstraction at the same time from the material elements and shapes that make the product a use-value; we see in it no longer a table, a house, yarn, or any other useful thing. Neither can it any longer be regarded as the product of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or of any other definite kind of productive labor. Along with the useful qualities of the products themselves, we put out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labor embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labor; there is nothing left but what is common to them all; all are reduced to one and the same sort of labor, human labor in the abstract.

It is hard to know exactly what to make of this passage, or of Marx's concept of "human labor in the abstract" (which he apparently regards as a concrete thing). Nor is it easy to see why Marx thought the passage was necessary. While Marx devotes a large part of his works to reducing complicated and subtle topics to idiotic simplicities, here he adopts an alternate mode, the hyper-inflation and mystification of what is straightforward and simple. (He does have a third mode of analysis which may be said to occupy the middle ground between these two: the detailed belaboring of the painfully obvious.)\*

At any rate the present passage presents something of a puzzle. In general terms Marx seems to be saying that, what he more specifically meant by saying that commodities all share the property of being "products of labor", was that they are products of "human labor in the abstract." That is the kind of labor goods are the products of. We will investigate this concept, and try to see why it was necessary and how it differs from ordinary "labor".

First, however, let us look at the path of argumentation by which Marx developed the concept. We might term this path Marx's process of "abstraction" or "abstracting from," which process is applied to what he started with, just plain labor.

What Marx apparently means by "make abstraction from" is, "ignore or disregard as irrelevant." We "make abstraction from its use-value" because, as Marx has shown, use-value is irrelevant to exchange value. He continues to enumerate and discard other properties which are irrelevant. Thus he "makes abstraction from" the identity of the particular commodity, i.e., whether it is a table, a house, or what have you; and he "makes abstraction from" the particular

\* Kathleen Nott, in "Pavlov and his Bad Dog," *Encounter*, London, 1964, has neatly summed up the rhetorical techniques of certain types of academic jargon under the headings of "(1) Grandiose-inflationary...(2) Disguise by obviousness... and (3) pejorative reference to unacceptable concepts..." Marx uses all three modes.

type of labor that produced it – that of a mason, joiner, etc. He continues to strip off all the irrelevant considerations in this manner until he arrives at the remaining core of essentials, from which we cannot "make abstraction," i.e., which are relevant and cannot be discarded. Then we see the true, essential nature both of the commodity and of the labor that produced it.

Marx's process of "making abstraction from," or mentally stripping away, is thus like the process described in the anecdote about the sculptor. He was asked how he could make such a life-like statue of, say, a horse; he answered, "It's easy, I just start with a block of stone and chip away everything that doesn't look like a horse." That is Marx's method here – he starts with the commodity and "chips away" everything that doesn't look like the true, essential nature of the commodity and its value.

In this case, Marx is dealing with the commodity as "the product of labor." What he really wants to do is "chip away" all the inessentials from that labor, to reveal its true nature. But to do this he must first apply logic to the commodity itself.

We already know that we can "make abstraction from" the use-value of the commodity, for all the voluminous reasons Marx has given us so far. And if we chip away use-value, "we make abstraction at the same time from the material elements and shapes," etc., that is, we can ignore what the particular commodity is; "we see in it no longer a table, a house, yarn," or whatever. This follows because Marx is now using definition number two for "use-value," namely, "the use the commodity is put to." If we ignore use-value (in the sense of what the commodity is useful for), we ignore at the same time what the identity of the commodity is – if we don't care about its use in the present instance, we don't care about what it is. To repeat, this step in Marx's chain logic is possible only because Marx has abandoned the definition of use-value as *usefulness* in an abstract (or "abstracted") sense; or as the value or esteem in which it is held on account of its usefulness. "Use-value" now means "use," the commodity's particular use; as, "for setting things on, for living in, for making clothes out of." In this sense use-value is very nearly synonymous with the identity of the commodity; the more so since Marx apparently considers there is a one-to-one correspondence between commodities and uses. For him a wool topcoat has a different use, or a different "use-value," from a cotton overcoat. Thus "use" and "commodity" are nearly synonymous, and Marx eventually just merges their meanings in "use-value."

At any rate, if it doesn't matter to us whether the commodity is good to set things on, or to live in, or to wear, then we can also chip away the question of whether it is a table, a house, or yarn. And if we don't care what the commodity *is*, that is, what *use-value* we're dealing with, then we don't care what particular kind of labor produced the commodity – whether that of a carpenter, mason or

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spinner; we chip that away too. And if we chip away the particular kind of labor that produced the commodity, all that is left, all we know and care about as relevant, is general labor, labor without specifying any one particular type of labor, or "human labor in the abstract."

The entire argument follows from the fact that we first discarded use-value, as irrelevant to exchange value. (The relevant properties of labor, remember, are those pertinent to its role as the source of exchange value; those are the ones we don't chip away.) Commodities with different use-values (different uses) are different commodities: in Marx's jargon, their "material shapes and elements" are different. Different commodities are produced by different kinds of labor. Thus if one of these factors is irrelevant, all are.

This shows once again Marx's viewpoint of use-value as a qualitative, rather than a quantitative, thing. He refuses to consider that there might be such a thing as varying *amounts* of use-value or usefulness. If he had considered that possibility, then his argument could not have been made. For use-value may indeed be unrelated to exchange value – the *amount* of usefulness a product has might not determine its exchange value – yet the identity of the product and the kind of labor that produced it might still somehow be pertinent to labor as a creator of value.\*

This is not to make the contrary case; it is said just to show how malleable words are for Marx, as for all sophists – and how word definitions always can be adjusted to suit his purposes. In sum, after all the chipping away has been done, we are left with "human labor in the abstract."

The question then becomes, How is that any different from what we started with, namely, commodities as "products of *labor*"? The word "labor" doesn't specify any particular kind of labor. It doesn't connote whether the labor is that of "the joiner, the mason, the spinner." The term "labor," in fact, is already general, encompassing, "abstract." It is not a name for any one particular labor. So what is the point of Marx's excursion?

It may be that the concept, "human labor in the abstract" is exactly like "labor," but with pretensions; it is set up by Marx as a formalized category, being put on a more rigorous and (presumably) scientific basis: it is labor with a social pedigree.

Or we might say that "labor" is just plain old, everyday labor, itself unspecified or "abstract"; while Marx's "human labor in the abstract," on the other hand, is abstract labor as a particular thing. After all, he states that all the commodities are reduced or "chipped away" to "one and the same sort of labor,

\* For instance, there is the simple fact that some types of labor are higher-paid than others.

human labor in the abstract." For Marx, it seems, "human labor in the abstract" is a concrete thing.

A couple of possibilities suggest themselves as to Marx's state of mind about this concept of abstract labor. One is that he simply didn't realize that in talking about plain "labor," he was already talking about an abstract thing. Another way of looking at it is to say that Marx seems to have been afflicted with a persistent inability to distinguish between the abstract and the concrete, and at times attributed to each the characteristics of the other.\*

For him it seems that the abstract or conceptual is accorded greater validity and the preeminent authenticity, while the concrete is treated as of lesser validity and as derived from the abstract. For Marx specific things are examples or "phenomenal" manifestations of the more authentic abstract concepts, rather than the other way around – rather than the abstract concept's having been formed by generalization from the more real, primary, concrete instances. (Again note the lingering remains of Hegel's "Ideal" in Marx.)

The forming of "abstract concepts" may be a topic that deserves further elaboration. Actually, Marx's use of the term "abstracting from" is at least partially respectable; it is similar to the ordinary person's notion of the forming of abstractions. What that word means, at least in one context, is the forming of concepts or images of things apart from any reference to particulars, or characteristics which may be found in particular instances but not in others. "Abstract" is defined as "thought of apart from any particular instance or material object." Thus it is true that Marx's process of the "chipping away" of properties which pertain only to particular individuals resembles, at least superficially, the forming of an abstract notion of "human labor."

We might say that to "abstract" is to look at a whole collection of individual objects and to determine what are the common characteristics of them all. To use a hypothetical example: perhaps at some time in the distant past, there were many four-legged creatures running around which could be perceived as sharing some common characteristics; they were carnivorous, they barked and howled, some of them were domesticated. While they had some common characteristics, there were also individual differences – they were of different sizes and colors, they had different bodily shapes and types of fur, and so on. Yet people could look at all these disparate individuals and "abstract" the common characteristics, producing the concept or category of "dogs." This was a matter of picking out the characteristics which could be considered both significant and common to all

\* One good example is his concept of the individual human being. He labeled the individual "the ensemble of the social relations," as if society were the primary entity and the individual were merely derived from it, as a product of the aggregate of social institutions; this, rather than recognizing individual humans as the primary entity, and society's being an abstraction derived from them.

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individual members of the group under consideration, while ignoring any characteristics possessed by only some animals; thus an abstract concept, "apart from any particular instance or material object," is formed. The abstract concept then could be referred to, in deciding whether any particular individual seen in the future belonged to the category.

The point to notice is that the process of abstraction, when actually pursued, consists of examining a whole class or collection of individuals and "abstracting" their common or distinguishing characteristics.\* Abstraction is not, as Marx assumes, a matter of looking at one particular individual and "chipping away" all its inessential characteristics. There is no standard of reference by which to do that; when looking at just one individual, you don't know what to chip away. The process of abstraction requires looking at an entire population and discarding, or "abstracting from," characteristics that are not *common to all*. Marx cannot possibly be forming an abstraction. His actual reasoning must take some other form.

A close inspection of Marx's text shows that he is not actually comparing all the individuals in a group to see what characteristics are common and what can be left out. Nor is he somehow "chipping away" the inessential. Actually, he is presenting a series of deductions; that is, he is using his same old method of chain deduction. That is not to condemn it *per se*; but if Marx himself was mistaken about the very form of reasoning he was using, the reasoning itself must be questionable.

The outlines of his chain deduction have been described already: use-value is ruled out of consideration; since use, or "use-value" is not pertinent to the determining of exchange value, it follows that what the product *is* is irrelevant; thus the particular kind of labor which produced it is irrelevant. Hence, because the commodity is just "a commodity," and not a *particular* commodity or "use-value," so also the labor is just plain "labor," or using Marx's formalized concept, "human labor in the abstract," and not a particular type of labor.

This may be the significance of Marx's enigmatic remark, "But even the product of labor itself has undergone a change in our hands." It may be that he means, undergone a change *in the course of his argumentation*; that is, not "in our hands" but *in our minds*, the commodity itself has already been "abstracted from" use-value. Thus since the concept of the commodity or "product of labor" has already undergone that change, various other changes or conceptualizations follow deductively: "If we make abstraction from its use-value, we make abstraction at the same time" from everything that can be linked logically to use-value. Thus the change to the "product of labor" Marx refers to is not in our

\* If this seems a trivial task, consider whether one would let hyenas, coyotes, jackals, and so on into the group. How about foxes? It is not always easy to form categories, especially for the hard cases.

hands in the process of production, but in our minds or in our analysis of it. That is a significant confusion – Marx apparently believes that the result of his mental analysis of commodities is the real commodity, and that what comes out of his mind is as real and valid as what is made by hands. The product of his thought-processes is real and concrete; particular, actual commodities are shadowy and abstract. This is a continuing misapprehension of Marx's – the taking of his own mental images to be the real world.

In sum then, when we disregard or "abstract from" the particular kind of labor, we don't actually "reduce" all labor to "one and the same sort of labor" (as if "human labor in the abstract" were a particular form of labor). Rather than "reducing" each separate kind of labor to one universal kind of labor, we actually conceptualize from all kinds of labor; we rise above the particulars or subsume all particular kinds of labor in one conceptualized category of just plain "labor" – "human labor in the abstract." It is not a matter of reducing all kinds of labor to one concrete form of labor, but of conceptualizing from the concrete forms of labor to derive an abstract or conceptual category.

(Similarly, when we use the term "dog," we "abstract from" any particular characteristic of a particular breed or individual. We decide that Chihuahuas and St. Bernards share the essential doggy characteristics, despite superficial differences. We "abstract from" particulars and decide which characteristics can be discarded as inessential – we don't make size a criterion, for example. We derive a classification based on characteristics common to all dogs. Thus we do not "reduce" all dogs to "one and the same sort" of dog, a dog-in-the-abstract, by applying any sort of chipping-away process to one particular dog. Rather, we look at all the individuals which we somehow sense should be classed together, and "abstract" what are their common characteristics, to form a concept or abstract notion of a dog.)

To reiterate: Marx demonstrates in the current matter a fundamental confusion about the difference between abstract and concrete, and about how abstractions are actually formed.

Marx's confusion about abstractions is that he reverses the roles of the concrete particulars and the abstract concept. It should first be observed that as between the abstract and the concrete, the concrete is primary and prior. In other words, what exists first, and arguably *all* that actually exists, is the numerous concrete instances or individuals. These are real; any generalizations or abstract concepts drawn from them are not real in the same sense of having concrete or physical existence. And the existence of the conceptual notion is secondary to and dependent on the prior existence of the physical individuals.

What exists first, in our example, is a lot of actual, furry, barking, individual animals. Their reality (the reality of their existence) is beyond dispute. What is



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secondary and what may be argued to exist only in human minds, is the classification or generalization or conceptual notion, "dogs."

This points up the derived and secondary nature of abstract concepts as compared to the primary status of concrete entities. Marx seems to reverse the two. For him the concrete seems to be an example or instance of the more valid concept or abstract notion. It is almost as in Hegel: the "Ideal," or the concept, is what is more real, even though unseen. Actual physical entities are derived from and secondary to this unseen but nevertheless more authentic and enduring hidden abstraction.

(And here is another area where Marx asserted something implicitly which he denied explicitly. He denied that he shared Hegel's concept of the Ideal. He says, in his preface to the second edition of *Capital*:

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel... the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought.

That may have been so of "the Idea" stated as such; yet Marx gave "Value," among other entities, the same treatment.)

Thus in the present instance Marx can say, "[C]oncrete labor becomes the form under which its opposite, abstract human labor, manifests itself."

Here we see the skewing of the relationship between the abstract and the concrete; it is as if "abstract human labor" were fundamental, and expressed or manifested itself as the secondary, concrete labor. Max Eastman said of that sentence, "It would be difficult in the whole history of science to find a more mystical and unreal construction"<sup>15</sup>

To repeat: what actually exists, what is actually done, is labor of a great variety of different kinds, i.e. manifold instances of particular kinds of labor, performed by particular individuals. A process of abstraction or of forming conceptual notions is applied to the various particular instances of labor. This produces the abstract, generalized notion of just plain labor – labor "considered apart from any particular instances." But the *concept* is secondary, derived from the concrete instances.

For Marx, however, the concrete instances are manifestations or guises or incarnations of the prior, more fundamental and more valid abstract concept: "[C]oncrete labor becomes the form under which its opposite, abstract human labor, manifests itself."

The distinction between the abstract and the concrete is a basic and elementary one, and it is a distinction every child learns to make, first intuitively and then, at a still-young age, explicitly. The fact that Marx confounded the two and was unable to make such a very basic distinction reveals that his fundamental thought processes were in disarray. Whether it was the effects of voluminous study of early Greek philosophers, undertaken with little skill or insight, or whether it came from some other cause, is hard to say. It might be that Marx wandered into Greek philosophy and never found his way out again; he seems to have learned just enough to muddle his mind. In any case, he repeatedly shows himself to have a fundamentally flawed philosophical framework and a resulting incapacity to understand or describe how the world really works.

It is difficult to say what point Marx thought he was making in proving that the term "labor" means not a particular form of labor, but "human labor in the abstract." Once Marx had shown that commodities have "only one common property left, that of being products of labor," he had already shown enough. Their common property is not that they are all produced by spinning, or by carpentry, or by any other particular form of labor, but that they are produced by plain, undifferentiated "labor." "Labor" is already "abstract" labor; that is a term embracing all labor, not denoting any particular form of labor. It is difficult to see a difference between "labor" and "human labor in the abstract."

So in the end we are left just where we started out; we began with "labor" and end up with "human labor in the abstract." Probably only Marx himself could tell just how these two are different. Without more information his point is unfathomable.

### **"Value"**

Marx continues:

Let us now consider the residue of these products; it consists of the same unsubstantial reality in each, a mere congelation of homogeneous human labor, of labor-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure. All that these things now tell us is, that human labor is embodied in them. When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are – Values.

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We have seen that when commodities are exchanged, their exchange value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use-value. But if we abstract from their use-value, there remains their Value as defined above. Therefore, the common substance that manifests itself in the exchange value of commodities, whenever they are exchanged, is their value. The progress of our investigation will show that exchange value is the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed. For the present, however, we have to consider the nature of value independently of this, its form.

### First Appreciation

Looking at the first sentence, we see that we are now to examine the "residue of these products" – i.e., the remainder after we have finished the chipping-away or "abstracting" process. This residue "consists of the same unsubstantial [i.e., non-material] reality in each" – that is, in each product or commodity. This same "reality" in each commodity is "a mere congelation of homogeneous human labor, of labor-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure." (Marx doesn't mean that last quite as it sounds; it's not quite that the labor is *expended* without regard to the mode of its expenditure, but that we as students of it do not need to take into account the "mode of expenditure" of labor, that is, the particular kind of labor which it is. All types are equivalent.)

In this statement we see more clearly Marx's concept of the process of "abstracting," or the forming of abstract concepts. He does not see that as beginning with a lot of individual kinds of labor, from which particular instances we "abstract" a concept or generalized notion of general human labor. He sees labor as beginning with one transcendent or intangible essence, "human labor in the abstract," which is then expressed or expended in a variety of "forms." The process of abstracting means peeling away nonessentials to find this inner essence.

He speaks of this inner essence almost as if it exists as an independent concrete entity in its own right, not just as an abstract notion formed from the many instances of actual, concrete labor. It seems to exist prior to the individual modes of labor – it is sort of a raw clay, perhaps like ectoplasm, which is molded into a variety of actual modes of work.

This "unsubstantial reality," this "common substance" which is "homogeneous human labor" or "labor in the abstract," does not have the secondary status of abstract concepts, that of as a conceptualization drawn from the prior, primary phenomena of the actual individual entities. Rather it is

primary, having the greater authenticity and reality; the various types of actual or "phenomenal" labor constitute secondary forms of expression of this primary, Ideal essence. Thus in it we see a reversal of the traditional logic of the formation of abstract principles; it is reversed, and it is also specious.

The key to seeing that all the above is the meaning of Marx's view of abstract labor is his statement that *each* product has the same "unsubstantial reality" in it. It exists in concrete form: each commodity individually contains "homogeneous human labor." That is, the common substance or residue, homogeneous labor, can exist in a single commodity (and does so in all commodities); it doesn't have to be drawn or conceptualized from examining all instances of the phenomenon (work). Thus to repeat, for Marx "human labor in the abstract" is a concrete thing.

To repeat: in reality, "abstract labor" doesn't exist in each particular commodity; it is drawn from looking at all types of commodities and discovering which are the common, defining characteristics. To refer to our analogy again, each dog does not contain within itself the "unsubstantial reality" of the universal or "homogeneous dog." Each dog first of all has its own entire complement of physical characteristics. Some of these are defining characteristics, essential to the animal's being placed in the "dog" category; others are non-universal peculiarities of the individual dog. There is not a universal essence or "homogeneous dog-ness" which is present in each dog, giving rise to "phenomenal" expression in the particular dog's characteristics. The dog itself must be considered primary – not some homogeneous inner essence.

### **Values**

To continue: we see in the commodities only the single reality, homogeneous human labor. "All that these things now tell us is, that human labor is embodied in them."

All they tell us now is all they told us at the start. That is, after the "abstracting from" process, their only remaining common property is that they are products of labor – plain "labor" being the same as abstract or "homogeneous" labor. The point is, though: when everything else has been chipped away, that is the last remaining "residue," and thus it is the only factor that can account for their exchange value.

Marx continues, rephrasing the same point: "When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are – Values."

The above sentence is nearly incomprehensible. Marx no doubt means primarily that he intends to equate labor and value; but other than that, the

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sentence is almost entirely devoid of meaning. What is the exact meaning of his statement that "when looked at" in such and such a way, commodities are values? If there is some relationship between this "social substance" and value, couldn't he have been more specific, stating precisely what relationship he envisioned? And "crystals of this social substance" is more poetic than scientific, or even meaningful. True, labor by some standard could be termed "social"; but is it a substance, and does it form crystals? (We had been led to believe it congealed, like chicken fat.)

At any rate, in its main point, the sentence is unwarranted. "When looked at as crystals of this social substance," commodities are – crystals of this social substance. No more conclusion than that is justified. Marx may have shown some relation of cause and effect between the two entities, labor and value; but that is not the same as showing them to be identical (if that is indeed the point he is making; as so often with Marx, we must remain in doubt). Marx is not justified in equating labor and value, even assuming his logic so far has been correct.

(A note: later in his text, it is presumably the quoted sentence Marx will allude to in speaking of, "their Value as defined above." Marx has set out to find, presumably, a quantitative, cause-and-effect relation; and having found it, or having deduced it by the process of "abstracting from," he turns it into an identity between two entities, rather than a quantitative relation. He also turns it into a definition stating that identity. We will examine the propriety of this process more fully later.)

Marx sums up, "We have seen that when commodities are exchanged, their exchange value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use-value. But if we abstract from their use-value, there remains their Value as defined above."

This is a recapitulation of his proof: use-value is eliminated as the explanation of exchange value, because it is constant while exchange value varies. Therefore use-value and exchange value are completely unrelated. Once having discarded use-value, Marx is left with only one factor which can be the determiner of exchange value: labor.

(Moreover, Marx tells us in passing that what he has derived is a *definition* of value. If we look backwards from the phrase "their Value as defined above," we see that the most likely candidate for being that definition is found in the sentence, "When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are – Values.")

Marx goes on to assert that "Value" is, identically, the embodied labor. "Therefore, the common substance that manifests itself in the exchange value of commodities, whenever they are exchanged, is their value."

In making the above statements, Marx makes a distinction between "value" and exchange value; or to put it another way, he adds a definition to the word "value." The real value of commodities is not their exchange value or their use-value, he implies, but the "common substance" congealed in them. Exchange value is a manifestation or "phenomenal form" of this inward property.

In fact, it is the only phenomenal form; for Marx continues, "The progress of our investigation will show that exchange value is the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed."

Exchange value is not real value, but is only crude market value, a mere "phenomenal form" – that is, its only merit is that it is an empirical entity: it actually exists and can be observed in the real world. In other words, there is exchange value, or just plain market price; but behind this visible phenomenon there is an unseen, underlying phenomenon which is actually controlling things. This unseen "value" is true value; that is what Marx intends to study, not the superficial, merely "phenomenal" exchange value.

(A preliminary objection to this part of Marx's theory is that exchange value is the only *visible* form or manifestation of value; it is the only form which we can examine and investigate directly. Marx's "Value" is unseen, hidden within the commodity; we can never know anything about it except through its outward form or manifestation, exchange value. Thus we can only infer things about "Value," and never really know anything for certain about it – not even that it actually exists.)

### **Value declared equivalent to labor**

This segment of Marx's text, with the introduction of the entity "value," as distinct from use-value and exchange value, contains a number of curious features. Primarily, there is the fact that "value" is a ringer, a specious entity brought into the discussion in place of the legitimate one.

Marx has begun his inquiry aiming to discover what factors determine exchange value. That is in principle a matter of finding a cause-and-effect relationship, or to put it another way, it is a matter of more or less scientific inquiry. Marx presumably set out to discover something on the order of a scientific law: a quantitative correlation between factors or phenomena, one that always holds true, verified by empirical observation.

This is the basic nature of scientific laws. We want to be able to say "Exchange value is always found in mathematical correlation to this common substance or causative factor X." This kind of relationship is what science usually seeks to find.

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It might be useful to backtrack and compare what Marx has really shown, by his thought experiment in "abstracting," to what he represents himself as having shown. Marx has sought to discover what determines exchange value. He never really articulates the task, of course; in his undifferentiated style of rhetoric, he just sets out to find the total, comprehensive explanation of exchange value. He expresses his task no more specifically than, "Let us consider the matter a little more closely."

But what the "answer" to exchange value means, if anything, is a quantitative correlation between entities; if Marx is genuinely a scientist he sought some objective evidence that a cause-and-effect relationship exists between (say) labor and exchange value. That is, he means to say that a correlation is observed between these two objective entities. This correlation, if it is actual science, is then part of the natural order of the universe – it is Marx's discovered law of exchange value,  $V = kL$ , exchange value equals labor times a constant or conversion factor.

(And be it noted: if it were a real scientific law, the two factors, labor and exchange value, would be distinct entities. They are quantitatively interrelated, but their *identities* don't merge; labor isn't simply made synonymous with value by the finding of a scientific correlation. And no third, invisible factor is implied; no *deus ex machina* such as "Value" is brought in by the relation of exchange value to labor.)

But now that Marx has identified his "common factor," he represents his discovery not as part of a cause-and-effect statement, but as a statement of equivalence or identity; value is not *caused* by factor X or dependent on factor X; it is *identical* with factor X. This is much less respectable, scientifically speaking.

Marx has changed the discussion from a scientific one wherein factor A causes phenomenon B, to one consisting of metaphysical gibberish concerning factor A being a "phenomenal form" of factor B. He reduces it to a search for alter egos or "manifestations" of unseen, mystical entities. The terms of discussion have been diverted from the scientific to the mystical and metaphysical.

And at the same time the very identity of the subject under discussion has changed. Marx had originally set out to investigate value, meaning market value – "the proportion in which goods of one sort or exchanged for those of another sort." But now he has invented a new "value" meaning not exchange value or use-value but only the amount of an inner, congealed "common substance." He now discards exchange value, which in the economic sense *is* value, and substitutes his own impostor, value meaning identically "congealed labor." This is the entity he will concern himself with in the rest of his analysis, rather than the real economic entity we were originally concerned with.

Marx was unjustified in equating value with the congealed labor. To say that "A causes B" does not justify saying "A is identical with B." If labor (a "social substance" in Marx's witless jargon) determines the magnitude of (exchange) value, that is not the same as saying that labor is identical with value. Marx apparently just didn't grasp the distinction between the two. Marx's approach turns the discussion into a kind of "black hole" – anything that gets near it is sucked in and merged in one leaden mass. All subtlety or differentiation among various aspects of the question disappears; no entity, no question, can retain a distinct identity.

For Marx, one factor does not determine another's magnitude; the two become identical, as alternate "forms" or alter egos of each other. That is incoherent; in genuine science, it doesn't work like that – Newton could say that  $F=ma$  without declaring that therefore force was identical with acceleration, or that "accelerations, when looked at as crystals of this social acceleration, are – Forces."

### **The logic of equating value and labor**

Marx goes on to say, if we eliminate or "abstract from" use-value, "there remains their Value as defined above. Therefore the common substance that manifests itself in the exchange value of commodities, whenever they are exchanged, is their value."

How "therefore"? What is the chain of logic in Marx's conclusion? Assuming that he has shown A *causes* B, how does that prove that "therefore" A is *identical* with B (or perhaps, that A is identical with some C newly pulled out of the hat)? There is no "therefore" to it, but just bald assertion.

Again, to make the analogy to scientific laws: if we show that the current flowing over a given wire (with a given resistance) is determined by the voltage applied to it (that is,  $E = Ir$ ), we do not then go further and say, "Therefore, the voltage that manifests itself in the flow of current, is their current." Voltage *produces* a current, in a corresponding magnitude; it is not the same as the current. (The analogy is not perfect, however; Marx is adding a fillip, the semantic obfuscation of inventing a new "value" distinct from exchange value. That is, he pulls a new entity out of his hat. There is no analogy for that in genuine science.)

Marx's "therefore" is mere handwaving – a flourish of rhetoric to distract the reader's attention from the fact that no justification for his conclusion has been advanced. Abraham Lincoln once characterized an argument of Stephen Douglas's as "a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, by which a man may prove that a horse chestnut is a chestnut horse." We will see many instances



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in Marx's text of "specious and fantastic arrangements of words"; the present non-argument is one such.

Marx's repeated manipulation and redefining of words in order to prove his point is an attempt to redirect the discussion from empirical, economic entities, and from factual investigation, to speculative metaphysics. Assuming his deductive proof about labor is correct, the amount of embodied labor *determines* the amount of exchange value (by some as-yet unspecified mechanism). That is a clearly-defined relationship between two distinct entities; and such clear and distinct concepts do not serve Marx's purposes. Thus he continues to rehash his proof, expressing his conclusion in more and more metaphysical terms, introducing new and unwarranted assumptions as if they were extensions of his argument. He repeats that exchange value is "totally independent of... use-value." And if we are thus forced to "abstract from" or disregard use-value, "there remains their Value as defined above"; that is, there remains labor, which determines their exchange value (their real value in the normal sense of the word). Marx now gives labor the new name "Value" – labor no longer merely determines the magnitude of value, but is itself identically Value.

But again, the only justified conclusion is, Therefore, the common substance that manifests itself in the exchange value – that is, the factor that determines exchange value – is... the factor that determines exchange value. Marx's attempt to make more out of this simple relationship than is there, or perhaps his inability to understand what is there, distorts any deductions he may have made. To paraphrase the famous remark of Dr. Johnson's, it is simply a matter of "ignorance – pure ignorance."

"A causes B"; or "A is the factor whose magnitude determines the magnitude of B" – these are simple concepts. And much as the fact that  $F=ma$  does not imply that the real acceleration of an object is a force, so the fact that labor might *determine* exchange value does not mean that "Value" is by definition equivalent to labor. Under Marx's hand all distinctions break down, any straightforward and clearly-defined relationship or assertion becomes blurred, and what he calls science degenerates into an undifferentiated mush of metaphysical mumbo-jumbo and bombastic rhetoric.

Having once identified his "common substance," Marx tells us that it does not *determine* exchange value; rather it "manifests itself in their exchange value." Marx thus changes the metaphysics and the entire set of assumptions of the discussion.

### **Significance of equating value and labor**

Now, in science one factor determines another; there is a cause-and-effect relationship, or an observed quantitative correlation. If an object is dropped from a high place, it achieves a greater velocity than if it is dropped from a low place: when a planet is closer to the sun, it moves faster along its orbital path than when it is farther away; the acceleration an object undergoes is proportional to the force acting on it. That is, one factor determines another. This is presumably the kind of scientific law or correlation Marx adopted as his model in examining exchange value. But (for example) distance is not called a "phenomenal form" of velocity. The two maintain distinct identities.

Moreover, when a clear-cut statement is made about a relationship, it is possible to test that statement. And when a cause-and-effect relationship is said to exist, one has a right to ask for an explanation of the mechanism of that cause and effect: is it a basic fact of the inherent order of the universe? Or is it explainable in terms of some already-established laws and mechanisms? For example, when an object is dropped from a greater height, the force of gravity, which constantly acts on it, has a greater distance over which to exert its attraction, and since the object is constantly accelerating, it achieves a greater velocity than it would when dropped from a lower height. Thus this phenomenon is explainable in terms of more elementary, already-established laws. By contrast,  $F=ma$  is simply "a fact of nature" – it is an unvarying correlation, which is part of the natural order of the universe itself. (That is, it is a good approximation at "non-relativistic" speeds. Actually, the correct formula has another factor which increases as the speed of the object approaches that of light.)

Perhaps because such clarity does not serve his purposes, Marx does not say "labor is the common factor that determines exchange value." The question in such a case would be, *How* does labor determine exchange value? By what mechanism? Moreover, in such a case, Marx's assertion would be subject to objective verification or refutation.

Marx thus adopts a more mystical, more metaphysical approach: labor doesn't determine exchange value, it "manifests itself in the exchange value." This is a murky, metaphysical assertion, more esoteric and less demonstrable; and so the reader is less likely to feel competent to challenge it, and more ready to accept it on Marx's authority.

The statement has overtones of Greek mythology; it is reminiscent of Proteus's manifesting himself in various guises; that is the kind of process it calls to mind. It seems to imply not two separate entities, but two different guises or alter egos of the same entity. In that sense it is reminiscent of Hegel's concept of an unseen "Ideal," which manifests itself outwardly in real-world form. (But the

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real-world form is only secondary and derived; the unseen Ideal has prior existence and greater validity.)

It is a type of Gnosticism – an assertion of an unseen reality which guides and controls mere physical, real-world entities; it is an assertion made on no basis or evidence, but held to as a matter of self-assured dogma. (Moreover, when making it Marx compounds the fault by inserting a substitute entity: labor equates to some transcendent "Value," which only has the "phenomenal form" of exchange value.)

The very meaning of scientific laws is transformed in Marx's text – the very nature of the relation he seeks to identify when he starts out to find the "answer" to the magnitude of exchange value. He seems incapable of saying something as simple as "the amount of embodied labor determines exchange value." He must first of all apply to labor the label of "the common substance," an atavistic and simple-minded analysis in itself. But it is necessary: in Marx's "materialist" analysis, all factors end up being reduced to quasi-physical entities, which directly and automatically determine other physical quantities. Everything is a "form" or "manifestation" of something else; thus labor is incorporated in physical form within the commodity, in which form it is identical to "Value"; and it adopts the alter ego or "phenomenal form" of exchange value. The fundamental relation of cause and effect is lost, being replaced by statements of equivalency among various guises or forms of one and the same inner, Ideal substance.

Thus there is no room for any *event* as such affecting things, or for human judgments and human responses in any way to affect economic phenomena like exchange values. Instead we have a system of guises and alter egos. Marx's is an automatistic system: it is a self-regulated automaton. It works under its own rules of equivalency or identity, the rules telling which entity is a "form" of which other. There is no room in this table of equivalencies for human guidance or input. Thus in the present instance, his inquiry into exchange value is reduced to the search for a "common substance"; and more broadly, economics, which is a social science, is reduced to an inanimate series of equivalencies or alter egos, automatically maintained.

### **Marx's process of reasoning**

So now let us see what Marx *considers* he has shown. He says: "Let us now consider the residue of each of these products<sup>\*</sup>; it consists of the same unsubstantial reality in each, a mere congelation of homogeneous human labor, of labor-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure."

<sup>\*</sup> Or maybe, "Let us now sift the ashes of our imagination"?

Marx's entire pose, this pretense of having derived his theory by a mental process of "abstracting from," applied to a mental image of a particular commodity, is a charade. Marx didn't derive it that way; his text is actually a line of deductive argumentation, not one of mental "chipping away." The process of mental "abstraction" is just a convenient cover for the actual logic by which he reduces the realm of potential answers to the select few he wants to consider. Nevertheless, he wants to discuss the "residue" left over after the chipping or "abstracting" process, so let us indeed consider this "residue," the remnants of the chipped-away commodity. It consists of the "unsubstantial reality" of congealed "homogeneous human labor." The labor can't be seen, it's not a physical object, and in fact the normal mind might consider that it's not "embodied" in the commodity in any sense at all as Marx means it. Nevertheless, Marx assures us that it is there, it is reality.

Actually, the only sense in which labor can be "embodied" in the commodity is that labor is *invested* in the commodity; a certain amount of labor is exerted in the production of the commodity; the commodity represents or "embodies" the exertion of a certain number of hours of labor. But labor is an action, it is the expenditure of energy – it doesn't in any actual, rational sense congeal or crystallize in the physical commodity.

Marx couldn't really discern it in any "residue." That is just his way of saying that labor is the only conceivable common factor of all commodities that could account for their exchange value.

What Marx has to show is that labor is a property of the commodity, at least more so than factors like the fact that there is demand for goods, and so on. (These other factors are dismissed as not being properties of the commodity.)

So even though no one can see labor embodied in the commodity, we'll pretend it is there, as Marx says; and we'll conclude that this "unsubstantial reality," supported by no more solid evidence than Marx's unsupported word, is the "common factor" which governs exchange value. Thus by rhetoric and sophistry Marx can resolve upon this one remaining "residue" or "common something." As Marx puts it, "All that these things now tell us is that human labor-power has been expended," etc. Avoiding Marx's reference to "residue" and the whole line of reasoning by which he purportedly arrives at this "common something," let's just say the only common characteristic of goods, besides use-value, is the property of being products of labor.

### **Value As a Definition**

And what does this tell us, assuming we grant its validity? If we adopt the model of scientific laws, it tells us that the amount of labor quantitatively

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determines the (exchange) value, i.e., the two are quantitatively related. That is, there is some law on the order of " $V = kL$ ", saying the amount of exchange value exists in a definite mathematical relation to the amount of labor expended.

Marx goes beyond this, blurring the conclusion he is entitled to make. He says, "When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are – Values." Marx then refers to this, or to his entire line of reasoning, as a "definition" – value "as defined above" being equivalent to the "homogeneous human labor" contained in the commodity.

Marx has given us a proof or (if you prefer) a line of logical reasoning showing value to be identical with labor; it seems superfluous now to *define* value as labor.

Marx's method here is unique in science. Probably no one else has ever seen the necessity of first proving by deductive logic that one factor determines another, and then *defining* one factor as identical to the other. By the nature of any subject what you need is either a proof or a definition; you don't need both. Newton didn't first discover that " $F=ma$ " and then define F equal to ma. If F, m, and a are empirical, objective entities, such as are fit for scientific study, then they have definite characteristics of their own, and what we must do is discover these. (Or, in Marx's case, what we must do is invent some contrived proof showing what they are.) If however we are dealing with hypothetical or arbitrary entities, we can define them at will. We don't do both! That Marx can first adduce a lengthy investigation (actually a series of logical deductions) to show what value is, and then go on to define value, is one of the more scientifically incompetent aspects of his text.

We can further say that, first of all, we are not looking for a definition of value; we already know what value is – it is, in the economic sense, practically identical to exchange value. In the plebeian, cut-and-dried, dollars-and-cents realm of economics, "value" is synonymous with "exchange value." Exchange value is what interests us, and that is all we are competent to discuss. (Other senses of value such as "worth" or aesthetic "merit" or even "use-value" are not concrete and quantifiable enough for us to write scientifically and definitively about them.)

We don't need another definition of value; we have one already – value is exchange value, the only value that can concern us scientifically. Exchange value is what Marx set out to investigate; and the "solution" to what determines value should have been on the order of "A causes B" or "A quantitatively determines B." But what Marx now attempts to do is to pull a bait-and-switch operation – to yank exchange value out of sight and put "Value" in its place; that is, to define Value as labor.

It is not easy to see this immediately in Marx's typically sloppy prose: "When looked at as crystals of this social substance, they are – Values." That is,

again, almost a senseless juxtaposition of words; it is very nearly gibberish. It is not how we look at them that makes them values or not values. They were in fact already "values" – that is, they had "value in exchange," exchange value, before we began analyzing them. They don't need to be looked at in any particular way to have exchange value. They have exchange value in that they are exchanged, there is a market in them.

Marx's question, at one time, was, What determines the outcome of this market in commodities; that is, what determines *how much* exchange value a particular commodity has? That was the original subject of investigation, and commodities thus already had value going into the discussion. The problem was not to define "value," but to determine the correlation of factors that governs its magnitude.

The word "value" is not open for redefinition; it has a very definite meaning already, and it is because of that meaning that we are interested in it. Moreover, in looking for the explanation of value, we are looking for a scientifically respectable relation of cause and effect, wherein one quantity (say, labor) determines the magnitude of another quantity (say, exchange value). We are not looking for alternate guises or "forms" of the same entity, on the model of ancient Greek philosophy or mythology. "Value", for our purposes, means exchange value. That is what the discussion is about; it is what Marx originally set out to explore, and it is the economic entity that really exists in the real world. *Hic Rhoda, hic Salta!*

### **Further Animadversions**

Marx's discussion, as has been stated, is of a very curious form. First, he defines value as meaning the embodied labor or "common substance"; then he *proves* that labor is value, or that "Therefore, the common substance... is their value." (At first, of course, he speaks of "Value" not simply "value." It is difficult to believe he meant to make any distinction between the capitalized form of the word and the uncapitalized. The end result, in any case, is that labor is value twice: first by definition and then by proof. )

The first reaction on seeing "Value" defined as "the common social substance," or labor, should be this basic one: value doesn't mean "crystals of this social substance." Value doesn't mean labor. In an economic sense, value is short for exchange value: it means what a thing brings on the market. It doesn't mean labor, and it can't be capriciously defined.

The term "value" isn't quite that simple; it may involve connotations not only of what a thing actually does sell for on the market, but also of what it ought to sell for (however the speaker may arrive at that figure). That is, there may be

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connotations of intrinsic worth, apart from fluctuating market conditions. For example, someone may say, "I can only get \$500 for this car, but it's worth more." (Perhaps the car has been taken care of so well that it's worth more than the "book" price.) Or someone may say, "This house sold for \$50,000, but it's worth more" – meaning perhaps that real estate prices are depressed at the moment, but in "normal" conditions it is worth more. These connotations bring the word "value" closer in meaning to Smith's term "natural price," a term which however is itself closely related to market price: it is what something exchanges for, or should exchange for, under "normal" or ideal conditions.

The term "value" also has aesthetic, "humanistic," non-economic connotations: thus in Wilde's epigram, the cynic is said to know the price (exchange value) of everything, but the value (value more humanistically judged) of nothing.

At any rate, in no sense does "value" mean "labor." Marx's defining it so contributes part of the "black hole" character of his text. He has shown (to his satisfaction) that this "social substance" is what is "behind" exchange value, in some inchoate, unspecified sense – it determines exchange value quantitatively, let us say. But having made that point, Marx is unable to maintain distinct identities for exchange value and labor, or a distinct and limited relationship such as "labor determines the magnitude of value." The two collapse in on themselves, merging identities: "A causes B" turns into "A is identical with B," and then "B is defined as A."

But the objection must be made, there is no vacancy in the position of definition of "value"; "value" already has a meaning – it means exchange value. To give it an entirely new definition, one directly at variance with its prevailing one, only confounds the discussion.

Perhaps Marx only meant to coin a term, a shorthand expression for the embodied labor, but didn't intend for it to be confused with "exchange value." That is, perhaps he meant by his new "Value" a completely new kind of value: his "Value" means "the embodied labor," and *only* that, with any similarities to the normal usage, value as exchange value, being merely coincidental.

If that were the case, he should have chosen a term less conducive to confusion, say for example, "friblitz." Then anyone reading a reference to the concept of "friblitz" would immediately be aware that it referred to Marx's coined term for the embodied labor, not to value as normally meant. Thus the reader could dismiss the whole subject – for "value" or "friblitz" as embodied labor, as Marx defines it, has absolutely no bearing on any economic subject. As he means the term, it doesn't even *exist*; it doesn't exist as a physical entity within the commodity. And it doesn't spontaneously transmute into or "manifest" itself as exchange value. Marx's whole thesis is preposterous, his whole picture of labor as physically deposited in commodities and somehow spontaneously

manifesting itself as exchange value, is a bizarre misappreciation of the basic workings of the material and economic universes.

It is part of Marx's scientific illiteracy that he apparently believes he can define words at will. But as Alice said, the question is whether you can make a word mean whatever you want it to. That isn't an easy question to answer definitively, but at least a partial answer would be that if one does use words to mean anything one wants, it will introduce a certain amount of confusion into the discussion. Moreover, a glib redefinition of terms is one of the major devices of sophistry, and as such is a suspect technique.

### **A Special Meaning for "Value"**

The end result of Marx's redefinition of "Value" is this: throughout the remainder of his text he will make repeated references to the subject of value, and the naive reader will assume he's talking about value in the ordinary sense of the word – exchange value. However, that will not be the case; he will be talking about his own pet, personal term "value" – value meaning the "embodied labor," crystals of that "social substance." Marx's entire theoretical framework from now on will concern this ersatz concept, not value as normal users of language think of it but a very particular, peculiar, jargon sense of the term. Marx no doubt profits by this confusion. If Marx had chosen a clearer, non-conflicting term for embodied labor, like "friblitz," his text would have been recognized at once as the kind of driveling fantasy it is. As it is, his whole text, revolving as it does around discussions of the "value" of various entities, ends up as a nonsense discussion, because it is based on a fantasy concept.

What Marx actually needs, it should be noted, is for both definitions of value to be held in the reader's mind at the same time. Value is supposed to mean "embodied labor" so that Marx can prove the things he wants to prove about it. He will construct a complete system, a set of categories defining or deducing what the "value" of any given entity is, using the definition of value as embodied labor. All of his determinations of the magnitude of value for different commodities will be calculated from the amount of this "social substance" contained in them (which Marx will derive by further sophistries).

At the same time, "value" has to mean value in the normal sense of the word; that is, it is supposed to mean "exchange value" as well, because exchange value was Marx's initial topic and it is what concerns us. If we are not discussing exchange value, the discussion holds no interest for us and has no economic pertinence.

The two definitions cannot merge or coexist; that should be plain. The exchange value of a commodity is not manipulable; that is, it doesn't produce the



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results Marx wants. It is an objective entity, whose magnitude can only be known by seeing what a commodity actually does bring on the market. It cannot be guaranteed beforehand to conform to any of Marx's *a priori* definitions of what the value of a commodity must necessarily be. Marx derives his laws of value using his specious definition, and expects the reader to believe they hold true for exchange value.

That is, if we look at both conflicting meanings of "value," we see at least one contradiction. The laws Marx derives using deductive logic applied to value as embodied labor, can't be guaranteed to hold true for value as exchange value. In a sense, what Marx thinks he can do is determine a real-world quantity by sheer force of definition. He has developed the theoretical underpinnings to his own satisfaction – value is proven to equal a certain thing, and *defined* to equal a certain thing; and, thus ideologically bound, it has no choice but to equal that. By Marx's definition of value as embodied labor, he apparently considers that exchange value can be logically compelled to correspond to this analytically proven determination of the category "value."

Thus by sheer compelling force of definition, exchange value (this remains part of the meaning of the term "value") is compelled, or deemed logically, to correspond to the amount of embodied labor. This superstitious, fatalistic attitude that "definition can compel the facts," is exactly opposite the scientific view. Marx derives his conclusions from logic and from willful definition, and assumes that the facts must correspond. The scientist first studies the *facts*, and fits his theories to them – not vice versa. This attitude of "My theory (or definition) is correct – it is the facts that are mistaken" should not be dignified with the term science.

Even apart from the redefinition of "Value," or inner Ideal value, Marx's theory also claims to define *exchange* value, that being the real-world manifestation of the transcendent entity, "value." To put it more prosaically, exchange value is always in direct proportion to Marx's ethereal entity, Value. (It is "proportionate" to it, rather than equal, because exchange value is presumably measured in different units from labor.)

Thus when Marx's casuistic theory mandates what value must equal, it tells us at the same time what exchange value must equal. But exchange value is a real-world, objective entity, measured by inspecting the market. To think it can be defined by an *a priori* category or a series of specious deductions is fatalistic and superstitious, not scientific.

You cannot define objective quantities by force. One can't for example define the distance to the sun as 50,000 miles; it is a certain distance in its own right. It is a quantity not subject to definition – it can only be measured. (It is reported, in a similar misguided vein, that an Indiana state legislator once introduced a bill to round pi off to 3, so as to make life easier for students. Even

the most scientifically naive reader will see that the fallacy in such attempts: objective quantities cannot be capriciously redefined.)

There is a certain superstitious fatalism, a mystical belief that "Logic can compel the facts," implicit in Marx's entire method of investigation. Having proven deductively that exchange value equals the embodied labor, and then for good measure having by force as it were simply defined value as labor, Marx assumes the actual quantities in the real world will have no option but to fall in line. The thought processes and deductions of Marx's own mind are presumed by him to be pre-eminently authoritative.

This smug scholasticism, or to put it another way, this scientific ignorance of Marx's, is an important reason why he can venture to make such definitive, precise statements about economics, value, the course of human history, and just about everything else. Marx gives exact and conclusive answers where other authors are tentative, hesitant, and willing only to suggest tendencies and approximate laws. This is a case where ignorance is Marx's main strength – it is all that enables him to be so self-confidently definitive. To quote a common parody of Kipling, this is a case where "If you can keep your head when all about you others are losing theirs, you probably don't understand the seriousness of the situation." Marx has no conception of the meaning of science or the task before him, and therefore he feels competent to speak authoritatively about every aspect of human existence and the universe.

Marx's attitude, it may be noted, is in a way the same as that held by the Scholastics. They deduced statements about objective matters of fact; for example they deduced that the planets orbit around the sun in perfect circles. Their reasoning was something like this: God is perfect (a premise no one would presume to challenge); the circle is the most perfect geometric figure; and God must therefore have made the planets orbit in circles.

Now, there are so many questionable assumption in that argument that it would take pages to discuss them all. But for our purposes the main anti-scientific assumption is that matters of fact can be determined conclusively by logic, rather than by actual discovery of the facts. The orbits of the planets, or the distance to the moon, can only really be known by somehow objectively determining or measuring such quantities. (However, they had no way of doing this at the time.) Such things can't be deduced from speculative assumptions. Logic cannot compel the facts.

The scientist knows that the natural universe has a certain nature of its own, independent of our logic and philosophies, and that it is our task to discover what the facts are – to derive our theories from the facts, not "deduce" the facts from our theories. Marx presumes to put economics or "political economy" in the same class of studies as natural sciences – another example of his scientific illiteracy. But even if this were valid, his notions about how science proceeds

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disqualified him from saying anything significant about the "science" of economics.

For the remainder of his text, then, Marx will deal with the "value" of various entities; but this "value" will be an impostor, a "ringer" for exchange value. That is, his "value" always means embodied labor – and that is a fantasy concept, irrelevant to real-world economics. Not that labor itself is irrelevant; the labor *costs* of producing a commodity are one of the main factors which determine its price. But labor as a crystallized "substance," which automatically and spontaneously determines the exchange value of a commodity by first depositing itself within the commodity and then manifesting itself externally in the stated guise of "exchange value" (the "phenomenal form" of embodied labor or "value"), is a fiction. Exchange value, or value itself, as an *a priori* category pre-determined by the simple circumstance of how much labor an article "contains," and with no reference to people or the market, is an outlandish misperception of the nature of economics itself.

What Marx ends up with as his "value" is something typical for him; it is a compound of two mutually contradictory views. On the one hand, value is represented by him as meaning ordinary value, value as normally thought of. In this sense of the word, value is a matter of economic import and an entity that interests us; however, quantitatively it doesn't adapt itself to Marx's purposes. On the other hand, Marx feels free to define value as he pleases, and in his chosen guise it means not ordinary value but some "crystallized social substance." As such it has no connection to exchange value, but is made by adroit rhetoric to appear quantitatively to equal what he wants it to be. Marx compounds his concept of "value" from both of these meanings; thus his text is first a proof, and then a definition, of the "value" of commodities.

Marx's text purports to be an investigation of exchange value, which is initially defined as the "quantitative relations... the proportion in which values in use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort." For discussing this issue, his chosen method is...to change the subject. Exchange value is too observable, too concrete, too open to investigation to serve Marx's purposes. Marx prefers to deal with a tamed concept of his own creation, "Value." This entity is invisible (indeed nonexistent), transcendent, unobservable, subject to no method of verification or refutation, and subject only to Marx's complete control and the rules, laws, and definitions he wishes to invent for it. It is an entirely malleable, subservient little concept, just suited for Marx's purposes, helping him prove whatever he wants to about "value." Its only drawbacks are that it doesn't exist and that it is not exchange value (and thus has no bearing whatsoever on what actually happens in the markets and economics of the real world). No one is interested in Marx's fictitious entity, "value," any more than one can really be interested in economic affairs on other planets as they might be described in

some science fiction novel. These things aren't real. To understand economics, to understand *value*, is to understand market value and markets; that is the ground of investigation, and the manufacturing of fantasy concepts will supply no insights into it.

### **Marx's Malleable World**

For Marx, the really valid entity is his unseen inner common element, "homogeneous human labor." He holds it to be the determining factor for value, with a significance beyond that of merely "phenomenal" real-world entities. His entire picture, the schema or paradigm in terms of which he interprets all data, is thus summed up, "The progress of our investigation will show that exchange value is the only form in which the value of commodities can manifest itself or be expressed. For the present, however, we have to consider the nature of value independently of this, its form." That is, we have to consider the nature of the transcendent "Value" independently of its phenomenal form, exchange value. (This is entirely true, since there is no possible connection between the two. Exchange value actually exists, and it is open to discussion in factual terms, by reference to market observations and data. Marx's "Value" is fictitious, and is discussed by him via such sophistries and *ad hoc* rationalizations as he is able to invent for it.)

Marx has come a long way from his initial statement of the problem of exchange value and what determines it; and he has come a long way from science. His view of the problem in terms of "forms" and "manifestations," with one entity manifesting itself in alternate guises, is a reversion to mythical concepts, philosophical methods and generally a pre-scientific manner of approaching the whole issue.

Marx's mystical-philosophical rhetoric of value (or labor) expressing itself in its incarnate guise as exchange value, explains nothing; it is just double-talk, specious metaphysics. It shows Marx to be not only a scientific illiterate, but very nearly a charlatan. He has created from nothing, trumped up out of thin air, an anti-rational picture, exactly the reverse of what any scientist would accept.

Marx's frame of reference is this: he views any actual, observed events, any real-world data, only in the context of a picture which makes it a "manifestation" of other, unseen factors. Whenever he observes anything having to do with exchange value, he first imposes on it the conceptual framework in which exchange value is only the "form in which the value of commodities [meaning, the contained labor] can manifest itself." He never views exchange value for itself, accepting the simple facts of the matter (though he prided himself on accepting the facts of the material world as they were, "without reservation");

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rather, he superimposes his philosophical framework, his fantasy world, over it. The facts are not allowed to speak for themselves.

Thus his fantasy world receives the highest priority; its validity is now taken as a foregone conclusion, and all facts henceforth will be filtered through it, interpreted in light of it. If the facts seem to contradict it, so much the worse for the facts – they will be explained away or ignored. The fantasy will be considered inviolate and Marx's Gnostic, unseen paradigm will be granted highest credence and authority, overruling the facts themselves.

One could say the principle of Occam's Razor applies to value.\* The observable facts of the matter, involving market value as an observed phenomenon, supply and demand, and so on, are sufficient in themselves to supply a rational explanation of exchange value; therefore no reference to spooks or unseen entities is necessary. Exchange value isn't a "form" or "manifestation" of any unseen, embodied, invisible "common substance" in commodities. There is no ectoplasmic entity inside commodities, taking on corporeal form as price tags. Exchange value is determined by a variety of economic factors, ultimately hinging on decisions and actions of human beings. It is not a spontaneous or automatistic "manifestation" of some "common substance."

This is not to say there can be no inquiry into what determines exchange value; but it must be a rational inquiry. If it identifies causative factors, they must be real and observable factors; and the manner in which those factors are supposed to influence exchange value must be described rationally and explicitly, in terms which can be verified or refuted by observation of real-world events and entities. And the relationships and the manner of influence must be such as actually occur in the real world. In other words, the explanation must fit in with how the world really works; and we can have no more of "manifestations" in "phenomenal form" of unseen "common substances" such as "congealed labor," defined by brute force to be identical with "Value." (Most of all we must respect language, and not presume to redefine terms like "value" to fit our personal agenda.)

This is again not to say that labor doesn't exist. It does exist, that is, it is performed. But it doesn't "congeal" into a substance, it is not a bodily presence inside the commodity, it is not "value," and it does not determine or "manifest itself as" exchange value in a direct, automatistic manner.

We must in short have science, a description of how the world really works, and not mystical assertions, specious rhetoric, and sophistical logic, all rolled up in a ball of speculative philosophy and verbal trickery. That is what Marx offers us. And when he tells us that "we have to consider...value independently of this,

\* One version of Occam's Razor goes, "Entities ought not to be multiplied except from necessity." A more modern form is, "The explanation requiring the fewest assumptions is the most likely to be correct."

its form," he tells us that he will henceforth be dealing *first* with his fantasy concept, with unseen, Gnostic "Value," which exists only in his mind and in his unsupported assertions, rather than with actually-observable exchange value, "its form." To him the real is only a "form" or "manifestation" of the imaginary. Marx prefers his trumped-up fantasy world to the real events and things of the "merely phenomenal" real world.

### **The Nature of "Value"**

Marx's redefinition of the term "value" carries with it a variety of implications. His transformation of the meaning of the word carries with it a transformation of the fundamental character of the concept referred to. This transformation might be briefly summed up by saying that value now becomes a static, rather than a dynamic, entity; it becomes an *a priori*, logical category, rather than an empirical, *a posteriori* quantity; and all in all it becomes, in Marx's jargon, a "metaphysical" rather than "dialectical" entity.

Consider first exchange value, or value in the normal sense of the word. It is, we know, the proportion in which goods of various kinds are exchanged, that being a mathematical relation. Alternatively (and speaking practically), exchange value is market price. Now this quantitative relation or this market price is governed by no logical imperatives or *a priori* philosophical rules. It is determined dynamically by people who have things for sale and people desiring to buy them, as they together strike their bargains. (All these people are however influenced by more objective factors like cost of production.) But there is no pre-established formula for knowing beforehand, to a logical certainty, what exchange value must of necessity be – it is determined *in the event*, by the dynamics of the market, i.e. by supply and demand. In this view, exchange value is volatile, fluctuating, human-determined and *a posteriori*; it is not pre-determined by logical necessity. It is what events make it, and it can be known only by measuring the actual results on the market – by seeing what the price actually is – not by a pre-fixed logical necessity.

Moreover, exchange value cannot be conceived of as a fixed physical property of the commodity. It is a product of human dealings in the commodity, of human behavior, of market considerations. It doesn't exist independently within the commodity in a certain fixed amount; in fact, it doesn't exist, in the form conceived of by Marx, at all. Exchange value is not really a thing in the way Marx conceives his "value" to be. It isn't there "in" the commodity, as a property like the commodity's weight or volume. Exchange value comes into existence only in the act of exchange, and it is actually a by-product of the act of exchange: if one person trades three apples to another person for two oranges,

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the quantitative proportion attained in the exchange is itself the exchange value. The apples and oranges exist in and of themselves as *things*, but the proportion attained in exchange is an aspect of the act of exchange itself. Exchange value becomes apparent, and in fact only comes into existence, as an aspect or attribute of trade.

Thus, to repeat, exchange value is an *a posteriori* concept – its magnitude can only be known after the fact. What considerations impinge on the parties involved in the exchange of course interests us; none of the above should be construed as implying that no generalizations or laws or predictions can be made as to what exchange value will be, based on a given set of conditions. But as regards the nature of the exchange value itself, it is *a posteriori*, transient, an aspect of trade and not a fixed physical property of goods themselves. Thus it is not pre-determined by an *a priori* rule or logical imperative: it has no existence "before the fact."

Exchange value is more or less in the same category as a baseball player's batting average; or perhaps it is like a description of what a player did or will do on a given trip to the plate: it can only be determined by the events themselves. It doesn't exist *a priori* as a logical category, and while we may think we have good grounds for conjecture on a batter's chances of success, we cannot know the result beforehand. What is more, the result is not congealed in solid form in his bat, from whence it manifests itself in another guise when he makes a trip to the plate.\* A player's box score for a given at-bat doesn't exist before he actually goes to bat. It is dynamically determined, and is not a static quantity, not a physical *thing* at all; it is one aspect of an event.

By contrast to this, Marx reifies the concept and portrays "value" as a physical property of the commodity.

In contrast to this dynamic or, we might say, "dialectical" view of exchange value, we have Marx's conception of "Value." This derives ultimately from his "pre-Aristotelian" notion of a "common substance" within goods which accounts for their being exchanged at a certain rate. He presents value, or embodied labor, as a reified or concretized thing, or at least as a physical attribute of a thing. Rather than being determined dynamically, in the act of exchange; it exists statically, "within" the commodity, as a pre-existing property of a certain magnitude, waiting to manifest (Actually, Marx's value is in a sense determined dynamically – the work embodied in the commodity during its production, we would have to say, is dynamic. But this value is not dynamic from a market viewpoint; by the time it is ready to "manifest" itself as exchange value, it has already been determined. That is, once the labor has been performed, once the

\* Of course this baseball example involves a much less orderly, predictable thing than even exchange value.

commodity is a finished product, value is a fixed, static, intrinsic property of the commodity.)

This "value" is pre-existent and pre-determined. It is an *a priori* phenomenon: Marx's rule is, measure the amount of labor that was embodied in the commodity, and by logical necessity, or by definition, or what have you, we know that this is precisely the value of the commodity. Marx's law serves as a logical category for determining, without ever having to follow the commodity to the marketplace, what its value is and must be.

Marx's "value" thus is static, concrete, pre-established, *a priori*, and "ready-made." It has all the characteristics he condemns in "metaphysical" science.

In fact, while Marx, in his approach to the physical sciences, purports to supersede "metaphysical" science by making all things dynamic, interactive and interrelated, he takes the opposite tack with exchange value; he reduces it to a static, concrete thing.

To review, Marx has said about the "metaphysical" approach of the ordinary scientist,

[H]is method of work has...left us as legacy the habit of observing natural objects and processes in isolation...in repose, not in motion, as constants, not as essentially variables...

Dialectics, on the other hand, [he brags] comprehends things... in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin, and ending...

The old method... preferred to investigate *things* as given, as fixed and stable...

Marx deplores this approach and this view of "things as finished objects," and applauds the dialectical view "that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made *things*, but as a complex of processes...."

Yet value, which actually is the end result of a complex of processes, he portrays as a static, ready-made thing. There is a weird consistency in this. His purported conversion of physical entities to "dialectical" form is mostly mere rhetoric and obfuscation, and his treatment of a genuinely dynamic principle – exchange value – is likewise exactly the reverse of the actual facts. Marx is at least consistent in that everything he says is in all cases the reverse of the truth.

The difference between the classical view of exchange value and Marx's view of "value" may be approached as follows. In the classical view, commodities can be known to have a certain exchange value because they sell at that price. In Marx's view, things sell at a certain price because that is their value.



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More exactly, the classical view is that to say a commodity has a certain exchange value is the *same* as saying it sells at a certain price. That is how we know what its exchange value is – we see what it exchanges for on the market. Exchange value emerges only in the act of exchange; there is no pre-determined formula for it and no pre-conceived determination of it. There is no distinction, no separate entity apart from exchange value or price. All that exists is what we see – the dynamics of the market, the "dialectical clash" of supply and demand, producing a resultant price, or exchange value. No transcendent, separate "super-Value" apart from the plain facts of the market (i.e., of the real world) exists. Exchange value itself is not a thing, but the result of a process; it is not so much "value" (a thing) as *valuing* (a process): it is the judgment of the market on a product, i.e. the end result of the conflicting impulses and desires of buyer and seller, of supply and demand. A commodity thus has a certain value, i.e. a certain exchange value, by virtue of the fact that it sells at a certain price.

For Marx, the logic is just the reverse. Value exists beforehand, i.e. before an object is put up for sale in the marketplace. Value is a reified, concrete entity, existing in a certain amount; the magnitude of value is logically determined in Marx's analysis as an *a priori* category – it is knowable beforehand by application of a formula. The whole concept of exchange is separated from that of value; value as "commensurability in exchange" is abandoned. Now we have value as a sort of transmutation of labor into solid form as "Value," and exchange value as a manifestation of this congealed, physically-contained labor. Exchange value is mystically determined by the guiding influence of the physical quantity of labor deposited inside the commodity.

For all these reasons it is accurate to say that in Marx's schema, a commodity first of all possesses in itself a definite value; and it then achieves a certain exchange value because of that pre-determined "value."

We can see this more clearly by looking at some statements Marx makes further on in his text. He says for instance, "It becomes plain that it is not the exchange of commodities which regulates the magnitude of their value; but, on the contrary, that it is the magnitude of their value which controls their exchange properties."

That is, value exists *a priori*, in isolation from the market; and it controls or determines exchange value. Goods have a certain *exchange* value because they first possess a certain transcendent or mystical inner "Value."

We see another indication of this in that Marx also states his "assumption, that all commodities... are bought and sold at their full value." From this we see that value exists independently of the selling price. For it implies that there is an independent standard, *apart from exchange value*, for determining "value." Exchange value is assumed, Marx states, to correspond in magnitude to this prior, independent standard of value.

By contrast, in the classical view, value is for all intents and purposes synonymous with market price. (Market vicissitudes might cause us to say the price of a commodity is not its genuine value; it might be more accurate to say that value is identical with "natural price," not current market price.) In short, whatever the commodity sells for, that is ipso facto its value; there is no ulterior value such as Marx conceives of. Value is determined in exchange, not as an *a priori* category.

For Marx, "The price, then, is merely the money-name of the quantity of social labor realised in his commodity." Value is absolutely static, pre-determined, "ready-made" and "metaphysical." Exchange value is represented as a mere offshoot of this pet concept: it follows after and is a subordinate, "phenomenal form" of this fixed, pre-determined value of Marx's.

Marx says, in discussing a particular commodity, "Its value, like that of every other commodity, is already fixed before it goes into circulation, since a definite quantity of social labor has been spent upon it... ." Value is fixed and determined beforehand, and accompanies the commodity to market like an invisible price sticker. Marx's skill in twisting the facts and logic and making "value" appear to mean "embodied labor," now pays off. He has this personal, pet concept he can discuss, a "value" which is totally imaginary and has nothing whatsoever to do with genuine economic value, but which advances his purposes. He is able to derive *a priori* formulae, specious categories subject to any degree of manipulation he desires, because his entity is unconnected to anything on this earth. His text is simply a matter of "dialectics," of verbal gymnastics, sophistical logic, and "specious and fantastic arrangements of words." Marx can make this fictitious entity appear to be anything he wants it to be, and the real world cannot intrude to refute him.

(Marx however did know what the classical view was, though he obviously disagreed with it. He quotes in another context, and apparently approvingly, a characterization of the classical view of value, as given by Butler:

The value of a thing  
Is just as much as it will bring.

That is true in classical theory as a matter of definition; or taking into account non-ideal situations, the value of a thing is just as much as it will bring under "normal" conditions: natural price.)

As between the two views of value, the reader can judge for himself, from his own experience, which is the accurate view. This author will venture his opinion, that Marx is seeing ghosts and goblins in positing an invisible "Value" exercising its influence over real-world, market value. The visible, apparent facts are explanation enough in themselves, and do not require any such *deus ex*

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*machina* to make sense of them. By the principle of Occam's Razor, and by common experience and common sense, Marx's view of value seems untenable.

### Further Comments on Value

Marx states, "A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labor in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it."

That is true by definition, that is, by Marx's personal redefinition, in terms of which the word "value" means "embodied labor." If value is *defined* as crystallized labor, then obviously the commodity has value only because human labor has been embodied in it.

That is then a trivial statement; but Marx apparently means it to carry along part of the connotations of the normal, or classical, sense of the word "value." That is, value is supposed to mean simultaneously his new, personal concept and also value in the original sense of market value, everyday value, exchange value.

The compounding together of these two meanings of the word, so that the reader keeps two entirely different definitions in his mind at the same time, makes the statement above seem meaningful. Marx seems to be culminating the examination he undertook of "the quantitative relation" which is exchange value, and saying that value, meaning exchange value, occurs in a commodity only by virtue of the embodied labor. The statement appears non-trivial, but actually it is only a restatement of the fact that Marx defined, by force as it were, value as simply "embodied labor."

Marx was quite able to hold two contradictory meanings of a word in his mind at the same time, and invites his reader to do so also. But this manipulation of the meanings of words is pure sophistry, and is an example of how Marx could reduce a question of substance, an issue of factual investigation, into a mere "thing of words," an arena for specious abstract logic. Marx has produced a definition (or proof) of something that is simply not true.

Moreover Marx can't, by sheer force of logic or definition, make exchange value (the "phenomenal form" of value) always be quantitatively in direct proportion to the "Value" – the embodied labor. The massive, overwhelming preponderance of factual evidence shows clearly that exchange value does not occur in such a simple, or simple-minded, relationship. It depends on more factors than labor – rents and profits, for instance. And ultimately, it is actually determined by supply and demand. Marx's specious syllogisms and definitions can't compel exchange value, by sheer force of logic and mystical power of words, to comply with his system. "Logic can't compel the facts."

Marx's proof, to recap, was something like this: first, exchange value exists as a mathematical relation only because all goods contain a "common substance"

whose amount determines (or constitutes) their exchange value. By process of elimination, Marx reduces the possibilities for the "common substance" to one: the property of being products of labor, or let's say just "embodied labor." Since labor is the substance that determines the exchange value of all commodities, or "manifests itself in the exchange value of commodities," it follows that labor, the common substance, is their "Value." (Thus labor is now identical with value, not merely its determiner.) For good measure Marx defines labor, or "crystals of this social substance," as Value; so labor is value both by definition and by proof.

The proof is mostly an elaboration of Marx's original assumption, that the entire phenomenon of exchange value is due to the presence in certain definite amounts of a "common substance" within all commodities. He uses deductive logic, of a sort, to identify that common substance, and dubs the result value. But the original assumption was completely idiotic, a primitive and excessively concretized view of how exchange value, or commensurability, is established, and in fact demonstrates a gross, almost moronic, misapprehension of how the world works on a very basic level.

This fundamental misapprehension of Marx's entire argument is mingled with a weird mythology of transmuting entities, of alter egos, of one thing "manifesting" itself in various "forms" or guises. This substitutes Greek mythology or superstitious metaphysics for the more prosaic but more realistic scientific understanding of what it means to say that one quantity is determined by another. The accurate model is cause and effect, or a quantitative correlation between two separate and distinct entities; it is not various "forms" and mutations and manifestations of an unseen "Ideal" or transcendent phenomenon.

### **More about the proof**

The question of whether value is determined by the amount of labor invested (let us not say "embodied") in the commodity is a factual one. We should be able to say, by empirical investigation, whether exchange value is always in direct proportion to the total amount of expended labor. It should in principle be possible to measure the productivity of some set of industries, that is, to find the ratio of labor to output, and to compare that to prices. Conceptually it should not be a difficult study to set up.

However, Marx did not proceed that way. He proceeded in several directions at once, one of them being to redefine the subject. "Value" ceases to mean what the normal user of language thinks it means, and is redefined as embodied labor. By this method a biology student could prove that the tiger is native to North America: "Let us define the tiger as a large, tawny-colored predator of the cat family, often found in mountainous and desert regions, and native to North

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America." Thus the desired point is easily proved, if one's attitude towards words is Humpty Dumpty's: "The question is...which is to be master – that's all." By this process however the investigation ceases to be an inquiry about the real world or about a substantive issue, and becomes an exercise in verbal manipulation.

The amazing fact is that Marx has trumped up his entire labor theory from nothing, from thin air. Literally the only fact he has adduced is that exchange value fluctuates while use-value may be presumed to remain the same. All else is arbitrary assumption, specious logic, impudent redefinition of words, and *ex cathedra* pronouncements.

That Marx dealt with the subject thus was not due to its being closed to empirical investigation. To quote Von Böhm-Bawerk again,

[E]xchange values, that is to say the prices of the commodities as well as the quantities of labor which are necessary for their [production], are real, external quantities [which are in principle determinable]... Marx ought to have turned to experience...he should have given a purely empirical proof... [However,] instead of submitting the supposed characteristic property to a positive test... Marx tries to convince us that he has found the sought-for property, by a purely negative proof, by showing that it is not any of the other properties.<sup>16</sup>

That is, he does it by a sophistry, by logic with a stacked deck. Specifically, he does it by a process of elimination that excludes from the start any embarrassing entities. His theory is based on a mechanistic conception of economics, which denies the human factor in establishing prices; its logic proceeds upon a specious assumption, in the first place, of the existence of some internal "common substance." His entire argument is based on a system of abstract syllogistic deductions constructed *ad hoc*, rather than by scientific investigation: a process that shows Marx knew nothing of the nature of economics or of science. The contents of his own head were much more malleable than the facts of the real world, but much less reliable.

As Von Böhm-Bawerk succinctly sums up, "He knew that the prices of commodities were not in proportion to the amount of incorporated labor, but to the total cost of production, which comprises other elements besides" – those elements being profits and rents.

Marx's metaphysics simply invents a world from whole cloth; he constructs a schema of interlocking logical categories whose nature and behavior are arbitrarily chosen by him. His new category "Value" is not real-world, everyday

value, but a category invented to fit into his hypothetical schema. Many other entities, categories, rules, assumptions, theorems and definitions are also adopted, much as a science-fiction writer invents descriptions of life on some distant planet. In very real fact, Marx invents a fantasy world, and the remainder of his text will concern itself almost exclusively with that fantasy world.

### **The Magnitude of Value**

Marx continues: "How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured?"

By looking at the market price, perhaps? That is how one would measure real value. But let's continue with Marx's version:

"Plainly, by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labor, contained in the article. The quantity of labor, however, is measured by its duration, and labor-time finds its standard in weeks, days, and hours." (Marx amazingly refrains from adding that these units in turn have their origins "partly in the nature of the physical universe, partly in convention.")

As to how one measures amounts of labor, Marx's comments are unexceptionable. They do show in succinct form the "bait-and-switch" operation Marx has accomplished: the measuring of labor is now synonymous with the measuring of value. The term "value" has been totally divorced from any connection with exchange value; in fact it has ceased to have any recognizable economic relevance. It means purely and simply "embodied labor" – a synthetic, not to say fictitious, entity.

We see too how value is now an *a priori*, logical category. One measures it simply by measuring the labor: the two are logically equivalent. And the amount of value is fixed by the logic of Marx's philosophical system, before the market ever passes judgment on the commodity. His economics becomes a closed logical system, deriving its validity from the definitions, rules and theorems he invents for it, and not on anything the market, i.e. the real world, may do.

From this fact too it appears that Marx is not describing how economics actually works in the real world; rather he is conceiving a hypothetical or "formal" (as opposed to "actual") system. It is a system of formal logic applied to chosen axioms, much like a field of mathematics.

In the real world we have to wait to see how the market passes judgment on our product, i.e., we have to await the event to know what a good actually sells for. (We may make predictions based on our production costs or on estimates of demand and supply; but the market has the definitive say as to what the exchange value is.) In Marx's system, value is pre-defined by the internal logic of the system. Goods go to market with an invisible price sticker already on them;

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their "value" has already been determined by the amount of labor embodied in them. (However, Marx never actually measures the amount of labor in any commodity; he established his theory entirely on shifty metaphysics and fancy footwork, without ever having the need to measure labor at any time.)

One final point about this passage: we have seen at some length how Marx slights exchange value in his analysis; but he also slights use-value, in a sense. Marx sums up his labor theory by saying that a "use-value...has value only because human labor in the abstract has been embodied...in it." That word "because" is unjustified. The correlation Marx has shown, if we accept his proofs, is that value corresponds quantitatively to the amount of embodied labor. (True, Marx also defines value as labor, but let us disregard that for the moment.) Having set out to investigate the "quantitative relation" of exchange value, Marx has found the mysterious causative factor or "common substance": labor. Value is always in proportion to the embodied labor; that is the substance that "manifests itself" in a corresponding amount of value.

Thus the *magnitude* of value depends mathematically on the *amount* of labor. But does that imply that there is value only "because" there was labor?

At first it might seem that such a conclusion does follow; after all, if the two are mathematically related, then zero expended labor would imply zero value.

But let us look at it from another viewpoint, the real-world viewpoint. People may pay a price for a commodity which is predicated on the amount of labor it took to produce the item; does that mean they buy it solely for the labor contained in it? Does it mean that the reason a commodity has value is that labor was done on it? Is it sensible to assume that people buy goods *because* labor was expended on them and not because of the intrinsic useful properties of the goods themselves?

To put it another way, it may be possible to distinguish two aspects of value, and especially of exchange value, namely, the *source* of value, and the factors that determine the *magnitude* of exchange value. Marx never distinguishes between these two; in his usual simple-minded approach, he looks for what might be termed a unary "answer" to value – one all-explanatory factor. It is not for him to distinguish various and subtle facets of any concept.

However, in the real world it is probably necessary to make such distinctions. Why does a pound of beef have value? Arguably, because there is demand for it; because people are willing to pay for it. And that is not for the pleasure of owning embodied labor, or for the virtuous glow of rewarding the laborers' self-sacrificing efforts, but for the desirable edible properties of beef – because of its usefulness.

Thus the strictly quantitative and economic aspect of the purchase, the exchange value, may be determined by certain quantitative factors – as Marx would have it, by the amount of embodied labor. But still there remains a

separate issue, that of why the commodity is sought-after at all; that is, the question of the source, rather than the magnitude, of its exchange value.

We would have to say, impersonal market factors may determine the amount of exchange value; but the source of all exchange, and all exchange value, is the desirable properties of goods: use-value.

In sum, the amount you will have to pay for a rabbit on the market may be determined by the labor required to secure the rabbit; or possibly, by supply and demand. But the reason you buy the rabbit is – because it is a rabbit. The source of its value is its own intrinsic useful properties – its use-value.

Marx sets out, in his labor theory, to find out what establishes the "quantitative relations" which is exchange value: what determines the magnitude of value. He turns his answer, labor, into the be-all and end-all, the omnipresent explanation of value. In fact, labor becomes actually synonymous with value, and exchange value becomes a neglected poor cousin, a "phenomenal manifestation" or real-world instance of this dual entity, embodied labor or value. The actually significant phenomenon goes unstudied, and Marx directs his readers' gaze toward a fictitious concept. And all subtlety and all distinguishing of various aspects of the nature of value is lost.



### Notes

- 1 Adler, Mortimer J. and Kelso, Louis O., *The Capitalist Manifesto*, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1958, p.56.
- 2 *ibid.*, p.58.
- 3 *ibid.*, p.57.
- 4 Revel, Jean-Francois, *The Totalitarian Temptation*, translated by David Hapgood, New York, Penguin Books, 1978, p.16-17.
- 5 Calder, Ritchie, *Man and the Cosmos; the Nature of Science Today*, New York, New American Library (Mentor Books), 1969.
- 6 Calder, Ritchie *op cit.*, p.11.
- 7 Böhm-Bawerk, Eugen von, *Karl Marx and the Close of His System*, Clifton N.J., A. M. Kelley, 1973, p.68.
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- 11 Calder, Ritchie, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 12 Duruy, *op. cit.*, p. 328-329.
- 13 Revel, Jean-Francois *op. cit.*, p.66-67.
- 14 Böhm-Bawerk, Eugen von, *op. cit.*, p.75.
- 15 Eastman, Max, *Is Marxism Scientific?*, New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1940, p.122.
- 16 Böhm-Bawerk, Eugen von, *op. cit.*, p.69.