The Work that must be Done
Volume I
Social Practice and Society

Preface

The problem Why do we find more and more resources being turned to the development of nuclear fision power instead of being applied to wind, wave, and solar power? Why has transportation centred around the private automobile and public roads, rather than on mass public transport? Why do enormous motorways continue to be built even during the current 'energy crisis'? Why does an increasing amount of valuable agricultural land, essential to present and future food production, disappear under concrete parking lots and high-rise buildings? In this 'affluent society', why do more and more goods continue to be produced, while the work-week is not, at the same time, cut in half or even further reduced? And why too does automation lead, not to reduced work weeks for all, but to unemployment for some?

To all of these questions, and many more, one usually replies: because of the profit motive in capitalist society. But is the answer sufficient and does it go to the root of the problem? Could not profit as easily be made from solar cells or from high speed-rail transport? No, the profit motive is not a sufficient answer, for profit only points to the *extension* of a process which is much more profoundly rooted in capitalist society. The answer must, rather, be sought in how labour is allocated to various activities in such a society and in who has the power to make the decisions about this allocation. To go a step further, this must be the key to the understanding of any society. Thus, exploitation, as expressed in profits, is only part of a more global control of labour activities, which, under capitalism, proceeds through commodity production and exchange.

The 1960's saw the development of massive protest movements. In the 1970's and 1980's, we have seen an economic crisis whereby capitalists refuse to invest and to expand, apparently for reasons of unprofitability. Are these two phenomena completely unrelated? Or is not the crisis a move by capitalism to reassert its shaken authority, its right to control the activities of the working class? Does not 'unprofitability' mean that the bosses have no longer sufficient power to force the workers to labour intensively and long enough?

Sabres are rattling more noisily again. Is the renewed arms race really directed against that external enemy now that huge markets and investment opportunities have begun to open up in the Comecon and China? Or do the military jets flying low over the European countryside serve more to remind the discontented farmers that Vietnam is not that far away? Could the next nuclear bomb be dropped by some government on its own people?

Such questions could be continued *ad infinitum*. But what single explanation

can encompass the totality of these disparate facts? What theory can explain both relationships among men and women and among bosses and workers? Both the everyday functioning of a given society and its inner economic laws? Both contemporary French and English societies? Late twentieth century England and mid-nineteenth century England? Advanced capitalist society and the Carolingian Empire?

The reader must already know the answer. Only Marxism could be foolish enough to make such a claim. However, in this book, I would like to propose that such a claim is not so foolish if we abandon an apparently untouchable orthodox Marxist axiom: that everything turns around control of the means of production. I intend to submit the counter-claim that everything turns around the control of labour activities. The full import of the first chapter of *Capital* has not been realised. I shall attack fetishism as it varies from single-mindedly explaining everything by control of the means of production to seeing imperialism as simply the search for more raw materials. This text will be read as an empiricist, orthodox tract by Hegelian Marxists, and also, paradoxically, by Althusserians. It will be read as too Hegelian by the orthodoxy. Is it not perhaps time to go beyond these labels?

The structure of the argument In this book, I attempt to apply the proposition that the allocation of social labour is fundamental to the understanding of the functioning of society. However, I shall not attempt a global application to any and all societies, but shall only consider two specific cases, capitalism and those societies based on corvée and tribute. Because this approach requires the introduction of a series of concepts which may not be familiar to the reader, I shall provide an analytic summary of the progression of concepts used. For the clarification and justification of the concepts, the reader must refer to the main body of the text. It may also be useful for the reader to refer to the appropriate summary below either before or after reading each chapter.

Part One. Chapter One Social labour is the production of socially-validated use values, while exploitative labour involves the decisions about the allocation of some or all of these activities. Within social labour may be distinguished necessary social labour, that which yields use values consumed by those involved in social labour, and surplus social labour, that which remains for consumption by others or for accumulation. Productive labour is that part of social labour which is allocated by decisions of exploitative labour. Hence, it must at least include surplus social labour, but may even extend to all social labour.

The two fundamental social practices of any class-based society are social and exploitative labour. In non-class societies, they are united. In societies where productive labour does not encompass all social labour, the remaining necessary social labour is domestic labour.

Within a mode of production, the relations of production must be conceived in terms of the production, allocation, and control of productive labour activities

within a production process. In class societies, where decisions about allocation are not made universally, surplus labour is extracted. In this context, I distinguish five modes of production: the primitive communal, slave, corvée-tributary, capitalist, and planned communist modes. In this way, production is the fundamental determinant of society, structuring the central human activities or social practices.

Social classes are constituted by relations in and to the relations of production. They consist, not of individuals, but of distinct categories of labour. Thus, the two fundamental social classes, in class-based modes of production, correspond to the two fundamental social practices. However, not all social practices constitute social classes: such is the case with domestic labour which has no such relation to the relations of production. Because the two fundamental social practices, in class societies, are in conflict, we necessarily have antagonistic relations. Based on them can develop conscious class relations.

The support of any social practice must be a biological human individual. What characterises such an individual is the ability to carry out *pre-planned* or teleological labour. This provides the basis for human language for accumulation and communication of knowledge, for history. In turn, language provides a material basis of social class relations founded in social practice, both through conscious and unconscious differences in the ways labour is and can be pre-planned.

All social practice takes time and this factor must enter into any process of allocation of labour. But, just as the allocation differs with the mode of production, so does the place of time. Only under capitalism does it occupy a premordial conscious position.

Chapter Two Materialism postulates the primacy of being over thought. The dialectic poses the problem of approaching knowledge. The uniting and essential part of both is human practice. We shall be concerned with the search for underlying laws to explain and hence to change reality, by the construction of successive levels of contradictory totalities. Each level of totality consists of several moments, one of which is determinant; as well, earlier levels of totality are the more fundamentally determinant of the social whole. In a mode of production, the totality of relations of production and the production process is determinant and, if class-based, the fundamental contradiction is that between these relations in the production process and the relations of struggle.

Practice is composed of three moments, perception, conception, and participation in changing reality, which act in an iterative cycle. Social practices are a specific subset of practice in general: those human activities essential to the maintenance and reproduction of a given mode of production. On the other hand, the totality of human activities is an even wider concept than practice in general.

The two basic categories of practice are those on nature and on the social. The object of practice on the social is social reality, which itself involves pre-planned labour and hence can react back and oppose the practice. This is in contrast to practice on nature where only causal, and not teleological, laws are involved. Antagonistic and conscious practices on the social are two basic subcategories;

the distinction depends on whether people simply accept the existing the relations of production, i.e. 'personify' them, or actually pre-plan an attempt to change or to maintain them.

The conceptual moment of practice on nature can have a certain unified form in a given mode of production, but, in class modes, that of practice on the social must depend on social position, on what changes are sought in social reality.

Although any inadequate conception can be said to contain elements of ideology, I reserve this term for conception within practice on the social. Because conception is necessary in order to change social reality and because, in class societies, such change involves conflict, one point of struggle is over ideology in conception. Each class strives to impose its conception of society on the other. For the dominant class, this may take two basic forms: conception may be restricted to inner laws which are not susceptible to human intervention or it may be restricted to observable phenomena, with a denial that inner laws exist.

Then, the base-superstructure metaphor may be interpreted as a distinction between practices imbedded in social relations, practice on nature and antagonistic practice on the social, and practices seeking to alter the relations of production, conscious practice on the social. In this way, the totality of base and superstructural practices constitutes social practice. Certain aspects of the conscious practices on the social of the dominant class may become institutionalised under an established dominant mode of production. Thus, under capitalism, we have civil society and the state, and, associated with them, a distinctive ideological class.

In the search for inner laws, two aspects must be emphasized. Concepts must be constructed as relationships, both in so far as they involve relationships among the moments and as they provide a means of relating particular cases to each other without losing their specificity. The second aspect, already mentioned, is the construction of levels of analysis as successive totalities. These levels are an attempt to reconstruct in thought the hierarchy of determination in reality. Each totality takes certain phenomenal forms and develops their inner laws and contradictions. Each level yields a resolution of certain contradictions while revealing others; still other, fundamental, contradictions remain unresolved throughout all the levels.

As an example, the seven levels for the study of social classes in capitalist society are: 1) simple commodity production; 2) the capitalist mode of production with its relations of production and production process; 3) the capitalist economic process which includes the circulation of the products; 4) the economic formation of society, where the institutionalised superstructure is added; 5) the social formation, as the combination of several modes of production; 6) the nation state and international relations; and 7) the given society.

Part Two. Chapter Three This second part illustrates how the concepts previously developed can be applied in a non-capitalist context, thus providing an important contrasting point of reference to capitalist society. The central thesis is that the 'feudal' and 'Asiatic' modes of production refer, in fact, to two social formations, both dominated by a corvée-tributary mode of production. I develop

the conception of this mode of production as three levels of analysis.

The basic determining totality of the corvée-tributary mode of production is the autarkical village community. Use values must be produced for consumption both by the individual members and by the community as a whole. Because the level of development of productive forces does not permit the elaboration of an extensive plan for the allocation of social labour to these two purposes, the only way is to divide and separate this labour into two parts. However, because all labour is communal, the distinction also tends always to disappear. This tension forms the basis of the fundamental contradiction between unity and individualisation within the community.

At the second level of analysis, the village community as a 'higher unity' becomes embodied in the dominant class. Thus, decisions about allocation of the corresponding part of social labour are made by this class, as surplus social labour. That social labour providing use values for the members of the community remains under their control as necessary social labour. The surplus labour can be either corvée or tribute, both of which are simply forms of the same inner law of labour allocation. These relations of production provide contradictory pressure on the production process, pushing it to evolve from communal towards individualised labour, with the accompanying tendential law to direct management by the dominant class. Hence, this movement is the subject of class struggle. As compared to slavery, this mode of production puts greater pressure on the subordinate class, because it is responsible for its own subsistence needs.

On the other hand, the subordinate class has the means by which to produce its required use values, independently of surplus labour. It follows that extensive coercive and ideological means are necessary to ensure that the surplus labour is performed. But no reason exists for a state separate from the dominant class nor need any such unified, central institution exist. The dominant class, with its 'state' functions, may be geographically dispersed or it may be centralised. Because the relations of production are 'visible' at the phenomenal level, ideology takes primarily the form of inner laws which are not susceptible to human intervention: religion.

A subordinate capitalist mode of production can be articulated with a dominant corvée-tributary mode in a number of ways. Three distinct elements of the capitalist mode may be present: exchange of commodities, extraction of surplus labour as merchant or userer's capital, and sale of labour power. Each introduces specific aspects of capitalist labour allocation into the social formation, but each is modified by the influence of the dominant mode of production.

Chapter Four An historical discussion of the corvée-tributary mode of production in western Europe and India during the Middle Ages can provide a concrete basis for the theory presented in the previous chapter, while also contributing to an explanation of why dominant capitalism only developed indigenously in one of the two places.

In India, a dominant corvée-tributary mode of production appeared much ear-

lier, during the Mauryan Empire of the fourth century, B.C. Tribal communities were in the process of being subdued to a centralised 'state'. This 'state' organised agricultural, mining, and industrial production of its own, as well as extracting tribute and corvée from the villages. Industrial workers received a 'wage' which concealed an elaborate form of corvée. Agricultural production required large-scale land-clearing, organised by the centralised 'state'. However, the 'state' never succeeded in breaking up the essentially communal character of the subjugated villages.

As the limits to land-clearing and mining were reached, while the villages remained united, the dominant class turned more and more to tribute to the detriment of its own 'state' production. The villages retained power and autonomy as long as they supplied tribute; they became the principal land clearers. This trend reached a climax under the Guptas. The draw in the class struggle over individualisation of the communal villages led to a rigidified caste structure. With minor modifications, especially through the Muslim invasions, this situation remained until after the British conquest.

In Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire, serfdom developed as slaves were given plots of land and independent peasants lost their freedom. The Carolingian Empire was an attempt to centralise this process of labour allocation, but it only managed to centralise for the wars to obtain booty and slaves. Its power came to be based on a contradictory trend to grant fiefs, the extraction of tribute never being sufficiently institutionalised and that of corvée being dispersed. The major invasions put an end to centralisation. Dispersion of the dominant class meant a continuing and growing importance of gifts and non-market exchanges.

After 1000 A.D., tenures became more often hereditary, while village community control of land use continued, through the open and common field systems. Rents more often replaced corvée, but salaried labourers also appeared. The two most important developments in production were construction of buildings in the towns and land-clearing in the country. The latter was carried out both by individual peasants escaping a lord's domination and under the organised initiative of a lord. Both indicated new forms of struggle over individualisation of the production process. In general, the lords came to depend primarily on taxes, tolls, and fines. In contrast to the continent, the English King retained sufficient power to monopolise fiscal extraction. In turn, the English lords concentrated more on their estates and on production by corvée, while also beginning to invest in a rural textile industry.

The village communities in India were more united from the beginning because they were located in their native land, not built up from slaves and invading peasant warriors, added to local independent peasants, as in western Europe. Linked with this, the dominant class eventually withdrew from direct control of production in India, relying primarily on tribute. This also occurred to a certain extent in continental Europe, but where the dominant class became involved on a major scale with production, especially in England, the contradictions of the corvée-tributary mode of production developed apace. Here, the most striking

contrast was for land-clearing. Instead of 'wage' labour hiding a corvée relation, as in India, wage labour in Europe developed as an individual escape from the dominant mode of production, but, in turn, often took a dominated form as the guilds. Capitalism only developed towards a dominant mode where the corvée-tributary contradictions were greatest, on the large corvée-dependent estates, and where corvée-tributary domination was least, in the ports. Thus, a transition occurred both through the development of the contradictions of the dominant mode and through the changing articulation of several modes.

Part Three. Chapter Five With this chapter, I begin the study of capitalist society. The point of departure is the labour theory of value, analysed as three levels. Under capitalism, productive labour is allocated by the private production and market exchange of commodities. Incomparable types of concrete labour are evaluated in this way as abstract labour. Both production times, as manifested in supply, and social need, as manifested in demand, determine the quantity of abstract labour in a commodity, and hence its value. Labour must be socially necessary, in that time must not be wasted, either by working slowly or by using inefficient techniques. Part of the evaluation process involves the equating of quantities of differently skilled, educated, in short, complex labour as simple labour. Abstract labour is thus created as the result of the totality of commodity-producing relations and holds no simple relationship to the corresponding concrete labour. Such production requires producing collectivities with a capitalist mentality, the basis of the first aspect of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism. It also requires two state relationships, the guarantee of money and of private property.

At the second level, the capitalist class makes decisions about the allocation of productive labour through the purchase of labour power. Because this transaction does not guarantee that a certain quantity of actual, concrete labour is performed, it yields the second aspect of the fundamental contradiction. As well, labour power must be sold by 'free' individuals; this yields the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction. The socially-necessary labour factor of the previous level now becomes a motor for technical revolution, but it also means that techniques are chosen, not to minimise total labour costs to the society, but paid labour costs for the individual capitalist.

At the third level, profit rates in different branches of production are equalised. At the previous level, productive labour was distributed among specific techniques for a given product; here, it is allocated among different products. A branch which has a higher value composition of capital (means of production and raw materials of proportionately higher value than labour power) is deemed more productive and receives more surplus value per unit of labour power expended. Decisions about allocation of productive labour gravitate towards the more capitalised branches. In so far as the equalisation of profit rates fails to operate through competition, there is a tendential law towards state capitalism, the third fundamental role of the state.

Oligopoly 'super profits' must be situated as originating within the branch.

Economies of scale are a technique which smaller firms in the branch cannot obtain through competition at the second level above. The socially-necessary labour criterion changes in such an oligopolised branch so that the value of the product is determined by the smallest, least efficient firm in it. This provides the extra surplus value, and profit, for the larger firms.

State capitalism develops when competitive equalisation of profit rates fails. Allocation of productive labour is then carried out by state capitalists, using non-market criteria. This change has effects throughout the society, and especially at the ideological level. It is also important in the less advanced capitalist countries of the 'Third World'.

Chapter Six In capitalist society, domestic labour is that social labour which does not take a commodity form. It arises from the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction, that labour power must be sold by 'free' individuals and cannot be the result of a capitalist production process. Productive labour is valorised over domestic labour because the dominant class only makes decisions about the allocation of the former, which then contains surplus labour. Men may have been preferred to women for productive labour because of the lack of replacement for nursing in the subordinate class. These factors combine to produce female sexual oppression, what has been called 'patriarchy'. Two levels of analysis are used for the study of domestic labour: household labour within the family and state social security and education.

Domestic labour, although central to capitalism, does not follow the law of value and produces no value. It is not productive. Here, labour power is not a commodity, but is fetishised as one. Its production does not involve abstract, socially-necessary labour. Whether sold or not, it must continue to be produced. Productive and domestic labour are incommensurable and no tendency exists to equalise the working conditions of the two. With no specific relationship to the relations of production, domestic labour cannot constitute a social class.

Household labour takes two distinct forms in the reproduction of the two fundamental social classes. The capitalist family consumes surplus value and produces an heir; this is part of the reproduction of privatised power to make decisions about labour allocation. The working class family, in contrast, is concerned with living, and, to this end, is forced to sell labour power. Here, the relation between the sexes is more equal, although the valorisation of productive labour creates important ideological effects. However distributed over the members of the family, the total sale of labour power tends to the value of the commodities required by a working class family. The family is an essential working class institution, acting as a welfare system and as a site of class consciousness and struggle, and the wife is the key member of it.

Household production cannot provide all of the non-commodity use values required by the working class. Although the working class family ensures certain welfare measures, these cannot adequately cope with many situations. State domestic labour takes the form of socialised medicine, subsidised housing, day-care

centres, and so on, while social insurance for unemployment, accidents, health, and children act to supplement the family wage for those deviating from the norm.

The household is too particularised to give the general, abstract education required for labour power to be a 'commodity'. This compulsory education must be radically separated from concrete labour. It must not let the child have the opportunity to decide (pre-plan) what is to be learned. The essential skills learned are reading, writing, and calculating, as well as the ability to follow an arbitrary and rigid time sequence. For the future capitalist class, the skills learned are primarily 'leadership' and the ability to communicate in a mystifying manner.

Both the capitalist and the working classes feel contradictory pressures at the same time to expand and to restrict the domain of domestic labour. For the capitalist, the goal is to sell more commodities but also to reduce the value of labour power. For the worker, it is to retain as much of the value to be produced as possible, but also to get out of the capital relation itself. Development of this aspect of the fundamental contradiction leads to a tendential law towards the welfare state.

Chapter Seven In the labour theory of value, the two fundamental social classes already appeared. But, a complete social class analysis of capitalist society must, now, centre first around antagonistic class relations before relating them to class consciousness.

The capitalist class makes the decisions about the allocation of productive labour through capital and the purchase of labour power. The production working class does productive labour resulting in commodities having use values. This class must be seen as a collectivity, encompassing not only direct transformation of nature, but also the conception process involved in producing use values. It, thus, includes technology and even natural science, but also the labour of coordination and unity. Because the one social class controls the activities of the other, they are necessarily antagonistic, whether consciously aware of it or not.

Capitalist commodity production requires a complex circulation process for the value to be realised: changes of ownership. This has two moments, financial and commercial capital, which yield two further fractions of the capitalist class, besides the industrialists of the previous level. Circulation of commodities also involves salaried workers, the circulation working class, which produce no use values: their salaries are a form of 'constant capital', adding no surplus value to the product. Circulation labour includes finance, commerce, production of money, private law, and advertising.

Because capitalist production is antagonistic and because individual capitalists are in competition, the relations of production can only be maintained and reproduced by contradictory and apparently autonomous institutions, the state and civil society, and by an ideological class. The state plays roles at several levels: circulation of money and ensuring contracts, managing capital investment, domestic labour, and now ideologico-repressive labour. At this level, both the educational system and technical-scientific work take on ideological tones as the same individuals perform both domestic or productive labour and ideologico-repressive

labour. Thus, this class is also found directly in the production process, performing the work of control and surveillance. We now have the bourgeoisie, with its capitalist and ideological classes, opposing the proletariat, with its production and circulation working classes. Because the apparent autonomy is partly the result of inter-capitalist competition, it is greatly reduced under state capitalism, where the capitalist and ideological classes are united in the state.

Other social classes in a capitalist social formation result from the articulation with other modes of of production. Paradoxically, the most important is capitalism with its own simpler form, petty commodity production, which yields the petty bourgeoisie.

Social antagonism results from necessarily conflicting social practices: antagonistic practices on the social. Class consciousness must mean conscious organisation to change the relations of production: conscious practice on the social. An important facet of class struggle is the attempt to destroy class consciousness, to stop such pre-planned social action. Here, the ideological class plays an important role.

Chapter Eight The nation-state results from the specific capitalist need to manage a labour force composed of 'free' individuals. It permits a restricted mobility of labour, while making possible an industrial reserve army. The very division into nation-states means an unequal development of the capitalist contradictions within them. This inequality depends on the origins of capitalism within the area defined by the nation-state and on the subsequent class struggle. Thus, given the expansive nature of capitalism, international relations are necessarily imperialist relations of dominance and subordination. But the essence of imperialism can be found neither in the search for markets nor for raw materials; these are both phenomenal forms of the extension of the power to make decisions about labour allocation.

The first historically important form of imperialist labour migration was colonisation, which however encountered the problem of maintaining the relations of production. The main means of 'freeing' local populations so that they migrate to seek wage labour has been through insertion in a 'money economy', especially through the imposition of taxes in cash. Modern labour migration, on an individual basis, gives the 'host' nation-state several advantages. It does not carry the costs of the state domestic labour. It can control the size of its labour force and the industrial reserve army more effectively than by 'natural' means. It can be used to divide the working class in struggle. But such migration also is a factor in instilling the necessary traditions and discipline in the labour force of the 'donor' country.

Colonisation was also the earliest form of imperialist capital migration. More developed forms have used primarily financial means, through capital investment, whereby local capitalist production is installed. At a first stage, this was for production and extraction of raw materials. By the gradual creation of a suitable labour force, this laid the basis for subsequent industrial production which found

a number of advantages over the situation in advanced capitalist countries. In turn, this opened the way for international crisis management through capital restructuration.

Chapter Nine We have already encountered the three aspects of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism. The third is studied in Chapter 6; the first two require further examination. However, first, another candidate must be eliminated.

The tendency for the profit rate to fall has long played a central role in Marxism. However, if it is clearly formulated in terms of value composition of capital, instead of organic composition, it can be seen not to hold as long as relative surplus value is produced. It is thus another tendential law, like that towards state capitalism, which is a constraint only taking effect when capitalism malfunctions for other reasons. It is not a contradiction.

The production process is a constant site of class struggle because of the second aspect of the fundamental contradiction: purchase of labour power provides no guarantee of the amount of labour performed. The control and surveillance by the ideological class is the key here. The conceptual (intellectual) part of productive labour must continuously be coopted from the production working class and turned against it. This takes various forms: direct supervision, bureaucratic control, technical control such as assembly lines, and 'workers control'.

The production process develops, under capitalism, towards ever more complete socialisation, but is always a subject of struggle. This is the first aspect of the fundamental contradiction. Hierarchies of wages, wages linked to productivity, and the disseminated worker are only a few of the current measures used in attempts to divide this socialised working class.

With each aspect of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism is associated a tendential law limiting the actions of the capitalist class. In time of crisis in labour allocation, the tendency to state capitalism leads to increased state intervention, while the tendencies to a falling rate of industrial profit and to the welfare state call for less state and ideological class expenditure, yielding a second order contradiction at the level of the state and the ideological class.

A synthesis and resolution of the three aspects of the fundamental contradiction is required to overthrow capitalism. This does not simply mean some highly developed level of the technical forces of production, because the first aspect involves, not technology, but social organisation of the production process. Commodities, including labour power, must disappear, collective decisions be made, and all productive labour be non-exploitatively so.

Contents

III CAPITALIST SOCIETIES

Part I

Basic principles

1
Social labour: the basis of society

1.1 Social labour

Marxism has declared *production* to be the basic determinant of society. To many, this appears to be a postulate which must be accepted on faith, to be dogma or metaphysics. The aim of this book is to outline one way in which such a concept of production can be interpreted and hence to show how it must necessarily be determinant in society. The underlying idea is that any society must use at least part of the time of its members to fulfil their needs, that these activities must be organized, and that differences in this organization allows one to distinguish among a few basically different types of societies. In order to proceed, a number of fundamental concepts must be examined and formulated in terms of human activity or, to use a term from philosophy, in terms of *practice*. This tedious exercise must be accomplished, in this first part, before we can go on to begin to realize the importance of productive activities to an understanding of modern society.

Production is based on labour, and labour is a type of social practice. We might, then, logically begin with the philosophical foundations of practice. I shall, however, delay this until the second chapter, beginning instead with a more heuristic approach to the basic concepts of social labour, social relations of production, and social classes.

Let us start with the concept of labour in society, of *social labour*. Two definitions are reasonably common in the Marxist literature.[1] The first is more specific than the second:

- social labour is labour the product of which, a use value, is not consumed by the production unit;[2] it must be exchanged to be socialized.
- social labour is labour which produces a socially-required use value.[3]

We can understand by a *use value* the result of specific human relations to nature, embedded in the social relations[4] of the given society, the result of a pre-meditated

[1] More generally, on the terms, work and labour, see Febvre (1948), Godelier (1980), Le Goff (1971), many of the essays in Wallman (1979), and Williams (1968, 1976, pp. 145–148, 281–284).

[2] See, for example, Krader (1976, p. 89, 1979, *passim*).

[3] See, for example, Sayer (1979, p. 21).

[4] See Bryceson (1983).

transformation of nature, what I shall call in the next chapter a practice on nature. A use value can be one of two basic types: it can be employed for further production (productive consumption) or be directly consumed by human beings. In either case, it must satisfy human wants.[5] However, we need not require that the end result be a physical product.

Society's requirements in use values, it must be emphasized, are socially determined, not naturally given, so that the transformation of nature must be socially validated. Not just any arbitrary transformation of nature will constitute social labour. In other words, by either of these definitions, social labour is human activity on nature which results in a product, validated in some way by society as necessary, and eventually consumed in some manner. The first definition restricts the form of validation while the second has a more general, trans-historical sense.

Consider first the narrower definition. In Marx's work, the theory of the capitalist allocation of social labour, through the production of commodities, falls under this definition.[6] It is the labour theory of value:

> ... the law of the value of commodities ultimately determines how much of its disposable working-time society can expend on each particular class of commodities. (Marx, 1967, I, p. 356)

Marx saw the allocation of social labour as a natural law of society, of which the law of value is its specific manifestation in capitalist society:

> ... the volume of products corresponding to the different needs require different and quantitatively determined amounts of the total labour of society. That this *necessity* of the *distribution* of social labour in definite proportions cannot possibly be done away with by a *particular form* of social production, but can only change the *mode* of *its appearance*, is self-evident. Natural laws cannot be abolished at all. What can change in historically different circumstances is only the *form* in which these laws assert themselves. And the form in which this proportional distribution of labour asserts itself, in a social system where the interconnection of social labour manifests itself through the *private exchange* of individual products of labour, is precisely the *exchange value* of these products.
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> ... The essence of bourgeois society consists in precisely this, that *a priori* there is no conscious social regulation of production. (Marx and Engels, 1975, pp. 196–197)

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[5] On the first page (35) of *Capital*, Volume I, Marx states "The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference." Needs may not necessarily be physical. Thus, "in the labour-process, therefore, man's activity, with the help of the instruments of labour, effects an alteration, designed from the commencement, in the material worked upon. The process disappears in the product; the latter is a use-value, Nature's material adapted by a change of form to the wants of man. ... If we examine the whole process from the point of view of the result, the product, it is plain that both the instruments and the subject of labour, are means of production, and that the labour itself is productive labour." (Marx, 1967, I, pp. 180–181). Marx states in a footnote that this definition is not specifically applicable to capitalist society, because it is general and trans-historical. On the essentiality of use values as one part of the dual basis of all commodities in the capitalist context, see Marx's (1975, pp. 197–200) critique of Wagner.

[6] Marx often uses 'social' in this sense of the product being consumed by others: "Whoever directly satisfies his wants with the produce of his own labour creates, indeed, use-values, but not commodities. In order to produce the latter, he must not only produce use-values, but use-values for others, social use-values." (1967, I, pp. 40–41).

However, as is well-known, the question for Marxist theory is not only the allocation of social labour, but also its expropriation. What is striking about the two quotations just given is their lack of reference to this specific point:

> The essential difference between the various economic forms of society, between for instance, a society based on slave-labour and one based on wage-labour, lies only in the mode in which the surplus-labour is in each case extracted from the actual producer, the labourer. (Marx, 1967, I, p. 217; see also III, pp. 791–792 quoted in a note below.)[7]

Even if the concept of a commodity fits the first definition, nothing in these quotations indicates that it is the essential point.

In most non-capitalist societies, such as societies based, say, on corvée or tribute, much of productive labour would not be social labour under our narrower first definition because, there, the production unit (village community, peasant family, ...) is also directly the consumer. Only the result of surplus labour circulates, and if, for example, the feudal demesne is taken as the production unit, not even much of that. Under slavery, none of the product (except perhaps slaves) need circulate, so that under this definition, there would not necessarily be any social labour in such a society. We can conclude that only in capitalist societies does this narrow definition seem at all suitable, for there social labour becomes the production of commodities.

This first, narrower definition is also, in a certain sense, at least implicitly sexist, because it excludes much of female labour in many societies, that in the household, from the social. The products of such female labour do not leave the domestic production unit; they do not circulate, but are consumed by the production unit. At least in this sense, domestic labour is not social labour under this definition. On the other hand, in capitalist society, the labour force is a 'commodity', a product which is sold, and hence circulates. Domestic labour produces it, at least in part, and, in this latter sense, would be included under social labour. But this labour force is not a use value in the sense specified above and, as we shall see, domestic labour does not fall under the typical conception of the capitalist production process.

Application of the second, more general definition of social labour helps us to escape from this last conceptual problem. The 'commodity', labour, only appears to be such, but it is not a use value resulting from the transformation of nature. On the other hand, the direct products of domestic labour are socially-required use values, making this labour social under the second definition. This is a step

[7] This is by no means the only criterion which Marx appears to indicate as distinguishing economic formations of society. In the context of archeological studies, he states: "It is not the articles made, but how they are made, and by what instruments, that enables us to distinguish different economic epochs." (1967, I, p. 180). In another place, he says: "Whatever the social form of production, labourers and means of production always remain. ... For production to go on at all they must unite. The specific manner in which this union is accomplished distinguishes different economic epochs of the structure of society from one another." (1967, II, p. 34). Although people have traditionally interpreted both of these quotations in terms of control of the means of production, they both, in fact, refer to differences in the production process, and therefore are more closely allied to the first two quotations in the text, which also ignore surplus labour.

in the right direction, but what is required is an articulation of the production and reproduction of the direct labourers with the larger process of production. Each basic type of society must have its specific means of producing and reproducing the labour force. The problem of deriving an adequate concept of social labour cannot be resolved without placing that labour in relation to how the decisions are made about its allocation, and the corresponding extraction of surplus.

In summary, as we have seen, the first definition of social labour (the product of which is not consumed by the production unit) is of little, if any, use. The second definition (production of socially-required use values) coincides with productive labour *in general*. Thus, I shall reserve this term, *social labour*, for this second concept, the production of *all* socially-required use values in any given society. The concept of *productive labour*, instead of being used in this, its general sense, can then be allowed to take on different meanings in basically different historical circumstances, i.e. under different modes of production.[8] We shall see that, in class societies, productive labour refers to that part of social labour allocated by the dominant class, or, in more classical Marxist terms, that part of social labour inseparably containing surplus labour.

So far, we have only considered the organization and production of use values. But, a moments reflection will show that, however adequate any definition of social labour is, it will not be sufficient for the study of the allocation of labour in general in a society. Entire areas of related human activity, such as repressive and ideological work necessary in the reproduction of conflictual social relations, may be excluded. A more general concept is necessary which will include all of what we are calling social practice.

1.2 Social practice

First, a note: care must be taken not to define one moment of practice, conception, as a practice in itself.[9] Scientific conception is one step or moment in the practice of changing reality, an institutionalization of the pre-meditation which is integral to all practice. But it may appear to become separated, in specific historical forms, through the necessity of the dominant classes to control the activities, and specifically the productive activities, of the subordinate classes.[10]

With the definitions of the previous section, in a class society, the activities of the dominant class would appear to be automatically excluded from social labour, in so far as they involve, not creation of use values, but extraction of surplus labour. We would, thus, have, in general, two basic categories of labour, social and exploitative. This distinction is usually assumed to be self-evident by Marxists. But is it so? Can all dominant classes, *a priori*, be said not to provide use values but only to extract them from another class, as some form of surplus?

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[8] Marx used both terms in both senses, so that I choose between them rather arbitrarily.

[9] This was the basis of Althusserian idealism: theoretical practice.

[10] The ideas in this paragraph are developed in more detail in Chapter 2.

In fact, we shall quickly discover that "extraction of surplus labour" cannot be the defining characteristic of exploitative labour. A distinction between necessary and surplus labour cannot even directly be made, for surplus labour never *appears* to be such and, hence, cannot be directly defined.[11] The dominant class always appears to give something essential to the production process, some 'use values', in return for the surplus,[12] whether it be the ritual necessary for productivity of the land, protection against common enemies, or the capitalist means of production. Such contributions are, however, never a final product, but are used to initiate a process. In consumption-oriented societies, social relations are fetishised as use values. In capitalist society, the problem is even more complex for a large part of the surplus value extracted is used for economic growth, which means that at least some of it eventually produces further use values for the working class.[13] Is this part really surplus labour? Thus, the contention that a dominant class obtains part of the social product without working cannot be sustained. Under capitalism, compare the capitalist who plans investment decisions for eighty hours a week with the person who receives unemployment benefits.

The attempt to escape from this definitional problem by considering the two fundamental categories of labour, and hence social classes, to be one form of the social division of labour[14] also implies reciprocity or exchange, however unequal. Even more serious, such a formulation of social class 'divisions' banalizes them by making them appear to occur as only one among many different types of divisions of concrete labour, within a given category of labour, rather than to be a relationship between distinct fundamental categories of labour.[15] A division of labour, whether social or technical, always must occur *within* a given category of labour; otherwise, social class relations would be assimilated to all of these much less important divisions of labour in a given society. Thus, for example, to specify that the fundamental division is between mental and manual labour does not help, because it must be based on an essential idealism whereby the power of

[11] In his definition of productive forces, Cohen (1978, pp. 32–33, 47, 61) slides over this difficulty, assuming that a distinction between material production and production relations is intuitively obvious.

[12] In this context, one often refers to Mauss' (1950) work on the gift. Note, however, that he situates the gift in *juridical* relations, and that all of his examples, except those where capitalism is dominant, refer primarily to gifts within the dominant class, although those received may be distributed to members of the subordinate class. Another example of apparent reciprocity is 'patron-client' relations. For exchange in the sense discussed in the text, see Bataille (1967), Godelier (1978), and Le Goff (1976).

[13] Von Weizsacker (1973) clearly defines this difference between the capitalist accumulation-oriented mode of production and consumption-oriented modes. Dupré and Rey (1969) also see the problem, but fail to solve it.

[14] Deleplace's (1979) and Poulantzas' (1968, 1974) work are typical of this approach, as is, of course, sociology.

[15] "The two people who face each other in the market-place, in the sphere of circulation, are not just a *buyer* and a *seller*, but *capitalist* and *worker* who confront each other as *buyer* and *seller*. ... we are not concerned with the merely *social division of labour* in which each branch is autonomous ... What we are concerned with here is the *division* of the *constituents of the process of production* itself, constituents that really belong together. This division leads to the progressive *separation* of these elements and their personification *vis-a-vis* each other ..." (Marx, 1976, p. 1015).

the dominant class resides not in what its members do, in the sense of changing reality, but in how they think, which, in itself, can never have an effect on reality. All of these approaches remain at the phenomenal level, appearances which the dominant class uses to hide the real basis of its power. But, what is this power?

Exploitative labour must be specified as the direct or mediate power to make decisions about the allocation of part or all of the social labour in society, over that part which we shall call productive. It does not necessarily involve a manual/intellectual (or any other) division of labour whereby the dominant class controls the conceptual moment of social labour, although this may develop as a means of maintaining and reproducing these social relations. Exploitative labour is a separate practice, in its own right, whether it be making decisions as to when to plant the crops or to set out fishing, or where to invest for maximum profit. This labour is not a production of use values which will eventually be consumed in one way or another, but a control of some or all of the activities of another class, this latter class being responsible for the production of the use values. For example, in capitalist society, the problem is not primarily that surplus is put aside for accumulation and growth, but how (by what social mechanism) this is done, to what ends, and who makes these decisions. And a centrally-planned economy, where a specific group of people makes the planning decisions, would also be a class-based society.[16]

Because the dominant class does not produce use values, it must necessarily extract surplus labour as part of its decision-making power or exploitative labour. But this is a secondary result, following from the basic definition of exploitative labour. The *necessary* social labour is that producing use values directly consumed by the subordinate class so producing them, while the *surplus* social labour is that yielding all other use values. The use of the word necessary here, however, in no way implies that exploitative labour, the specific form of making decisions about the allocation of productive labour, and surplus social labour are not also necessary for a given type of society to function.

Let us consider, very briefly, a few examples, to be developed in detail in subsequent chapters.

In societies where the goal of production is creation of use values for direct consumption, such as slavery and feudalism, the general definition of productive labour takes on specific forms depending on the way in which the decisions about allocation of social labour are made. For a dominant class, only surplus labour, the result of which it can consume, is 'productive'. However, from our point of view here, productive labour is that social labour for which the dominant class makes decisions about allocation. Depending on the extent to which surplus labour is distinguishable within the totality of social labour, the dominant class is forced to make decisions about the allocation of more or less of this social labour, so that productive labour will encompass more or less of it, perhaps including all of the

[16] As we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, such is the centralised form of the corvée-tributary mode of production, and in Chapter 5, state capitalism.

necessary labour.

The subordinate class is the creator of all use values. The dominant class must extract surplus labour which results, either directly or indirectly, in its obtaining a portion of these use values created; in these consumption-oriented societies, they consist only or primarily of articles for its direct consumption. The subordinate class is occupied with productive consumption, although it may not control it. This class also, of course, consumes directly in reproducing itself, but the production necessary for this may, as with corvée and tribute, or may not, as with slavery, be separated from its other productive activities. In the first case, productive labour includes only part of total social labour and none of necessary labour; in the second case, it includes all of both.

The same principle is applied to the concept of productive labour under capitalism:[17] it is that portion of all social labour for which the capitalist class makes decisions about allocation and which is distinguishable as containing surplus labour. This type of society involves production of commodities, which are not directly for use, but for exchange. Whether or not the product is in fact a social use value is only determined once the exchange has been accomplished. On the other hand, use values which are not commodities are produced in such a society, including many of those for direct consumption in the household. This distinction between two types of production of use values corresponds to the division between capitalist production of commodities and production of that peculiar 'commodity', (the ability to) labour.

Under capitalism, labour of the subordinate class is productive if it creates a use value controlled and exchanged by the dominant class, i.e. a capitalist commodity.[18] Such production necessarily involves surplus labour. This, however, cannot be separated from necessary labour within the capitalist production process, so that it all becomes productive, i.e. all commodities are the result of productive labour in so far as they contain surplus labour.

In this same form of society, any other labour, which does not produce commodities, but is productive in terms of the wider definition, i.e. is social labour, will be called domestic labour, because it yields social use values for direct domestic consumption, acting in this way to reproduce the labour force. We, then, have three basic categories of capitalistic labour: exploitative, productive, and domestic, where the latter two are subcategories of social labour. Necessary labour consists of domestic labour and part of productive labour, while surplus labour is the rest of the latter. Note that it is no more useful to talk of unproductive labour

[17] An enormous literature on this exists, including Altvater and Huisken (1970), Berthoud (1974), Bullock (1973, 1974), Fine (1973), Gough (1972, 1973), Harrison (1973a), Howell (1975), Hunt (1979), Miller (1984), O'Connor (1975), Rubin (1973, pp. 259–275), Tarbuck (1983, 1984), Terray (1972), and de Vroey (1982). Many of the authors writing about domestic labour, cited in Chapter 6, and about social class, cited in Chapter 7 below, are also concerned with this problem. Rubin's analysis is closest to that adopted throughout this book.

[18] According to Rubin (1973), to be productive, labour must be organised in a capitalist enterprise (pp. 261–262) and must operate in the production, not money or commodity, phases of the capitalist cycle (pp. 268–269).

than of non-social, unexploitative, or non-domestic labour. All are heterogeneous terms.[19] However, we shall see in subsequent chapters that these basic categories are still not sufficient to encompass all the work that must be done under capitalism.[20]

The term, social practice, can then be used to apply to all categories of labour outlined above. Note, however, that each category of labour is not defined by the intentions of the people involved, nor by some rationality, but by the structure of social relations. However, these various categories of labour or social practice by no means exhaust the human activities in a given society. They are only those essential for the continued existence of that basic type of society. But they will have a pervasive influence on all of the other activities in it.

1.3 The relations of production

One important element in any production of use values is the collection of material factors involved: human productive potentiality, the skills and capabilities of labour (often called *labour power*: the ability to do labour),[21] plus the means of production and raw materials, called the *productive forces*. This can be distinguished from the concept of *production process*,[22] the combination of means of production and raw materials with human production *activity*,[23]

But productive forces cannot be considered in isolation from the specific social relations which organize them. These are what Marxists have called relations of production. We may distinguish three broad categories of such definitions, none of which is satisfactory for our purposes:

(1) control, or even simply property, of the means of production;[24]
(2) expropriation of surplus product; and
(3) expropriation of surplus labour.

Let us look briefly at each of these definitions in turn.

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[19] O'Connor (1975) carries this confusion to the absurd when he classifies both ideologico-repressive labour and workers' struggles together as unproductive labour.

[20] In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, we shall see that two further categories, circulation and ideologico-repressive labour, also exist in capitalist society. However, until this subsequent development of the specific relationships among the categories only mentioned here, they must appear simply as a classification, and a heterogeneous one at that. De Vroey (1979, I) arrives at these same five categories of labour under capitalism, but by a simple classification procedure. Bradby (1982) usefully criticises the restrictiveness of the debate over the theory of value which ignores these other categories of labour.

[21] "But the *development of science* ... is only one aspect, one form in which the *development of the human productive forces*, i.e. of wealth, appears." (Marx, 1973a, p. 540). "The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production* ..." (Marx, 1973a, p. 706). See also Marx (1967, III, pp. 81–82).

[22] Care must be taken because, in *Capital*, Volume I, Marx sometimes calls the production process the mode of production; the meaning is always clear from the context.

[23] See Cohen (1978, pp. 42–43) and Shaw (1978, pp. 14–20).

[24] See Castoriadis (1973) and, following him, Bettelheim (1968 and 1970) for the critique of the orthodox position in terms of property and its replacement by that of control.

First note that all three, in fact, deal with relations of *distribution*, not of production.[25] The first two are primarily concerned with material goods. They take the perspective of modern economics, that such goods, and specifically the means of production, are scarce and that political economy is the science of their optimum use.[26] However, the assumption that material goods are rare is only another way of stating a specific hypothesis about human nature: that human beings have no limits to their needs and desires and that it is this which makes material goods appear to be scarce.[27] Otherwise, human needs could be adapted to existing material goods and their allocation would not pose serious problems. More important, this perspective of society is that of the capitalist class because it is directly concerned with the accumulation of material goods. Subordinate classes have long had the habit of adapting their needs to what is available. The origin of such theories of the distribution of material goods can be found in Bentham's utilitarianism, a *moral* theory, on which the later theories of marginal utility came to be based. Such theories apply best to luxury goods, and, in fact, most often do not apply at all to newly invented products, because these are unknown. Demand for them must be created.

More specifically now, the first definition, control of the means of production, is a translation of the economists' concepts of factors of production: the capitalists obtain a profit because they control the means of production, what is commonly called 'capital'; the productivity of capital provides a profit to its owner.[28] It necessarily assumes *competition* for a scarce resource, the means of production.[29] The second definition emphasizes the consumption side, and, by implication, human needs. A surplus product is expropriated, whether for productive or individual consumption. Again, this is a perspective of the dominant classes, although

[25] See Clarke (1980) who provides a detailed exposition of the bourgeois content of the concept of relations of production used by both the Stalinists and the Althusserians.

[26] "The *production of capitalists and wage labourers is thus a chief product of capital's realization process*. Ordinary economics, which looks only at the things produced, forgets this completely." (Marx, 1973a, p. 512). Rey (1973, pp. 98–99, my translation), in his critique of the Althusserians, states: "in all of *Capital*, there is only a *single text* where the relation of production is expressed in juridical language: it is that of the chapter "Simple reproduction"... In all the other passages where it is a question namely of *relations of production* ..., the concern is only with 'capital' as a relation between exploited class and exploiting class, but not of property. ... the *property* referred to here [in the cited chapter] is a very particular property ... [This metaphor] concerns in fact the *worker as the property of the capitalist class*, that is, the only form of property which capitalism excludes as a juridical relation. ... [The Althusserian reading is of] this text as we perceive it across the Marxist tradition, constituted since Marx's death, and which has identified *relations of production* and *property relations* without any foundation, without anyone being able to find the origin of this identification at any point in *Capital*." Rey then defines the relations of production, following Marx, as the specific way in which surplus is extracted; we have already seen indications that this solution to the problem, although a step in the right direction, is also insufficient.

[27] On the social determination of needs and desires, and especially on the contrast between capitalist and hunter-gatherer societies, Sahlins (1968) is especially enlightening. See Heller (1976) for Marx's uses of the term 'need' and Lebowitz (1978) for the capitalist context.

[28] See Clarke (1977, 1980) and James (1980).

[29] An excellent example of such an approach in the social sciences is North and Thomas (1977).

not so specific to capitalism as the first. At least in the analysis of capitalist societies, it can lead to individualistic and psychological explanations, such as those in terms of desire for competitive gain.

Although not sufficient, the third definition is more satisfactory because it does refer to labour.[30] However, it suffers the same problems as we noted above for abstractly defining surplus labour and needs to be integrated more closely with production. Thus, in studying the bases of different societies, we shall be concerned primarily, not with scarce goods, but with the limits on the amount of social labour produced by society, and with how each such system of production implies a system of distribution among the various possible socially-defined[31] tasks. This assumes an adaptability of the human character, not only to the various tasks, but also to the various modes of distribution of labour.

Let us, then, define the *relations of production* as *a specific social mechanism of production, allocation, and control of productive labour, whereby, if decisions about allocation are not universal, surplus labour is extracted*.[32] Several points of clarification should immediately be noted.

(1) Production of productive labour is not the reproduction of the direct producers, but the process of rendering such labour activities social.

(2) Allocation must be taken to mean both the structuring of tasks and the distribution of labour to them.

(3) Of the triad, production, allocation, and control, the second is most fundamental because it refers directly to decisions about what must be produced, that is to what activities will be undertaken, while production and control assure that these activities take place in the proper social context.

(4) The "if" qualification in the definition is required to distinguish class from non-class based societies, thus providing the definition of the two fundamental social classes of the former.

We immediately see that the idea of the basic determinant of society being production of social use values becomes more concrete with this definition. First,

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[30] In a certain sense, the centrality of labour to Marxist theory has come under attack by the neo-Ricardians. For example, Steedman (1977, p. 14) states that "the quantities of labour embodied in the various commodities . . . play *no essential role* in the determination of the rate of profit (or of the prices of production)". Marxists must accordingly admit that value theory cannot play a key theoretical role because "the cost of abandoning Sraffa's work is nothing less than the cost of abandoning logical consistency" (Hodgson, 1977, p. 91; see also Steedman, 1977, pp. 25, 49, 205 and Lippi, 1980). Converging attacks on the labour theory of value have come from the ex-Althusserians, Cutler *et al.* (1977), and from the philosopher, Cohen (1979). Replies by Marxists include Benetti et al (1975), Fine and Harris (1977, 1979), Himmelweit and Mohun (1978), Lebowitz (1974), Lipietz (1979a), Roosevelt (1975), and Shaikh (1981). As should become clear in what follows, and especially in Chapter 5, these attacks depend on a misunderstanding about the role of labour, and its allocation; they are rather concerned with the product and ignore its fetishisation.

[31] For the labour theory of value, Elson (1979b) has emphasised the importance of the specification of the structure of tasks, as well as the distribution of labour to them.

[32] One isolated recent Marxist to provide a somewhat similar definition is Castoriadis (1973, I, pp. 231–235).

the way in which productive labour is produced, allocated, and controlled must necessarily have an enormous influence, exert pressures, on what human activities, those which take the form of social labour, are pursued and on which are relatively more or less important. Secondly, the specific allocation of the activities of productive labour will necessarily form constraints, a framework, within which all *other* human activities must take place. Thirdly, because productive labour is allocated, at least in class societies, in the context of extraction of surplus labour, a certain proportion of labour must be applied to the reproduction of these exploitative relations, to the production and control of productive labour.

Until recently, few Marxists accepted the allocation of social labour, and its production and control, as the basic social phenomenon which Marx set out to explain.[33] Most considered it as the point of departure for the explanation of the distribution of (material) goods.[34] They see the goal of *Capital* in the explanation of prices and profits, whereas from my point of view, this step in Marx's study provides a further complication to the ways in which social labour is allocated under the capitalist mode of production.

Within Marxism, the basic types of society, which we have been discussing, are distinguished as different modes of production. For want of a better term, we shall use this here. We can now define such a given basic type of society, a *mode of production*, as a specific combination of relations of production with a developing or evolving production *process*. Then, the labour activities, produced, allocated, and controlled through the relations of production, constitute this production process. Thus, the smallest conceivable *determining totality* for starting the study of any society must include both a production process and some form of relations of production, providing the fundamental constraints and pressures for all subsequent analysis. No social production process can be imagined on its own without the accompanying allocation process.[35] The production process, with its specific level of development of the productive forces, provides the constraints within which the totality can operate, but the relations of production provide the

[33]Lukacs (1975, esp. p. 327) has demonstrated that Hegel, not Marx, first conceived of labour activity as the basis of society.

[34]Representatives of the dominant interpretation of Marx range from von Bortkiewicz through Samuelson to Sraffa and the neo-Ricardians among non-Marxists and, for example, Lange, Brus, and the authors of the *Manual of Political Economy* (Academy of Sciences of the USSR), among Marxists. Rubin is the most important representative of the labour allocation interpretation among the classics.

[35]This contrasts with the proposition of the primacy of productive forces, as found most recently in Cohen (1978) and Shaw (1978), but also Godelier (1969, 1973, esp. pp. 187–221). Their work situates the ultimate determinants of societies outside human practice, and, in the end, reduces history to the progress of technical knowledge. Their definition of production relations as relations to the productive forces, instead of as relations among groups of people which, in certain conditions, *appear* as relations to things, renders their theory of history ahistorically capitalist: an avowed structuro-functionalism. If the productive forces were determinant in historical materialism, they would find a much greater place in Marx's exposition of the capitalist mode of production in *Capital*; Shaw (1978, pp. 74–75) admits this and generally takes a less dogmatic position than Cohen. For a critique of the ahistorical rationality in Cohen's work, see Levine and Wright (1980).

pressures towards development of that very production process.[36] Thus, what we precisely mean by a factor, such as production, being *determinant* is that it exerts the most important *constraints* and *pressures* .

The definition of relations of production given above has many ramifications. For example, in the capitalist mode of production, the principal contradiction is not between private control of the means of production (or private appropriation of the product) and the increasing centralization and socialization of the production process, but rather between the latter and the privatisation of decisions about the allocation of productive labour.

Following the above outline, we may distinguish five different basic types of societies, or modes of production:[37]

(1) *primitive communism*, where the entire community makes the decisions about the allocation of social labour by 'traditional' means;[38]

(2) *slavery*, where decisions about the allocation of *all* social labour are made and the entire product seems to be expropriated by the dominant class;[39]

(3) *corvée-tributary*, where decisions about the allocation of a well-defined portion or proportion of social labour, the surplus labour, are made and the product expropriated by the dominant class and those for the other portion are made by the subordinate class;

(4) *capitalism*, where, although decisions about the allocation of productive labour are made by the dominant class, *none* seems to be expropriated by it;[40] and

(5) a hypothetical *planned communism*, where the society as a whole would make planned decisions about the allocation of social or productive labour.

Obviously, because of the constant interaction between theory and empirical facts, these definitions, and the limitation to five modes, can only be taken as provisional. When, for example, Africa and the Moslem countries are better known,

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[36] "...relations of production [are] appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. ...At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations...From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters." (Marx, 1970, pp. 20–21).

[37] Actually, a sixth 'mode of production' is conceivable. With the possibility of complete automation, 'labour' may no longer be required to produce use values, and yet a form of 'capital' relation remains, whereby the dominant class possesses the means of production, and hence the product, forcing the 'working' class to activity, any activity, even absurd, and thus maintaining its control. See Montano (1975).

[38] For one of the best attempts to construct a primitive communist mode of production, see Sacks (1979, pp. 96–192).

[39] At least in some cases, this is a slight exaggeration, because some minimal social (domestic) labour is required by the slaves before the final act of consuming their use values.

[40] "In the corvée, the labour of the worker for himself, and his compulsory labour for the lord, differ in space and time in the clearest possible way. In slave labour, even that part of the working-day in which the slave is only replacing the value of his own means of existence, in which therefore, in fact he works for himself alone, appears as labour for his master. All the slave's labour appears as unpaid labour. In wage-labour, on the contrary, even surplus-labour, or unpaid labour, appears as paid." (Marx, 1967, I, pp. 539–540).

the theory may need to be drastically revised. However, the three class-based modes of production do correspond to the three possible ways of dividing decisions about labour allocation with their corresponding divisions of social labour into surplus and necessary labour:

(1) decisions about the allocation of all social labour made by the dominant class, so that necessary labour is fixed at subsistence and surplus labour variable;
(2) decisions about the allocation of only surplus labour so made, so that either surplus labour is fixed (by tradition) and necessary labour variable or, more rarely, the proportion between the two is fixed as in share-cropping (*champart*, *métayage*); and
(3) intermediary between these, decisions about the allocation of surplus labour and part of necessary labour made by the dominant class, so that both surplus and necessary labour are variable.

It would be difficult to conceive of a structure of labour allocation where both necessary and surplus labour are fixed or where dominant class decisions applied to only part of surplus labour. This said, only the corvée-tributary and capitalist modes of production will be studied in more detail in succeeding chapters.

A mode of production is an abstract basis of a given type of society. However, this does not imply that only one such mode can exist in any actual society. The historical changes which have occurred in societies immediately demonstrate this. But a fundamental question is how such basic changes can occur. Generally speaking, when a given mode of production is dominant in society, the development of its production process is preponderant,[41] in that the pressures of the given relations of production can never overcome the constraints of this process within which the society must operate and develop. However, as we shall see, when contradictions develop, they alter these very relations. In a period of transition, when the contradictions have so developed such that one mode has lost dominance, while no other mode has gained it, the conflict is among relations of production, and the pressures they exert make them preponderant.[42] The new relations of production must eventually be able to force a radical transformation of the production process, as during the period of manufacture, when capitalist relations of production were gaining domination over the existing production process, this being achieved with the advent of modern industry.[43] All of this does not, however, imply an evolutionary system of continuously developing productive forces which, at different levels of development, cause different specific relations of production to correspond. The result of the 'struggle' among modes of production in a transitional period is never pre-given.

[41] See, for example, Okishio (1977), but also Cohen (1978).

[42] It seems to me that the apparent contradiction between Marx's (1970) "Preface to the *Contribution*" and much of his other work, especially in *Capital*, can be understood in this way.

[43] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 368, 382–383).

The development of higher levels of analysis, the classical 'base-superstructure' problem, also becomes more complex with this restriction of the sense of mode of production, because any notion of a one-to-one relation between 'base' and 'superstructure' is destroyed.[44]

1.4 Social class and individuals

Social class analysis has been a perpetual headache for Marxists, because Marx broke off his manuscript of *Capital* at the point where he was apparently going to 'solve' this problem. However, this is a misreading of Marx's project; *Capital*, in its entirety, must be read as the basic social class analysis of capitalist society, to be continued in the projected further volumes.[45] This lack of precise and clear indication, in turn, led orthodox Marxism to conclude that social class relations were relations to the means of production. In turn, this has led to the paradox that historical materialism cannot handle non-capitalist societies, in the sense that social classes cannot be conceived in such terms for those societies. This has been particularly evident for slave societies, where the direct producers are fetishized as means of production.[46]

Up until now, we have discussed social classes in rather general terms. It is time to consider a more precise definition. Social classes must be defined in terms of the relations of production. But when these relations are understood to revolve around control of labour activities and not fundamentally around control of the means of production, such a definition can be seen in a new light.[47] The previ-

[44] "The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers — a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity — which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not prevent the same economic basis — the same from the standpoint of its main conditions — due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances." (Marx, 1967, III, pp. 791–792) Here, as elsewhere in the third volume, extraction of surplus labour exists in an uneasy relationship to control of the means of production as basic elements of any mode of production.

[45] See Marx (1973a, p. 108), where he mentions "the 'unproductive' classes".

[46] Vernant (1974) and Vidal-Naquet (1973) encounter this problem and end up excluding slaves from class society because of their lack of social cohesion and lack of vision of an alternative society. They, thus, accept this fetishism at face value. See de Ste. Croix (1984).

[47] Lenin (1919) was clearer than most orthodox Marxists on this, although his remarks are open to misinterpretation: "Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy." (p. 421).

ous discussion of social labour and of social practice, which necessarily involved some reference to the dominant and subordinate classes, provides the required basis.

If decisions about allocation of social labour are universal, i.e. if there is no distinct activity involving allocation of the social labour *of others*, social classes do not exist. If such a distinct activity, which I have called exploitative labour, exists, this labour forms one antagonistic pole of the fundamental social class relations of a mode of production. The other pole is constituted by that part of social labour, the productive labour, so controlled. This does not mean that the two social classes are restricted to these different labour activities, and more specifically that the subordinate class is restricted to social labour, the production of use values by transformation of nature. The two social classes are defined by the totality of social practices entailed by the production process and the relations of production.

In any class-based mode of production, these are the two fundamental social classes. As we shall see, in the slave and corvée-tributary modes, they are the only social classes. However, as we shall also see, in the capitalist mode, two further classes exist, circulation and ideologico-repressive labour, both relations to the relations of production.[48] The two forms of pre-capitalist society seem to have a more complex class structure for at least three reasons:

(1) we are projecting back the complexities of our capitalist class structure;
(2) these societies may be composed of complex combinations of several modes of production;
(3) the importance of politics and ideology in these societies generates apparent 'class' divisions which are not a one-to-one reflection of the relations of production.

We can see that social class structure does not coincide with what I have called the categories of social practice. Besides the differences already mentioned, an important discrepancy occurs for necessary social labour. For the different mode of production, necessary social labour will be more or less confounded with the totality of social labour. That necessary social labour which is distinct from surplus social labour does not form a (part of a) social class because it does not fall under the relations of production. It is not allocated by a distinct, exploitative, labour. Thus, for example, with corvée-tribute relations, the peasant families' or village community's necessary labour on its own land does not constitute a class relation; decisions about its allocation are not made by the dominant class. This is especially significant if, for example, women are not corvéable, because their activities, then, do not have a class relation. The same holds true for domestic labour under the capitalist mode of production.

Social classes are not categories, or, more correctly, relations among categories, of individuals, but of labour activities. Any given biological individual,

[48] For more extensive development of these social class analyses, see Chapters 3 and 7.

situated in a society dominated by a specific mode of production, may be involved in several categories of labour activities, and, thus, have several social class relationships. This statement has important implications for political action, for the development of common class political positions. The same individuals may be prepared to take different positions in different conjunctural situations, depending on the varying relationships among the social practices in which they are involved. If practice, in the sense of purposively changing reality, is accepted as a fundamental determinant of consciousness, as discussed in the next chapter, this also has important implications here. Depending on the complex interaction of the various practices, an individual's conception of social reality may be more or less contradictory.[49]

Because social classes are founded in social practices, they necessarily exist whether the individuals involved are conscious of the class relations or not.[50] And because they consist of relations of control of human activities, they are necessarily antagonistic, whether consciously so or not. We, thus, have antagonistic class relations, and, based on them, (the possibility of) conscious class relations. Such consciousness is a fundamental factor in any practice which attempts to modify social relations.

The preceding discussion raises the question of the place of the individual in a general theory of society.[51] The basic support of the social must obviously be biological individuals; only they can have social practices. However, this is not sufficient. We find suggestions that what specifically characterizes human beings is that they are tool-making animals or that they are animals with an elaborate form of language. Such presuppositions are inadequate in that they each cover only one aspect of specifically human activity: that it is *pre-planned labour*.[52] Only human labour necessarily involves the mental construction of an image or reflection of reality, and how it is to be changed, before the act is actually performed. It includes the teleological conception of something which has not yet been directly experienced, or perceived, a separation or distancing from reality.[53]

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[49] Gramsci's (1971, p. 324) remarks on 'disjointed' conceptions of the world can be understood in this context.

[50] De Ste. Croix (1984) emphasises this point.

[51] "Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand." (Marx, 1973a, p. 265); see also the sixth "Thesis on Feuerbach" (Marx and Engels, 1976, pp. 4, 7). "The basic innovation introduced by the philosophy of praxis into the science of politics and of history is the demonstration that there is no abstract 'human nature', ... but that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations." (Gramsci, 1971, p. 133; see also p. 352).

[52] "We pre-suppose labour in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. ... what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 178). Mead (1934) presents no more than one elaboration of this paragraph by Marx. Lukacs (1978) has developed his ontology of social being on this basis; see also Doyal and Harris (1983). Bruner (1964 and 1972) emphasises the importance of the use of tools in human development.

[53] See Lukacs (1978, III, p. 26).

Then, from this can be derived a secondary, but essential, specificity of human beings, the use of language which permits the communication of aspects of reality which have not been directly experienced: second-hand transmission of information.[54] Not only is this closely associated with teleological labour,[55] but it makes possible numerous other basic human characteristics: the possibility and necessity of the social in human activities. Only with such a form of language is history possible, with its accompanying accumulation of social knowledge.

Specifically human language may now, in turn, be related back to the specifically human social labour and hence to social classes. The construction of a mental project for labour is only possible on the basis of language. This basis has come to be known as "inner language", which the child integrates from the earliest age, as the fundamental means of control of all his/her projected actions[56] and which becomes the 'unconscious'.[57] Human language is, however, not just the prerequisite of all human activities; it is an eminently *social* creation, which is adapted to the teleological control *and* to the communication of all human actions. In this way, the pre-existing social is inseparably bound into the formation of the child from the beginning, both in the conscious and in the unconscious.

The individual is, thus, a completely social creation, with no (non-social) psychological residue. (S)he is no more and no less than the sum of social relations. But no human being incorporates the totality of social relations of a given society, and every one combines a somewhat different subset of these relations. In this way, every individual is a determined product of the society, but is also different from all others.

Innumerable sociolinguistic studies[58] have demonstrated empirical social class differences in language. These reflect the different forms of involvement in social practice. But they also mean that different structures of the conscious and the unconscious are imbedded in the individuals performing labour of the different classes, thus forming the basis for antagonistic and conscious class relations. This, in no way, implies that individuals are absolutely socially predetermined by their class positions, by their involvement in specific social practices. For all human activities must retain important elements of teleological pre-conception, of choice and decision, no matter how much coercion is exerted to force a given task to be accomplished.[59] But the mental tools with which the pre-planning is

[54] See Benveniste (1966, pp. 60–61) and Lukacs (1978, III, p. 100) for this characterisation of language. Lukacs (1978, III, pp. 48–49, 100–103) makes the links here discussed between labour and language. Reed (1975, p. 125) interprets it as an historical progression.

[55] For the importance of communications in production, see Williams (1980a, pp. 50–63).

[56] See especially Luria and Yudovich (1971), but also all the works of Luria and of Vygotsky cited in the bibliography.

[57] See Volosinov (1976).

[58] See especially Bernstein (1973) and Labov (1972a and b).

[59] "My standpoint ... can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 10). Althusserian structuralists have ignored the last phrase. "All men are intellectuals, ... But not all men have in society the function of intellectuals. ... although one can speak of intel-

done, the choices made, are social and must necessarily limit and structure the preferences of the individuals. Social relations imply an overall structure of social practices, but provide no indication of the particular thoughts and actions of a given individual. The latter cannot be the subject of any social 'science'.

1.5 Labour time

Because the allocation and extraction of social labour must involve labour times, and their distribution,[60] a few words must be said about the historical specificity of the latter.[61]

The way in which labour, and hence labour time, is allocated is important in any society.[62] General, trans-historical, natural constraints will exist, especially in agriculture, which depends on the seasons and on the weather. The time linked with agricultural production will always be more irregular than that for industrial production.[63] However, the conception of labour time will be historically specific to the mode of production, as well as depending on the development of the productive forces. In general, time will be linked closely to productive activity when the aim is direct consumption. Areas of land are measured by the time necessary to cultivate them and distances by the time to travel them.[64] Time, as abstracted from social practice, need not exist. Prevision for investment, as opposed simply to foresight in preparation for direct future consumption needs, will generally be unthinkable.[65]

Time is also linked closely to production in the sense that agricultural growing

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lectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist. ... There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded." (Gramsci, 1971, p. 9). See also Lukacs (1978, III, pp. 32–42).

[60] "... time in economics as well as in nature is simply a measure of a process. Particularly in economics it is a measure of the processes of production and circulation (in other words, and in the last analysis, a measure of labor)." Labriola (1981, p. 170).

[61] For the place of time in ideology, see the exchange between Geertz (1973, pp. 360–411) and Bloch (1977).

[62] "In all states of society, the labour-time that it costs to produce the means of subsistence, must necessarily be an object of interest to mankind, though not of equal interest in different stages of development." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 71). "On the basis of communal production, the determination of time remains, of course, essential. ... the multiplicity of its development, its enjoyment and its activity depends on economization of time. Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself. Society likewise has to distribute its time in a purposeful way, in order to achieve a production adequate to its overall needs; ... Thus, economy of time, along with the planned distribution of labour time among the various branches of production, remains the first economic law on the basis of communal production. It becomes law, there, to an even higher degree." (Marx, 1973a, pp. 172–173). "Real economy — saving — consists of the saving of labour time ... but this saving identical with development of the productive force. ... The saving of labour time [is] equal to an increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labour as itself the greatest productive power." (Marx, 1973a, p. 711; see also the rest of pp. 708–711).

[63] See Georgescu-Roegen (1970).

[64] On ways that these standards of measure are the subject of class struggle, see Kula (1962).

[65] See Bourdieu (1963).

requires a period of time, preparation for the future. Production and consumption time are not separated, although they may both be distinct from the surplus labour time. If production is communal, time is continuous and unending.[66] Birth and death are only natural elements of the continuation of the community. All activity contributes to this continuity.[67]

The conception of time becomes more specific when we take into consideration the relations of production. If surplus labour takes the form of tribute, labour time will be of little importance to the dominant class, concern being only with the amount of product received. On the other hand, members of the subordinate class will have a feeling of flexibility of time because they can decide when to do necessary and when surplus labour. The same is not true for extraction by corvée. In the latter, time is a matter of continuous class struggle, although it may become institutionalized. In any case, the subordinate class sees its time cut in two, with complete loss of control over one part. In a slave economy, time has only physical limits for the dominant class, because the slave can be worked until (s)he dies. The slave may have no conception of time, because all control is lost.

Time may also be involved in the exchange of products. Barter and simple market exchanges are instantaneous, but the corresponding gift and credit market exchanges both imply a period of waiting before reciprocity is attained.[68]

The conception of time changes radically under capitalism. Just as use value becomes separated from exchange, so does concrete labour time distinguish itself from its measure, money. Time is not measured by what is accomplished but in and for itself. Time becomes an abstraction; clocks are required.[69] However, this abstraction from 'natural' time is much more possible in industry than in agriculture where the weather and the seasons cannot be completely dominated.[70]

Labour time becomes the principal concern of the dominant capitalist class; not surplus labour time, but the time required to produce a use value for future sale. In order to extract surplus labour, the capitalist must remain competitive, must use the least paid labour time possible per use value. Thus, the dynamic of capitalist production necessarily involves a certain minimization of labour time, a progressively more efficient production of use values.[71] Labour is allocated in terms of time, nothing but time, but this time is separated from any concrete activities. Production and consumption time are drastically divided: public and

[66] Leach (1966, pp. 124–136) rather suggests that in many it is perceived as an alternation between polar opposites.

[67] The points in this paragraph are derived from Bakhtine (1978, pp. 351–366) and Le Goff (1964, pp. 225–228). See also Meillassoux (1972), although I do not share his notion of relations of production.

[68] See Mauss (1950, p. 199) for the gift in this light.

[69] See Debouzy (1979), Le Goff (1960, 1963), Thompson (1967), and Wolff (1962) for the historically growing importance of time under capitalism.

[70] See especially Demonio (1979).

[71] We shall see in Chapter 5 that this is necessarily accompanied by a waste of total labour time.

private life.[72]

In general, labour time need not be the basis of the allocation of social labour in society, except in so far as certain limits must be taken into account. Thus, although the perspective from capitalist society permits us to see the importance of time in labour allocation throughout history, one must not think that it has always been so perceived.

[72]The private/public opposition under capitalism is paradoxical. 'Private' capitalist firms produce use values for 'public' social consumption, while, as we shall see in Chapter 6, 'public' education and welfare institutions provide use values for 'private' consumption. The economic, juridical, and ideological forms of this dichotomy differ drastically. See Fildes (1983), Lipietz (1979a, p. 85), Remy (1973), and Williams (1976, pp. 203–204).

2
A methodology of social practice?

2.1 Why methodology?

To include in this book a chapter on methodology is to include a note of uneasiness. A method is something one uses: it is preferable to do just that rather than to talk or write about it. We judge Marx by his substantive work, not by his "Introduction" to the *Grundrisse* or by some methodological work which he proposed to write but never did. However, it is specifically the profound questioning of Marx's method over the past twenty years which makes this chapter necessary. Most recently, this criticism has taken two forms, both related to the conception of social practice and hence both essential to the premises and goals of this book: Marx's method, in the "Introduction" and elsewhere, has been examined and found wanting; the same has occurred with the keystone of Marx's substantive work, the labour theory of value.

The idea of scientific knowledge of society has also come under increasing attack. This is most probably a result of the mounting evidence that the so-called 'social sciences' are becoming less and less useful in understanding social reality, especially in the current crisis.[1]

The basic postulate of any materialistic philosophy is the primacy of being over thought.[2] In its most common forms, materialism is an empiricism which accepts that being or reality can be appropriated directly in thought through the senses. In contrast, a dialectical approach poses the *problem* of approaching ob-

[1] See especially Cleaver (1979, Ch. 1).

[2] "The chief defect of all previous materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that things [*Gegenstand*], reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the *object, or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively." (Marx and Engels, 1976, p. 3, first "Thesis on Feuerbach"). "To posit oneself, to produce and reproduce oneself — that is *reality*." (Lukacs, 1971, pp. 15–16). "Only in labour, in the positing of a goal and its means, consciousness rises with a self-governed act, the teleological positing, above mere adaptation to the environment . . . and begins to effect changes in nature itself that are impossible coming from nature alone, indeed even inconceivable. Since realisation thus becomes a transforming and new-forming principle of nature, consciousness, which has provided the impulse and direction for this, can no longer be simply an ontological epiphenomenon. It is with this contention that dialectical materialism cuts itself off from mechanical materialism. For the latter recognizes only nature and its laws as objective reality." (Lukacs, 1978, III, p. 23). See also Williams (1976, pp. 163–167). This concept of materialism contrasts with that of Cohen (1978) and Shaw (1978) who defend a determinism of productive forces independently of human practice. One can read Timpanaro (1975) without gaining any clear idea of what *historical* materialism is about; for a discussion of his work, see Williams (1978).

jective knowledge of the inner laws which produce the observed phenomenal forms, of the successive steps towards never absolutely obtainable knowledge,[3] through a process of changing reality.[4] Empiricism posits a passive subject. In contrast, the dialectic necessarily involves an active subject. However, the dialectic may still be idealist, as in phenomenology. To avoid this it must penetrate to the inner laws beneath the forms.[5]

At each step, the dialectical method supposes several *inter-related moments* forming a *unity* as a complex *totality* of *contradictions*. One contradiction is *fundamental* in that it defines the internal dynamic of the totality. Such a contradiction, as it develops historically, yields *tendential laws* which circumscribe the field of action in the society. One of the moments of the totality most fundamentally *determines* the structure of the totality,[6] although it may not necessarily be the same moment in all situations.

As we saw in the previous chapter, I understand by determination the most important constraints on what is possible in the totality, constraints which do exert a certain force.[7] As we also saw in that chapter, individual human beings are the support of all social practices and all such practice must involve teleological conception. Such conception, and the ensuing action, as social practice, necessarily involves choice and decision. However, it also involves constraints and pressures, not only blatantly through directly experienced social forces, but also more subtly, through language and the basic tools of conception. Thus, social practices are socially structured or determined and never causally predetermined. For example, within human communication, if we consider the Saussurian dichotomy between language and speech, language determines individual speech acts. Such a conception of social determination allows the apparent contradiction between historical necessity and individual action to be overcome.[8] This contrasts with and must be radically distinguished from the sense of determination as external causes which yield precisely predictable results, a sense which is used in the natural sciences but which has no applicability to the social.

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[3] See Lukacs (1978, II, p. 103) and, more generally, James (1980).

[4] For Lukacs (1971, pp. 2–4), this is the 'essence' of dialectics. "... in all metaphysics the object remains untouched and unaltered so that it remains contemplative and fails to become practical; while for the dialectical method the central problem is to *change reality*." (p. 3).

[5] A well-known example of inner laws and phenomenal forms is the Chomskyan linguistic theory of deep and surface structures. Consider also the distinction between mass and weight in physics and between genotype and phenotype in biology. Lipietz (1983) based his work around such a distinction.

[6] From this point of view, the most important part of Marx's (1973a) "Introduction" is the last paragraph of Section 2 (pp. 99–100), before he starts "The method of political economy."

[7] Williams (1977, p. 87) clearly expresses the import of determination: "in practice determination is never only the setting of limits; it is also the exertion of pressures." See also Williams (1973a, 1976, pp. 87–91). Wright (1978, pp. 15–26, 1979) has a somewhat similar concept with his structuralist limiting and selecting determinations. On constraints to human action, see also Gellner (1971).

[8] Labriola (1980) perhaps originally faced this dilemma most clearly.

2.2 What is practice?

According to Bernardo (1977, I, p. 76, my translations), "Marx's point of rupture with previous social theories" was "the introduction of a new object of study, the action of social individuals".[9] "Practice is conceived as a specific object of analysis ... implying the production of a new model of the structure of the totality" (p. 109). However, it is not "a model whereby individual practices act directly on natural reality for they are processes within social institutions" (p. 110). Then ideas, concepts, are "an expression, not of material reality, but of practice" (p. 189), and are thus an integral part of that practice.[10] Under capitalism, Bernardo (1977, I, pp. 213–227, 256–259) considers the foundation of all proletarian practice, and, hence, of social reality as experienced by the proletariat, to be production of surplus value, this being epistemologically more fundamental than the law of value. As based on the discussion of the previous chapter, my position is somewhat different: the fundamental practice is productive labour, i.e. that minimum category of social labour which falls directly under the relations of production. Because, under capitalism, necessary and surplus productive labour are inseparable in the production of commodities, the epistemological basis for knowledge of capitalist society must be, not surplus value, but the law of value.[11]

We can now conceive of practice as composed of three moments: perception, conception, and participation in changing reality.[12] These form a cyclic totality of human activities. Thus, reality is perceived, a conception is formed of the change desired, and the necessary actions are carried out to change reality. This change results in an altered perception, which may or may not correspond to what was desired. If not, the cycle is repeated.[13] However, determination proceeds in the reverse order to chronology: changing reality determines conception which

[9] See also Gramsci (1971, p. 351): "...man is a process, and, more exactly, the process of his actions." I have already noted that Lukacs (1975) has shown Hegel to be at the origin of this conception.

[10] In this context, see Gramsci's (1971, p. 9) well-known remarks, already partially quoted: "...although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist. But even the relationship between efforts of intellectual-cerebral elaboration and muscular-nervous effort is not always the same, so that there are varying degrees of specific intellectual activity. There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded..."

[11] I, thus, do not consider Lukacs' (1978, II, p. 38) justification of the centrality of value to be adequate. It is founded in an ahistorical conception of labour activity, and not in specific relations of production.

[12] Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach", in Marx and Engels (1976, pp. 3–8), are important here. Although Godelier (1978) remains in the orthodox framework of control over means of production, he comes close to the perspective presented in the following pages, but insists on making the distinction between 'functions' instead of practices.

[13] See Lukacs (1978, III, p. 33). Luria (1973, pp. 327–329) breaks the cycle down further into a number of stages:

(1) confrontation with a situation having no ready-made (inborn or habitual) solution,

(2) restraint of impulsive responses and investigation of the conditions of the problem,

(3) selection of one of a number of possible alternatives and creation of a general plan for performance of the task,

in turn determines perception. Reality is then appropriated in thought when one manages to change it in the desired way.[14] I purposely choose the term practice to encompass both what is generally considered to be practice, i.e. changing reality, and conception.[15] This forces into the mind the constant unity of theory and 'practice', emphasising that theory is always an integral part of practice.[16]

Obviously, many human activities do not conform to this description. A person may say one thing and do another; if this is not intentional, it is not a practice. Activities which do not have these three moments are not practices. On the other hand, all three moments may not be performed by the same individual; this is one form of collective practice, perhaps based on a division of labour. Or a practice may become a reflex action so that the moment of conception seems to disappear; it is no less a practice, because it still has a basis in the three moments. As we have seen in Chapter 1, *social* practices are more limited than this practice in general, the fundamental ones, in class societies, being the two social classes based on exploitative and social labour. On the other hand, building a model airplane or manipulating a Lion's Club meeting are practices, although not usually social practices.

Perception is perhaps the most individualised moment, but is social in its determination by the other moments.[17] On the other hand, as we have seen in the first chapter, conception is socially determined, especially because it depends on language.[18] This means that practice need in no way be 'rational', attuned to the 'real interests' of the actor. Conception, including choice of the goal desired, depends on the social-historical context, on all of the prevalent myths, customs, and so on. It is always located in specific relations of production, a fact which will have important consequences in what follows.

Conception is an integral moment of all practice, and differences in complexity are not qualitative but only differences of degree. However, in its more developed forms in class societies, and especially under capitalism, conception has appeared to take on an autonomous social form, as scientific theory. But this is primarily an historical result of the capitalist production of commodities, their fetishisation, and the accompanying division of labour.[19] For present purposes,

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(4) choice of appropriate methods and consideration of which operations will be adequate for putting the general scheme of solution into effect,

(5) the operative stage of using the approprate operations, and finally

(6) comparison of the results obtained with the original conditions of the task.

Most of these stages usually occur without the person involved being consciously aware of them.

[14] See especially the second "Thesis on Feuerbach".

[15] For a similar conception of practice, see Larrain (1979, pp. 41–44).

[16] For a discussion of the terms, see Williams (1976, pp. 266–268).

[17] See Bruner (1957).

[18] See especially the early Russian students of thought and language, Léontiev (1976), Luria (1932, 1973, 1976), Volosinov (1973, 1976), and Vygotsky (1962, 1978), as well as Benveniste (1966, 1974) and Gramsci (1971, pp. 348–353, 452–456).

[19] "It may seem an exaggeration, but it is yet true to say that any tool is an embodiment of *science*.

scientific knowledge, or theory, is taken to mean the institutionalisation of the process of conscious conception which serves as a step to changing natural or social reality. Thus, in this sense, science cannot be separated from practice.

Conception is made necessary by the complexities of any real totality. It consists of two moments:

(1) the choice of a goal: the desire to change a certain aspect of reality in some way and

(2) the mental elaboration of the means by which this can be done.[20]

Let us concentrate on this second moment, the need for a sufficient knowledge of reality to attain the goal. This moment of conception is the search for underlying, unobservable laws which allow perceivable and changeable reality to be understood, i.e. to be perceived and changed.[21] The more general are these laws, the more do we have the illusion that they are independent from the real world, as with mathematics and logic.[22] This moment is the appropriation of the real in thought by the production of concepts as multiple inter-determinations and relations. Although internal procedures exist for testing a theory in thought, they are only internal to the conceptual moment, and the ultimate test comes with the attempt to change reality in accordance with the conception.[23] The moments of the totality in thought, the conception, are relational concepts which are never completely specified within the theory: provisional complete specification depends on perception and changing reality. On the other hand, what is conceivable is determined both by the socio-historical conditions and, in class societies, by social class position, because these are ultimate determinants of practice as a whole.

Conception is concerned with changing reality, but it must also start from concrete reality. The things perceived, those to be changed, are always concrete and particular. One can only observe particular cases of exploitation and not exploitation in general. The problem is to pass conceptually from the particular to the general[24] and from the observable phenomena to their inner laws.[25] Both are aspects of this same difficulty with perception, a problem which has long preoccupied philosophers.

For it is a practical application of remembered, compared, and collected experiences of the same kind as are systematized and summarized in scientific formulas, descriptions, and prescriptions." (Childe, 1964, p. 15). See also Clegg (1979), Cooley (1980, esp. pp. 80–81), Lipietz (1979a, pp. 231–232), and Sohn-Rethel (1978). Kosik (1970) attempts to synthesise the fetishised capitalist perspective on science with an approach based, at least nominally, on practice.

[20] See Lukacs (1978, III, pp. 11–12). Luria's more detailed totality has already been mentioned in a note above.

[21] In this sense, empiricism denies conception; it is reduced to description by its elimination of the mediation between perception and change.

[22] See Lukacs (1978, II, pp. 98–99 and III, pp. 51, 61–62).

[23] See Toulmin (1972, *passim*, esp. pp. 151, 173).

[24] See, for example, Dietzgen (1973, p. 41).

[25] See, for example, Cohen (1978, pp. 326–330), Elson (1979b), and Sayer (1979). Among the classics, see especially any of the works of Marx and of Lukacs.

I shall distinguish two basic categories of human practice: human relations to nature or practice on nature, i.e. the transformation of anything which is not a social relation,[26] and human relations *to* the social or practice on the social, i.e. the transformation of any social relation.[27] Although the two categories may be analytically distinguished, they are necessarily combined in specific ways in any given type of society.[28]

Practice on nature can only occur within social relations, including specific relations of production. This is also true of practice on the social: some social relation is transformed within the total context of constraining social relations. However, such practice on the social may also be a conscious attempt to overcome the constraints of these relations. But in spite of some similarity, at least in class societies, the two categories of practice are very distinct, because practice related to nature is unidirectional while practice on the social always involves the interaction of the two poles of a social relation: practice on the social never occurs in isolation, but must always take into account reciprocal reaction from conflicting practices on the social, while practice on nature does not have to deal with nature consciously acting back.[29] In other words, the inner laws of natural reality are causal laws while those of social reality always involve teleology, the fact that people pre-plan their actions.[30] Thus, the corresponding practices on these two categories of reality must be distinct.

Two subcategories of practices on the social must be distinguished. To a large extent, people act on social relations only from within their given society, from within the relations of production, as their 'personifications', without consciously trying to change them. They act to alter social relations which are not fundamental, in the way the relations of production are. For example, a dominant class allocates productive labour or a subordinate class attempts to gain better working conditions.[31] Here, we have definite class *antagonisms*, but no pre-meditated attempt to maintain or to change the relations of production or, more specifically,

[26] See Marx's (1967, I, pp. 177–185) discussion of the production of use values.

[27] Castoriadis' (1975, pp. 97–109) distinction between 'technique' and 'praxis' approaches, in some ways, these two categories.

[28] "The discovery that the relations between the social and natural orders are mediated by work, by man's theoretical and practical activity, creates the first elements of an intuition of the world free from all magic and superstition." (Gramsci, 1971, p. 34).

[29] This provides an important reason why such theory applies only to social, and not to 'natural', reality: "...the crucial determinants of dialectics — the interaction of subject and object, the unity of theory and practice, the historical changes in thought, etc. — are absent from our knowledge of nature." (Lukacs, 1971, p. 24, n.6). However, it also demonstrates why Lukacs was wrong in his development of "imputed class consciousness": people cannot be conceived, even theoretically, to be "able to assess both [a particular situation] and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society" (1971, p. 51), because such an assessment can never adequately take into account the position of the opposing class.

[30] See Lukacs (1975, p. 345, 1978, I, p. 110, II, p. 74, and III, *passim*).

[31] Lukacs (1978, III, p. 47) discusses this in terms of "teleological positing ... in which the posited goal is directly the positing of a goal for other people."

their inner laws.[32] On the other hand, class struggle may rise to a *conscious* level, where these very relations are placed in question.[33] This does not mean that antagonistic practices on the social do not involve conception, but that such conception is aimed towards changing other social relations than the relations of production. In summary, because, in class societies, practice on the social depends on antagonistic positions in that social, it always contains a movement towards an opposition between conscious action to preserve and to overthrow that social reality.[34]

The distinction between the two fundamental categories of practice, on nature and on the social, implies that the moment of conception in each must be distinct.[35] In its more complex capitalist forms, the conceptual moment of practice on nature is the natural sciences.[36] Although embedded in social relations, these sciences are relatively independent of the social position, and specifically the class position, of the persons involved. However, because the subordinate class produces the use values of the society, it is most directly involved in practice on nature. This can provide the basis for a continuous class struggle for control of the conceptual moment of such practice.

The case of conception in practice on the social, and the social sciences is absolutely distinct.[37] Because such practices occur at different poles of the relations of production, their conception will vary depending on the social positions of the persons involved, on whether the pre-planned goal is to preserve or to modify the relations of production.[38] For this very reason, such conceptions are always

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[32]This appears to be what Thompson (1978b) means by class conflict without class: because, for him, by definition classes only exist when there is class consciousness, class antagonism is a form of class conflict without classes so defined.

[33]"...it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production ...and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic — in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out." (Marx, 1970, p. 21). "...once class societies have arisen, any question leads to different solutions according to the standpoint from which the answer to an actual dilemma is sought." (Lukacs, 1978, III, p. 131).

[34]Williams (1979, pp. 135–136, 412) distinguishes between conflict and struggle, Larrain (1979, pp. 41–44) between reproductive and revolutionary practices, and Thompson (1981) between experience I and II in similar ways to that which I do between antagonism and consciousness.

[35]"...as Vico says, human history differs from natural history in this, that we have made the former, but not the latter" (Marx, 1967, I, p. 372, n.3). As we shall see, the point is also that, in class societies, this "we" is not one but is classes in struggle.

[36]Bhaskar (1978) provides an important recent discussion of conception in the natural sciences.

[37]The point has already been made above that this approach only applies to social reality and is necessarily methodologically distinct from the natural sciences. Schmidt (1971) interprets Marx in a diametrically opposite way, claiming that for him there was "no fundamental methodological distinction between the natural sciences and historical science." (p. 49). However, even on the following page, a quote from Marx directly contradicts this. There Marx states that these two sciences "will one day" incorporate each other, i.e. in practice under communism when the polar oppositions of practices on the social disappear. Although Schmidt conceives of practice in a way very similar to mine, he restricts it to practice on nature— Perhaps that is why he can call Marx "probably the greatest utopian in the history of philosophy." (p. 127).

[38]That the group at one end of the relationship has greater access to or a monopoly over 'true science' can only be deduced if that group is seen to have an 'historical mission', and if there is a societal

specific to a given mode of production. Thus, within capitalism, we can have the opposition between conficting views of social science, each of which may be a conception more or less suitable for changing social reality according to conflicting class positions,[39] but each of which is specific to capitalist society.[40] Because of the fundamental antagonism of the relations of production, the goal of conceiving the inner laws of society, for the subordinate class, is to abolish these very laws, something which can never occur with practice on nature, while, for the dominant class, it is to defend and to reinforce them.[41] Hence follows an inclination for the dominant class to identify the way the social is conceived with that of nature: positivism, the assimilation of the methods of social science to those of the natural sciences.

All of this does not imply that specific class 'interests' can be defined.[42] 'Interests' refer to a norm of rational action, to an "imputed class consciousness". Members of a class can set themselves goals, but when non-members assign them 'interests', the latter always have a basis in value judgements.

This distinction between conception of nature and of the social is strictly epistemological, and not ontological. Natural and social reality are a unified totality, so that objective social reality may be assumed to exist in any given society, but it cannot be *conceived* independently of social position.[43] The only way to assume this possible would be to postulate the 'scientist' outside or above social relations.

The fundamental polarity in conception is grounded in the relations of production. Thus, in class societies, one's relation to concrete objects is socially determined, constrained, but also pressured, by social class position. For example, under capitalism, the dominant class relates to commodities on the market

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teleology which makes inevitable, for example, the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by socialism. This is a position which Marx seems to hold in some of his writings, although not in the *Communist Manifesto*, where he speaks of the alternative between "a revolutionary reconstitution of society" *or* "the common ruin of the contending classes" (Marx, 1973b, p. 68). Even if he considered his work, and the study of society more generally, to be scientific, he always located it historically, seeing the limits to its possibilities at any given time, as with his discussion of Aristotle on value.

[39] See Delphy (1980). Colletti (1972, pp. 234–236) also comes close to making this distinction. Kosik (1970, p. 121), due to his scienticism, considers this position to be an extreme subjectivism.

[40] "The substantive truths of historical materialism are of the same type as were the truths of classical economics in Marx's view: they are truths within a particular social order and system of production. As such, but only as such, their claim to validity is absolute. But this does not preclude the emergence of societies in which by virtue of their different social structures other categories and other systems of truth prevail." (Lukacs, 1971, p. 228). On the "historicity" of historical materialism, see also Cohen (1978, pp. 336–344), Gramsci (1971, pp. 404–407), and Pannekoek (1982, I, pp. 197–199).

[41] See Gramsci's remarks about objective prediction and a political programme (1971, pp. 171, 438), about the use of statistics (1971, pp. 428–429), and about the Russian revolution (1977, pp. 49–50) and Lukacs' (1971, p. 4) remarks about immutable laws.

[42] Therborn (1980) demonstrates the link between the idea of class interests and utilitarianism. On the other hand, Therborn's Althusserian sociology of ideology differs greatly from my conception.

[43] "... the objective reality of social existence is *in the immediacy* 'the same' for both proletariat and bourgeoisie. But this does not prevent the *specific categories of mediation* by means of which both classes raise this immediacy to the level of consciousness ... from being fundamentally different, thanks to the different positions occupied by the two classes within the 'same' economic process." (Lukacs, 1971, p. 150). See also Ollman (1971, p. 49).

primarily as exchange values, whereas the working class relates to them as use values. In this way, the duality of practice on the social permeates all practice. At a higher level of analysis, for example in a society combining several modes of production, a given individual may participate in and be socially defined by the relations corresponding to a number of very distinct social practices, and hence have fragmented and conflicting elements in his/her associated conception of the world.[44]

Because social relations change with fundamental changes in society, e.g. a change in dominant mode of production, we can expect that the conceptions of society will also change drastically. The same will not be true, at least not nearly to the same extent, for conception of nature, although with the changed determination by practice on the social, new possibilities and perspectives for conception of nature will become available.[45] It would, however, be a serious error to believe that the apparent autonomy of conception, as science, so predominant in capitalist society, must necessarily appear in other forms of society.

Because reality is a complex and contradictory totality, any conception is not entirely adequate to the goal of changing it. This is doubly important because the underlying laws regulating reality cannot be observed. Such an inadequate conception can be said to contain elements of ideology. Successive passages through the cycle of moments of practice: perception, conception, changing reality, tend towards the reduction of such elements. The acceptance of observable reality as a sufficient conception, without development of underlying laws, means remaining at a primarily ideological level.[46]

Although such ideology exists both in practice on nature and on the social, it seems preferable to restrict its meaning to the latter. Then, 'ideology' in practice on nature can simply be called error. Thus, ideology is specific to practices on the social, those which involve actions on the relations among social groups.[47]

In class societies, social practices are necessarily contradictory and conflictual, and conception is a necessary step in this conflict. A social group will naturally assume that its analysis of society (its social science) is the only true and scientific one and will tend to try to impose this conception on the opposing group. Where successful, this will reduce the chance of success of the latter group's practice on the social.[48] Of such ideologies, the most important in class societies is

[44] See Gramsci (1971, p. 324, 364–365) and Williams' (1973a) discussion of alternative and oppositional cultures, and of their residual and emergent forms.

[45] See, for example, Kuhn's (1957) work on the Copernican revolution and Rosenberg (1974). This distinction is denied by Korsch (1970, p. 62) who believes that the bourgeois natural sciences will be overturned after the proletarian revolution.

[46] Sayer (1979) limits ideology to this form.

[47] Some authors give the term, ideology, a much wider meaning as "the general process of the production of meanings and ideas" (Williams, 1977, p. 55; see also 1976, pp. 126–130), as for example, Dorais (1977), Dumont (1977), Therborn (1980) and Volosinov (1973). For me, this is the moment of conception, not its specific form as ideology. The discussion of ideology here is necessarily sketchy; I hope to develop it further in a subsequent work on social class, the state, and ideology.

[48] Larrain (1979, p. 46) sees ideology as being produced "as contradictions emerge and reach con-

that propagated by the dominant classes which, depending on the mode of production, tends to hide from everyday consciousness, or to justify, the exploitative nature of the social relations. Under the capitalist mode of production, the task is made easier because the exploitative social relations cannot be directly observed. This is not to say, however, that in pre-capitalist situations, directly observable exploitative relations are *consciously* taken as such.

Through ideological conflict, what may be a proper conception for one class becomes imposed ideology for another. When successful, it is as much believed by the one class as the other. It becomes an integral part of seeing the social world. But because the dominant class most often does the imposing, it means successful practice on the social for it but misdirection or even disppearance of such conscious practice for the subordinate class.

The intentional production of ideology, within ideological struggle, may thus be an explicit conscious practice on the social, and not just a moment of such practice. This is because the production of such ideology, by influencing the conceptual moment of conscious practice on the social of the opposing class, changes its practices and, hence, can act to change or to maintain the relations of production. This contrasts with natural science, which can never be an independent practice, but is always only the conceptual moment of some practice.

We may distinguish two basic types of ideological conflict between social classes.[49] The dominant class may act in ways which restrict the conception of the inner laws of society to ones which are not susceptible to human intervention, thus enhancing the apparent eternality of the existing order. The most obvious case is religion, although this can be used just as easily to justify the ascendance of a new dominant class. A subordinate class which struggles on religious grounds has implicitly accepted a dominant class rules of the game. Secondly, the dominant class may deny that anything other than that which can be observed is pertinent to social explanation.[50] Thus, wages, prices, and profits, but not labour time or exploitation, are held to be necessary concepts for the study of capitalist society. In either case, the ideology must be embedded in and compatible with the global social practices within the given society, not something imposed on them.

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sciousness before men can solve them in practice, they are given distorted solutions in the mind. ... As men in their reproductive practices are unable to solve these contradictions, they project them in ideological forms of consciousness. Ideology is, therefore, a solution in the mind to contradictions which cannot be solved in practice." Such a definition is social class independent and essentially psychological. Larrain then links this conception mechanically to social class: "As the conditions under which productive practice is carried out are always the conditions of the rule of a definite class, the ideological hiding of contradictions necessarily serves the interests of that class." (p. 47) without explaining how this just happens to come about conveniently for the dominant class.

[49] See Lukacs (1971, pp. 83–222, esp. pp. 191–194), where he discusses the religious ideology of social unchangeability and the reified objectivity of 'immediacy', both opposed to understanding the inner laws of process.

[50] "Once the interconnection is grasped, all theoretical belief in the permanent necessity of existing conditions collapses before their collapse in practice. Here, therefore, it is absolutely in the interest of the ruling classes to perpetuate this senseless confusion." (Marx and Engels, 1975, p. 197).

The problem of 'verification' of conception[51] is much more complex in practice on the social than in practice on nature. Note that any verification can never be individual, but always means that it can be accomplished by anyone, or, for practice on the social, anyone in the same social position. However, what is to be conceived, and subsequently acted upon, in practice on the social is an ever-changing reality. The very fact of class struggle is continuously modifying the situation. This is further complicated by the ideological factors just mentioned. The very problem of power in the class struggle also means that a conception which has not worked is not necessarily entirely false, although it may have been misapplied or may contain incorrect elements. The balance of power may not have been favourable at the given moment, although the analysis is, on the whole, correct.[52] The reverse also holds: a conception which works once is not necessarily correct.

If the base-superstructure metaphor, so dear to Marxists, is to have any meaning,[53] it must refer to a distinction related to these two categories of practice. The base refers to practices, imbedded in social relations, which do not take these relations to be fundamentally in question. Besides social labour itself, it must also include decisions about the allocation of this social labour, i.e. in so far as the dominant class is acting, not on, but within the social relations, as their personification. The base, therefore, does not coincide with, but is larger than practice on nature, because it includes the specific practices on the social necessary for practice on nature to be carried on under a given mode of production, the antagonistic practices on the social. On the other hand, the superstructure, conscious practices on the social, also involves exploitative labour, in so far as the dominant class is consciously acting to maintain and reproduce the relations of production. Of course, much of the practice of the subordinate class also belongs here, its conscious struggle against the relations of production. Obviously, ideology must play an important part in any move from antagonistc to conscious struggle. The metaphor, hence, does not refer to some separation between 'doing' and 'thinking', for the two are inseparable, but to distinct forms of practice.[54] All of this would imply that the concept of superstructure may only be applicable to class societies, although ideology is certainly not so restricted.

Social labour, both productive and domestic, as production of use values, is the only *social* practice on nature. Social labour and exploitative labour, as imbedded in the relations of production and the production process, form the fundamental moments of the base. However, because, in class societies, they are necessarily

[51] See again Marx's second "Thesis on Feuerbach", as well as Lukacs (1978, II, p. 43 and III, pp. 23, 60–65).

[52] On these problems, see Gramsci (1971, p. 408). Also "... one can 'scientifically' foresee only the struggle, but not the concrete moments of the struggle, which cannot but be the results of opposing forces in continuous movement, which are never reducible to fixed quantities..." (p. 438).

[53] The best recent discussion of this metaphor can be found in Williams (1973a).

[54] Bloch (1977) makes a similar distinction, although he virtually evacuates contradiction and class struggle from the superstructure, by reducing them to "ritual" and to "hierarchy".

antagonistic, they are continually overflowing into the superstructure. If the base, socially-located social and exploitative labour, is fundamental to a mode of production, the superstructure, is also essential to and indissociable from the mode of production. The base would operate smoothly on its own if only it did not incorporate antagonistic relations. Thus, the concept of social practice must be enlarged to include, not only social and exploitative labour within their social relations, that is antagonistic social practices, but all conscious practice on the social. In other words, the base and the superstructure form a fundamental relationship among categories within social practice, that between antagonism and consciousness, while social and exploitative labour, through the relations of production, are the fundamental categories within the base.

The fundamental contradiction of a class-based mode of production is that between relations of the production process and relations of struggle. This can now be reformulated as the contradiction between antagonistic and conscious social practices, between base and superstructure, or between human beings as the simple support or bearers of social relations and as creators, modifiers, or maintainers of them.[55]

Because of the necessary leap from antagonistic to conscious practice, as well as the role of ideological struggle, conscious practices on the social never are in a one-to-one correspondence with social classes as defined by the antagonistic social practices. In the political arena, many other social forces, for example arising from the interaction among modes of production in a specific society or from interaction among societies, such as divisions along race, ethnic, religious, sex, or other lines, thus, are at work, ofter hiding the fundamental class struggles. In this book, I am concerned with social practices specific and fundamental to a mode of production, hence concentrating primarily on the base and superstructure of a single mode of production. Conscious practice on the social, the superstructure, is treated where necessary, but in a restricted manner, because these various other social forces are not touched on at all, being outside the scope of this work.

Certain aspects of conscious practices on the social, of the superstructure, become institutionalised, i.e. organised and systematic,[56] under an established dominant mode of production.[57] Such a process of institutionalisation necessarily relates to maintenance of given relations of production, to the prevention of fundamental change in the existing relations, and thus to practices of the dominant

[55]"...it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production ...and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic — in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out." (Marx, 1970, p. 21). I, thus, consider Marx's immediately preceding remark: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." to have the same meaning — an opposition between antagonistic and conscious practices, so that Cohen (1974) has completely missed the mark with his structuro-functional interpretation. James (1980, pp. 59, 171–172) has a conception very similar to mine.

[56]See Williams (1976, pp. 139–140.)

[57]Contrary to many writers, Cohen (1978, p. 45) restricts the superstructure to (non-economic) institutions and excludes knowledge. He, thus, also excludes practice.

class. Under capitalism, this process leads to the development of two separate groups of institutions, civil society and the state,[58] and to a separate social class, occupied with ideologico-repressive labour, both in these institutions and in those where capitalist production actually takes place.

As we have seen, in the social totality, the most fundamental determination is by the moment of production, the specific social mechanism of production, allocation, and control of productive labour within a production process, with a possible corresponding extraction of surplus labour. The activities of social labour, and specifically of productive labour, are, thus, the fundamental social being. In this sense, we see why the moment of production is socially determinant: time is required to perform social activities, and the way in which labour is allocated to productive tasks will provide pervasive constraints and influences on all of the activities possible. Allocation of productive labour is also essential in another sense for any social science by the subordinate classes: there is always a limit to available labour in society and it is the subordinate classes which must provide the essential part of it, the social labour. An attack on this social mechanism of allocation is an attack on the very foundations of society.

2.3 Relations and levels

We are not here concerned with the individual process of conception, with how an individual can use a social science in his or her practices. We are rather interested in conception at a social, communicable level, in how a conception of society must be presented in order to form a moment in the practice on the social by a group. The individual and more or less accidental way in which the results are first obtained will not be considered.[59]

Because social science is a moment of practice, it is always involved with changing reality. It is only as a reflection of the capitalist division of labour, which reinforces capitalist exploitation, that it can be considered even as relatively autonomous from the 'practical moment' of practice. However, this does not mean that it is always necessarily directly embedded in some ongoing practice. Social science would then be reduced to pragmatism. It is rather a part of a collective practice on the social. This is possible because all human practice is mediated by language, which means, in turn, that there can exist separations in time and in space. This is, of course, what makes the capitalist social division of manual and intellectual labour possible in the first place. It is also the basis of mathematics

[58] The differences between state and civil society institutions cannot be developed here. They are the subject of continuing debate within historical materialism. See especially Anderson (1977), Clarke (1977), and Negri (1977).

[59] Sayer (1979) makes this important distinction. He maintains, and I agree, that Marx's method in the "Introduction" is restricted to the problem of presentation, which interests us here. However, he also attempts to treat the individual production of conception, at least for Marx's case. He fails in this task because he ignores the insertion of conception in the larger totality of practice. Sayer simply claims that Marx "posited a strict correspondence between categories and their objects" (note 10, p. 174), the Leninist idea which Korsch (1970, pp. 81–84) so ably demolished.

and logic as abstract theory. As an example of such separation, the struggles of other peoples, in other nations, even in other times, can be incorporated into the conception of what is occurring in one's own society. This point is doubly important because every period is not equally favourable for changing social reality. For example, the class struggle may momentarily be at a draw, with no class able to impose itself. Especially at such times, comparison is essential. The local situation is clarified by its contrasts and similarities with other situations which differ in space and time.

The first problem of conception to be discussed is the question of applying relationships in the construction of concepts.[60] Concepts are not produced by a process of successive abstractions whereby particularities are removed and the inner essence remains in some 'ideal type'. This procedure ignores the inseparability of phenomenal forms and their inner laws; the latter produce the former, an important point which separates us from the Kantians.[61] The more particularities are removed, the less useful is the concept: "If we group cherries and meat together under the attributes red, juicy and edible, we do not thereby attain a valid logical concept but a meaningless combination of words, quite useless for the comprehension of the particular cases." (Cassirer, 1953, p. 7). Instead, concepts are produced by defining the contradictory relationships among categories of 'things'. Thus, attention centres on these relationships, and their process of change through development of their contradictions, and not on the substantive characteristics of the members of the category. This does not mean that we ignore these substantive characteristics, but rather that they are only conceivable as oppositions or relationships and as processes.[62]

A concept consists of relationships in two senses. The concept of something defines that something by the relationships among its categories or *moments*; these only exist conceptually as relationships, and not in themselves. Secondly, in its generality, a concept also allows us to conceive how the particular cases to which it refers relate to each other. A concept is not an abstraction from what is different among various particular cases, but a means of relating these particular cases together as a whole, of passing conceptually from one to another. This is particularly important for the process of change, for particular historical cases.

Note that a concept must also be in 'external' relations to all other concepts in the totality.

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[60] Lukacs (1971, p. 154) emphasises the importance of relationships for conceiving of change: "If change is to be understood at all it is necessary to abandon the view that objects are rigidly opposed to each other, it is necessary to elevate their interrelatedness and the interaction between these 'relations' and the 'objects' to the same plane of reality." See also Ollman (1971, pp. 12–42) who, however, has an idealist Hegelian conception of totality whereby everything is in everything so that, ultimately, a person has direct access to knowledge of the world without a need to mediate it through practice (e.g. p. 269, n.8). In a book constructed around an inherent positivism based on the observer somehow outside society and ignoring any class differences in conception, Bhaskar (1979, pp. 51–52) does, however, provide a clear exposition of the use of relations in social science.

[61] See, for example, Banaji (1979).

[62] See Lukacs (1978, I, pp. 65–66, II, pp. 71–72, and III, p. 94).

An analogy between the concept and a mathematical function may be useful. The function for a straight line is $y = a + bx$. Just as a concept is defined by the relationships among moments, so is the straight line defined by the relationship among points. For given values of a and b, the relationship among all points (x, y) on the line is defined. But this function also defines the family of *all* particular straight lines, by all possible variations in a and b. In the same way, a concept defines the relationships among all particular cases to which it refers.

Consider, for example, social classes. Relationships among the moments, the social classes, are defined with respect to the relations of production of a given mode of production. A single social class is inconceivable; social classes only exist in relation to each other. The concept of social class does not deal with the substantive characteristics of members of the social class, but with relationships among the classes as categories. Hence, it does not refer to individuals, or their relationships, but to group relationships. Substantive characteristics can, then, be derived in terms of the social class relationships.

Other concepts, defined as relationships, may, with respect to the one of interest, social class, appear to be substantive characteristics. Thus, income and education, at their respective conceptual levels, are both definable in terms of relationships; if everyone had the same education, not only now but in the whole history of humanity, the concept of education would be unthinkable; it would be invisible as a problem. However, these are not social class relationships. At the level of the concept of social class, they appear, not primarily as relationships, but as substantive characteristics of the members of the social classes.

On the other hand, in the other sense, of relating together particular cases, the concept of social class for capitalist society allows us to conceive of particular social class structures in various specific capitalist societies. The concept must allow us to move from one society to another, or from one time period to another, while relating these processes of change to each other within the concept.

This distinction also applies to the difference between a general and an historically specific concept. A general concept is defined by relationships, but must also allow the possibility of relating the particular historical concepts to each other. For example, production in general is defined by relationships among human beings, including their needs, and between human beings and nature. But it also provides the means by which specific historical types of production, such as capitalist production, can be conceived.[63]

The second problem of conception concerns levels of abstraction. Because reality is a complex and contradictory totality, it is impossible to attempt to understand it at one sweep. Perceived reality must first be decomposed into its simplest elements. We must then proceed to construct a conception of reality in thought by successive steps or levels of analysis,[64] beginning with the most fundamentally

[63]This is closely related to the way in which Sayer (1979, pp. 105–141) interprets Marx's "analytic" as starting from transhistorical categories.

[64]Macpherson (1962, p. 30) states that this procedure was used by Galileo, in the natural sciences,

determinant, that which provides the most important constraints and pressures on the final totality. Each level is a contradictory totality in itself, which incorporates all previous levels, in modified forms, within it in the process of becoming more complex. The totality at each succeeding level provides a resolution of certain contradictions at previous levels, only to reveal further contradictions.[65] We start at the first level with a simple, determining totality, consisting of several moments. At the second level, this first totality becomes one or more (modified) moments of a new totality along with the other new one(s) added, as the latter act back and change the contradictions which have already been studied. For example, we shall see that, at an early level of analysis of capitalism, the production working class encompasses the conception of technical innovations, but at a later level, this very conception process acts back to divide and to dominate the working class.

Marx starts his analysis in *Capital* with simple commodity production, with its specific moments: production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. At a second level, he introduces labour power as a 'commodity', which immediately modifies the previous level to give the two fundamental moments, represented by the two basic opposing classes. Subsequently, he considers specifically the circulation of capital as a separate moment, later transformation of exchange values to prices of production, and then the division of the surplus value, now profit, among the dominant classes.

The earlier levels of an analysis are more highly abstract in the sense of abstraction from certain aspects of reality. This does not mean that the aspects retained are abstractions which relate less directly to reality. As Marx emphasised, he started from something real: commodities. However, by ignoring less pertinent facets of reality, fundamental underlying laws can be more easily studied and the processes more clearly understood without other interfering factors. At each level, all possible results are derived from the combination of moments present. However, subsequently at each succeeding level, these results will be modified as new moments react back through the whole system.

Such a dialectical analysis by means of levels is a methodological device. But because it does correspond, to the best of our knowledge, to orders of determination in reality, to the hierarchy of importance of material facts, it is not arbitrary. Although subject to revision, through the iterative passage of the moments of practice, it does have an ontological basis.[66] Although founded on observables, primary and secondary levels cannot be studied directly and empirically in the

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and then taken over by Hobbes for the study of society. Levels of analysis should *not* be confused with Althusserian structuralism using "relatively autonomous instances" which can be fitted together or taken apart for separate study. Ironically, the latter appear closely related to Hegel's interacting totalities of complexes placed in a purely logical hierarchy; see Lukacs (1978, I, pp. 67–68, 72–73).

[65] See Lukacs (1975, pp. 370, 393, 398).

[66] See Lukacs (1978, II, pp. 30–31, 36–37, 151). The realisation that levels of analysis and order of determination must correspond seems to originate in Spinoza (1910, p. 41). Many Marxists, such as Fine and Harris (1979, p. 11), do not consider hierarchies of abstraction and of determination to correspond. For them, levels of abstraction are a purely logical construct, based on the Hegelian idealism which Lukacs (1978, I, pp. 49–51 and II, pp. 18–19) has criticised.

sense that they abstract from certain aspects of reality, and hence will be modified at subsequent levels. In addition, the series of levels chosen will depend, to some extent, on the specific aspects of social reality to be studied. Variations will be even greater when different types of society are involved. However, because the series of levels depends on the order of determination, all schemas will have points of resemblance, due to the primacy of production.

2.4 The levels of analysis for social classes

As an example, I shall present here the levels of analysis which will be used for the study of social classes in capitalist society in Chapter 7. At the same time, I shall take the opportunity to introduce certain concepts which will be of more general use in subsequent chapters. Note again, however, that these particular levels of theoretical analysis are constructed for the study of capitalist societies and no claim to validity can be made for their use in societies dominated by other modes of production.

The resulting seven levels, beginning with the most abstract, are as follows:

(1) the starting point is the process of simple commodity production;
(2) capitalist production is this commodity production, but now in the context of sale of labour power, called the *capitalist mode of production*;
(3) to the previous level is added the process of circulation of the products, the necessary changes of ownership of the product;
(4) to these are added the institutionalised political-juridical and ideologico-repressive superstructure necessary to ensure reproduction of the relations of production, the totality of which I then call the *economic formation of society*;
(5) several modes of production combine under the dominance of the capitalist mode of production in a *social formation*;[67]
(6) the next level includes the nation state and international relations; and
(7) finally the concrete, historically located, conjunctural analysis of a given society involves all of the preceding theoretical concepts.[68]

[67] This term is used here with reservations, because it will certainly be confused with current empiricist use of the term to refer to an amalgamation of levels four through seven. Marx frequently uses both "economic formation of society" and "social formation", but, depending on the context, with either of the meanings I have given to them; for these varying usages, see Sereni (1971). For examples of the much wider variety of recent uses, see the other articles in the same special number 159 of *La Pensée* (1971).

[68] Marx has provided analyses primarily at four of these levels, the first three and the last, although he had a tendency to jump to one of the middle levels in his many asides. The three volumes of *Capital* provide a development of the theory of the capitalist mode of production while such political pamphlets as the *Class Struggles in France*, the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, and the *Civil War in France* provide conjunctural analyses of French society. In addition to the asides, especially in *Capital*, some of Marx's earlier works and the *Theories of Surplus Value* provide certain elements for the fourth level, the economic formation of society, especially with regard to its institutionalised forms, the state and the ideological superstructure. Of course, in that conscious practice on the social is inseparable from the mode of production, all of Marx's work is permeated with analysis of the superstructure.

Because, by definition, no fundamental change can occur in the relations of production, i.e. in the law of value, during the different periods when the capitalist mode of production is dominant,[69] this theoretical outline of the steps in capitalist class analysis should hold for all societies where this dominance occurs. Let us look quickly at what such a schema implies, before going on, in succeeding chapters, to develop it in more details.

The ultimate basis for the understanding of capitalist societies lies at the first level, the process of simple commodity production and the associated law of value. Although a specific mechanism for the allocation of social labour exists, there is no dominant class making the decisions and no extraction of surplus labour, hence no social classes at all. But the dynamic movement of the law of value at this level makes the actions of participating members contradictory in that they must simultaneously act as capitalist and as collective worker. Thus, in spite of common misconceptions, simple commodity production is not a mode of production, but a theoretical step in the analysis of capitalist society, the basis of the capitalist production process.[70] Hence, where this production appears to exist, it is only an 'undeveloped' or 'atrophied' form of capitalist production.[71]

Under the capitalist mode of production, the relations of production are defined by the class power to make decisions about the allocation of productive labour, accompanied by the extraction of surplus value, through the necessary sale of labour power paid by wages, called the valorisation process. Control of the means of production by the capitalist class is only a necessary condition for these relations of production and not a definition of them.[72] In its developed form, the production process forms the industrial system. The independent collective producer of the first level thus becomes split into the two fundamental antagonistic classes of capitalist society.

The process of circulation is also integral to the capitalist mode of production in that, for surplus value to be extracted, the value of the commodities must

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Moreover, it is clear that he did intend to deal more systematically with the intermediate levels in the originally projected form which his work was to take. All of his work shows a consciousness of the need to distinguish these levels and he implicitly applies them in his conjunctural analyses.

[69] See Chapter 5.

[70] "Production based on exchange value and the community based on the exchange of these exchange values . . . and labour as general condition of wealth, all presuppose and produce the separation of labour from its objective conditions. This exchange of equivalents proceeds; it is only the surface layer of a production which rests on the appropriation of alien labour *without exchange*, but with the *semblance of exchange*. This system of exchange rests on *capital* as its foundation, and, when it is regarded in isolation from capital, as it appears on the surface, as an *independent* system, then it is a mere *illusion*, but a *necessary illusion*." (Marx, 1973a, p. 509).

[71] See, for example, Friedmann (1978) for the contrast between capitalist and petty commodity wheat farming and Chevalier (1982) for the ways in which simple commodity production integrates within the capitalist mode of production.

[72] "The use of 'relation-to-the-means-of-production' as the sole determinant of class is a classic (if not widely appreciated) example of what Marx called the 'fetishism of commodities': the social character of people's relationships with each other is disguised as an objective relationship between them and things." (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1979, p. 325).

be realised by sale, by a change of ownership. This is a part of the economic process, although not of production, but is also closely connected to the juridical superstructure. To overcome these contradictions in the realisation of value, at this third level, a further social class, the circulation working class, appears, a class central to any society dominated by the capitalist mode of production.

In the dynamics of capitalist society, the only constant is the form of the relations of production: decisions about labour allocation made through the sale of labour power and the production of commodities. On the other hand, the production process has developed from simple manufacturing to major industry, Taylorism and automation. The process of circulation has changed with the development of publicity and of major commercial and financial spheres separated from the production process.

These first three levels provide the theory of the economic base with the relations of production as the central concept. No society can exist without some such base. However, because, as we have seen, the relations of production are antagonistic relationships by which decisions about the allocation of productive labour are made, they cannot be maintained solely by mechanisms integrated within the economic process. Class antagonisms generated within them tend to manifest themselves as conscious ideological or political struggle. The relations, then, cannot be reproduced without a specific institutionalised ideological, political, and repressive superstructure which both corresponds to and reacts upon the economic base. The key, although by no means the unique, element at this level is the state. Mediating between the state and the economic base is civil society. Connected with all three is a further social class fundamental to capitalist society, namely the ideological class.

Certain elements of the institutionalised state superstructure are essential to the capitalist mode of production, wherever it is dominant in a social formation. Thus, an elaborated juridical system and compulsory education for children are necessary elements of this fully-developed capitalist ideological superstructure, while a police force and standing army belong to the repressive side. This is not to say that, until these all exist, we do not have domination of the capitalist mode of production. The historical process by which a mode of production becomes dominant does not instantaneously put an appropriate institutionalised superstructure into place. For example, in the case of Britain, the successive historical stages of development of the state superstructure seem to have involved religion (Protestantism), justice,[73] and finally education, as the most important institution of ideological integration.

On the other hand, much more variability is possible in this institutionalised superstructure than in the base of an economic formation of society. These variations will depend to a significant extent on the specific combination of modes of production in a given social formation. However, because this superstructure is

[73] See Thompson (1975). The aspects of justice deriving from Roman law provide a case of superstructural elements preceding capitalist dominance; see Cohen (1978, pp. 245–248).

most essential in acting, more or less successfully, to overcome the contradictions inherent in the relations of production of the dominant mode, this level must be dealt with before introducing other modes of production.

A social formation consists of the combination of a number of modes of production, one of which is dominant;[74] if none is dominant, a transitional social formation exists. Then, contradictions within a dominant mode of production, leading to its dissolution, form the necessary conditions for the loss of dominance of that mode of production within a social formation. When one mode of production is dominant, the social formation may consist of two or more different production processes with their corresponding relations of production, but the institutionalised superstructure is specified by the elements necessary to the dominant mode of production. This superstructure more generally will, however, take on distinctly different forms in given societies, depending both on what modes of production are present and on the particular history of class struggle in the society. Certain elements of a previous superstructure, e.g. 'feudal', may be adapted to the capitalist form. Thus, we have a combination of modes of production and not of economic formations of society in a social formation. All of the subordinate modes of production will be distorted to an important extent by their integration with the dominant one. Conversely, the institutionalised superstructure will vary, within the necessary constraints of the dominant mode of production, depending on which other modes of production must be integrated in, and on their relative importance. For example, the institutionalised superstructure of a capitalist social formation will be considerably different if the wage labour force must be produced from migrant labourers coming from a subordinate mode of production than if it need only be reproduced in an advanced capitalist social formation.

Thus, given the contradictory historical development of any mode of production, it must originally appear in the presence of other modes, while the working out of its specific contradictions generates the possibility of new modes. Theoretical analysis reveals three principal capitalist social formations.

(1) In the early stages of development of any capitalist society, the transition, at least two modes of production, each with its specific social classes, will coexist, the capitalist mode, including its simpler form as petty commodity production, plus that mode which was previously dominant. Two subcases of this may be distinguished, depending on effects acting back from the sixth level, i.e. on whether the society is one of the first to pass to dominance of the capitalist mode of production or has it imposed through imperialism.
(2) In an advanced capitalist society, only capitalist and petty commodity production may be present, if other modes have been eliminated.
(3) A third, more theoretical, type of social formation could occur with the start of the development of some new mode of production, say communism (if barbary can be avoided!).

[74] Balibar (1968, pp. 87–88, n.1, p. 225) reintroduced this formulation, which had been virtually lost to orthodox Marxism.

International relations, and specifically imperialism, will have additional effects on social class. The most important may be the appearance of further fractions of the capitalist class and the introduction of migrant workers, as well as ideologies based on racism, nationalism, and ethnicity.

The seventh and final level of analysis, the most important, is concerned with the most direct appropriation of the real in thought. It is here that conscious practice on the social, the questions of strategies and tactics in the class struggle, is addressed within a concrete society. This is the ultimate objective of all of the preceding analyses. Only with the development of the concepts of an appropriate social formation can the empirical analyses of the conjuncture in a given society be performed. The actual process of the class struggle, determined by the concrete mechanisms theoretically described by the previous levels, can only be understood at this level. The course of this struggle among the different classes, determined by the inner laws analysed at all six previous levels, will depend not only on the structural constraints and possibilities of these levels but also on the tactics and strategies adopted by the different social classes, which in turn depend on the validity of their theoretical analyses.

Part II

Pre-capitalist societies

3
The corvée-tributary mode of production

3.1 'Pre-capitalist' modes of production

Marx dedicated his time to the study of the capitalist mode of production. When he considered pre-capitalist forms, he always did so for the light which they could throw on what interested him most. In capitalist society, control of the means of production, real property relations, is an essential historical condition. When Marx looked at pre-capitalist societies, he was most concerned with the development of this condition.[1] Thus, his well-known comments on "pre-capitalist economic forms" in the *Grundrisse* are not about different pre-capitalist modes of production,[2] but about the development of property relationships. In spite of the brilliance of the discussion there, and elsewhere, for example the chapters on the historical development of commercial capital, interest, and rent in *Capital*, Volume III, Marx's work on pre-capitalist societies is of limited direct relevance to the construction of an historical materialist theory of these societies. Here, the methodology of social practice outlined in the first two chapters can play a crucial role.

Marx's concern with the control of the means of production is reflected in the definitions of relations of production discussed in the first chapter. In order to study non-capitalist types of societies, we must escape from the idea that everything turns around this control.[3] Instead, this study must begin by an examination of the specific ways in which social labour is produced, allocated, controlled, and

[1] See, for example, Hobsbawm (1965) and Meillassoux (1972).

[2] He rarely uses the term there. In Marx (1973a), this text extends from pp. 471 to 514. The first time that "mode of production" is used is on p. 494. In the entire text, he uses the term eight times in all. Three of these (pp. 506, 510, 512) refer to a plurality of modes existing together. Only once does he refer specifically to one of the commonly accepted modes of production, the capitalist one (p. 512). Otherwise, he always refers, not to modes of production, but to "Asiatic land forms", "forms of property", "the Asiatic form", "the Germanic form", etc. In a similar way to that outlined in Chapter 5, these refer to higher levels of analysis than that of mode of production, and most often assume a combination of modes of production.

[3] "In a non-capitalist mode of production, there is no a priori reason to look for the determining relation of production in the direction of property relations." (Rey, 1973, p. 100, my translation); see also Clarke (1980). Tokei (1977 and 1979) provides a recent sophisticated theorisation of pre-capitalist societies in terms of control of property, centring the mode of production on the relationships among the individual, the community, and the means of production.

extracted. The thesis of this and the next chapter is that the 'feudal' and 'Asiatic' modes of production are simply based on distinct historical forms of the same mode of production,[4] which I call the corvée-tributary mode. The term feudal, for example, refers to a social formation, not to a mode of production. Further, in many ways, as we shall see in the next chapter, the 'Asiatic' form is purer in the sense that the 'feudal' form is a more balanced combination of several modes of production.[5]

The notion of 'Asiatic mode of production' is perhaps the more ambiguous in Marxist work. Everyone seems to have their own definition.[6] More agreement appears to exist over what is meant by the 'feudal mode of production',[7] but this is rejected by virtually all serious non-Marxist students of the European Middle Ages.[8] The basic problem centres around attempting to distinguish between the two 'modes of production' by essentially political-juridical relationships, the differences between a despotic 'state' and feudal relationships, whereas, when considered separately, they are seen to be based on something else: the village community and the seigneury. The difficulty is compounded in the European case by the lack of distinction among modes of production existing in the society: city artisanal and merchant relationships are seen as essential parts of the dominant mode of production based in agriculture. A step by step comparison of the two 'modes of production' is given in an Appendix.

In the necessarily very circumscribed discussion of the corvée-tributary mode of production given here, three levels of analysis will be used to present the essential concepts. At a first level, social labour is allocated within a village com-

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[4]Only rarely does Marx talk of similarities, as for example: "Peasant agriculture on a small scale, and the carrying on of independent handicrafts, which together form the basis of the feudal mode of production, and after the dissolution of the system, continue side by side with the capitalist mode, also form the economic foundation of the classical communities at their best, after the primitive form of ownership of land in common had disappeared, and before slavery had seized on production in earnest." (1967, I, p. 334, n.3) "The original unity between the worker and the conditions of production abstracting from slavery, where the labourer himself belongs to the objective conditions of production has two main forms: the Asiatic communal system (primitive communism) and small-scale agriculture based on the family (and linked with domestic industry) in one form or another." (Marx, 1971, pp. 422–423). See also Marx (1967, III, pp. 790–791).

[5]What is provided in these two chapters can be no more than the barest skeleton of an approach to this mode of production. By comparison, consider the length of Marx's study of the capitalist mode of production in the three volumes of *Capital*.

[6]See, especially, CERM (1974a), the special number (**57/58**) of *Recherches internationales à la Lumière du Marxisme* in 1967 on the first class societies, Krader (1975), and Wittfogel (1957), but also Bailey and Llobera (1979), Chesneaux (1964, 1965–68), Dhoquois (1966, 1969, 1970), Godelier (1964, 1965), Keyder (1976), Leach (1959), Lichtheim (1963), Pecirka (1964, 1967), Saad (1976), Sertel (1976), Shiozawa (1965), Skalnik and Pokora (1966), Taylor (1979, pp. 172–186), Thorner (1966), Tokei (1964, 1977, I, II, 1979), Tran (1974), and Vidal-Naquet (1964). Anderson (1974b, pp. 462–549) and Hindess and Hirst (1975) have attempted to show that an Asiatic mode of production is not possible.

[7]See, for example, CERM (1974b), but also Anderson (1974a) and Tokei (1977, I, II). For a distinct approach, in terms of technical (transportation) and military factors, see Lattimore (1957).

[8]For example Boutruche (1968, pp. 18–20), Duby (1978, passim, but especially p. 189), Ganshof (1968, p. 11), and Le Goff (1964, pp. 593–594, 616).

munity. At the second level, the specific means of making decisions about this allocation are introduced, splitting social labour into two distinct parts, necessary and surplus labour, controlled by the two fundamental social classes. At the final level, the necessary superstructural elements are added.

The corvée-tributary mode of production is then compared, in its essential outlines, with the two other class-based modes, slavery and capitalism. In a final section, I discuss certain ways in which a subordinate capitalist mode of production can be articulated with a dominant corvée-tributary mode.

3.2 The village community

It is perhaps useful to recall that I define the relations of production as a specific social mechanism of production, allocation and control of productive labour whereby surplus labour is extracted. I must now attempt to elaborate on what are these relations of production, and the corresponding production process, for this mode of production. At this first level, I concentrate on the allocation of social labour and not on class differences in what decisions are made.

The basic characteristic of non-capitalist modes of production is the direct production of use values. The goal of production is not to produce something, anything, which can be exchanged on the market. It is to produce things for specific known consumption needs. Given the lower development of the forces of production, of technology, etc., and the dependence on the vagaries of nature, this production must also always aim to be sufficient to meet periodic variations, the times of crop failure and famine.

If the commodity is the basic economic unit and the point of departure for the study of the capitalist mode of production, then the autarkical village community is the corresponding unit for the corvée-tributary mode. The community produces the use values which it requires for consumption. Of the use values produced, a large proportion must be consumed by the individuals, as food, clothing, and perhaps shelter. This does not mean that they are not consumed in common. On the other hand, certain use values must eventually come to belong to the community as a whole. These might include shelter, but also certain 'cultural' or 'superstructural' elements, such as symbolic riches, consumed, for example, to maintain village unity.

An analogous individual/communal division results for the means of production. Those operated on a more or less individual basis may also be individually possessed and controlled. Other, major means of production, of which few units exist in the community, and most often the land, are possessed and controlled by the community. But, even when individual means of production are being used, labour is carried out communally. However, the division here is not in one-to-one correspondence with that between the two types of consumption.

At this low level of development of the productive forces, which, remember, include skills, capabilities, and labour organisation, social labour cannot be allocated according to an extensive plan. The only way of ensuring that both in-

dividual and community use values are produced in the necessary proportions is to divide all social labour into two corresponding parts. Although both parts are performed communally, they will be separated in time and in space. The product of one part of social labour goes directly to the individual consumption; the other part is dedicated to the community, which, in turn, tends to be incarnated as a 'higher being'. However, because all labour is communal, there is also constant pressure for this distinction to dissolve, with the resulting problems of labour allocation for the community. Thus, for example, communal control of access to certain means of production may aid in maintaining participation in this division.

With such a division, the individual as consumer, and hence, the individual as producer, come into conflict with the community as consumer, and hence the community member as producer. These conflicts are the forms taken by the *fundamental contradiction* of the corvée-tributary mode of production: that *between collectivisation and individualisation* of the production process. It is this contradiction which places opposing pressures on the distinction between social labour for the community and for the individual.

Just as we shall see in Chapter 5 that petty commodity production is only a theoretical step in the study of capitalist society, so the village community I have just described is hypothetical. Its internal contradictions would not permit it to exist.

3.3 Corvée-tributary control of labour allocation

At the second level of analysis, class control of decisions about labour allocation is introduced. The specific social mechanism of allocation of social labour in this mode of production is unique in that it consists of two *distinct* parts, controlled by opposing social classes. The decisions about the allocation of the social labour necessary for production of the needs of the direct producers are made by these producers themselves[9] outside the relations of production. Hence, this labour might also be called domestic labour. The producers possess their means of production, except perhaps for certain major ones, such as irrigation dams and mills, and possibly absolute control of their land. Only the decisions about allocation of surplus labour, which, from the dominant class perspective, is the only productive labour, are directly made by this dominant class, representing the 'higher community'.[10] These are the relations of production. Then, the division of time between these two areas of production is decided by class struggle, but can become institutionalised, to a certain extent, by tradition and custom.

The direct producers are responsible to provide for their own needs in the time which they have available. At least some of the decisions about specific allocation of the time are taken in common. Such cooperation will be analysed in more detail below when the production process is discussed. Most of the time is occupied by

[9] See, for example, Marx (1967, III, p. 794).

[10] On the problems of empirically measuring the relation between these two parts of productive labour, see Rosdolsky (1951).

direct agricultural production, but also by production of means of production and other artisanal labour. This may or may not involve a division of labour. The surplus for bad years may be looked after by the community or control may be lost to the dominant class. In every case, specific types of concrete labour are directly allocated to their tasks in prevision for specific needs.

The surplus labour is also allocated in the same direct way, but the decisions are made by the dominant class. The product is used for ostentatious display to demonstrate the superiority of the dominant class as the embodiment of the 'higher community'.

Extraction of surplus labour can take two fundamental forms, both of which allow direct allocation of concrete labour to specific tasks by the dominant class without impingement on allocation of the necessary labour. It may directly involve labour itself, in the form of corvée, which the dominant class then puts to work. This corresponds to the trend to distinguish between production of use values for the individuals and for the community at the first level. Or it may involve tribute,[11] i.e. the requirement of specific use values, the congealed form of specific concrete labour. This corresponds to the dissolution of all distinctions into community labour at the first level.

Then, the main aspect of the fundamental contradiction is that between the communal production process of necessary labour and dominant class control of decisions about allocation of the remaining social labour. Collectivism facilitates the latter while individualisation reduces the dangers of the former. However, the dominant class has no power to make decisions about allocation of necessary labour and, thus, must attempt to introduce individualisation by indirect and roundabout means. Hence, development of the contradiction involves a complex interaction among corvée and tribute, individualism and collectivism.

The ideal for the dominant class would be an individualised necessary labour process to reduce the power in unity of the subordinate class, with a communal surplus labour process providing tribute to ease the problem of obtaining the desired use values. Decisions about allocation of this surplus labour can more easily be made if the production process is communal; a separate decision and a separate command are not required for each individual. But the dominant class cannot act directly on the necessary labour process. Politico-juridical and ideological conflict can impose a certain individualisation of the subordinate class community. And yet individualisation of the communal surplus labour process is one of the most effective ways of introducing individualisation directly into the necessary labour process. Not only are communal labour traditions undermined, but the contrast between the two becomes too great.

At a certain stage of individualisation within the subordinate class, a new means of control becomes available to the dominant class. Part of the subordinate

[11] Hence the name given to the mode of production. Hayakawa (see Shiozawa, 1965) conceived the Asiatic mode of production as being a state based on tribute. Following him, Banu (1967a, b) has given Asiatic society the name "tributary social formation".

class's power resides in its control of the means of production; the community looks to their repartition. With the breakup of some of the communal ties, this control also becomes more individualised, moving towards coordination. The dominant class can then intervene to supervise the way the means of production are passed on from generation to generation, to ensure that the inheritors will supply the required surplus labour. It can also use control of access to certain major means of production to extract a tribute which may not even be related to what is produced with those means of production.

The development of the fundamental contradiction towards individualisation of surplus labour leads to a *tendential law to direct management* limiting the actions of the dominant class.[12] This class is forced to spend more time directly involved in production decisions, even if only about surplus labour. The dominant class continually divides itself between ostentatious and administrative practices. This may even involve distinct individuals for the two types of practice, but a passage of these individuals from the administrative to the ostentatious is an ongoing process. This law increasingly limits the ways in which the dominant class can use the surplus extracted. Its lofty position embodying the 'higher community' is threatened by more direct involvement in the mundane affairs of production. To compound the difficulty, these limits are felt most directly, and both the contradiction and the tendential law can develop most completely, under the corvée form where direct management must involve supervision of the actual surplus labour activities. Under the tribute form, there are less changes with individualisation, because the products must still simply be specified, but now for each producer. However, this also has less impact on community power. In so far as the process of individualisation does not come to fruition, and especially if surplus extraction takes primarily the tribute form, a class structure may appear within the community, so that a local dominant class ensures the transfer of surplus.

In the case of corvée, the length of time is controlled, but the surplus labour actually performed can only be supervised with difficulty. In contrast, for tribute, the surplus labour accomplished is directly controlled through the product, although the time is not. A subsidiary possibility is for the dominant class to expropriate a definite proportion of the product, as in share-cropping. This is usually only possible, however, for production activities which would, in any case, be included under necessary labour. If a complex division of labour exists, artisanal workers may be given money in exchange for the product, but this amount is determined as the direct intermediary, actually measured in subsistence goods, given for the fixed proportion of product belonging to the worker and not as a wage for the value of labour power.[13] Although the individual worker has lost

[12] The most well-known tendential law concerns the falling rate of profit under capitalism; see my discussion in Chapter 9 below, but also that of the tendency to state capitalism in Chapter 5.

[13] "In Asiatic societies, where the monarch appears as the exclusive proprietor of the agricultural surplus product, whole cities arise ... from the exchange of his revenue with the 'free hands' ... There is nothing of wage labour in this relation ... the determination of prices remains a merely formal moment for the exchange of mere use values, as before. This determination itself, however, is created

control of necessary labour allocation, the subordinate class as a whole has not. The money simply allows a redistribution of the products of necessary labour within the class. For example, producers of the subsistence goods owe a tribute to the dominant class; they exchange part of these goods with the artisans for money to pay the tribute. But in all cases, the dominant class makes decisions about the way in which surplus labour time is allocated to the different types of concrete labour. Most often, continual variations through time occur between the amounts of corvée and of tribute, depending on the development of the fundamental contradiction and the strength of the opposing class forces. Two distinct phenomenal forms, tribute and corvée, which are most often associated in reality, hide one inner law of labour allocation.

We should note in passing that, in this sense, both labour rent and rent in kind contrast directly with money rent. In the latter, the receiver of the rent has lost all power to make decisions about concrete labour allocation. The producer may obtain the required money in any way possible. Thus, Marx's (1967, III, pp. 790–802) progression from labour rent, through rent in kind, to money rent only makes sense in reference to the capitalist mode of production and even then, only to the capitalist landlord.[14]

A second important difference between tribute and corvée is that, in the case of the former, necessary and surplus labour activities are spacially and temporally united in the community, while corvée labour involves a necessary separation. Thus, the latter allows the potentiality for a sexual division of labour, whereby the women are restricted to necessary labour, and only the men provide the surplus, the corvée.

As in any mode of production, the production process develops and changes under the impulsion of the relations of production. The fundamental basis is communal work controlled by the totality of direct producers, for the necessary labour, and by the dominant class, for the surplus labour. However, decisions about allocation of necessary labour escape completely from the control of the dominant class. And the subordinate class is in the especially powerful position of being communally united in fulfilling its own needs. Hence, the fundamental contradiction between individualisation and collectivisation plays its most important role here. At least from the outside, this mode of production is obviously exploitative: the extraction of surplus is a phenomenal form visible to all. As I have already hinted and shall develop more fully in the next section, maintenance of these relationships must necessarily involve elements of force and ideology, acting to attenuate the power of the united subordinate class. As the contradiction

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by other relations, by the general laws and the self-determination of the ruling mode of production ..." (Marx, 1973a, pp. 467–468).

[14] See however Marx (1967, III, pp. 637–638): "Rent can develop as money-rent only on the basis of commodity-production, in particular capitalist production, and it develops to the same extent that agricultural production becomes commodity-production, that is, to the same extent that non-agricultural production develops independently of agricultural production, for to that degree the agricultural product becomes commodity, exchange-value, and value."

develops, not only does corvée usually come to predominate over tribute, but the bonds of the community progressively become broken, separating it into individual producers,[15] each more directly dependent on the dominant class, in as much as that is possible within the constraints of the relations of production.

Three distinct phases of development of the contradiction, as it influences the necessary labour process, may be distinguished. The most 'primitive', because closest to the non-class primitive communal mode of production, is completely communal labour. Production is directly carried out by cooperation among the workers, although not necessarily all of them for any given task. In other words, a division of labour may be involved, for example by sex, age, or other criteria. The entire community is responsible for the welfare of all its members. Tribute is usually more important than corvée; the latter, moreover, is supplied communally.

At a second stage, the work is not carried out in common, but only in cooperation or coordination. However, decisions about the distribution of the means of production, and specifically of the land, are taken in common, as are decisions about the temporal organisation of labour. General welfare of the individual members may or may not be the concern of the community.

In the final stage, independent producers will still work in coordination. The different tasks, especially the agricultural ones, will be organised together, for example crop rotation, although they will be carried out more or less individually. The division of labour will be more developed, and will involve exchange, although not commodity exchange, of products within the community, for example grain for tools. Corvée, rather than tribute, usually comes to be the main element of surplus labour. Responsibility for welfare in bad years will often fall into the hands of the dominant class at some point in this process of change.

The big advantage of corvée-tributary exploitation to a dominant class, as compared, for example, to slavery, is that the direct producers are responsible for their daily subsistence. They are forced to work by a 'natural' compulsion, at least for their necessary social labour.[16] However, to this advantage corresponds the disadvantage that the dominant class does not make the decisions about the allocation of an important part of the total social labour. If the surplus is supplied directly as labour, the subordinate class can save its energy for its necessary labour by delivering as little actual work as possible in the corvée time. The corvée is, thus, in this sense, a more 'inefficient' form than tribute, because the latter guarantees the dominant class a certain amount of actual work accomplished. Even the corvée for agricultural work takes a tribute form when it is specified, not in days due, but in area of fields to be cultivated. On the other hand, tribute

[15] Note that Marx (1973a), in the "Pre-capitalist economic formations", emphasises differences in development of individual and communal property among his oriental, Germanic, Slavic, and feudal forms. The relation between community and "seriality" plays an important role in the theory of the transition between the slave and 'feudal' modes of production, and the subsequent development of the latter, in Europe, developed by Dockès (1979, *passim*, esp. pp. 44–45).

[16] See Marx (1967, III, pp. 790–791).

collection more easily leads to stagnation,[17] because less pressure is exerted to force the fundamental contradiction and the tendency of the mode of production to develop, with the accompanying individualisation of the production process, and direct involvement of the dominant class in production.

The slave mode of production is the mirror image of these two characteristics of the corvée-tributary mode in that the dominant class makes decisions about the allocation of all social labour, but is also responsible for the slaves' subsistence, thus not having the 'natural' leverage which automatically forces the direct producers to work, at least part of the time. This opposition between these modes of production is only resolved by the advent of the capitalist mode of production.

3.4 Reproduction of production relations

The social class structure of the corvée-tributary mode of production is simpler than that for the capitalist mode to be developed in Chapter 7. It consists of two fundamental social classes: the lords, the priests, the King, the Emperor, the despot, and the corvée- and tribute-yielding peasants and artisans. In a case where corvée were the only form of surplus extraction and were only provided, for example, by the men, those not subject to corvée, say the women, would not perform labour forming part of a social class. The often complex social class structure in societies dominated by this mode of production, thus, must arise from the combination of modes of production.[18]

The subordinate class of direct producers has no obvious reason inherent in the relations of production to supply a surplus to the dominant class. It must do so, at least initially, through fear, although this may eventually turn into tradition and custom.[19] The instillation of this fear takes two forms: repressive force and ideology, what are most often considered to be functions of the state.

The orthodox Marxist conception of the state,[20] as a relatively autonomous

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[17] "In Asia, on the other hand, the fact that state taxes are chiefly composed of rents payable in kind, depends on conditions of production that are reproduced with the regularity of natural phenomena. And this mode of payment tends in its turn to maintain the ancient form of production." (Marx, 1967, I, pp. 140–141).

[18] This in no way contradicts the statement in the *Communist Manifesto* (Marx, 1973b, p. 68): "In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. ... Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat." The capitalist mode of production tends to eliminate other modes, in this way simplifying the conflict.

[19] See Marx (1967, III, p. 793).

[20] Bernardo (1977, esp. II, pp. 65–67) and Lipietz (1979a, pp. 104–105) suggest an interesting modification of this: a state appears when the social division of labour becomes such as to make it necessary to regulate the relations among those subdivisions of production. However, this is still a capitalist definition (Bernardo claims no more than that it applies to capitalism), which does not take directly into account the class antagonisms and class consciousness. We shall see in Chapter 5 that it does not reach to the fundamental basis even of the capitalist state.

institution, is a bourgeois idea, in that it renders the capitalist state eternal and universal. This concept can only apply to the capitalist mode of production,[21] for various reasons studied in Chapters 5, 7, and 8. No such reason appears in the corvée-tributary mode of production. One might even ask if the concept of a state is at all applicable. In any case, any general concept of 'state' must be particularised for this specific mode of production.[22] As a first approximation, the general concept must involve the institutionalised mediation of antagonistic relationships between dominant and subordinate classes, which acts to reproduce the relations of production. Here, in this mode of production, if the 'state' is to be considered to exist, it must be seen as an instrument used directly by the dominant class to enforce the relations of production. No separation exists between dominant class and 'state';[23] the two concepts coincide, hence a certain redundancy. The ideological and repressive functions of the 'state' are directly used for the control and extraction of surplus labour because of the lack of control of necessary labour by the dominant class and the consequent cohesion of the subordinate class discussed in the previous section. Most important, the dominant class must use its 'state' powers to attempt to introduce individualisation into the subordinate class community.

If the 'state' is identified with the dominant class, this does not imply that it must exist as an isolable body, although it may. The 'state', and the dominant class, may be centralised in what appears to be the form of a classical (capitalist) 'state', as in Asian society. But, it may just as well be dispersed throughout an area, wherever members of the dominant class are found, as in Medieval Europe, but also in the village caste structure of India.[24] This will depend on three main

[21] This reliance on an autonomous state is the major weakness of the interesting book by Dockès (1979).

[22] See Miaille (1978, pp. 32–67). In the same way, Marx (1967, I, pp. 508–509) talks of production in general and then specifies it for the capitalist mode of production. See Chapter 5 above. For the historical origins of the idea of nation state in France, see Guènée (1967).

[23] Dhoquois (1970) is one of the few Marxists to suggest this possibility for the 'Asiatic' mode of production, but considers the 'feudal' mode not to have a state at least at the beginning, instead of seeing it as dispersed.

[24] "... in all forms in which the direct producer remains the 'possessor' of the means of production and labour conditions necessary for the production of his own means of subsistence, the property relationship must simultaneously appear as a direct relation of lordship and servitude, so that the direct producer is not free ... He conducts his agricultural activity and the rural home industries connected with it independently. This independence is not undermined by the circumstance that the small peasants may form among themselves a more or less natural production community, as they do in India ... Should the direct producers not be confronted by a private landowner, but rather, as in Asia, under direct subordination to a state ... then rent and taxes coincide ... The state is then the supreme lord. Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale. But, on the other hand, no private ownership of land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land. (Marx, 1967, III, pp. 790–791)."

Tokei (1979, pp. 18–19), contrary to my position, interprets this passage as indicating a fundamental difference between the feudal and Asiatic modes of production. For him, the difference lies in the existence or not of *private* ownership. But if all ownership is concentrated in a single centralised state, then, by definition, it cannot be private, because there exists no one to whom it can be alienated. Where the dominant class, and the 'state', are dispersed, property can be alienated, but the usefulness

factors: the phase of development of the contradictions of the mode of production, the specific combination of modes of production in the society, and other particular historical and geographical factors, for example, external threat of invasion or need for large scale projects, such as land-clearing or irrigation.

If reproduction of the relations of production operates primarily through two factors, repressive force and ideology, these normally will work together and complement each other, as in the despotic 'state' which is the embodiment of the 'larger community'. However, especially when the 'state' is scattered geographically, the two functions may become separated so that two distinct, but complementary, fractions of the dominant class appear.[25] One relies primarily, although not, of course, exclusively, on force, and the other on ideology for extraction of surplus labour. This was the case during certain periods in Medieval Europe.[26]

The King, of a small region or of a vaste empire, is the embodiment of the local communities. All other members of the dominant class receive their legitimation from the Royalty, whether this class, and the 'state', be unified or dispersed. This is well-known for Asiatic society, but perhaps not for feudal. Here we have lords of the king, not a king of the lords. At least mythically or ritually, the king cedes land to the lords, in that way creating them.

Under the capitalist mode of production, the exploitative relations are not visible at the phenomenal level, and ideological struggle can play on this fact. Such is not the case under the corvée-tributary mode. Ideology must take primarily the other form outlined in the previous chapter: explanations of the functioning of society revolve around factors which cannot be modified by human intervention, and specifically religious ones. These permeate all perception of society. For example, when religion involves a single god, the lord, as in Christianity, this also appears in patriarchal relationships, master-servant relationships, etc.[27]

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of calling it private is another matter. Tokei (1979, pp. 72–76) also provides strong evidence of a tension towards alternation between 'feudal' and 'Asiatic' modes in ancient China, which appears to contradict his affirmation that they are distinct. Anderson (1974a, p. 148) remarks on the vertical allocation of state functions under feudalism. Wood (1981) provides a similar interpretation to mine of the fragmentation of feudal 'state' power.

[25] Resnick and Wolff (1979) see secular and church lords as two distinct classes, and, more generally, make the dynamic of all societies turn primarily around conflicts among dominant classes, whether 'fundamental' or 'subsumed'.

[26] Gramsci (1971, p. 7) is wrong in applying the concept of organic intellectual to the medieval Church. The lords of the Church were part of the dominant, exploiting class, with their own demesnes, and not auxiliary to it as is the ideological class in capitalist society. The appearance of specifically intellectual groups, such as the *noblesse de robe* in France, corresponds to the development of an articulated capitalist mode of production; see especially Goldmann (1959). Thus, Gramsci's distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals appears only to be applicable to capitalism.

[27] The most important works on ideology in this mode of production include Banu (1967b), Duby (1976, 1978), Gurevich (1977), and Le Goff (1964, 1977).

3.5 Comparison of class-based modes of production

Although the theory of the slave mode of production (SMP) is not developed here,[28] it is possible, and useful, to compare it and the other two class-based modes of production, the corvée-tributary (CTMP) and capitalist (CMP). The relationships among them are complex, and, in no way, form a linear or logical sequence. In some aspects, one mode appears more 'developed' and, in other aspects, less so. The comparisons provided here involve *pure* modes of production, theoretical cases at a high level of abstraction, which are necessarily modified when articulated in a specific social formation.

The CTMP is distinguished from both of the other modes of production by the unique way in which decisions about the allocation of social labour, and more indirectly, about the production process, are made. For this first mode, the subordinate class has an important part in the decisions, because it controls all of its necessary labour. This is not the case for the other two modes, where the dominant class even makes decisions about much or all of necessary labour.[29]

In the SMP, labour power, the slaves, appears as a 'means of production', while in the CMP, it appears as a 'product' or 'commodity'. In the CTMP, the capacity to labour is not reified.

In the SMP, the dominant class appears to appropriate all of the social labour. A certain amount of the product must, of course, be given back as means of subsistence, and it is the corresponding necessary labour which is fixed. Any additional labour performed goes to surplus. In the CTMP, the dominant class appropriates a part of the social labour, and that part, the surplus labour, is fixed. If the subordinate class increases its labour time or its productivity for the other part, it can retain the supplement. An associated form occurs when the ratio of necessary to surplus labour is fixed, as in share-cropping or in the 'salaries' in Mauryan India discussed in the next chapter. In the CMP, the dominant class does not appear to appropriate any social labour. Neither the necessary nor the surplus labour is fixed.

The dependence and responsibility of the subordinate class vary inversely. In the SMP, this class depends completely on the dominant class for its subsistence; this clearly distinguishes it from the 'wage slave'.[30] In the CTMP, the subordinate class is responsible to produce its own means of subsistence, but may depend on the dominant class in times of need. The extent of this dependence varies with

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[28] See, especially, Dockès (1979) for the beginning of an elaboration of such a mode of production. Padgug's (1976) three major types of slave systems correspond to slavery dominated by the corvée-tributary and capitalist modes, and to a dominant slave mode of production. Although Marx often compares slavery and capitalism, his most incisive remarks are found in (1976, pp. 1031–1033).

[29] However, as we shall see in Chapter 7, under the CMP, certain types of concrete labour within the technical division of labour are allocated by the coordination and unity of the subordinate class.

[30] "... the slave works only under the spur of external fear but not for *his existence* which is *guaranteed* even though it does not belong to him. The free worker, however, is compelled by his wants. The consciousness (or better: the *idea*) of free self-determination, of liberty, makes a much better worker of the one than of the other, as does the related feeling (sense) of *responsibility*..." (Marx, 1976, p. 1031).

the strength and unity of the community. In the CMP, this responsibility becomes complete and individualised.

From a dominant class point of view, only surplus labour is productive in the CTMP, because that is the only part about which it makes allocation decisions. In the CMP, only commodity producing (value producing) labour is productive. Domestic labour is excluded. Only under the SMP is all labour yielding use values productive, because all decisions about its allocation are made by the dominant class.

In both pre-capitalist modes, the goal of production is consumption, whereas, in the CMP, it is exchange on the market. Only in the latter does productive accumulation occupy an essential place in the dynamic. In the other two modes, the dominant class usually consumes the surplus unproductively.

The products of the CTMP can circulate by barter, tribute, and gifts, as they can in the SMP, but in the latter, some products, especially slaves, may appear on a 'market', although not a market based on the law of value. Only in the CMP do all products containing surplus labour exchange on a market.

In the CTMP, the means of production normally cannot be alienated, except through gifts, conquest, and booty, whereas they can in the CMP. The SMP is intermediate in that slaves can be alienated.

In the SMP, the dominant class is responsible for the reproduction of the labour force. This may be accomplished in various ways, from war booty to slave farms, but does not depend on the individual couple. In the CTMP, the labour force is reproduced within the community as a whole, which is responsible for raising and educating the children. The individual couple plays only a minor role. In the CMP, the individual must be 'free' to sell his/her labour power. There are no direct ties of dependence, because the work contract must continually be renewed. Reproduction concentrates on the individual couple and the nuclear family.

In all modes of production, the production process develops under the pressure of the relations of production, i.e. the class struggle, but is, in turn, constrained by the very level of this development. In the SMP, the slave is not responsible for any of the labour done, and hence does not take care of means of production and has to be driven, by brute force, to work. The production process develops towards more responsibility of the slave and may eventually lead to serfdom. In the CTMP, the dominant class tends to push the communal production process towards more individual production units, whereas in the CMP, the development is the reverse, from independent producers (the putting out system) through manufacture to the socialised cooperation of large-scale industry.

An important contradiction in the SMP evolves around the lack of responsibility of the slave. Not only are there problems in forcing the social labour to be done, but reproduction of labour power is only accomplished with difficulty. Expansion and war reach physical limits and breeding is difficult. An essential contradiction of the CTMP is that a specific portion of surplus labour must be appropriated from a communal production process with a united subordinate

class.[31] The dynamic of the CMP leads to a contradiction between the increasingly concentrated private decisions about the allocation of productive labour and the centralisation and socialisation of the production process.

These three class-based modes of production do not provide an historical or evolutionary sequence.[32] Depending on specific historical conditions, either the slave or the corvée-tributary mode might form the basis of the first class society in a given region, at least as far as our present theoretical knowledge permits us to say. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that the capitalist mode of production would fill this role. But there also seems to be no obvious reason why it should replace one rather than the other of the two more 'primitive' modes. However, historically, a predominance of the corvée form of the CTMP seems to have been fundamental.[33] Its development also depends on the specific way in which the modes of production are articulated in a given society.

3.6 The articulation of modes of production

Any society, except the most primitive, and perhaps the most developed, must be conceived, at the level of the social formation, in terms of the combination or articulation of several modes of production.[34] One aspect of this is the question

[31] Marxists have traditionally seen the basic contradiction of feudalism as being between the low level of productive forces and the increasing consumption demands of the dominant class; see, for example, Dobb (1946, pp. 42–48), Hilton (1976b, 1979), and Rey (1973, p. 73). Certain other historians, such as Duby (1973a, p. 200), have also taken this point of view. On the other hand, Anderson (1974a, p. 152) and Dockès (1979) look to the opposing trends towards decomposition and centralisation of sovereignty, Boutruche (1968, pp. 217–218) seems to suggest that vassals holding fiefs from more than one lord was important, and Guerreau (1980, p. 195) holds the essential dynamic to lie in the alternation between external and internal conquest. Asiatic society, being 'static', is not usually thought to have such a fundamental contradiction with the accompanying internal dynamic.

[32] For Marx's anti-evolutionism, see especially the three rough drafts of his letter to Zasulich in CERM (1973, pp. 318–342); see also Wood (1984). For a recent alternative way of considering the sequence of modes of production in history, see Gellner (1980) and Semenov (1980).

[33] See the next chapter.

[34] Recent discussion of how to conceive of concrete society in terms of one or more modes of production has been quite extensive. It may be roughly categorised into three camps:

(1) those who reject the concept of mode of production, favouring unique use of the much wider one of social formation, such as Banaji (1977), Friedman (1976), and Hindess and Hirst (1977);

(2) those who consider all present societies to be encompassed entirely under the capitalist world system of unequal exchange relations as centre-periphery theory, especially Amin (1973), Emmanuel (1972a), Frank (1969a, b), and Wallerstein (1974); and

(3) those who, following Balibar (1968), attempt to articulate modes of production in a social formation, such as Kahn (1974, 1975), Laclau (1971), McEachern (1976), Rey (1973), Taylor (1979), and Wolpe (1979). (I would exclude from this group those such as Meillassoux (1972 and elsewhere) and Terray (1969) who confuse production processes with modes of production.)

Recent summaries of the debate can be found in Foster-Carter (1978) and Jhally (1979). An important problem with the first two approaches is that, to allow say all capitalist societies to be analysed, their concepts must be so general and flexible as to reduce to empiricism. Everything observed must be fitted under this same concept, whether 'social formation' or 'world system'. Another similarity is that

of the respective roles of internal development and of external factors, such as conquest or trade. Except in periods of transition between dominant modes, any society will also have one dominant mode of production which influences and distorts all of the others present.[35] But in all cases, the articulation of modes of production is a process; Rey (1973, p. 65, my translation) speaks of "two modes of production struggling for hegemony."[36]

As the internal contradictions of a given dominant mode of production develop, the antagonisms and struggles give rise to new elements, some of which will be specific to other modes of production. Depending on the circumstances, these elements may develop in continuing subordination to the dominant mode, never leading to a threat to this mode. In other circumstances, as the contradictions of the dominant mode reach the breaking point, the antagonisms and struggles will yield the same or other elements of a new mode of production which, then, eventually become dominant. In the same way, the new dominant mode does not immediately eliminate all elements of the previous dominant mode, but transforms many of them into subordinate forms.

One important result of this generation of new elements, even when they are not to become dominant, is the progressive restructuring of the possibilities of practice, especially at the conceptual level. New ways of acting and thinking become available, so that when the final rupture with the old mode of production occurs, the new practices are not completely foreign.

The prerequisite to any study of the combination of modes of production in a social formation is a knowledge of which elements are specific to given modes and, on the other hand, which concepts can be generally applied to any mode. For example, commodities are present in the most diverse types of society, but are a specific characteristic of only one mode of production, the capitalist one.[37]

As throughout, relations among distinct categories of labour form the basis of the combination of modes of production, of the antagonistic social class relations in the society. However, it is important to remember that different categories of labour often do not correspond to different individuals; the same person may be involved in various types of labour and be the 'bearer' or 'personification' of

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they both give preponderance to circulation (and consumption) of the products, with some reference to the development of 'productive forces', but always to virtual exclusion of production relations.

[35] "In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others." (Marx, 1973a, pp. 106–107). Although here Marx is not referring to modes of production (Rey, 1973, p. 23, however, interprets it in this way), but to different production processes and to the difference between agriculture and industry, this appears to be the closest he comes to this idea. See, also, however, Marx (1967, III, p. 876, 1976, pp. 1022–1023), quoted in footnotes below, and Lukacs (1971, p. 242). Marx continues "Among peoples with a settled agriculture — this settling already a great step — where this predominates, as in antiquity and in the feudal order, even industry, together with its organisation and the forms of property corresponding to it, has a more or less landed-proprietary character; is either completely dependent on it, as among the earlier Romans, or, as in the Middle Ages, imitates, within the city and its relations the organization of the land."

[36] See also, for example, Lukacs (1971, pp. 241–242).

[37] See Krader's (1976, 1979) abusive use of commodity production.

the various corresponding relations.[38] This is especially important at the level of the social formation, where the various modes of production enter the analysis.[39] Thus, we shall see, for example, that some medieval European serfs had their own slaves.

Many of the effects of a dominant capitalist mode of production on other modes are well known.[40] The general trend is for other modes to be dissolved, or, more precisely, for their "conservation-dissolution".[41] The other modes are dominated by the capitalist mode; they are not in outright conflict except in a period of transition.[42] Specific non-capitalist relations take on money and commodity forms, as with rent and landed property. All production, even that which is non-capitalist, becomes oriented to the market, and pre-capitalist relations of exploitation become much more barbaric as the traditional means of protection of the subordinate classes disappear.

However, the combination of interest here is the capitalist with the corvée-tributary mode, where the latter is dominant.[43] Because of the problem of transition to capitalism, the question of combination with a subordinate capitalist mode of production must be dealt with. A first important point is that the combination

[38]Thus, Kosminsky (1935, p. 31) states of medieval England: "The lord of one manor is often the free tenant of another, and from an economic point of view the lands in respect of which he is a tenant form a part of the demesne of his own manor. Sometimes a free tenant of a manor has his own tenants, his own villeins and even his own court, which entitles us to regard his holding as a separate manor, or sub-manor."

[39]"One and the same man can, on the other hand, appear as the support of a function in several coexisting modes of production" (Rey, 1973, p. 56, my translation). This is also the basis of Frank's (1969a, p. 272) dilemma over the Latin American case where "a single worker who is simultaneously (i) owner of his own land and house, (ii) sharecropper on another's land ... (iii) tenant on a third's land, (iv) wage worker during harvest time on one of these lands, and (v) independent trader of his own home-produced commodities."

[40]Marx often discusses this interaction, as in (1967, I, pp. 236, 510, 716–774; II, pp. 34, 109–110; III, pp. 323–337, 593–613, 782–813). More recent authors analysing such combinations of modes of production were mentioned in a note above.

[41]I adopt the term proposed by Bettelheim (1972, p. 323).

[42]This contrasts with Alavi's (1975) position, whereby such modes are always in fundamental opposition and contradiction. So they are, but this does not exclude one mode adapting to the requirements of another under domination.

[43]The study of the combination of modes of production where a non-capitalist mode is dominant is rare in the literature. Anderson (1974a, b) gives lip-service to the principle, but then seems to ignore it. Many orthodox Marxists seem to deny the possibility; others who use it have already been mentioned in a note above. Because Marx does study such combinations, providing specific indications for proceeding, he will be quoted rather extensively in the notes. For example, he states "This enlargement of *scale* constitutes the real foundation on which the specifically capitalist mode of production can arise if the historical circumstances are otherwise favourable, as they were for instance in the sixteenth century. Of course, it may also occur *sporadically*, as something which does not dominate society, at isolated points within earlier social formations. The distinctive character of the *formal* subsumption of labour under capital appears at its sharpest if we compare it to situations in which capital is to be found in certain specific, subordinate functions, but where it has not emerged as the direct purchaser of labour and as the immediate owner of the process of production, and where in consequence it has not yet succeeded in becoming the dominant force, capable of determining the form of society as a whole." (1976, pp. 1022–1023).

may not involve any actual production of use values by the subordinate mode.[44] Only other, non-production, elements specifically characteristic of the mode of production may be present. But this is in harmony with my use of production in the context of allocation of social labour.

Three distinct basic elements of the capitalist mode of production often exist, articulated with a dominant corvée-tributary mode. These are, first, the exchange of commodities, although without a capitalist production process and capitalist relations of exploitation: setting a price on a product is the first basic step to incorporating it under the capital relation; second, the extraction of surplus labour by the capital relation, again without either capitalist production or the sale of labour power; and, third, the sale of labour power, although without a market in labour power. All three will play specific roles in the production, allocation, and control of productive labour in any social formation in which they exist.

Exchange of commodities is common to many societies.[45] This usually involves excess production over that required for use by the producers or exploiters; only this excess is produced specifically for exchange.[46] Another reason for exchange may lie in regional differences. The exchange of gifts among members of the dominant class may develop into a form of commodity exchange, or the same may happen with the barter among village communities producing different things.[47] In more developed form, this becomes petty commodity production, again an element of the capitalist mode, one which can only exist in subordination to some dominant mode.[48]

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[44] "Usurer's capital employs the method of exploitation characteristic of capital yet without the latter's mode of production [= production process, JKL]." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 597).

[45] "The mode of production in which the product takes the form of a commodity, or is produced directly for exchange, is the most general and most embryonic form of bourgeois production. It therefore makes its appearance at an early date in history, though not in the same predominating and characteristic manner as now-a-days." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 82; see also 1967, III, pp. 325, 337, 1976, pp. 949–950).

[46] "Production and circulation of commodities can take place, although the great mass of the objects produced are intended for the immediate requirements of their producers, are not turned into commodities, and consequently social production is not yet by a long way dominated in its length and breadth by exchange-value." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 170; see also p. 79, II, p. 34).

[47] "Different communities find different means of production, and different means of subsistence in their natural environment. Hence, their modes of production, and of living, and their products are different. It is this spontaneously developed difference which, when different communities come in contact, calls forth the mutual exchange of products, and the consequent gradual conversion of those products into commodities." (Marx, 1967, I, pp. 351–352). In spite of this, there is no inherent reason, without other factors being present, that such exchange develop into commodity exchange and not remain as barter or exchange of gifts. Occasionally, Marx seems to equate barter and commodity exchange: "In fact, the exchange of commodities evolves originally not within primitive communities, but on their margins, on their borders, the few points where they come into contact with other communities. This is where barter begins and moves thence into the interior of the community, exerting a disintegrating influence upon it." (1970, p. 50). This passage has been considerably changed in Marx (1967, I, p. 87).

[48] "The private property of the labourer in his means of production is the foundation of petty industry, whether agricultural, manufacturing, or both; ... this petty mode of production exists also under slavery, serfdom, and other states of dependence." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 761).

One, however, must be extremely careful in attempting to isolate this element in non-capitalist social formations. Exchange of products for money does not necessarily make them commodities. Money may be measured in amounts of some staple instead of itself being the measure of all things, thus being only a direct intermediary among use values. Money in this form is often a means of ensuring the transfer of surplus product to a dominant class and the distribution of necessary products among a subordinate class fragmented by a division of labour where decisions about the allocation of social labour are made by other means. A product is only a commodity if it is intentionally produced for its exchange value, not its use value, and hence is destined from the beginning for a market. Only in this way is the social labour involved allocated in a capitalist fashion. For example, a feudal peasant family paying its rent in money, but producing its own subsistence products, has its *surplus* labour allocated by the commodity market through which it obtains the money. However, this is a subordinate capitalist relation, because necessary and surplus labour are clearly separated by the dominant corvée-tributary mode. Other factors which distinguish such a peasant from a petty commodity producer include diversification of production to meet subsistence needs while avoiding the dependence on the market implied by specialisation and possession of the land which impedes competitivity over efficiency with the possibility of being eliminated.[49]

Linked to exchange of commodities without capitalist production is one form of capitalist exploitation,[50] merchant capital.[51] The extraction of surplus labour is brought about by an unequal exchange.[52] This is in distinct opposition to its form when the capitalist mode of production is dominant, where it is restricted to circulation and its profit is subordinated to industrial profit. Merchant capital may link up various production units of the same mode of production, but it may also serve as the link between modes of production.[53] One of the most important divisions which must be so linked up is that between town and country; without a

[49] See Brenner (1977).

[50] Recall that exploitation refers to the extraction of a surplus, although I have given the concept of exploitative labour a wider meaning.

[51] "Since merchant's capital is penned in the sphere of circulation, and since its function consists exclusively of promoting the exchange of commodities, it requires no other conditions for its existence aside from the undeveloped forms arising from direct barter — outside those necessary for the simple circulation of commodities and money. Or rather, the latter is the condition of *its* existence. No matter what the basis on which products are produced, which are thrown into circulation as commodities — whether the basis of the primitive community, of slave production, or small peasant and petty bourgeois, or the capitalist basis, the character of products as commodities is not altered, and as commodities they must pass through the process of exchange and its attendant changes of form." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 325).

[52] "So long as merchant's capital promotes the exchange of products between undeveloped societies, commercial profit not only appears as outbargaining and cheating, but also largely originates from them. ... those modes of production bring it about that merchant's capital appropriates an overwhelming portion of the surplus-product..." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 330).

[53] "Money and commodity circulation can mediate between spheres of production of widely different organisation, whose internal structure is still chiefly adjusted to the output of use-values." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 328; see also pp. 325, 330–332).

separation between agriculture and industry, commerce only develops with great difficulty.[54] Although merchant capital acts in certain ways to destroy these other modes, it, in no way, necessarily leads to a dominant capitalist mode.[55] Even if commerce does act to break up the existing modes of production, this is not the revolutionary path. That only occurs when the contradictions of the existing dominant mode develop so that the *producers*, i.e. those making decisions about production, become capitalists.[56]

The other form of capitalist exploitation, without capitalist production, is money-lending.[57] Like merchant's capital, this form allows a dominant class to exploit the production of another mode of production.[58] Both are based on the expansion of money capital, either M-C-M' or M-M', the use of money to obtain more money. When the capitalist mode of production is dominant, interest-bearing capital is primarily involved in production, and interest is subordinated to profit. When it is articulated with other modes of production, it depends on providing loans for consumption and thus knows no upper bounds. Hence the well-known necessity to regulate interest rates politically when the capitalist mode of production is not dominant.

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[54] "... as soon as town industry as such separates from agricultural industry, its products are from the outset commodities and thus require the mediation of commerce for their sale." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 332). "... with India and China. The broad basis of the mode of production here is formed by the unity of small-scale agriculture and home industry, to which in India we should add the form of village communities... The substantial economy and saving in time afforded by the association of agriculture with manufacture put up a stubborn resistance to the products of the big industry..." (Marx, 1967, III, pp. 333–334).

[55] "And whither this process of dissolution will lead, in other words, what new mode of production will replace the old, does not depend on commerce, but on the character of the old mode of production itself. In the ancient world the effect of commerce and the development of merchant's capital always resulted in a slave economy..." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 332; see also p. 327). Monetary wealth "is itself one of the agencies of that dissolution, while at the same time that dissolution is the condition of its transformation into capital. But the *mere presence of monetary wealth*, and even the achievement of a kind of supremacy on its part, is in no way sufficient for this *dissolution into capital* to happen. Or else ancient Rome, Byzantium, etc. would have ended their history with free labour and capital, or rather begun a new history. There, too, the dissolution of the old property relations was bound up with development of monetary wealth — of trade etc. But instead of leading to industry, this dissolution led in fact to the supremacy of the countryside over the city." (Marx, 1973a, p. 506).

[56] "The transition from the feudal mode of production is two-fold. The producer becomes merchant and capitalist, in contrast to the natural agricultural economy and the guild-bound handicrafts of the medieval urban industries. This is the really revolutionising path. Or else, the merchant establishes direct sway over production." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 334). However, the way in which Marx goes on, in the next few pages, to describe this process is not exactly the way it is now understood, as outlined in the next chapter.

[57] "But the middle ages had handed down two distinct forms of capital, which mature in the most different economic social formations, and which, before the era of the capitalist mode of production, are considered as capital quand même — usurer's capital and merchant's capital." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 750). "Interest-bearing capital ... belongs together with its twin brother, merchant's capital, to the antediluvian forms of capital, which long precede the capitalist mode of production and are to be found in the most diverse economic formations of society." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 593; see also 1976, p. 1023).

[58] "Usury, like commerce, exploits a given mode of production. It does not create it, but is related to it outwardly." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 609; see also p. 376).

Much care must be taken in the study of usury, for M-M', in fact, presupposes a market. Take the example of a feudal lord who lends his serf 10kg. of grain worth 10 livres in the winter. After the harvest, it is agreed that the serf must pay back the 10 livres in grain, but now this equals 20kg. The livres are no more than a money of account, not even physically existing in the society, and the value of the grain is fixed each time by the lord alone. This is not usury but tribute extracted by the power of the lord.

Specifically capitalist production, with the accompanying sale of labour power, also occurs in a subordinate form.[59] It appears as a regulated, not a market, production, where both the product and labour power have a just value.[60] This regulation takes forms, as in the medieval guilds, which reflect the organisation of the dominant mode of production. Thus, each worker, as producer, at the same time reproduces all the others; there is no competition.[61] However, wage labour, under the dominance of the corvée-tributary mode, is not restricted to artisanal industry; it also appears in agriculture.

Whatever element of the capitalist mode of production appears in a corvée-tributary society, it takes on the forms determined by the dominant mode of production.[62] All of this tells us little about the specific way in which the capitalist mode of production comes to be dominant. That can only be determined by study of the concrete historical development of the articulation of modes of production

[59] "In periods of the dissolution of *pre-bourgeois* relations, there sporadically occur free workers whose services are bought for purposes not of consumption, but of *production*; but, *firstly*, even if on a large scale, for the production only of *direct* use values, not of *values*; and *secondly*, if a nobleman e.g. brings the free worker together with his serfs, even if he re-sells a part of the worker's product, and the free worker thus creates *value* for him, then this exchange takes place only for the superfluous [*product*] and only for the sale of superfluity, for *luxury consumption*; is thus at bottom only a veiled purchase of alien labour for immediate consumption or as use value. Incidentally, wherever these free workers increase in number, and where this relation grows, there the old mode of production — commune, patriarchal, feudal, etc. — is in the process of dissolution, and the elements of real wage labour are in preparation. but these free servants [*Knechte*] can also emerge, as e.g. in Poland etc., and vanish again, without a change in the mode of production taking place." (Marx, 1973a, p. 469, but see also p. 467).

[60] "... the most prominent Canonist writers of the 13th century, *Albert the Great* and *Thomas Aquinas*, taught that the value of a product depends upon 'the quantity of labour and outlays' expended upon its production. ... What the authors had in mind by it were outlays which the craftsman made for raw materials and implements and a 'decent' reward for his labour. The price that they were concerned with was not the one that was *actually* established through the process of *market competition*, but the *'just price' (justim pretium)* that *had* to be set by the authorities in order to accord with the traditional conditions of the medieval crafts." (Rubin, 1979, p. 65). Such has been the classical position; however, de Roover (1958) and Baldwin (1959) have demonstrated that, in fact, for the dominant classes, the just price was the non-monopoly market price. But, on the other hand, the passage cited does describe the position of the subordinate classes, as shown, for example, by Thompson (1971), albeit for a period when capitalism was dominant.

[61] See, for example, Lopez (1976, pp. 125–130) and Pirenne (1963, pp. 158–159).

[62] "Moreover, this method of subsumption was also characteristic of previous dominant modes of production, e.g. feudalism. Production relations which nowise corresponded to it, standing entirely beyond it, were subsumed under feudal relations, e.g. in England, the tenures in common socage (as distinct from tenures on knight's service), which comprised merely monetary obligations and were feudal in name only." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 876).

in given societies.

3.7 Appendix: The 'feudal' and 'Asiatic' modes of production

It is perhaps useful to consider what the 'feudal' and 'Asiatic' modes of production have come to mean.[63] The simplest form of exposition may be a discussion in parallel of a series of elements for the 'feudal' (FMP) and 'Asiatic' (AMP) modes of production as they are commonly conceived by orthodox Marxism. In this way, the similarities and differences can be more easily grasped. Note that this will be an exposition of theoretical elements, not of characteristics of concrete societies.

The most fundamental oppositions between the two modes of production appear at the two poles of the exploitative relationship. In the FMP, the direct producers are independent serfs or peasants, while in the AMP, they form a commune or village community. On the other hand, in the first case, the dominant class occurs as a feudal hierarchy, while in the second, it is concentrated as the despotic state.

In the feudal hierarchy, members at each level have certain property rights on the land. The peasants, thus, have the rights to occupy and to use their own plots, although they normally cannot alienate them. In the AMP, this 'hierarchy' has only two levels, the state which is the 'larger community' and each village community. Both have rights on the land, but the individual community controls direct occupation and use by the producers.

In the FMP, the lord's estate is more or less self-sufficient, and is based primarily on agricultural labour. The basic means of production and consumption (clothing, furniture, etc.) are produced by the estate artisans, although luxury goods almost always come from outside. The AMP village community is also self-sufficient, except that it depends on the state for the organisation of major works, such as irrigation projects.

Marxists consider the feudal state to be important, although they also see the hierarchy of political and juridical powers spread among the lords and princes. They have in mind primarily the absolutist state of the later Middle Ages, right up until the French Revolution. Specific state functions are dispersed and not all centralised. In the AMP, on the other hand, all power is centralised at the state level.

In feudal society, justice is rendered by the sovereign on his vassals and by the lord on his peasants. Justice among equals was most often a euphemism for vengeance. However, within the village community, a village justice took effect, at least for certain matters. In Asiatic society, justice is controlled by the community. The only interference by the state is in the collection of tribute and

[63] Marx apparently only used the term "Asiatic mode of production" twice in the works which he published, in the famous preface to the *Contribution* (1970, p. 21) and in Capital (1967, I, p. 79). In the former, he also uses "feudal mode of production", thus considering the two to be distinct. In *Capital*, he uses the latter term only five times (1967, I, pp. 334, 751, III, pp. 332, 334, 799). Neither term is used in the "pre-capitalist economic forms" section of the *Grundrisse* (1973a, pp. 471–519).

corvée labour.

Feudal ties attach the individual to his master. Rent in kind, corvée, etc. are the responsibility of the individual (family). The Asiatic community, as a unity, is responsible to provide the tribute and corvée required by the state.[64]

Feudal ties are fixed by tradition and custom. Specifically, the periods of corvée which can be required are fixed by convention. But in Asiatic society, the despot can arbitrarily exact corvée and tribute. There exists no fixed limit to the amount nor time during the year which must be respected.

Feudal society is seen to involve an important relationship between town and country. Agricultural work is separated from town artisanal work and the two are linked by commerce. This relationship is considered essential to the mode of production.[65] In Asiatic society, the city is primarily a military (and political) centre, a seat of the state. In opposition to this, artisanal and agricultural production are organically linked in the village community.

[64] Marx (1973a, p. 495) has called this "general slavery".

[65] See especially Anderson (1974a, pp. 150–151, 190–196). For a contrasting, non-Marxist, position, see Boutruche (1970, p. 287), Cipolla (1976, pp. 143–145), and Postan (1975, p. 239), but also Bloch (1952, p. 177). Hilton (1975, pp. 76–87) emphasises the possible variations in town-country differences.

4
Modes of production in the middle ages: Europe and India

4.1 Europe and India

In the preceding chapter, a rather abstract theory of the corvée-tributary mode of production was developed. This theory must obviously refer to and help in the comprehension of specific concrete societies. Two such examples will be presented in this chapter. However, the interdependence of the two chapters is such that their order is rather arbitrary. In many ways, this chapter should precede the previous one in that the results presented there depended on a study of these societies. The more theoretical chapter has been placed first primarily for didactic reasons.

The corvée-tributary mode has been proposed as the proper conception to replace both the 'feudal' and the 'Asiatic' modes. It, thus, seems appropriate to consider the classical areas of application of these two 'modes of production': medieval western continental Europe and pre-colonial India. Because of the fundamental contradiction, and the accompanying tendential law, of the corvée-tributary mode of production, the interaction between individualism and communalism within the subordinate class, the varying relations among corvée and tribute, and the role of the dominant class in direct management will be of special interest. However, emphasis will also be placed on the articulation of the modes of production present and on the dynamics of change, of transition. Because elements of the capitalist mode appear in both areas, specific differences in capitalist development will be of special interest. And because, at least during part of the period under study, slavery is also present, both of these societies are examples of the articulation of the three class-based modes of production.

In the area of Europe which is now France, the low countries, western Germany, certain parts of Spain, and northern Italy,[1] we find, in the high Middle Ages, an unsuccessful attempt to install a strong, centralised corvée-tributary mode of production: the Carolingian Empire. For various reasons, this mode of production, although dominant, came to take a dispersed feudal form and eventually did not remain in control of the entire economy. A fundamental division between country and town appeared which allowed the ultimate continued development of

[1] In what follows, I shall concentrate primarily on the region between the Loire and the Rhine.

the capitalist mode of production. In India, the corvée-tributary mode of production also was dominant, perhaps for an even longer period. However, it remained at a less developed phase of its contradictions, because it continued to depend on the village community rather than evolving towards more individualised production. It also remained much more centralised, thus not allowing elements of capitalism to develop in the same way as in Europe. However, in many other ways, the two societies are remarkably similar.

4.2 India: The Mauryan Empire

The predominance of a corvée-tributary mode of production can be traced to a much earlier period in India than that which I considered in Europe. The Mauryan Empire, centred in the Ganges valley, the first Indian empire,[2] is situated in the fourth and third centuries, B.C. This was a period, many centuries after the Aryan invasions, with no external invaders, a period which Kosambi (1956, p. 177) has compared to the Roman Empire in Europe.

All production in this Indian society was split into essentially two distinct parts. In the first place, there existed the tribal village community, in the process of being converted from itinerant pastoral to sedentary agricultural production, with integration under the unified dominant class, the 'state'.[3] The peasants possessed their tools and animals, but were not allowed to bear arms.[4] However, the land was controlled by the community.[5] Rural artisans were closely integrated into this village structure.[6] Surplus labour was exacted as taxes, tribute, and corvée, but the entire village, not the individual members, was responsible. Land tax amounted to between one-sixth and one-fourth of the product.[7] These exactions were primarily customary, but the 'state' could demand special 'gifts' when in difficulty or when major projects were to be undertaken.[8] To a large extent, the community was responsible for the welfare of its individual members, although, in certain cases of general difficulty, such as epidemics, fire, bandits, and war

[2] This does not mean that great urban civilisations had not previously existed in India, but they were found in the Indus valley. Not enough is known about them to be able to study their modes of production. For a popularised history of India up to the Mughal invasion, see Thapar (1966).

[3] "The major historical change in ancient India was not between dynasties but in the advance of agrarian village settlements over tribal lands metamorphosing tribesmen into peasant cultivators, or guild craftsmen." (Kosambi, 1955, p. 38). Thapar (1966, pp. 50–69) calls these tribal groups republics and kingdoms.

[4] Kosambi (1956, p. 204), Thapar (1966, p. 76).

[5] See Dambuyant (1974, p. 382) and Kosambi (1956, p. 215). The former does not clearly situate these as tribal communities in the process of being integrated under the state, and contrasting with the new state created villages to be discussed below. See especially Kosambi (1970, pp. 148–149, 197) and Jain (1971, p. 71).

[6] See Dambuyant (1974, p. 390) and Kosambi (1956, p. 222). Jain (1971) provides immense detail of the types of concrete labour being performed throughout the period considered here, up until the end of the Gupta Empire.

[7] Basham (1967, p. 108), Thapar (1966, p. 77).

[8] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 377–378, 383), Kosambi (1956, pp. 205, 207, 211, 213 and 1970, p. 148).

damages, the 'state', in effect, redistributed part of the surplus extracted.[9] One of the constant preoccupations of the 'state' was the unity of the people. Attempts were continually made to break up the communal (tribal) activities, to encourage individual initiative.[10]

In opposition to village production, the 'state' had an economy of its own. It possessed 'state' lands (*sita*), both for agriculture and for mining natural resources.[11] These were exploited by corvée (*visti*), but also by slaves, share cropping, and wage labour.[12] However, wages were essentially a commutation of crop shares. The major government concern was extension of territory. Thus, war was used, not for booty or slaves, but to extend the area controlled by the 'state'.[13] However, conquest was of little significance in itself because conquered peoples were left as they were, as long as they supplied the tribute demanded. For prime interest lay in the fact that not all of the land conquered was occupied.[14] After a conquest, the main means to extend territory productively was by land-clearing and this colonisation was the major 'state' project. It was accomplished by forced labour, entire masses of peasants being uprooted and displaced to create new villages.[15] Although the communities were recreated, they were more dependent on the 'state' because they were more homogeneously composed of *Sudra*, the labouring castes, because they had installation grants from the 'state',[16] and because, at first, they were primarily agricultural, not having integrated local artisanal production.[17]

The other major 'state' project was the establishment of the network of communications, especially canals, necessary to bring the exacted tribute to the centralised 'state'. Although the canals also served for irrigation, this was of relatively minor importance in a land dependent on monsoon rains.[18] Except as fortifications for war, building construction was of minor importance. Prestigious monuments were not constructed.[19]

The 'state' also had its own industrial production,[20] integrated with the rest of

[9] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 379–380, 383), Kosambi (1970, pp. 150, 155).

[10] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 375, 389), Kosambi (1956, pp. 203–204 and 1970, pp. 127, 144–145)

[11] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 377, 382, 384), Kosambi (1956, pp. 200, 208, 216–218 and 1970, pp. 152, 154), Wilhelm (1959).

[12] Dambuyant (1974, p. 392), Jain (1971, pp. 51, 231–236, 243–247), Kosambi (1970, pp. 149–150).

[13] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 376, 392), Kosambi (1970, p. 151).

[14] Kosambi (1956, p. 218 and 1970, p. 151).

[15] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 385–387), Kosambi (1956, pp. 196, 216–219 and 1970, p. 149).

[16] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 379, 386), Jain (1971, p. 51).

[17] Kosambi (1956, p. 222).

[18] This contra Wittfogel (1957); see Dambuyant (1974, p. 371), who cites Kosambi's review of the book. See also Kosambi (1956, pp. 131, 208–209) and Thorner (1966), but also Leach (1959).

[19] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 379, 387).

[20] A somewhat similar industrial corvée organisation existed in medieval Poland; see Le Goff (1964, p. 107), Malowist (1966), and Modzelewski (1964). However, there the artisans were not so exclusively specialised in their craft, having their own plots of land for subsistence, and, thus, not being paid a 'wage'.

its economic activities, but drastically cut off from village production, although, at least at first, not from the villages which it established on the cleared lands. Thus, only the 'state', and not the peasant producers, benefitted from any industrial progress.[21] The industrial workers were organised in guilds (*sreni*), perhaps established on a former tribal basis, but now controlled by the 'state'.[22] Those working for the 'state' were paid 'wages', in kind or in money. However, both prices and 'wages' were 'state' controlled. In addition, 'wages' were prescribed as a portion of the produce, most workers getting one tenth, but miners receiving one third.[23] Then, although measure in kind was the basis, many 'wages' were transformed into money equivalents. Money[24] was, thus, measured in the units of the staple, grain, and not the reverse; the 'wages' were not payment for labour power but a fixed equivalent for necessary labour. In addition, production was not for a market but for the 'state'. Use values, but not exchange values, were being produced. In spite of appearances, neither capitalist wage labour nor commodities existed.

In this way, the Mauryan 'state', as the embodiment of the larger community, developed a sophisticated means of applying corvée labour to industrial production. The labourer, embedded in a developed social division of labour, worked a well-defined portion of the time for him/herself and spent the rest producing for the 'state'. Exclusively industrial production had to take some such form as this because, with such specialisation, the producers' necessary labour time could not yield the required subsistence products directly. The controlled exchanges, although mediated by money, allowed the various products of 'state' agriculture and industry to reach their destinations, while at the same time yielding a definite proportion of surplus labour time. Such a complex system of exchange contrasts with the simple one found at the village community level, at least when the village was self-contained, only supplying tribute and corvée for major projects.

The radical separation between rural community and the urbanised 'state' was reflected in the artificial aspect of the city. It contained the palace and government, the storehouses for tribute, workshops and administration. It was obviously a creation of the 'state', not organically linked to the villages.

Thus, the 'state' depended both on the extraction of surplus from outside itself and on direct production. These forms of exploitation necessitated on extensive bureaucratic-administrative system and a powerful police force. Repression was central to a well-functioning economy.[25]

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[21] Basham (1967, p. 218), Dambuyant (1974, pp. 389–390), Kosambi (1956, pp. 202, 206–208 and 1970, p. 152), Wilhelm (1959).

[22] See Basham (1967, pp. 219–220) and Kosambi (1956, pp. 220–221 and 1970, p. 125). Jain (1971, pp. 184–226) provides a comprehensive discussion.

[23] See Jain (1971, pp. 190, 195–196, 231–232).

[24] It is interesting to note that in both the Carolingian and the Mauryan Empires, more than a 1000 years separated in time, the predominant currency was made of silver. See Grierson (1954), Jain (1971, pp. 234–235), and Kosambi (1970, p. 151).

[25] Basham (1967, pp. 112–123), Dambuyant (1974, p. 375), Kosambi (1956, pp. 200, 205, 209, 211

The dominant class, the *Kshatriya* and *Brahman* castes, coincided with the 'state', as the extractor of surplus labour, while the direct producers were grouped in the lowly *Sudra* castes. The former was divided by caste distinctions, into repressive (the warrior *Kshatriya*) and ideological (the priest, educator, and administrator *Brahman*) functions. The *Sudra*, on the other hand, were the property of no one, even when deported onto the new colonial lands.[26] Women had full rights, including the right to remarry and to possess property.[27]

To a certain extent, private producers also existed in the cities, but they were submitted to as close a control and police surveillance as the 'state' enterprises.[28] Certain members of the early resettlement colonies entered commercial occupations, as the *Vaishya* castes, but their activities were very much restricted because the overpowering influence of the 'state' eliminated the possibility of a developed market.[29] Traders had to add to the 'value' of goods by transporting them to a different territory; they could not sell them where they were produced.[30]

Various types of slaves, penal and chattel, were used, both domestically and in production, although it is difficult to determine their importance in the latter.[31] Forced labour employed directly in 'state' production, was very similar to the employment of the more independent *Sudra*, because both received a salary, as did all military and civil officials.[32] Penal slaves were allowed to work for wages in their spare time.

The 'state', thus, had to convert a substantial portion of the tribute it received into 'commodities' to be able to pay its employees. This involved primarily local trade, of which the 'state' had a monopoly,[33] but may also have consisted in a

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and 1970, pp. 143, 147), Wilhelm (1959).

[26] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 391–394), Kosambi (1956, pp. 184–185, 196, 212–215 and 1970, p. 149).

[27] See Kosambi (1956, p. 206). This may perhaps be linked with the absence of a unique patriarchal god.

[28] Dambuyant (1974, pp. 381–383), Jain (1971, p. 190), Kosambi (1956, pp. 206–207 and 1970, p. 155)

[29] See Dambuyant (1974, p. 391). Kosambi (1956, p. 222) states that the control of private traders and artisans restricted trade to the new villages causing village artisanal production to become necessary and ultimately leading to the disintegration of the whole 'state' system. This seems to put trade before production and reverse the necessary train of events, because the 'state', itself, could certainly have ensured that the villages were supplied with the urban artisanal products.

[30] Kosambi (1956, p. 207 and 1970, p. 155).

[31] Kosambi (1956, p. 220 and 1970, pp. 150, 156) is clearly wrong in stating that slavery did not exist in production. Jain (1971, pp. 143–183) gives an excellent description of slavery. See especially pp. 145 and 162 for an implicit critique of Kosambi's position. See also Thapar (1966, pp. 76–77).

[32] See Kosambi (1956, pp. 209–210 and 1970, pp. 152–156). Dambuyant (1974, p. 392) seems to confuse forced labour and slavery.

[33] See Kosambi (1959). For some reason, Kosambi (1956, pp. 202, 205–206, 220 and 1970, pp. 152–153) insists on calling this 'commodity production': "The society . . . engaged in large-scale commodity production and trade over long distances. However, the work does not describe a state of the commodity producers. The reason was that the king, as the successor to chiefs of many different tribes, and as the recipient of great revenues in kind from harvested grain and from local manufacture, had to convert a substantial part of these gains into commodities to pay the army and bureaucracy." (1956, p. 205).

circular process of the 'state' selling some of its acquired tribute to its paid functionaries, thus recuperating some of the wages paid. Although the products of state industry were sold, this was not done on a market because prices were controlled. On the other hand, the 'state' did not require loans or a national debt,[34] perhaps for obvious reasons.

During this period of Indian history, the corvée-tributary mode of production became all-predominant, conquering the tribal pastoral primitive communism. Because of the centralisation of the extraction of surplus labour, alternative forms of production, or of exchange, could only develop with great difficulty. Circulation of products occurred virtually only in one direction, towards the 'state'. Although the 'state' employees were paid a 'wage', this very embryonic form of 'capitalism' could not develop because there was no alternative employer, no room for individual initiative.[35]

However, by the end of the Mauryan Empire, under Asoka (275–230 B.C.), a number of fundamental changes were occurring. At least in the north, most of the cultivable land had been cleared. As long as no foreign invaders threatened, an army was no longer necessary because the villagers were disarmed and the tribes subdued. The 'state' was losing its mining monopoly, because the remaining accessible deposits were much too widely scattered for effective central control, and it had given up attempts to control the traders. Buildings began to be constructed of stone rather than wood.[36] Palaces and other non-productive public works were built, while the 'state' began to travel systematically, to consume the surplus locally.[37]

4.3 India: The Gupta and Muslim Empires

The Mauryan Empire turned tribal communities into self-sufficient agricultural communities, and created further such villages on its own cleared land. However, the 'state' was not able to overcome the basic contradiction between communal production and extraction of surplus labour. On the other hand, because the villages were disarmed and extraction of tribute institutionalised, the central administration, with its army, bureaucrats, and spies, had become unnecessary for this extraction of surplus, so that centralised industrial production was abandoned. In addition, self-sufficiency meant that little circulation of goods occurred among villages, providing little opportunity for revenue from tolls and customs.[38]

India split up into a number of small local empires, rarely encompassing all of the country, until the major conquest by the Moslems. When it was unified, as under the Gupta Empire (320–500 A.D.), this meant collecting tribute from the

[34] Kosambi (1956, p. 212).

[35] Kosambi (1956, p. 206) calls this a fundamental contradiction.

[36] Jain (1971, p. 108).

[37] See Kosambi (1970, pp. 160–165) for this paragraph.

[38] Kosambi (1956, pp. 222–225).

local mini-empires, not setting up central 'state' production as under the Mauryan Empire. Luxury production and certain water works projects were, however, carried out by the central 'state'.[39]

The change in emphasis in the extraction of surplus labour, from 'state' production to tribute, generated a new agent of law and order, the ascetic preacher, accompanied by an ossification of class into caste. *Sudra* were said to be doomed to servitude by nature and creation. Although *Brahman* learning was essential to production in one way, the calculation of the time of the monsoon,[40] it was primarily ritual, mystified by Sanskrit. The *Brahmans* gradually penetrated the remaining tribal groups and transformed the guilds of artisans into castes. They introduced the plough, new crops, and trade.[41] The last forest tribes were cleared out of the Ganges basin by force in the fourth century A.D.[42]

At the same time, the old pastoral ideology, Buddhism, allied itself with the ever growing number of merchants and traders. Buddhist caves and monasteries were situated along the main long distance luxury trade routes. They were important customers of the merchants, but also received many donations from them.[43]

Land continued to be cleared, now not by the 'state' but by 'private' enterprise, the village community. The 'state' allowed such work as long as the required tribute was provided.[44] In the south of India, where the Mauryan Empire had not succeeded in implanting the village system, community production was more open, involving exchange.[45] There, a sophisticated guild system remained, but the basic caste structure was simpler, opposing *Sudra* and *Brahman*.[46] Where 'wage' labour existed, it took the same form as in the Mauryan Empire, with fixed fractions of produce or their money equivalent.[47]

The trend towards self-sufficient villages, already manifest in the Mauryan Empire, came to fruition under the Guptas. Unless belonging to a *Brahman*, the village land was taxed, in kind. Land was assigned to producers by the village council. A fairly complex division of labour, regulated by caste, existed within the village. Artisans had their own plots to cultivate, but also received a certain portion of all crops, in return for repair of tools.[48] The 'state' had a local official in the village to collect the tribute. The poorest workers could replace tribute

[39] Jain (1971, pp. 113–120), Kosambi (1955 and 1956, pp. 227, 240–241, 279–281, 289).

[40] Construction of the calendar was also an important task of medieval European monks; see Duby (1976, p. 99) and Le Goff (1964, p. 229).

[41] See Kosambi (1955, 1956, pp. 225, 235–236, 239, 261–272, 291–295 and 1970, pp. 165–172) for this paragraph.

[42] Kosambi (1970, p. 193).

[43] Kosambi (1956, pp. 247–252 and 1970, pp. 182–186), Thapar (1966, pp. 111, 124, 147–148).

[44] Kosambi (1956, pp. 242–243, 280–281, 297 and 1970, pp. 194–195).

[45] Kosambi (1970, pp. 163–164), Thapar (1966, p. 207).

[46] Jain (1971, p. 208), Kosambi (1955 and 1956, pp. 254–255, 259, 292), Thapar (1966, pp. 212, 251).

[47] Jain (1971, p. 240).

[48] Kosambi (1956, pp. 244, 300–301, 310–313 and 1970, pp. 17–20, 195–196), Thapar (1966, pp. 176–177).

with labour. Corvée labour was also extracted for public works but paid for, thus not taking the place of taxes. On the other hand, artisans were subject to regular forced labour, as a tax,[49] whereas such corvée had been virtually restricted to agriculture in the Mauryan period. Local police garrisons existed for groups of villages, supposedly to protect them against robbers. Each village had its own law. However, the development of this village class structure meant that a growing portion of the tribute was consumed locally, eventually causing the collapse of succeeding empires.[50]

Money-lending, by the *Vaishya*, led the poorer *Sudra* to 'debt-slavery', a form of serfdom, when the crops failed. Interest rates were differentiated by caste to allow additional exploitation.[51] Traders were no longer controlled by the 'state', and were even actively encouraged, because the 'state' was not engaged in commerce. Merchant guilds replaced the older artisan guilds.[52] In spite of the self-sufficient villages, certain items, such as salt, coconut products, and cloth, were exchanged. Extensive trade routes existed, especially in the south; international trade linked India to west, central, and south-east Asia, as well as to Europe.[53]

This period of a relatively pure corvée-tributary mode of production, based on communal village production and surplus extraction as tribute, lasted from the fall of the Mauryan Empire in the last centuries B.C. to the Muslim conquest and rule from the 10th to 16th centuries. The essential innovation of the latter was the development of local land-owners.[54] Thus, the Muslim and Rajput states bear certain similarities to European feudalism, with their hierarchy of 'lords' extracting surplus. However, in India, 'demesne' production was minimal, what there was depending on slaves, and the caste system replaced both a central Church and the guilds.[55] Still more important, agricultural and artisanal production remained united in India, and political dispersion, with its tribute base, took a 'mini-state', rather than an estate, form.

The introduction of local landlords fundamentally changed the village structure. Although the village as a unity generally continued to be responsible for the taxes due,[56] control of the land had changed. As well, payments could take a natural or a money form. In the former case, the landlord dealt with the mer-

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[49] Jain (1971, pp. 59–60, 244–247), Kosambi (1956, pp. 240–243, 281–282, 298 and 1970, pp. 190–196).

[50] Kosambi (1955 and 1956, pp. 277, 290, 294).

[51] Kosambi (1956, pp. 239–240, 315), Thapar (1966, p. 112).

[52] See Kosambi (1959), but also Thapar (1966, pp. 147, 155, 331).

[53] Basham (1967, pp. 225–233), Kosambi (1955 and 1956, pp. 242, 248–249, 256 and 1970, p. 189), Thapar (1966, pp. 105–135).

[54] Kosambi (1956, pp. 334–335, 343).

[55] Kosambi (1956, pp. 326–328 and 1970, pp. 166–210) and Jain (1971, p. 247) consider the whole period, from the Gupta Empire (320 A.D.) to the British invasion to be feudal. Coulborn (1968) and Thapar (1966, pp. 241–265) take feudalism to have started in the seventh century.

[56] Kosambi (1956, pp. 354–355).

chant; in the latter, the direct producers did.[57] For tribute now had to be passed on to the higher levels of the 'state' as money, but in fixed grain prices.[58] The city remained a purely politico-military site, strictly parasitic, because the 'state' was not involved in production.[59] On the other hand, the local landlords often were, although most usually with slave labour. They also became responsible for waterworks, flood control and irrigation.[60] The state also had slaves, but for personal services only.

Trade, internally and internationally, was very important, with the arrival of the Muslim merchants, well before the conquest. Traders were necessary to convert the tribute into money.[61]

4.4 Europe: The Carolingian Empire

In the early period, after the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe was essentially rural. The peasants were also artisans, producing their own tools, something which was only possible because of the primitive level of technology.[62] The principal means of cultivation was the scratch plough, and not the heavy plough with an iron share and mouldboard. The former had, at most, an iron tip and could be produced by a non-specialist. Thus, with this simple technology, agricultural and artisanal production were unified, and people formed the most important asset of any member of the dominant class.[63] However, this should not be taken to mean that only bare subsistence was being eked out of the land; agriculture was producing a substantial surplus.[64]

This production came to be based on the lord's estate. Cultivated land formed two distinct parts: the demesne of the lord, worked mainly by corvée of the peasant-serfs, who in turn held a plot of land or *mansus*[65] on the second part from which they gained their own livelihood.[66] In addition, there were certain common lands to which both lord and serfs had access for various uses. Although the serfs were not to live united in villages in all regions, this was the most suitable form for the mode of production, because it made the separation from the demesne simpler and clearer, as well as easing the task of bringing the serfs together for corvée labour.[67] Thus, agriculture, much of which had been mobile, all

[57] Kosambi (1956, pp. 351–352).

[58] Kosambi (1956, p. 354), Thapar (1966, pp. 113, 210).

[59] Kosambi (1956, pp. 356–357).

[60] Kosambi (1956, pp. 327, 348–351, 353–354).

[61] Kosambi (1956, pp. 332, 350–351).

[62] Duby (1962, p. 257).

[63] Duby (1973a, p. 92), Perroy (1974, p. 46).

[64] Bridbury (1969), Delatouche (1977).

[65] Dubled (1949), Herlihy (1960), de Saint Jacob (1943), Tulippe (1936).

[66] See especially Bloch (1952 and 1960) and Ganshof (1949) on estate organisation. For earlier origins, see Percival (1969).

[67] Bloch (1941 and 1960, p. 35), Homans (1953).

became sedentary and permanent villages began to be formed,[68] in most cases, by the lords. The estates, including the *mansi*, were in a continuous process of creation, transformation, and disappearance, through land-clearing or drainage, through extension of territory by conquest, and through gifts, purchases, or inheritances.[69] Many villages were divided among several lords. The peasants, thus, entered into two distinct and conflicting forms of relationship, those to their masters, but also those within their rural collectivity.[70]

Serfdom had several sources, four of which were most important. In the early part of the period, the invading Germanic peasant was also a warrior. This was only possible while agriculture relied on slave production and remained itinerant. Very early, this characteristic was eliminated, so that the peasants were forced to renounce their essential criterion of liberty, the right to carry arms. Cooperation with military action was still compulsory, but it now took the degrading form of a 'service', supplying the provisions.[71] The development of a special warrior group also proved necessary, in these conditions, because of the continuing invasions and the reliance of the dominant class on obtaining booty to be used for redistribution.

In the last period of the Roman Empire, the government tried to ward off internal decay and external threats by attaching everyone to their situation by law, a form of juridical caste system. By this means, the peasants were attached to their fields, as *colons*, to stop rural emigration, and to ensure both agricultural production and the rural tax base. With the shortage of rural labour, this system worked in favour of the rural lords. When the Empire disintegrated, the *colons* ceased to be tied to the soil, but the ties of personal dependance remained, ensured by the lord.[72]

After the final fall of the Roman Empire, links between town and country, and supply routes, were broken. The independent peasants, who, under the Empire, had never been self-subsistent, were now faced with famine. Often they were forced to turn over their land to a lord in return for protection from their creditors. This occurred in spite of their communal life; their new ties of individual dependence on the lord indicated the weaknesses of the community. However, in contrast to the first case, here no military factor was involved.[73]

Slaves were still very important in production; even certain peasants had

[68] See Chapelot and Fossier (1980, pp. 139–152). More generally on the village communities, see Blum (1971), Dubled (1963), and de Saint Jacob (1941, 1942, 1946, and 1953) for the continent and Ault (1930, 1954, 1961, and 1965), Cam (1950), and Miller and Hatcher (1978, pp. 100–110) for England.

[69] Boutruche (1968, pp. 79–84), Herlihy (1958, 1960, and 1961), Perroy (1974, pp. 23–24).

[70] Bloch (1939, pp. 336–337, 1941, and 1952, pp. 172–189), Chapelot and Fossier (1980, p. 148).

[71] Bloch (1960, p. 45), Dockès (1979, p. 290), Duby (1973a, p. 55), Herlihy (1960).

[72] Bloch (1939, pp. 358–359, 1952, p. 72, and 1960, pp. 44–45), Boutruche (1968, pp. 107–108, 150), Dockès (1979, pp. 104–105, 121–122), Goffart (1972), Herlihy (1960), Jones (1958), Perroy (1974, pp. 166–173).

[73] Bloch (1939, pp. 340–343 and 1960, p. 45), Boutruche (1968, pp. 75, 150–152), Dockès (1979, pp. 102, 120), Perroy (1974, pp. 111–113).

them.[74] On large estates, they alone sometimes still worked the demesne.[75] Although a problem of 'biological' reproduction of this type of labour force without resort to war was developing, the markets remained supplied. However, the changing relations of power between slave owners and slaves was forcing the dominant class to place their slaves on tenures, on their own plots of land.[76] This new way to use the available labour power, which began in the seventh century, perhaps eventually meant an increase in exploitation, because the costs of upkeep could be reduced, while at the same time increasing productivity and ensuring the reproduction of the labour force.[77] Thus, slavery was being replaced by corvée and tribute. If the slaves were to be given tenures, their work capacity had to be superior to that necessary for cultivation of the plot. The surplus time could then be used for labour services on the demesne, but also for transportation and artisanal work. This corvée very soon became the most important form of exploitation of all the peasants, with obligations or rent in kind (tribute) being much less predominant.[78] The corvée labour on the demesne took two forms: each peasant usually was assigned full responsibility for the cultivation of a small part of the demesne, the entire product going to the lord, but also owed a certain number of days of labour on the rest of the demesne.[79]

Thus, four trends converged towards the extension of tenures and of corvée labour. Certain social relations survived the Roman Empire. Slaves were being turned into serfs for reasons of control and, perhaps, of efficiency. Independent direct producers were being relieved of their liberty and forced into a similar state of dependence, for apparently technological and military reasons or simply due to need. The serf became both economically and juridically subordinated to his lord, who thus held all 'state' powers over him, especially where the (Church) lord had received an immunity from the King.[80] What is especially significant is that these ties of dependence were individual ties between lord and serf, as were all ties in what was to become the feudal hierarchy.[81] This occurred in spite of the communal ties, which were becoming sedentarised in the village or even

[74] Bloch (1941, 1947, and 1960, p. 28), Boutruche (1968, pp. 95–97, 139–149), Duby (1962, pp. 100–102).

[75] Boutruche (1968, pp. 102–103), Dockès (1979, pp. 116–124), Perroy (1974, p. 27).

[76] Dockès (1979, pp. 35, 105).

[77] See Bloch (1939, pp. 338, 360–361, 1947, 1952, pp. 70–71, and 1960, pp. 40–45), Boutruche (1968, pp. 97–98), Duby (1973a, pp. 50–51), Herlihy (1960), and Perroy (1974, pp. 30–31, 173–177, 180). On the difficulty of comparing productivities and exploitation, see Dockès (1979, pp. 145–164).

[78] Bloch (1939, p. 336, 1952, p. 75, and 1960, pp. 27–28), Duby (1962, pp. 103–104), Fourquin (1972, pp. 52–54), Perroy (1974, pp. 31, 46).

[79] Bloch (1952, pp. 75–76 and 1960, p. 30), Fourquin (1972, p. 53).

[80] Boutruche (1968, pp. 125–138), Halphen (1968, pp. 170–174), Harding (1980), Perroy (1974, pp. 144–151, 170–173).

[81] This contrasts with the importance of community ties elsewhere in the world where corvée-tribute was dominant; see especially the comparative study by Boutruche (1968, pp. 237–328) and also Wood (1981).

(re)created for the slaves placed on tenures.[82] Such different sources necessarily meant a certain differentiation among the peasants. The process of creating serfs continued throughout the Middle Ages as the remaining independent peasants felt continual pressure to turn over their *allod* to a noble in return for protection.[83] The peasant's *mansus* on the estate, thus, could be one of two basic types, servile or free, depending on the often long forgotten origin of the *mansus*. However, through inheritance, marriage, sale, or exchange, the status of the *mansus* most often soon did not correspond to that of the peasant family occupying it. The servile *mansus*, much less frequent, was usually smaller and owed more corvée services.[84]

Let us now study the larger context in which this process developed. The transitory period, from the 5th to 8th centuries, A.D., between the Roman and the Carolingian Empires was above all a time of booty and gifts, i.e. of forced acquisition of tribute and its subsequent redistribution within the dominant class. Possibilities of pillage could be found everywhere.[85] The Merovingian Empire of the early 7th century was simply a large territory possessed by a very successful family of conquering chiefs.[86] Finally, with Charles Martel's defeat of the invading Moslems at Poitiers in 732, we find an attempt to centralise power and to institutionalise tribute collection, leading eventually to the Carolingian Empire. At the same time, the Pope in Rome was feeling the domination of the eastern Emperor and was being threatened by the advancing Lombards, soon forcing him to turn to Charles for help.[87] The close ties which developed between Royalty and Church continued under Pepin and Charlemagne, leading to the domination of the Royalty. Missionaries were sent out to convert the pagans in newly conquered areas, often by their display of technical superiority.[88] Rich lands and resources were given to the bishops in the newly conquered eastern territories to enable them to carry out violent missions of conversion and to make them strong supporters of the 'state'.[89] Thus, we have a centralisation of the entire dominant class.[90] But this was centralisation for war:[91] to control booty and slaves and to establish a system of tribute, called gifts, within the dominant class. This entire

[82] Dockès (1979, pp. 135–136, 277–278, 291).

[83] Dubled (1951), Perroy (1974, pp. 164–166).

[84] Bloch (1939, p. 338, 1941, 1952, p. 73, and 1960, pp. 37–42), Boutruche (1968, pp. 99–100, 118–119), Fourquin (1972, p. 50), Ganshof (1949), Perroy (1974, pp. 33–34, 177–183), Tulippe (1936).

[85] See Duby (1973a, pp. 60–62). Grierson (1959) distinguishes 'theft' and 'gift' as the two principal means by which goods changed from hand to hand. In between lay ransoms, war indemnities, fines, political payments, compensations, dowries, and diplomatic exchanges. All of these alternatives to trade were much more important than trade itself. See also Cipolla (1976, pp. 20–27), Himly (1955), and van Werweke (1932).

[86] Fichtenau (1968, pp. 4–10), Halphen (1968, pp. 17–18), Perroy (1974, p. 188).

[87] Halphen (1968, pp. 20–25).

[88] Sullivan (1953).

[89] Boutruche (1968, p. 74), Fichtenau (1968, p. 17).

[90] Wemple (1974).

[91] Fichtenau (1968, pp. 79–82), Halphen (1968, pp. 146–155).

class, including the higher clergy, were warriors.

The King, allied with a strengthened Christian Church, was responsible for law and order. Conquered territories retained their own ethnicity, laws, and customs,[92] with the exception of imposed Christianity. Counts, with their vice-counts and vicars, administered the territories as direct appointees of the King. In order to consolidate power, a contradictory trend to disperse it developed by the granting of *benefices* or estates, later to be called fiefs, to vassals who had previously only received protection in return for their service.[93] The land now covered by these estates had been cultivated to some extent by slave labour, the rest being occupied by the more independent peasants employing itinerant agriculture, but often subject to some form of tribute. Uniting the two for effective exploitation of the entire estate meant reliance on corvée labour.

Throughout this period, military service was due only to the King or Emperor.[94] The term vassal became synonymous with warrior and the *benefice* gradually became in effect, although not in law, hereditary. Both counts and more and more nobles, at least indirectly, held their lands as *benefices* from the King, lands which he obtained either by conquest or by confiscation from the Church.[95] However, the Church was compensated for the latter by receiving a fifth of the produce of the land, in addition to the tithe, from the vassal so created.[96] The Royal administration lived from the land granted to it and from a portion of tribute and fines collected, so that there was little need to collect taxes to pay them. The main tax was the tithe, enforced by the Royalty, for the Church, to which must be added the compulsory annual gifts and the *tonlieux* on transported goods.[97] The King's personal service was confounded with 'state' service[98] so that he became a representation of the society as a whole. The Royal power had no monopoly of the control and extraction of surplus labour and no independent organisation of production throughout the territories controlled. Economically, it relied primarily on the *fiscus*, the King or Emperor's lands, but also on a part of the tribute and fines collected by the counts;[99] supplies were obtained by an organisation of 'state' merchants.[100] Politically, it had the *ban*, to command, to constrain, and to punish, the principal 'state' power.[101] Public works, such as road, bridge, palace,

[92] Halphen (1968, pp. 127–134), Perroy (1974, pp. 221–222).

[93] Bloch (1939, pp. 209–249), Boutruche (1968, pp. 165–198), Halphen (1968, pp. 174–180), Perroy (1974, pp. 104–109, 114–140, 151–161).

[94] Boutruche (1968, pp. 180, 220), Perroy (1974, pp. 155, 234).

[95] For changes in the size of Church lands, see Herlihy (1961).

[96] Constable (1960).

[97] See Fanchamps (1964), Halphen (1968, pp. 157–161), and Perroy (1974, pp. 245–251). Although often thought to apply only to commodities meant for sale, the *tonlieu* was, in fact, usually applicable to all transported goods; see Fanchamps (1964).

[98] Le Goff (1964, p. 73), Halphen (1968, pp. 142–143, 162), Perroy (1974, pp. 188–201).

[99] Halphen (1968, p. 142).

[100] Laurent (1938).

[101] Dubled (1961), Fichtenau (1968, pp. 104–105), Fourquin (1972, pp. 67–68), Halphen (1968, pp.

and church construction, were carried out locally by corvée under the direction of the count.[102] Certain areas were cleared and populations resettled under Royal direction.[103] Thus, the King or Emperor provided the basis of legitimation of a hierarchy, but was forced to rely on tribute as the unifying means of surplus labour allocation throughout the Empire, as opposed to corvée on his own estates. The lords who had gained immunities and the counts would come to acquire the most 'state' power.

Throughout the Carolingian period, the constant threat of invasion, by Danes, Moslems, Slaves, and so on, was present.[104] With the death of Charlemagne, the problem of unity of the Empire became acute. Louis the Pious took measures to increase unity, but, faced with incessant struggle, ended by being forced to split the Empire among his three sons. The division was formalised by the Treaty of Verdun in 843. At the basis of the dissolution of the Empire was the need for continual wars to reassert the right to tribute; force could never be transformed into custom. Each King now became a lord among the others, even although a lord with certain special prerogatives;[105] vassalic ties became more and more important and the power of *ban* began to be dispersed among the counts.[106] Only the Church remained united, and slowly began to take on a more dominant position. For the first time in the nineth century, it began to take control of marriage, at least within the dominant class.[107]

Then came the major invasions, of Muslims, Hungarians, and Normands,[108] made possible by the failure of centralised tribute collection.

Throughout the period, the goal of production was consumption. But the centralised dominant class had continually to re-ensure their tribute by force, because custom was difficult to impose.[109] To consolidate what power they could, they also had to disperse the rest of it, leading to increasingly important local corvée production. Where custom was imposed, the dominant class had always to push production so that they never felt a lack of anything. Such an impetus to production was, however, a constant aspect of the mode of production and not a developing contradiction, as most Marxists propose. Goods were not accumulated, but distributed as gifts to increase other people's obligations. In years of abundance, enormous wastes occurred.[110] With regional specialisations, and lords holding

155, 167–169), Perroy (1974, p. 148).

[102] Boutruche (1968, p. 132), Fichtenau (1968, p. 135), Halphen (1968, pp. 135, 142, 157), Perroy (1974, pp. 206, 254).

[103] Boutruche (1968, pp. 109–110), Perroy (1974, p. 42).

[104] Halphen (1968, pp. 72–90, 259–261, 288–291, 294–296, 310–311, 342–343, 394–396), Perroy (1974, p. 61).

[105] Boutruche (1968, p. 184), Halphen (1968, pp. 280–281, 414), Perroy (1974, pp. 160–161, 262).

[106] Fourquin (1972, p. 68), Halphen (1968, pp. 414–421).

[107] Duby (1981, pp. 39–40), Scammell (1974).

[108] Described so well by Bloch (1939, pp. 23–95).

[109] See, for example, Halphen (1968, pp. 51, 63, 79–81, 85).

[110] Bloch (1939, pp. 432–433), Duby (1962, p. 99).

lands in different areas, the master and the product had to be brought together. The warrior-lord travelled from estate to estate, consuming the various products on location when they became available. But the Church-lord, as a collective body, could not travel; goods from various Church estates had to be transported to the monastery,[111] although some were sold locally.[112] Thus, for these, and other, reasons, there was much circulation of goods, but essentially without a market.[113]

The towns were the seats of the lords; they were primarily administrative, religious, and military centres.[114] Urban artisanal work was virtually limited to workers linked to the Church.[115] Already by 800 A.D., construction of religious buildings was very important, more important for the urban economy than the passing merchants.[116] The little long distance commerce served to bring luxury objects, such as spices, perfumes, and cloth, from the Orient and Africa principally in return for slaves. Local and regional trade involved only wine, metal, and fish, plus some speculation in grain, alongside the poor salt merchants.[117] Most towns had a small weekly market based on barter, indicating little movement of goods over longer distances.[118]

The period from the fall of the Roman Empire until about the year 1000, thus, can be divided roughly into two periods. The first was one of transition between dominance of the slave and the corvée-tributary modes of production, a period when neither was dominant. By the time when the Carolingian Empire began to be constructed, the corvée-tributary mode had become dominant, although elements of the slave mode persisted for a long time thereafter. Throughout this period, elements of capitalism were at a strict minimum: the few usurers and itinerant merchants.

4.5 Europe: Feudalism

The years just after 1000 marked the end of an important stage in European history. Peasant slavery, the centralised Empire, the invasions, the peasant-artisan, and the primarily politico-military-religious town all came to an end and disappeared.

The heavy plough, with a superior harness and more often horse than ox drawn, had replaced the scratch plough;[119] with it appeared specialised village artisans. However, the latter were still dependent on the lord's estate and most often

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[111] Duby (1962, p. 224), Fourquin (1972, p. 55), van Werweke (1923 and 1925).

[112] Perroy (1974, p. 50).

[113] Hilton (1979) considers this to be essential to the dynamic of feudal society, but he treats it in market terms.

[114] Duby (1973a, p. 123), Le Goff (1964, pp. 102–103), Pirenne (1971, pp. 43–57).

[115] Perroy (1974, pp. 53–58).

[116] Duby (1973a, p. 123).

[117] Boutruche (1968, pp. 50–59), Himly (1955), Perroy (1974, pp. 62–68, 70–78, 85–86).

[118] Perroy (1974, pp. 68–69).

[119] Duby (1966b), Fourquin (1972, pp. 91–92), Gilles (1962).

were still slaves. An exception were certain wandering masons. On the estates, the most important artisans included the blacksmith, the cobbler, the butcher, and the baker. Only in the twelve century did these artisans free themselves from the estate.[120] This followed on a reduction in the needs of the estate for the crude local products, as commerce slowly increased.[121] Linked with the change in artisanal production was an increase in the production of iron, which had already slowly developed in the Carolingian period.[122]

Village community control and coordination of land use continued and strengthened, primarily in the north, through the open field system, with its common lands and intermixture of communally-rotated strip fields, which quickly became more complex.[123] With this developed village 'guilds' or brotherhoods.[124] Although there was some individualisation of the usufruct of the land, the labour was collectivised. All peasants, independent of their origins described in the previous section, came to have the same juridical status as unfree serf. This provided a basis for solidarity among all peasants.[125] However, because private property of physical objects, in the capitalist sense, was virtually unknown, people were not tied down, and showed on extreme mobility.[126]

The lords took certain measures in response to the developing strength of the village community, which they had themselves, in most cases, originally created. Instead of the tenures apparently being allocated at the arbitrary will of the lord, their use tended to become hereditary and now formed the basic unit of exploitation. The two main forms became the *censive*, with fixed dues in nature or in money, and the *champart*, with dues calculated as a fixed percent of the harvest.[127] The lord, thus, had to intervene in the inheritance system[128] to ensure that the new dependents would supply the surplus labour. Accepted usage, tradition, became custom. All of this implied a progression of the rights of the couple at

[120] Chapelot and Fossier (1980, pp. 165–166), Duby (1962, p. 259 and 1973a, p. 265), van Werweke (1932).

[121] See Bloch (1952, pp. 95–97), Boutruche (1970, p. 101), Duby (1962, p. 449), and Fourquin (1972, p. 116). Hilton (1969, p. 22) notes that, in England, "production for the market could strengthen manorial organisation, if estate owners chose to expand demesne production, while village industrialisation could work in the opposite direction."

[122] Sprandel (1969).

[123] See Bloch (1952, pp. 35–57), Blum (1971), Juillard (1957), Meynier (1957), and de Planhol (1959) for the continent and Ault (1954 and 1965), Baker and Butlin (1973), Barger (1938), Bishop (1935), Dodgshon (1976), Homans (1969), Miller and Hatcher (1978, pp. 88–97), Orwin (1938), Thirsk (1964b and 1966), and Titow (1966) for Britain. For the possible relationships between field systems and inheritance of land, see Homans (1937 and 1953). Considerable confusion still exists over the terms and concepts pertaining to field systems; see Baker (1969) and Butlin (1961).

[124] Chapelot and Fossier (1980, pp. 157–158), Coornaert (1948), Duby (1973a, p. 110), Le Goff (1964, p. 360).

[125] David (1959), Hilton (1984).

[126] Le Goff (1964, p. 172).

[127] Fourquin (1972, pp. 119–125).

[128] Creighton (1980) provides an extensive discussion of inheritance and family form in medieval Europe.

the expense of those of the larger family group, the community,[129] because the inheritance, in most systems, went primarily to one individual (and his wife). To counteract the united power of the serfs, who controlled the allocation of their own necessary labour, the lords imposed the seigneurial *banalités*, a monopoly over the major means of production, especially the mill for grinding grain and the oven. All other ovens and mills were forbidden and were systematically hunted out.[130] Note, however, that this was done, not to allocate (necessary) labour to grinding and baking, but to be able to extract a new form of tribute.

With the disappearance of a centralised power, the most powerful lords, as the dispersed 'state', took over control of the Royal *ban*,[131] then, allowing the lords under them to adopt fiscal measures, forms of tribute, such as the tithe, tallage, and *Umgeld*. These expanded quickly, but were much less closely linked to production than was the corvée.[132] Such dispersion of power was necessary to meet the local strength of peasant communities.[133] The landed seigneury was turning into the village and banale seigneury.[134] The system of granting fiefs evolved to the point where the administrators held them, taking their place as part of the dominant class.[135] The corvée, becoming less important, was, thus, being replaced by rent in kind. Occasionally even money rent, as opposed to the older money dues, began to be paid, but this was a distinctly non-seigneurial development.[136] In addition, the peasants may more often have originally obtained any money owed as alms rather than by the sale of their agricultural products.[137] Thus, the dependents on the estate were now considered more as material for fiscal imposition rather than as a labour reserve.[138] This increase in tribute at the expense of corvée meant either that the peasants had to have access to greater means of production, especially more land, and be more productive, or that they were much more heavily exploited, because the surplus labour was no longer employed on the lord's demesne.

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[129] See Duby (1973a, p. 209) and Fourquin (1972, pp. 121–122), but also Aries (1973, p. 395).

[130] Bloch (1935b and 1952, pp. 83–84), Boutruche (1970, pp. 138–139), Dockès (1979, pp. 135–136, 216–248), Fourquin (1972, pp. 109–110), Hilton (1984), Latouche (1937).

[131] See Bloch (1935b and 1952, p. 82), Boutruche (1970, p. 132), Dubled (1961), Duby (1962, pp. 452–461 and 1973a, pp. 194–200), and Latouche (1937), but also Fourquin (1972, pp. 109–110).

[132] Bloch (1952, pp. 84–86), Dockès (1979, pp. 136–137), Dubled (1960a), Duby (1962, pp. 449–455 and 1973a, pp. 198–199).

[133] Hilton (1984).

[134] Bloch (1935a), Boutruche (1970, pp. 91–140), Dubled (1960a and 1961), Fourquin (1972, pp. 107–119).

[135] Bloch (1939, pp. 467–478), Boutruche (1970, pp. 84–91), Dubled (1960b, c), Duby (1962, pp. 458–461 and 1973a, pp. 199–200).

[136] Boutruche (1970, pp. 122–123), Fourquin (1972, pp. 138–139).

[137] See Le Goff (1964, p. 310), who points out that records of money rent do not necessarily mean that money, and not produce of the stated value, was paid. In England, this was still occurring at the end of the fifteenth century; see Lomas (1978).

[138] Bloch (1952, p. 104), Boutruche (1968, p. 121 and 1970, pp. 96–102), Duby (1962, p. 487).

Salaried agricultural labourers began to be employed on the estates,[139] although their services were no less compulsory than the corvée.[140] Beginning about 1100, corvée days were being sold; peasants, thus, freed themselves of their labour obligations by paying the lord sums of money. The lord, in turn, used the money received to hire agricultural wage labourers.[141] This gave them a needed flexibility in their labour requirements. Such a trend is indicative of two important phenomena: some corvéable serfs, the ploughmen, united and possessing their means of production, their land and plough team, were producing a surplus which they could transform into commodities; but, at the same time, other peasants, the labourers, with little or no land or other means of production, were being forced to go into dept or to sell their labour power.[142] Developing individualisation was leading to further social differentiation among the peasantry,[143] in spite of the juridical bases of solidarity already mentioned. However, paradoxically, this differentiation also increased solidarity, because the labourers depended on the commons and on the community rights for survival.[144]

Within this period, a significant consolidation of estates occurred in the south of the region,[145] while the pioneering work of opening new land to cultivation through clearing or draining began, especially in the north, the latter reaching its peak about 1150.[146] From very early, the wood of the forests had been important in construction and in the production of iron, as well as being an obstacle to agriculture, and had been subject to transport and exchange.[147]

Assarting or land-clearing took two essentially different forms. In the first form, technical improvements allowed individual peasants or artisans to create their own exploitations in formerly uncultivated areas.[148] This movement indicates that individualism had progressed to such a point within the subordinate class that they were prepared to give up their collective solidarity and mutual aid in the village. In this way, an agrarian individualism became firmly established[149] and, with it, a means to escape from at least some of the feudal ties.[150] Class struggle began to take on a new form. Instead of struggling for the communal

[139]Duby (1962, p. 423), Fourquin (1972, pp. 114–115).

[140]Boutruche (1970, p. 104).

[141]See Duby (1962, p. 506). For more details, but at a later period, see Duby (1959).

[142]Le Goff (1964, pp. 314, 318).

[143]Duby (1966a), Hilton (1978b), Le Goff (1964, pp. 359–360).

[144]See Bishop (1935) and Bois (1976, p. 353). For the communal village by-laws in England, see Ault (1930, 1954, and 1965).

[145]Herlihy (1958).

[146]Boutruche (1970, p. 12), Dubled (1960b), Duby (1962, p. 145), Fossier (1964), Fourquin (1972, p. 82).

[147]Le Goff (1964, pp. 258–263), Lombard (1972, pp. 107–176).

[148]Hilton (1984), Latouche (1948).

[149]Boutruche (1970, p. 13), Duby (1962, pp. 210–211 and 1973a, pp. 229–231), Fourquin (1972, p. 87).

[150]On the role of land-clearing in freeing the peasants, see Lyon (1957).

way of life, within the relations of production, certain peasants began to use the individualism imposed upon them to struggle against the relations of production.

The second form occurred on a much larger scale and consisted in the opening of new territories. This required a formal decision by the lord, including a reflection on the profitability of the enterprise. Money was necessary, as advances for the installation fund, before production could begin. Once it did begin, rent in deniers was expected. Thus, the lord had to offer initial advantages, such as charters, to attract pioneers, and had to publicise the venture;[151] he had to create new *communities* with their own open field systems. He was being forced, by the relations of production, to develop a form of managed collectivisation.[152]

Both of these processes of land-clearing were a part of the class struggle over the individualisation of the production process. Peasants escaped the resulting increased exploitation by setting up on their own on the few occasions when it was possible. But the lords were also forced to devise new means of maintaining and increasing surplus labour extraction in the face of peasant resistance. The lords' expansion to new territories cannot simply be explained by demography or by hunger for additional surplus.[153]

With the complete disappearance of the centralised monarchy, the individual lords took on most of the 'state' powers,[154] while the Church had become responsible for law and order. After 1000 A.D., this took the form of God's peace,[155] as well as the ideology of the three orders,[156] both emphasising social harmony in the same way as the utilitarian notion of market does for capitalism. It was no longer legitimate to plunder one's neighbours, the Christians. Pillage had to be directed towards the exterior, as the Crusades were launched.[157] The dominant class had become more clearly divided into two fractions.[158]

At the same time, women gained greater importance with respect to both the family and the land, with a resulting modification in their ideological image,[159] as the nuclear family began to take shape. However, an exception was the extreme upper reaches of the dominant class, the counts and the King, where heredity became increasingly important as feudal relations expanded, bringing the women to be increasingly dominated.[160] Kinship and feudal ties took on complicated

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[151] Bloch (1939, p. 384 and 1952, pp. 5–17), Boutruche (1970, pp. 15–16), Duby (1962, pp. 148, 155, 160, 167 and 1973a, pp. 226–227, 231–233), Fossier (1964), Fourquin (1972, pp. 83–86).

[152] Blum (1971).

[153] As even by a Marxist such as Hilton (1976b, pp. 115–116).

[154] Bloch (1939, pp. 563–566, 585), Dubled (1960d).

[155] MacKinney (1930).

[156] See Duby (1978, passim) and Le Goff (1964, pp. 313–329 and 1977, pp. 80–90). Guerreau (1980, pp. 177–210) attempts to explain the entire European Middle Ages by the central role of the Church.

[157] Duby (1973a, pp. 185–187).

[158] Duby (1976, p. 52).

[159] Duby (1976, pp. 54, 151, 245), Herlihy (1962), Le Goff (1964, p. 355), McNamara and Wemple (1973 and 1977), Power (1975), Thirsk (1964a).

[160] Duby (1981, *passim*).

inter-relationships.[161]

Labour was mobilised for the construction of churches in the towns and cities. In addition to using its own resources, the Church obtained financial aid from the bourgeois merchants and from the King.[162] Instead of the Church relying on corvée, it hired free labourers and paid them in deniers.[163] Urban residential masons were rare because most buildings were in wood, so that continuous work in one locality was not usually available. Instead, masons were itinerant, often rural, workers involved in the construction of churches, abbeys, and castles. In this way, they avoided the restrictions of the guild system. Because of this and the massive size of Royal and Church projects, the work lent itself to wage labour and contracting.[164] Thus, this production was more significant, in many ways, than the advanced sectors, such as the textile industry.[165] For, in Flanders, this latter industry had begun to produce explicitly for the market.[166] At the same time, guilds developed in the towns, based on much older brotherhoods for solidarity and mutual assistance and protection.[167] This occurred first among the merchants, perhaps because they were in more direct and continuous contact with the dominant rural feudal relations, which the guild structure reflected, than were the artisans.

Markets began to develop, centred around the regional fairs, but this was less important than is often implied, not playing the role of economic detonator imputed to it.[168] Non-market circulation of goods, especially among estates of the same lord, continued. Even in private contracts, land sales for example, substitute

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[161] Guerreau (1980, pp. 184–191), Le Goff (1976), Painter (1960).

[162] Duby (1976, pp. 135–136).

[163] Duby (1973a, pp. 182–183 and 1976, pp. 331–332); for England, see Knoop and Jones (1932 and 1937) and Shelby (1964 and 1970).

[164] Knoop and Jones (1932), Shelby (1970).

[165] See Le Goff (1963), but also Lopez (1976, p. 142).

[166] See Pirenne (1963, pp. 153–163 and 1971, pp. 113–116), van der Wee (1975), van Werveke (1954), and, especially, Verlinden (1972).

[167] Coornaert (1942 and 1948), Pirenne (1963, pp. 44–50, 153–163).

[168] The debate on the role of markets in European history was launched by the work of Pirenne (1963, 1970 and 1971) on the closure of markets by the Arab Empire leading to the Carolingian Empire and the subsequent rebirth of commerce as the economic detonator after 1000. The debate among historians has been carried on notably by Bolin (1953), Bridbury (1969), Brown (1974), Cipolla (1949 and 1962), Dopsch (1966), Frend (1955), Ganshof (1938), Grierson (1954, 1959, and 1960), the essays collected in Havighurst (1958), Hibbert (1953), Himly (1955), Lombard (1972), Lopez (1976), Morrison (1963), and Perroy (1954). Boutruche (1968, pp. 33–64) gives a balanced summary of the evidence. North and Thomas (1971) add a novel twist in considering the manor to be an institution of free contract. All of these authors, however, remain within the problematic of circulation so that the question has only been resolved, in terms of production, by the work of Duby (1962, 1973a and b and 1978) and of Le Goff (1956, 1964 and 1977). This debate has also found its reflection in the more Marxist literature on the transition to capitalism, especially in Dobb (1946) and the resulting discussion in Hilton (1976a). More recently, Wallerstein (1974) has explicitly taken Pirenne's circulationist viewpoint, as further elaborated by Amin (1973), Emmanuel (1972a), and Frank (1969a and b), and has been, in turn, refuted, among others, by Brenner (1976, 1977, and 1978). The debate still continues, with important contributions from Bois (1976 and 1978) and Hilton (1978a), as well as an Althusserian compromise by Resnick and Wolff (1979).

money was often used in payment.[169] On the other hand, coined money was more a symbol of social and political than of economic power. Kings struck money as a manifestation of prestige, with no economic value.[170] The towns were still military and religious, but now much less political, as political power had become dispersed throughout all the estates. Instead, as we have seen, non-agricultural production, especially of buildings and cloth, became centred, to a significant extent, in the towns; they took on a more predominantly economic function.

The development of this non-agricultural production in the towns, with labour not subject to corvée or tribute, meant that much of the requirements in food and other natural resources had to be brought in from outside, from the country, although small urban agricultural plots continued to be important as well. This provided an added stimulus to land clearing, as the bourgeois merchants and artisans still depended on the seigneurial organisation of the country-side.[171] But, because the mode of production was not the same, transfer could not simply be within a particular lord's estate, nor by gifts. Merchant capital came to provide the essential bridge between the two modes of production, while construction of the cathedrals, and the development of scholasticism, directly reflected the increasing surplus rural production.[172]

The period from about 1000 to 1200 is, thus, characterised by the dominance of the corvée-tributary mode of production,[173] by the disappearance of slavery, except for urban domestic slave labour,[174] which tended to increase, and by the development of a subordinate capitalist mode of production. The corvée-tributary mode lost artisanal production to the towns, and to capitalism, but remained dominant in the economy as a whole. Because subordinate, this urban capitalism took on forms dictated by the dominant mode, especially as seen in the guilds.[175] Perhaps the city wall could be taken as a symbol of the division between modes of production, for, although urban monasteries and churches, and the town castles, were an encroachment, it did contrast with the gradual mergence of city into country in antique times.[176]

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[169] Herlihy (1957), van Werweke (1932).

[170] Grierson (1954), Le Goff (1964, p. 313).

[171] Le Goff (1964, pp. 128–129).

[172] See Duby (1976, p. 115, 154) and Le Goff (1964, pp. 87–93). In his book, Duby lays the materialist basis for Panovsky's (1957) well-known thesis linking scholasticism and the cathedrals.

[173] Duby (1978, pp. 186–205) calls it the seigneurial mode of production, but the argument of the previous chapter means that this is essentially a special case of the corvée-tributary mode. Unfortunately, Duby does not consider the possibility of combining several modes of production. Boutruche (1968 and 1970) also considers the seigneury to be the basis of feudalism, and provides a detailed comparative study with antiquity and Asia.

[174] Bloch (1952, p. 99), Boutruche (1968, pp. 156–157).

[175] "The *medieval guild system*, of which analogous forms were developed to a limited extent in both Athens and Rome, and which was of such crucial importance in Europe for the evolution of both capitalists and free labourers, is a *limited* and a yet inadequate form of the relationship between capital and wage-labour." (Marx, 1976, p. 1029).

[176] See Hilton (1979), Le Goff (1964, p. 363), and Pirenne (1963, pp. 47–50), although their inter-

In continental Europe, the failure to institutionalise centralised tribute collection, combined with the invasions, ultimately led to a dispersion of political powers, to feudalism. Although corvée, at first, took on most importance, with development of the struggle over the production process, and its individualisation, the lords came to rely primarily on tribute. All of this had several important effects. In the first place, it led to a great extension of gifts and exchanges, of circulation of goods, which in the proper conditions could lead to a developed market. More important, because there was no central 'state' to direct the major works, such as construction of buildings and clearing of land, these had to be carried out as more individualised projects, whether by the bourgeois, the peasant, or the lord. Without the centralised 'state', and with the progression of the contradictions of the corvée-tributary mode of production to a point where production was being decommunalised, individual peasants of certain strata could escape from their direct lords, although this, in turn, meant that other strata became attached to the glebe.[177] However, the tendential law had not developed accordingly, so that the lords avoided much of the direct management of surplus labour through dependence on tribute. Then, with the clear separation of two distinct modes of production, we find the potentiality for a market, for an individualistic ideology, and for a wage labour pool. And yet the town was not to be a sufficient base for the capitalist organisation of labour allocation; what was to be required was the nation-state,[178] something which only began to emerge in the thirteenth century with the strengthening of Royal power.[179]

The contrast, on certain points, between the continental and English situations is instructive.[180] The English King, even before the Norman conquest, had enough authority to limit the power of the other lord's fiscal extraction and to keep it for the Royalty;[181] this conflict over Royal fiscal measures was at the origin of both the Domesday Book[182] and the Magna Carta.[183] The basis of this power lay in the dispersion of the King's estates throughout every corner of the land. This made Royal influence ever-present, a result, only possible because of an extended road system,[184] which was institutionalised by the conquest and the Domesday

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pretations differ from mine.

[177] Bloch (1921 and 1960, p. 79), Boutruche (1970, pp. 70, 80–82), Fourquin (1972, p. 131).

[178] See Ennen (1956) and Le Goff (1964, p. 139), as well as Chapter 8 below.

[179] Guénée (1967), Harding (1980).

[180] See Duby (1962, p. 457), following Perroy (1961) and Bloch (1960, passim, esp. pp. 56–57, 90–96, 103), from whom the idea of this comparison between England and the continent originates. See also Ennen (1956).

[181] See Bloch (1939, pp. 594–595 and 1960, pp. 55–57), Boutruche (1968, pp. 265–273), Campbell (1975), Fourquin (1972, pp. 68, 108, 110–111), Loyn (1957), and Maddicott (1975); Boutruche finds one of the causes of the retarded development of feudal ties here to be strength of the village communities. For the comparison with the continent, see Le Goff (1964, pp. 131–138).

[182] Harvey (1975).

[183] Holt (1955 and 1965, p. 28), Painter (1947).

[184] Stenton (1936).

inquiry.[185] One 'natural' ally of the King in this extended network of power was the bourgeois of the developing towns.[186] 'State' power was here decentralised, but not dispersed. Because of this power, the lords were forced to concentrate more on production on their demesnes for their revenues, whether by direct management or by farming them out. Thus, in the twelfth century, lords had depended on leasing their lands to farmers; in the thirteenth, they replaced tenants with their own local administrators,[187] as the relations of power between lords and King changed.

Land-clearing and drainage greatly expanded, a century later than on the continent,[188] but, here, it could only occur in direct conflict with the King, especially over control of the Royal forests.[189] Seigneurial power over the peasants, and the strength of the village communities, was clearly associated with this colonisation, as was the growth of the community-based open field system.[190] As immediately after the Norman conquest, during the great period of cathedral-building on the continent (1150–1250), the English King continued to concentrate on castle-building and repair[191] and on the strengthening of the prison system throughout the island[192] in order to consolidate his power. English cathedral-building, especially in its Gothic form, only began in earnest subsequently (1250–1350).[193]

All of this led to a reinforcement of serfdom towards 1300,[194] accompanied by

[185] See Holt (1965, pp. 23–24), John (1979), and Stafford (1980). The greatest delegation of Royal power, with its tight limitations, occurred in Durham; see Cam (1957), Fraser (1956), and Scammell (1966).

[186] Platt (1979, p. 27).

[187] See Duby (1962, p. 457), Fourquin (1972, p. 111), Harvey (1973), Miller (1971), and Stone (1962), although Harvey attributes the change to direct management of the estates and the differences between England and the continent to a rise in English prices and not to differences in Royal fiscal policy. Miller also looks to inflation but does not even consider the latter possibility. Dockès (1979, pp. 298–299) explains this movement by the repressive force of the state.

[188] See Bridbury (1978), Harvey (1974), Miller and Hatcher (1978, pp. 33–41), Postan (1937), and Titow (1962). Bishop (1935) discusses the relationships between land-clearing and the open field system.

[189] See Bazeley (1921), Holt (1965, pp. 25–29), and Miller and Hatcher (1978, pp. 34–35). On the continent, many Royal forest hunting rights had been given away much earlier, removing this constraint to land-clearing; see Fairon (1925).

[190] Miller and Hatcher (1978, pp. 95–96).

[191] Beeler (1956), Brown (1955).

[192] Pugh (1955).

[193] For earlier continental influences, see Bony (1949).

[194] See Hilton (1969 and 1973), Kosminsky (1935 and 1955), and Postan (1937). In his later article, Kosminsky imposes Stalin's notion of a necessary independent petty commodity producer period between feudal demesne production and capitalist farming. Dobb (1946) and most of the participants in the subsequent transition debate (Hilton, 1976a) accept this point of view, as do Bois (1976) and Hilton (1978a). However, the small peasant paying money rents is not a petty commodity producer in any accepted sense, as we have seen, because only the surplus labour, and not the necessary labour, is transformed into commodities and money. I, thus, disagree with the assertion that the origin of capitalist farming can be found in the small estates, earlier integrated into the market. To a certain extent, Britnell (1980) sustains my point of view.

a distinct impoverishment of the peasants.[195] Corvée gained ground over money-rent. Freedom from such service became the criterion of freedom of person.[196] This does not, however, mean that there was not very extensive use of 'wage' labour as well, performed primarily by descendants of slaves.[197] At least until the Black Death, these 'wages' followed the cost of living (the just price?), showing little or no effect of a labour market.[198] It is also noteworthy that men and women earned equal 'wages'.[199] However, at least on rural estates, such 'wages' consisted most often in a rent-free holding not owing services, in the use of the lord's plough-team and men on the holding (the Saturday plough), in the produce of a small portion (the sown acre) of the lord's demesne, and in food. Most of these were evaluated in money terms and some even could be replaced by a money equivalent.[200] They were not a payment for labour power, but a direct portion of the estate's necessary products and labour, redistributed to those members of the subordinate class who primarily performed surplus labour.

One immediate result of these changes was to halt the trend towards hereditary tenures, a trend which continued on the continent.[201] However, although the peasant land market was active, it primarily involved odd plots, not often affecting basic family holdings.[202] Another result was the entry of the English King into the domain of legislating on private law,[203] while Edward I created the first national army.[204]

At the same time, the textile industry began to move out of the towns, away from guild control, to the manors, as a technical revolution introduced the water-powered fulling mill,[205] while many new towns for industry and commerce began to be planned and constructed.[206] The export of wool, already of major proportions, began to be rivalled by the export of cloth, as the English textile industry was soon to outstrip the Flemish.[207] Customs dues began to form a basic part of

[195] Hilton (1965a), May (1973), Post (1975), Titow (1962).

[196] Hilton (1965a), Scammell (1974).

[197] Ault (1930 and 1961), Beveridge (1936 and 1955), Hilton (1973, pp. 37–38), Miller and Hatcher (1978, pp. 220–221), Postan (1954).

[198] See Beveridge (1936). More generally, it would be very important to ascertain how the "just price" of labour was determined in the European Middle Ages; Le Goff's (1964, p. 360 and 177, pp. 167, 207) remark, following Baldwin (1959), that it was simply the market price needs re-examination.

[199] Beveridge (1955).

[200] Postan (1954).

[201] Fourquin (1972, pp. 121–126), Harvey (1973), Searle (1979), Titow (1962).

[202] Faith (1966).

[203] Miller (1952).

[204] Freeman (1967), Keeney (1947), Maddicott (1975).

[205] See Carus-Wilson (1941 and 1944) and Platt (1979, pp. 106–109), but also Miller (1964 and 1965). In a comparative study, Kellenbenz (1963) demonstrates the great advance which England then held over the rest of Europe. For subsequent development of the English textile industry, see Carus-Wilson (1950 and 1959) and Gray (1924).

[206] See Carus-Wilson (1965), who describes, in a microcosm, many of the developments discussed in this paragraph, and Platt (1979, pp. 29–31).

[207] Carus-Wilson (1950), Gray (1924), Miller and Hatcher (1978, p. 247), Thrupp (1972), van der

Royal financial revenues.[208] Local markets developed to supply the artisans and workers cut off from direct agricultural production.[209]

In this period, the thirteenth century, "labour dues are most strongly represented in the area which is most thickly populated, most industrialised, most completely involved in exchange and in foreign trade." (Kosminsky, 1935, p. 40; see also 1955). This occurred on the large estates: "The obvious response to a growing production for exchange on such estates was a still further development of labour services..." (Kosminsky, 1935, p. 44).[210] This area roughly coincided with that where the open field system predominated. Although apparently a reinforcement of corvée-tributary relations of production on these large estates, increased corvée, along with the struggle over the village community, was, in fact, the first step towards their rupture. In contrast, the small estates and those farthest from capitalist pressures, in the north of England, those which had earlier changed to use of money rents and extensive hired labour, but also much rent in kind,[211] remained subject to domination by the corvée-tributary mode, in the same way as the guilds in the cities.

On the continent, as we have seen, the situation was very different because taxes, tolls, and fines could provide large revenue for the lords, but necessarily led to their lack of interest in demesne production. The additional surplus was used more exclusively for conspicuous consumption and construction of religious buildings, as textile production remained under urban guild control.[212] On the other hand, once the absolutist state developed, it and the individual lords came more and more to compete for these fiscal resources, providing the peasants with some space for manoeuvre.[213] They could gain some protection from the lord by seeking alliance with the Royalty, which does not mean that there were not massive peasants revolts against state taxation as well. More important, they were able to redevelop links of solidarity and communality,[214] again sometimes with aid from the monarchy. The combination of these factors eventually led, not to large estates as in England, but to a parcellised, land-owning peasantry which

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Wee (1975), van Werweke (1954).

[208] Gray (1924), Miller (1972).

[209] Britnell (1981), Platt (1979, pp. 26–31, 92–114).

[210] See also Dobb (1946, pp. 38–40).

[211] See Kosminsky (1935 and 1955). For the continuing differences in labour services between areas into the fourteenth century, see Gray (1914).

[212] Van Werveke (1954) tries to explain the urban textile industry by the merchant-entrepreneurs lacking accounting capabilities; he does not consider the possibility of indigenous industry on the seigneuries, nor why it did not occur in Flanders. A detailed comparative study for continental Europe between Loire and Rhine and for England of the inter-relationships among land-clearing and field systems, the construction industry and cathedrals, and the textile industry is urgently required.

[213] Bois (1976, pp. 193, 203–204).

[214] See Bloch (1952, pp. 172–189) and Blum (1971). Hechter and Brustein (1980) attach importance to peasant solidarity, but explain variations by different modes of production instead of by the development of the contradictions of one mode of production.

the absolutist state could tax as individual units.[215] For even when the English lords subsequently reverted to leasing, in the fourteenth century and later, the production units usually remained large, in spite of certain attempts at competitive letting of small plots, a practice which quickly exhausted the land.[216]

Another important result of this difference, besides the extent of direct involvement of the dominant class in production, was that, while fiscal revenue could be supplied by the productive unit as a whole, demesne obligations could become separated from household labour, providing a bridge from corvée to wage labour, both of which are distinct from the activities of the domestic unit.[217]

The period following 1200 in Europe, including England, saw the beginning of the transition between the corvée-tributary and capitalist modes of production which was only to end, in England, with the triumph of the latter in the sixteenth century.[218] However, this transition can only be understood if its preconditions are traced through the period from 1000 to 1200. The class struggle, which led to the breakdown of the community organisation and the individualisation of the direct producers, resulted in increased exploitation. The increased surplus labour, in turn, permitted the development of the social division of labour which, because of the individualism, could take place in towns and which could support an enlarged market. Increased consumption needs by the lords did not lead to greater exploitation; on the contrary, more intensive agricultural exploitation permitted additional consumption[219] and hence led to all of the subsequent developments. The 'prime mover' was not such increasing consumption needs, but class struggle over the production process. Most students of the transition to capitalism have ignored this basis in feudal agriculture.[220] Only in this way can the specificity of Europe be accounted for, and within Europe, the precocity of England. The contrast with India should make this even clearer.

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[215] See Brenner (1976) for this paragraph, although he misses the significance of the monarchy and the lords having to *share* the fiscal revenue on the continent, so that the latter were pushed to parcellisation rather than to direct involvement in production as they were in England. See also Bois (1976, p. 217), who, however, (see also 1978) sees feudalism as most advanced in France in the thirteenth century, i.e. where it is based on small-scale peasant producers paying rent. He, thus, misses completely the greater development of the individual-communal *contradiction* in England.

[216] Du Boulay (1965), Halcrow (1955), Harvey (1969), Hilton (1965b), Lomas (1978).

[217] See Middleton (1979) for the later period of English history.

[218] This period has been so often studied that more details need not be repeated here; a classical work still worth reading is Dobb (1946) and a little-known article worth considering is Walker (1937). The most important recent contribution has been made by Brenner (1976 and 1978).

[219] See Hibbert (1953).

[220] The important exception is Brenner (1976 and 1978); see also Hilton (1984). Thus, for example, if as Dobb (1946, p. 87) says, the early bourgeoisie's "income, in whatever form it was immediately acquired, necessarily represented a share in the product of the peasant cultivator or the urban craftsman", then these workers must have been productive enough and socially organised in such a way as to allow such a surplus to be extracted. Only by the fundamental differences in exploitation of agricultural labour can one solve Dobb's (p. 160) puzzle over why the precocious merchant capitalism of the continent did not mature.

4.6 The development of capitalism

Perhaps the most important difference distinguishing India from Europe in the Middle Ages was the unity of agricultural and artisanal production, the lack of a split between town and country.[221] However, this is only another way of saying that a subordinate, although eventually deadend, capitalist mode of producton was already developing in the European towns.[222] The question is why?

The answer is, of course, complex, but revolves around the different ways in which the contradictions of the corvée-tributary mode of production developed in the two cases.[223] First note that although Europe had a subordinate capitalist mode of production in certain urban centres from an early date, it was dominated and permeated by the corvée-tributary mode. This subordinate capitalism did not develop into a dominant mode of production, although its very existence played some role in the early transition. In the end, it had to be destroyed along with the rural feudal relations. The town/country distinction in Europe was only a phenomenal manifestation of much more profound transformations in process: the internal contradictions of the corvée-tributary mode were developing to the breaking point. And the key cannot be found in the development of trade, because this occurred earlier and more extensively in India. We have, thus, had to move back somewhat in time and look at this particular mode of production more closely.

In both regions under study, the dominant class had to create the basic production units whose surplus labour could be controlled. In Europe, this succeeded slave production overrun by tribal communities. However, these tribal communities had long contact with the Roman Empire, and, in addition, were invaders, thus not as unified and organised as if settled in their original area. As we have seen, this led to a convergence towards village communities composed of fairly individualised, although cooperating, producers. The Mauryan Empire had to deal with united, native tribal communities, which were self-sufficient. Those which it created developed along the same lines. These communities had, thus, much more class resistance to the impulsion towards increasing dominant class power to make labour allocation decisions and towards greater extraction of surplus through individualisation.

In both situations, the dominant class made decisions about surplus labour allocation through tribute and corvée. During the period of creation of the village

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[221] Recent work on town and country and the transition includes Abrams and Wrigley (1978), Hilton (1979), Le Goff (1972), Merrington (1975), Platt (1979), and Williams (1973b).

[222] Brenner (1978) provides an excellent discussion of this European town-country relationship.

[223] Rey (1973, pp. 69–76, 156–165) paints this transition too simply. He talks of a double necessity: the landlords had to move the peasants off the lands to increase their rents to meet their growing consumption needs while the capitalists needed the landlords to provide them, in this way, with the required free labour. This is pure description, which explains nothing; it results from a restriction, especially for feudalism, of relations of production to extraction of surplus labour, rather than also including decisions about allocation of productive labour. However, Rey does point to certain important differences between Europe and Asia.

community structure, corvée predominated in both cases, being replaced more and more by tribute as institutionalisation advanced. However, the resulting combination was different. In Europe, the dominant class remained directly involved in production, on the demesne, and, in the most important case, England, continued for a long period to depend primarily on corvée labour. Where it did not, the development of capitalism was retarded.[224] The evolution towards tribute and money rent (plus tolls and other taxes), with its less intensive involvement of the domininant class in labour allocation, was regressive, in spite of appearances, because, as in France, it allowed the lord to escape from production, while leaving necessary and surplus labour activities united. And it subsequently led to the early continental bourgeoisie investing in rent-producing land rather than becoming involved in capitalist agriculture and rural industry.[225] Corvée necessarily forced involvement of the dominant class in production, but also meant the first step towards a physical separation between productive and domestic labour while allowing an easier confiscation of the means of production, because the peasants had less independence and less control of their labour time. In India, the dominant class, as the 'state', depended on tribute, and very early abandoned its role in production. Thereafter, the corvée was used only for major works, primarily the transportation and communications network, which did not directly yield products for the dominant class.

The more direct involvement of the European dominant class in production coincided with its dispersion where the production occurred. Invasions accelerated this tendency; they did not culminate in conquest, but at most in integration, because of this very dispersion. Even in England, the strong Royal power was decentralised throughout the island. On the other hand, the institutionalisation of tribute collection in India permitted the creation and maintenance of the dominant class as a centralised 'state', which invaders could then easily conquer.

The contrast is most striking for *the* most important project, land clearing.[226]

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[224] The situation was different once capitalism had become dominant in Europe. Such was the case for the 'second serfdom' in eastern Europe. See, especially, Brenner (1976).

[225] See Merrington (1975).

[226] Kosambi (1956, p. 53) clearly explains the critical importance of land clearing: "Yet it was the Indus alone that could develop a great urban civilisation when the rest of the country supported a thin savage population that eked out a precarious livelihood by food-gathering. This was inevitable. The Nile and Mesopotamia showed great parallel development, the Mississippi was unsettled till the last century, the Amazon remains undeveloped to this day. Clearly the river by itself does not suffice. The common factor of the earliest riparian urban cultures is that the rivers concerned flow through a desert. The jungles on the Amazon cannot be cleared without modern heavy machinery, while the tremendous sod of the Mississippi prairies was first broken by heavy ploughs which were not sent to that region till the last century. There was no possibility that primitive man on either of the two rivers could emerge from irregular food-gathering to secure, large-scale food production. The desert was necessary because there were no heavy forests to clear. ... Neolithic man cannot clear great tropical forests with his stone tools, particularly in alluvial soil as in the Gangetic basin. The desert made real agriculture, yielding a substantial surplus, possible, as well as necessary. It promoted the search for materials such as timber and metals, with exchange of commodities along the great trade-route provided by the river itself."

See also Bloch (1952, p. 6). Note that slash and burn clearing cannot provide a basis for permanent

In Europe, with no powerful centralised 'state', the work had to be carried out on individual initiative. This led to an urban construction industry and the cathedrals, but also, at least in England, to investment in rural industry. In India, the initial land clearing was accomplished by the Mauryan 'state'. When initiative devolved, it went to the village communities, not to individual members of the dominant class, who were no longer directly involved in labour allocation in the production process.

Although 'wage labour' seemed to make an appearance at a very early date in Indian history, it was, in fact, only a form of labour allocation through industrial corvée in disguise. With one centralised 'employer', there was no possibility of a labour market developing. All 'wages' could be centrally regulated, while total responsibility for subsistence did not fall on the individual. In contrast, in Europe, wage labour developed through individual dispossession of the means of production which implied an individual responsibility. This was only possible with the partial breakdown of the solidarity of the village community, which in its turn allowed exploitation to be drastically increased.[227] Escape from the corvée-tributary mode of dependence was an individual escape, to the cities or to uncleared land. However, this process was immediately incorporated under the dominant mode of production with the "just price" and the guilds. These did not develop towards a dominant capitalism. But the very dispersion of the dominant feudal class meant that this growing capitalism could not be adequately controlled and dominated. The new mode of production developed, not where it was strongest in its corvée-tributary dominated form, but, in its urban form, where it was least controlled, as in the ports, and, in its rural form, where the contradictions were most developed, on the large agricultural estates based on corvée labour.

Thus, paradoxically, the strength of the subordinate class in India, united in the communal village, impeded the development of capitalism.[228] This strength, and the resulting draw in the class struggle, may even go a fair way towards explaining the degree of institutionalisation of social class relations as the caste system. It did not allow the separation of agricultural and artisanal production, nor the dispersal of the dominant class, with its accompanying involvement in production, and the necessity of circulation of goods potentially leading to a market. It also forced a reliance on tribute instead of corvée labour, which meant that the direct producers could not easily be dispossessed of their means of production.

Capitalism developed in Europe in an articulation with other modes of production. At the same time, the dominant mode was in a process of transformation through the development of its internal contradictions. Neither the capitalist nor

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agriculture; more sophisticated equipment is necessary to remove stumps and roots to allow ploughing and harrowing. Hilton (1965b) expresses certain reservations about the progressive aspects of land-clearing in the European feudal period.

[227] See, for example, Dobb (1946, p. 46), who, however, believes that increased exploitation simply resulted from a sudden desire for the dominant class to increase its consumption.

[228] Bois (1976, p. 345) notes the same effect in Normandy.

the waged worker was created out of nothing, for they were both produced by a radical transformation within the existing class relations, which at first also left those relations intact alongside the new ones. Hence the articulation.

This process, perhaps, allows us to conceive more easily of the transformation out of capitalism. The problem of transition, in the perspective of historical materialism, seems to have been viewed in two lights. At times, it seems to take the form of a combination of modes of production, as with feudalism and early capitalism, whereby the one is in the process of replacing the other. Then again, it appears to be the revolutionary disintegration of a given unique mode of production which engenders another, as with the envisioned advent of communism.[229] Neither of these is sufficient in itself. The internal contradictions of the dominant mode must develop and break forth.[230] But this mode does not then disappear overnight. The working class does not take over control of society; it must, itself, be radically transformed so that it is no longer the working class, seller of labour power, but the embryo of the new society.

[229] Lukacs (1971, pp. 243, 283) makes just this opposition.

[230] "... the historical development of the antagonisms, immanent in a given form of production, is the only way in which that form of production can be dissolved and a new form established." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 488). "... new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society." (Marx, 1970, p. 21).

Part III

Capitalist societies

5
The labour theory of value

5.1 The steps in the analysis

The social labour in any society is always composed of a variety of direct concrete forms of activities. The major problem is the allocation of the total labouring time available in the society to the different tasks. For various reasons, the allocation of labour to productive activities must be central. These activities are essential to the survival of any society.[1] At least until now, creation of use values has occupied a considerable portion of that available time in all forms of society.[2] More important, however, is the fact that decisions about allocation of a significant part of social labour, the productive labour, are made, at least in class societies, by the dominant class, and, hence, must involve extraction of surplus labour. This, in turn, implies the organisation of many other activities to this end around the production process. Thus, the way in which productive labour is allocated will have repercussions throughout the entire system of human activities. Under the capitalist mode of production, this basic allocation of social labour, or at least of productive labour, follows the law of value. This law is the capitalist relations of production, but it is concerned primarily with allocation to the virtual exclusion of production and control of productive labour. However, under this mode, not all social labour is so allocated, for domestic labour exists outside these relations; this will be treated in the next chapter.

In order to understand the labour theory of value, the first thing one must do is to eradicate the idea that the goal of the demonstration is to determine the value of objects, of commodities, and, hence, their prices.[3] Although prices can be explained by the theory, this is no more than a secondary result. Only by such a radically changed point of view can we avoid the apparent circularity of such problems as the reduction of complex to simple labour. Any equation of different types of concrete labour, through production for a market and subsequent exchange on that market of the products of labour, is arbitrary in the sense that

[1] "Every child knows that a nation which ceased to work, I will not say for a year, but even for a few weeks, would perish" (Marx and Engels, 1975, p. 196). See also Sirianni (1982, pp. 283–286).

[2] Just how much time, especially under 'primitive communism', has been subject to debate since the work of Sahlins (1968). However, the point is very important. For example, Deleplace's (1979) rejection of this basis as being ahistorical leads him to a form of bourgeois sociological stratification theory of the allocation of individuals by their socialisation.

[3] Elson (1979b) makes this point.

it serves only to allocate labour to specific but qualitatively incomparable tasks.[4] The values, exchange values, and prices of the products are only more or less phenomenal manifestations or symbolic representations of this labour allocation process, which have received too much emphasis in the past.[5]

Marx's development of the labour theory of value, in the three volumes of *Capital*, proceeds through three basic levels of analysis.[6] The first level, the production and circulation of commodities, occupies the first five chapters of Volume I. Here we find the presentation of the "specific social mechanism of production, allocation and control of productive labour" within the relations of production. At this level, the phenomenal form under study is the commodity, its production and exchange. This corresponds to the inner law of the allocation of productive labour in capitalist society. Marx calls the correspondence, and the lack of visibility of this inner law, the fetishism of commodities.

The second level of analysis, beginning with the sixth chapter of Volume I and continuing through Volume II, concerns the sale of labour power. This introduces the second part of the relations of production, "if decisions about allocation are not universal, surplus labour is extracted", which reacts back to modify the first part. Here, the most important phenomenal form is the wage which appears to be paid for work done, but which is in fact payment for the value of the labour power bought. The wage labour side of the capital relationship is thus studied in Volume I. In Volume II, Marx studies the other side of the relationship, the circulation and reproduction of capital.[7]

The third, and final, main level of analysis, in Volume III, involves the equalisation of profit rates and the division of surplus value. The analytic transforma-

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[4] "In the determination of value, it is a question of social labour time in general, the quantity of labour which society generally has at its disposal, and whose relative absorption by the various products determines, as it were, their respective social importance." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 882; see also I, p. 356, cited at the beginning of Chapter 1 above). "... in a commodity economy. The equality of two amounts of abstract labor signifies their equality as parts of total social labor — an equality which is only established in the process of social equalization of labor by means of the equalization of the products of labor" (Rubin, 1973, p. 155).

[5] "Value is not the product of labor but is a material, fetish expression of the working activity of people" (Rubin, 1973, p. 147, n.20). Thus, Cohen (1979), with his "creation" of value, is attacking a misconception of the theory of value, and, once more, missing the point entirely.

[6] These do not correspond exactly to the levels of analysis for social classes, presented in Chapter 2 and to be applied in Chapter 7. Although all three are situated at the first three levels for social class analysis, simple commodity production, mode of production, and its circulation process, the combination of elements is different: circulation is, in a certain sense, more essential to understanding the law of value from the beginning.

[7] Thus, it is striking, for example, that Chapter 25 of Volume I, on "The general law of capitalist accumulation" treats wage labour, the industrial reserve army, etc. and apparently not the accumulation of constant capital: "Production of surplus-value is the absolute law of this mode of production." (p. 618). "The greater the social wealth, the functioning of capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and, therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat and the productiveness of its labour, the greater the industrial reserve army. The same causes which develop the expansive power of capital, develop also the labour-power at its disposal. ... *This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation*." (p. 655) This contrasts with the corresponding Chapter 21 of Volume II, "Accumulation and reproduction on an extended scale."

tion from exchange values and surplus value to prices of production and profits produces important changes in the theory of the way in which productive labour is allocated. The partition of surplus value determines which social classes or class fractions can make decisions about the allocation of productive labour, and especially of the surplus labour. Here we have several layers from phenomenal forms to inner laws. Prices of production, salaries, profits, rent, and interest represent exchange values with their corresponding values and surplus value which, in turn, represent the specific allocation of productive labour, including the surplus. On the other hand, the phenomenal form of individual competing capitals corresponds to the inner law of social capital as a relation of global control over the allocation of all productive labour.[8]

It is important to note here that I, following Marx, am stating that the inner law of the production and circulation of commodities *determines* the way decisions are made about the allocation of productive labour, and the accompanying extraction of surplus labour, as surplus value. For the order of levels of analysis follows the order of determination. This assertion, however, goes directly against much of orthodoxy which considers surplus extraction to be premordial.[9] Certain authors, such as Bernardo (1977), Hodges (1960), and Negri (1979), have even gone so far as to maintain that surplus value extraction is (somehow) prior to the labour theory of value.[10] But commodity production does constitute the framework within which the possibilities of surplus labour extraction are constrained, and it does exert pressures on this process. The reverse is not true. Such is the meaning of determination. The most serious danger of placing surplus value first is that it emphasises the fact of surplus labour extraction to the detriment of the *specific*, total context within which productive labour is produced, allocated, and controlled, thus, destroying the historical specificity of capitalism.[11]

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[8] Rosdolsky (1977), among others, considers Volumes I and II to deal with non-competing 'social capital', with a passage to competitive capital in Volume III. This would imply that the successive levels provide a progression from the inner laws to the phenomenal forms, as Banaji (1980) and Sayer (1979) propose. However, as we shall see, in the first two volumes, individual capitals are already in competition, at the phenomenal level, within a branch, i.e. over ways to produce a given commodity. Thus, throughout *Capital*, the opposition between social and competing capitals is present.

[9] See, however, Lenin (1961, pp. 360–361): "In his *Capital*, Marx first analyses the simplest, most ordinary and fundamental, most common and everday *relation* of bourgeois (commodity) society, a relation encountered billions of times, viz. the exchange of commodities. In this very simple phenomenon (in this ''cell" of bourgeois society) analysis reveals *all* the contradictions (or the germs of all the contradictions) of modern society." For Marx, besides the structure of *Capital* itself, consider: "... the contradiction of commodity and money is the abstract and general form of all contradictions inherent in the bourgeois mode of labour." (1970, p. 96) and "What is overlooked, finally, is that already the simple forms of exchange value and of money latently contain the opposition between labour and capital etc." (1973a, p. 248).

[10] Stalinism also emphasises the means of appropriation of surplus, confounded with juridical forms of property, superposed on a technically conceived production process, as fundamentally distinguishing modes of production. For a critique of this, as founded in distribution, not production, see Clarke (1977 and 1980).

[11] Elson (1979b) makes this point.

5.2 The production and exchange of commodities

In the analysis of the allocation of productive labour, the first problem to be solved is how specific tasks are selected and the discrete concrete types of labour divided among them. Under all other modes of production, decisions, whether for 'traditional', rational planning, or other reasons, are taken directly in terms of concrete forms of labour and of the corresponding use values required; the allocation is carried out directly. Only under the capitalist mode of production is there no such direct regulation of production.[12] Production is, thus, not carried out for directly forseeable use, but is conducted by private initiative[13] for exchange on a market. Only when this exchange has been accomplished does the private production receive social recognition. Here lies a basic contradiction between private and social labour.[14] This is the production of commodities; these may be material goods or services; the only essential differences are that the latter cannot be stocked and that their producer does not own the raw materials upon which the labour is performed. Such production means that the various incomparable types of private concrete labour must, by some inner law, be reduced to a common form for social comparison, and allocation, to be possible. This is general *abstract labour* which contrasts with particular concrete labour activities,[15] the basis of an aspect of the fundamental contradiction which takes on special importance at the next level. Labour is abstract in the sense that it forms part of the total socially-recognised (productive) labour of society, independent of its particular concrete private form. This abstraction is reflected in the increasing mobility and interchangeability of workers and of their labour.[16]

Abstract labour is commodity-producing society's *evaluation* of concrete labour in its capability to meet that society's socially-determined needs. This evaluation occurs when concrete labour becomes congealed in commodities and they are exchanged on the market.[17] This evaluation depends on the amount of the total labour of the society consumed in producing the commodity, hence on the con-

[12] See the quotation from Marx ending with the sentence about "the essence of bourgeois society" given in the text of the first chapter. For a stimulating study of how this level of analysis is related to class struggle, see Cleaver (1979).

[13] We shall see in what follows that this 'private' initiative need entail no more than a radical separation between producer and consumer. It may come from a unique source, the state.

[14] See especially Lipietz (1979a, pp. 82–85).

[15] "On the market, products are not exchanged in terms of equal, but of equalized quantities of labor." (Rubin, 1973, p. 164). In passing, Balibar (1968, p. 213) notes that social (i.e. abstract) labour time in no way coincides with empirically measurable concrete labour time. This concept of abstract labour is contradicted by certain remarks of Marx, for example in the "Critique of the Gotha Programme" (1974, p. 346) and in *Capital* (1967, III, p. 176, 815, 828). The clearest discussions of value theory as labour allocation, at this first level of analysis, may be found in Arthur (1976), Elson (1979a), Ganssman (1983), Rubin (1973), Sayer (1979, Ch. 2), Sweezy (1942, Ch. 2 and 3), and Weeks (1981); de Vroey (1982) provides a typology of different approaches. Sohn-Rethel's (1978) work on commodities is also important here.

[16] Gleicher (1983) attempts to base abstract labour ontologically on this fact.

[17] On this evaluation, see Duménil (1980, esp. pp. 36–37, 56–57). On various ways in which labour is evaluated on the margins of capitalism, see Ortiz (1979).

crete labor time. But it also depends on how much of the commodity can be exchanged on the market, because only in this way can social needs enter the determination. Because of this role of the market, the measure of abstract labour is not necessarily directly proportional to concrete labour time, although the latter is the most fundamental determinant of the exchange proportions. Thus, there is an interplay between needs, as expressed by demand on the market, and the time necessary to fulfil those needs, as expressed by supply.

Demand is primary in a certain sense, just as is use value; supply must adapt to demand, as the expression of need, by a reallocation of labour.[18] However, the production process and allocation of labour time ultimately determine needs because they delimit what totality of needs can be met, as well as constantly creating new needs for means of production; those needs which are given lower priority by society are not fulfilled because of the finite amount of labour available. As always, this determination is reciprocal, in that, within this framework, needs determine what tasks labour is applied to, but are, in turn, weighted by the time required to accomplish these tasks. In the determination of abstract labour, production creates both pressures and constraints, while social need provides primarily pressures. Supply and demand are, then, the phenomenal forms of the interaction between production times and social needs; abstract labour is the result of the two.[19] Note, however, that both this way in which production times are evaluated as social costs and the structure of needs will be radically modified as we move through the levels of analysis; so also must the concept of abstract labour be changed.

Abstract labour must necessarily be *social labour* in that it corresponds to production of a socially-required use value.[20] The labour is not social, has not produced a socially-required use value, if the product does not find a consumer, a buyer on the market. In this way, it takes its exchange value form. What is initially private labour can only be demonstrated to be social labour by exchange of the product. Abstract labour congealed in a commodity is value; it takes its phenomenal form as exchange value, the relations of exchange between the given commodity and all others. The fundamental representation of this form is money.[21]

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[18] "... if the use-value of individual commodities depends on whether they satisfy a particular need then the use-value of the mass of the social product depends on whether it satisfies the quantitatively definite social need for each particular kind of product in an adequate manner, and whether the labour is therefore proportionally distributed among the different spheres in keeping with these social needs, which are quantitatively circumscribed. ... The social need, that is, the use-value on a social scale, appears here as a determining factor for the amount of total social labour-time which is expended in various spheres of production." (Marx, 1967, III, pp. 635–636).

[19] See Marx (1967, III, pp. 180–181).

[20] It also fulfills the requirements of the narrower definition of social labour given in Chapter 1, in that it must be consumed by someone other than the producer.

[21] On the essential role of money in validating abstract labour, see de Brunhoff (1976a and 1979), Innes (1981), Lipietz (1979a, pp. 96–112), de Vroey (1979, II), and Weeks (1981, pp. 95–148). On the other hand, as pointed out in Chapter 2, Negri's (1979) emphasis on money rests at the phenomenal level.

A commodity must be exchanged against money and not against another commodity, or we are in a situation of barter. Thus, the exchange value, in its form as a monetary equivalent, is, in fact, a kind of 'price'.[22] However, let us adopt the terminology that the amount of money paid for any given individual item is the (simple) price of the commodity; in contrast, the exchange value is defined by the totality of monetary exchanges of the same commodity.[23] At this level, money, in its metallic form, may be conceived as a 'commodity' which is produced and the value of which must be validated in the market. But it is a very specific 'commodity' because it is only acceptable in an exchange if the seller is assured of being able to re-exchange it for a needed consumable use value.[24] It is the unique commodity which is never accepted in an exchange for the purpose of consuming it, but always for it to be re-exchanged. Thus, it can easily be replaced by a symbol; hence, all of the confusion over money. We have here one fundamental basis of the capitalist state: the *guarantee* of money by the state which ensures the possibility of re-exchange.[25] However, the state has never managed to hold a monopoly over the *creation* of money; this has been the subject of constant struggle between private capitalists and the state throughout the history of capitalism, from the first bank notes to the present forms of credit.[26] The other fundamental role of the state, already at this first level, is in the maintenance of contracts which make the exchange possible: private property.[27] The first point relates directly to abstract labour and value, the second to concrete labour and use value. Both tend to guarantee an equality of status among members of the society, and both must exist outside of and independent from the control of the individual producer-members.

The presence of money as the symbolic representation of value creates the possibility of inflation/deflation:[28] a separation between the symbol and what it represents. This can have three fundamental roots,

(1) changes in productivity,
(2) changes in total time spent at productive labour in the society, or
(3) initiatives to create use values which ultimately cannot be sold because of lack of social demand.

With any one of these changes, the question is, then, if and how the quantity of

[22] De Vroey (1979, II and 1981) calls it a simple price, as opposed to the price of production and the actual market price, both of which appear at subsequent levels of analysis; see also Shaikh (1981).

[23] In the same way, at the third level of analysis, the price of production will be distinguished from the actual price.

[24] For the problems this poses when capitalism penetrates a non-capitalist society, see Bourdieu (1963).

[25] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 124–129), de Brunhoff (1979, p. 52), and Hilferding (1970, pp. 72–73, 100).

[26] That an institutionalised state is not absolutely essential can clearly also be seen, for example, by the use of cigarettes and nylons as money in Europe after the Second World War; see Kaldor (1970).

[27] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 84–85) and Pashukanis (1978).

[28] For a stimulating discussion of inflation, see Lipietz (1983).

money adapts to it. For example, with a given velocity of circulation of money, if the productivity increases in the same proportion as total labour time drops, so that the total amount of use values produced remains constant, while, for some reason, unit prices do not change, inflation will have occurred.

Questions of supply and demand are circumscribed from the beginning. If producers bring products to market but are unable to exchange them, or are forced to sell them at an exchange value inferior to that sufficient to make a living, they will eventually be forced to start producing something else. This is the basic social mechanism of labour allocation. Supply and demand are not the fundamental determinants of exchange values (or prices), but only the phenomenal forms of the determinants which regulate the allocation of productive labour. But it is at this phenomenal level that the people involved make their decisions.

Thus, this social mechanism is in no way restricted to the market. Production, specifically as it involves labour time spent, is the most fundamental determinant. Why are producers not able to exchange the products or are forced to sell them at an inferior exchange value? This may simply be because too much of the available time in the society has been spent in producing the total amount of that specific product, which is reflected in too much of the same product finding its way to the market. However, this surplus is not absolute and 'eternal', in that, with a new, more efficient, technique of production taking less abstract labour time per item, reflected in its lower unit exchange value, demand would perhaps increase and more of the product be consumed. At the same time, less, the same, or more of the total available concrete labour time might be used in its total production, depending on the new societal evaluation of this concrete labour in terms of abstract labour, i.e. depending on the new relationships between this concrete labour, with its changed technique, and all of the other types of concrete labour.

Note that the producers considered here have a 'proto-capitalist' mentality, because only capitalists, and not petty commodity producers, feel the social pressure to compare the rewards of specific amounts of labour in different branches of production. Petty commodity production depends more on possessing specific skills than on owning substantial means of production and hiring wage labour; only the latter, as capital, can easily be transformed by its owner to allow a change in what is produced.

I repeat that the product is secondary; the essential is the allocation of labour. This is a continuous dynamic process with no fixed allocation structure; it depends both on a flexibility of human needs, although not on their being unlimited, and, more important, on an adaptability of human beings to various activities.

Consider now more closely the production process. A given product may not be sold on the market, not because too many of the item are available, but because this specific one contains too much concrete labour in relation to other identical products. The latter can be obtained for less. Abstract social labour must be *socially-necessary labour*. If someone spends longer than necessary to produce something, this does not mean that more abstract labour has been expended. Identical products must contain identical amounts of abstract labour and be sold

at the same exchange value. Any extra concrete labour time does not count. More specifically, three conditions must be fulfilled:

(1) the labour must be done under normal conditions, i.e. with the most efficient technology;[29]
(2) the labour involved must be of average efficiency; and
(3) all waste of materials and means of production must be eliminated.[30]

The concept of socially-necessary labour time calls for several comments. The second condition ensures that value is not increased by poor work increasing the time required. It takes into account the variety of capabilities of workers doing the same task at a given moment in the society. However, given this condition, we see that, even at this level of abstraction, the theory does not apply to some 'simple commodity production' involving a multitude of independent producers. In order to have products containing labour of average efficiency, people must be working in some form of cooperation. Petty commodity production, as independent small producers, can thus only exist subordinated to some mode of production, whether it be the developed capitalist mode or some other.[31] The basis for the collective worker is already laid in the value-creating process, before the capital relation, and the wage labourer, are introduced.

However, the first condition is the essential one for the distribution of productive labour. It means that, within a branch of production, labour tends to be switched to that technique which is most efficient, i.e. which consumes the least abstract labour. But it also means that some fraction of all production will not usually be producing under these optimum conditions, and hence will be wasting some labour time, because all units of the commodity have the same value. Obviously, if different types of concrete labour are involved for the different techniques, this comparison may be complex. For example, suppose that the new technique requires less concrete labour time per unit produced, but that this specific kind of concrete labour is in high demand, especially in relation to the kind previously required, perhaps because no one wants to do it. In these conditions, this smaller amount of concrete labour is evaluated as more abstract labour and new technique will not be adopted.

Another important point is that 'congealed' labour in a commodity often changes in quantity, or, more exactly, is re-evaluated. A commodity, no matter when produced, is always worth the abstract labour currently required to produce it. If certain techniques have changed, and not even necessarily those involved in its

[29] Because, following the neo-Ricardians, there is debate over the interpretation of this aspect of the labour theory of value, and because even most Marxists have missed the point (Eldred and Hanlon, 1981, are one exception), appropriate quotations from *Capital* are given in an Appendix. An average of techniques is logically appropriate for a concept of value as embodied labour, while the most efficient technique is appropriate for value as social evaluation.

[30] This is consistent with Cohen's (1978, p. 56) interpretation of Marx's concept of productive forces: "What counts is not the amount of labour actually spent on what is actually made, but how much needs or would need to be spent ('is required') to make specified products."

[31] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 761–762).

production, this amount of abstract labour will not be the same as that actually spent when it was produced. Change in productivity for one commodity changes the whole system of evaluation. This excludes any possibility of value simply being embodied labour.[32]

One specific kind of differentiation among types of concrete labour takes on special importance in capitalist production. This is the difference among types of labour requiring different amounts of training, education, skill, and so on. As with all kinds of concrete labour, these must be reduced to the common basis of abstract labour. This reduction takes place before the introduction of the value of labour power (wages). It is thus not concerned with the relation between wages and the cost of education.[33] Marx called this specific case the reduction of *complex labour* to *simple labour*, but it is essentially no different than the more general case. It is not a reduction of skilled to unskilled labour, both of which are forms of concrete labour, but is rather society's evaluation of the relationship between the two in terms of abstract labour.

The product of one hour of carpentry might exchange against that of one and a half hours of plumbing, both involving the same apparent levels of training and skill, each product thus containing the same amount of abstract labour. In the same way, a product which requires one hour of complex labour may exchange for a product requiring N hours of simple labour. If the complex labour is indeed required by the society, the exchange factor must be sufficiently large to encourage enough people to acquire the training and skills. But this need in no way correspond proportionally to the amount of time spent in acquiring that training and those skills.[34]It is quite imaginable that the product of an hour of concrete labour requiring a long period of training exchange against that of *less* of a different concrete labour requiring a shorter period, if people undertake the former type of training for other reasons or if the subsequent tasks to be performed are

[32]See Duménil (1980, pp. 56–57). Cohen (1979) clearly points this out, but, then, goes on to reject the labour theory of value.

[33]See Marx (1967, I, p. 44), as well as Lautier and Tortajada (1978, p. 85) and Rubin (1973, p. 163). This reduction, thus, involves the way in which forms of concrete labour are transformed into a quantity of abstract labour ($v + s$, if wage labour were involved). Differential wages due to differences in education, then, refer to the way in which this total abstract labour is divided between v and s, although variation in this division will usually be correlated with the magnitude of total abstract labour, $v + s$.

[34]Hilferding (1975) was the first to propose a one-to-one reduction directly in terms of training. He did this in an attempt to avoid the circularity of a reduction in terms of wage differentials. His lead has been followed by various recent authors including Baudelot et al (1974), Morishima (1973, pp. 191–192), Okishio (1963), Roncaglia (1974), Rowthorn (1974), and Wright and Perrone (1977), and criticised by Lautier and Tortajada (1978) and Tortajada (1977); see also Rosdolsky (1977, pp. 506–520) and Rubin (1973, pp. 159–171). This procedure, in fact, treats training for the worker exactly as capital for the capitalist, i.e. as bringing a 'profit' to the person trained. We rediscover the 'human capital' or 'cultural capital' approach of bourgeois economists and sociologists. Another possibility, suggested by von Weizsacker (1973), is to measure labour of any type of skill by the total actual concrete labour time expended; Elson (1979b) provides an excellent critique; it is also discussed below in relation to the problem of equilibrium.

very desirable.[35] The opposite is more generally the case, but must be treated at a higher level of analysis, where extraction of surplus labour is involved, because higher education is generally associated with the latter.[36] As with all transformation to abstract labour, this equivalence between complex and simple labour occurs through the articulation of production and exchange of commodities.[37]

Concrete labour times are, thus, transformed into corresponding but disproportional units of abstract labour, commodity-producing societies' evaluation of these different types of concrete labour. Concrete labour time might be taken to correspond to the supply price in so far as the producer has used only socially-necessary and simple labour and can calculate this time expenditure, something which is only slightly plausible even at this level of abstraction. Then, abstract labour would correspond to the actual market price for the totality of that commodity sold. At this point, an analogy may be useful.[38] The land surface of the earth is divided up into various shaped countries of different areas. Because the earth is a globe, these areas cannot be represented without distortion on a plane surface. Various projections, the Mercator, polar, and so on, change the relative areas of the countries by different amounts. In the same way, the projection of concrete labour times onto abstract labour distorts the relative magnitudes of the latter as compared to the former. Innumerable projections are possible depending on the interaction of social need and concrete labour times as mediated by the market.

The production of commodities, and of value, can never be conceived as a system in equilibrium around which variations occur; such production is always a *process*.[39] And a process regulated by crisis at that.[40] For example, equilibrium is not the point where all direct producers receive the same revenue for each hour worked. Implicit here is the assumption that all workers evaluate compensation for different tasks and fulfillment of different needs in the same way, and that they do so in monetary terms. But society, through the market, has to raise the hourly monetary reward for undesirable tasks, such as garbage collection perhaps, in

[35] See Albert and Hahnel (1978, p. 67).

[36] "The distinction between skilled and unskilled labour rests in part on pure illusion, or, to say the least, on distinctions that have long since ceased to be real, and that survive only by virtue of a traditional convention; in part on the helpless condition of some groups of the working class, a condition that prevents them from exacting equally with the rest the value of their labour-power. Accidental circumstances here play so great a part that these two forms of labour sometimes change places." (Marx, 1967, I, pp. 197–198, n.1). See Braverman (1974) and Phillips and Taylor (1980).

[37] Hence Marx's (1967, I, p. 44) dismissal of the problem of the reduction of complex to simple labour: "The different proportions in which different sorts of labour are reduced to unskilled labour as their standard, are established by a social process that goes on behind the backs of the producers, and consequently, appears to be fixed by custom." See also Marx (1970, p. 30).

[38] On the topological relation between concrete and abstract labour, see Aglietta (1976, pp. 161–162).

[39] See especially Marx (1967, III, pp. 189–190) and also Bellofiore (1985) and Shaikh (1981), although the latter considers average, and not the most efficient technique to be the condition for socially-necessary labour and value.

[40] See Bellofiore (1985), Dobb (1940, pp. 79–126), and Shaikh (1978).

order for them to be done, although no task is a priori undesirable. Note, however, that this revenue differential is drastically altered at the next two levels of analysis, where the direct producers have control neither of the means of production nor of a monetary reserve and where capitalists use the profit criterion to choose which tasks are desirable to perform.

Such an equilibrium in terms of revenue would have each hour of validated concrete labour proportional to a given amount of abstract labour. We would be in a yes/no system where each hour of concrete labour actually expended is either validated by the sale of the product on the market, or not.[41] A producer proposes a supply price and this is either accepted, in so far as it reflects the concrete labour time expended, or suitably modified, and the commodity bought or rejected and the commodity remains unsold. Such an hypothesis must have one of two bases: either we have a collective (monopoly) producer in the branch setting the same supply price for all of the product or we have different prices validated for different producers, perhaps after suitable modification, and hence a whole series of different values for the same commodity. But how does the market bring prices and concrete labour times into such a correspondance? Such a conception considers individual commodities as isolated and does not take into account the relationships among them. It takes a static cut at each C-M instead of studying the totality of *processes*, C-M-C. The allocation role of abstract labour disappears to be replaced by a simple validation role: a given quantity of private labour is accepted as the same quantity of social labour, or not at all. Societal evaluation of concrete labour could then only operate in this discrete way and not by the weightings of values, which is the abstract labour of my conception. All deviations from such a yes/no equilibrium, the actual labour allocation, would simply be the result of market fluctuations and not of the interplay of labour times and social needs. On the contrary, a given value of a commodity exists only at a point in time in an ever-changing process; all items of the commodity, then, have that value. A change in productivity changes the value, but this change in productivity may occur anywhere in the system, not just in the production of the given commodity. For such a change modifies all of the relationships which determine abstract labour.[42] With no conscious plan to allocate labour, the possibility of a crisis of misallocation is always present.

From all that has preceded, we see that abstract labour is in no way a measure of actual time spent.[43] It is only an evaluation by commodity-producing society

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[41] The work of Aglietta (1976, pp. 162, 235) has most contributed to the wide use of the idea of "social validation of private labour"; see also de Vroey (1979). This notion seems to originate as the Keynesian adaptation of Ricardian embodied labour to an uncertain world where private risks may or may not be validated. It is, thus, a capitalist perspective.

[42] "... the rates at which the goods in any particular exchange are exchanged depend not only on the parties to the transaction, but upon all other exchanges simultaneously taking place." (Elson, 1979b, p. 153).

[43] "This does not mean that every hour of labour is objectified as the same quantity of value and represented by the same quantity of money. Hours of different kinds of labour may be objectified as different quantities of value, and represented by different quantities of money." (Elson, 1979b, p. 177).

by means of which total productive labour time is allocated among qualitatively incomparable activities.

(1) If concrete time is spent on a product which is not sold, what would be the corresponding abstract labour is not recorded by society.
(2) If some producers spend more than the socially-necessary labour time, the excess is wasted for society, and does not count as abstract labour.
(3) An hour of complex labour equals a different amount of abstract labour than an hour of simple labour, as may any two different types of concrete labour.
(4) A commodity has the value of the abstract labour which is required *today* to reproduce it, not the (abstract) labour spent to produce it yesterday, before the techniques, and productivity, changed.

All of these factors act to allocate the available labour time.

(1) The attempt is made not to produce more than can be sold. Instead, labour is spent on other activities.
(2) All production must be carried out with the most efficient means of production available, to avoid wasting time.
(3) If a person, or the members of a collective production unit, can earn a living more easily by one means than another, they will do it. "More easily" may mean few hours of undesirable work or long hours of very desirable work.
(4) A new labour technique is adopted if it reduces the *total* amount of abstract labour.

At first sight, this exposition of the labour theory of value in the production of commodities may appear to be the description of a utopia. By means of the market, production activities are automatically regulated in the best possible way through the interaction of many independent producers.[44] However, this is no more than the stage in the theoretical analysis of capitalist society and cannot apply to any possible concrete society. As we have seen, for the socially-necessary labour condition to operate, not individual producers but collectivities must be assumed. In addition, they must have a capitalist mentality and depend, not on acquired skills, but on control of means of production. This level of analysis, thus, contains, as an inherent contradiction implicit in private production requiring social recognition through exchange on a market, the opposition between capitalist and collective worker. This is the basis for the *first aspect of the fundamental contradiction* of the capitalist mode of production, that between increasing centralisation and socialisation of the production process and private decisions about labour allocation, a contradiction which is never resolved in the passage through the levels of analysis.

Suppose for a moment that simple commodity production by individuals could exist, with individuals all having the same capabilities, speed of work, etc. so that

[44] This is, of course, the liberal ideology of capitalist society which is even more unrealistic than the interpretation of the theory to be commented on here in that it ignores social class divisions.

such factors would not create inequalities. Because equal amounts of abstract labour in no way correspond to equal actual times spent, if all individuals spent the same amount of actual time at productive activities, some would gain control of more and more social labour. Simply by the exchange of the products of their day's concrete labour, worth more abstract labour, they could gain more than the product of a day's labour of certain other people. If this society could exist or be created, it would lead necessarily to the production of capitalist relations through the inevitability of this form of 'primitive accumulation'.[45] The only way to break the chain would be to force everyone to provide the same amount of abstract labour, a contradiction in terms, because production would no longer be by private initiative.

The law of value involves an interaction between labour time and needs. Given specific needs, labour time will be distributed to fulfill them 'optimally'. However, this very distribution, as just seen, implies that some individuals will have more purchasing power for the same concrete time worked, which must have an effect on needs. The inequality of needs, in turn, affects the allocation of productive labour, but in no way implies a return towards more equality. Here complex labour might be important, because increased purchasing power may be used initially for extra training which most often further increases inequality when complex labour is worth a multiple of simple labour. All of this is only hypothetical, but the the key would be when individuals begin to use the surplus to obtain a monetary reserve and control of additional means of production.

5.3 The sale of labour power

Within the context of commodity production, extraction of surplus labour is brought about by the purchase of that special 'commodity', labour power. It is through the existence of this 'commodity' that the capitalist class has a direct hand in the allocation of productive labour. The capitalist class has a reserve of money and owns or can buy the means of production, while the working class has neither and can only sell its ability to work for successive periods of time. The historically- and socially-determined value of labour power is equal to the productive labour necessary to produce and reproduce it. Needs, in the phenomenal form of demand, are now determined by the relations of production, as class relations.[46] The value of the means of production and raw materials, the constant capital, is preserved in the product, while the value of labour power, the variable capital, must be reproduced in the product.[47] Both purchases of constant and of variable capital are

[45] This is not, of course, the historical process of primitive accumulation, because such a 'petty commodity mode of production' has never existed. The point is rather made against the 'petty bourgeois' illusions of a free market utopia.

[46] "... the 'social demand', i.e. the factor which regulates the principle of demand, is essentially subject to the mutual relationship of the different classes and their respective economic position ..." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 181).

[47] Marx (1967, I, pp. 207–208) calls the one an apparent reproduction of value and the other an actual reproduction. Aumeeruddy et al (1978) and Lautier and Tortajada (1977 and 1978) are wrong

sealed by contract before production begins. But, the preservation and the reproduction are only effected by the labour actually performed. Then, under the proper conditions, the sum of these two is less than the value of this product. Surplus labour has been performed and surplus value created. Thus, the new labour performed now corresponds partly to the reproduction of the value paid in the wage and partly to surplus above this.[48] The sum of the two constitutes a radical transformation with respect to the previous level. The capitalist, as the practice, not necessarily of an individual, but also of larger entities, such as a joint stock company, decides to what end all of this labour is applied: in what both the value preserved and that newly created are embodied.

Surplus value can be increased either absolutely or relatively. If necessary labour time remains constant, while total labour time or labour intensity[49] is increased, absolute surplus value is produced. If labour productivity, the amount of use values created in a given time and with a given intensity, is increased by technical change and these use values are directly or indirectly incorporated into the means of consumption of the direct producers, the portion of time needed for necessary labour is reduced in so far as the amount of use values consumed does not increase. This is production of relative surplus value, because the surplus increases relative to the necessary labour time even although total time does not change. Because the working day and human endurance both have physical limits, the production of relative surplus value is more fundamental,[50] but, on the other hand, individual capitalists can only act directly to increase absolute surplus value.

However, the capitalist does not make decisions in terms of the ratio of surplus value to variable capital but in terms of the profit rate, the ratio of surplus value to total capital (variable plus constant) advanced. To maximise the profit rate, not only must the ratio of necessary to surplus labour be minimised, but so also must be the ratio of constant to variable capital, the value composition of capital. For example, the capitalist attempts to obtain raw materials at the least cost and he also tries to use his constant capital for a maximum time through the shift system.[51]

Under the law of value, social labour, as productive labour, must be embodied in commodities. Thus, the value of labour power corresponds to the wage paid for it, a right to a part of the value transferred to the products. But, at the same time, its value must be equal to the value of those specific commodities required to produce and reproduce it. Labour power must be measured simultaneously in

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in claiming that the value of the commodities consumed disappears and, hence, that labour power has no value, only an exchange value determined on the market. Only the capitalists personally consume use values unproductively, without reproduction or transfer of value. See Marx (1967, II, p. 309).

[48] See Marx (1976, pp. 985–986) and also Palloix (1977, pp. 121–122).

[49] Some Marxists mistakenly include increased intensity in the production of relative surplus value, not clearly distinguishing changes of productivity and of intensity. In large part, this is due to the incredibly bad French (Roy) translation of the first volume of *Capital*.

[50] See my discussion of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall in Chapter 2.

[51] See Georgescu-Roegen (1970).

abstract and in concrete terms; both are the object of struggle, in the market and in the production process.[52]

Because the value of labour power is determined socially and historically, it always involves an important element of negotiation and struggle. Because of this, what Engels (1969, pp. 117–121) and Marx (1967, I, pp. 628–640) called the "industrial reserve army" is essential in order for the capitalist class to put pressure to restrain or to reduce wages. When this class's power to make decisions about labour allocation begins to weaken so that a crisis is initiated, one important factor is always a drastic increase in this army.[53] The other factors are capital restructuration and inflation.

Note that labour power, or more precisely labour, is an ordinary commodity, although not a capitalist one, when it is sold as a service, by an independent producer, such as a cleaning women who works directly for the firm or person requiring the cleaning, and not for a cleaning firm. The commodity is the work which has been done. The value of this, and not of labour power, is paid for; it does not constitute a salary in the capitalist sense.[54]

The opposition between use value and exchange value now develops into a *second aspect of the fundamental contradiction*. The capitalist pays a certain exchange value for the 'commodity', labour power, but its 'use value', the actual amount of labour performed, is not, in this way, predetermined. Because of the wage contract, not all of the new value created, but rather the surplus value, becomes the object of struggle within the production process.[55]

But we also encounter once again the problem with the delimitation of social labour. Labour power cannot be produced by a capitalist production process, but must be sold by 'free' individuals. Additional, domestic labour does not increase the value of the commodities in which labour power is incorporated. This labour, including education to the extent that it does not take a commodity form, is excluded from productive labour and from the value calculation. Here is the basis of the *third aspect of the fundamental contradiction*. All of this does not, however, mean that the housewife does not receive the value, in the form of commodities, required for her reproduction, only that she does not receive it directly. It is included in the husband's wage as part of the value necessary to reproduce the worker.[56]

We now see that, at this early stage in the development of the theory of value, we already have the three aspects of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism.

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[52] See especially Lipietz (1979a, pp. 148–153, 282–293).

[53] For a general discussion, see de Gaudemar (1976). For a comparative analysis of the post Second World War politics of unemployment in various countries, see Apple (1980).

[54] See de Vroey (1980).

[55] This is the basis of Wood's (1981) affirmation that the political penetrates directly into production under capitalism. Castoriadis (1974 and 1979, II, pp. 105–119) sees this aspect as the fundamental contradiction of capitalism in its entirety.

[56] On the production of labour power, see the next chapter. Here, we need only assume that it is a 'commodity', and not attempt to penetrate to its inner laws.

Each is a distinct form of the contradiction between the relations in the process of production and relations of struggle, between antagonism and consciousness. Because each has been studied in detail by relatively separate groups of people, we might call the first the "value theorist" aspect, the second, the "labour process" aspect, and the third, the "feminist" aspect. The labour allocation perspective demonstrates their unity. Although the subject of the remainder of the book, they will be specifically examined more closely in Chapters 6 and 6.

The historical condition necessary for capitalist exploitation is that the direct producers lose control of the means of production and have no access to a monetary reserve. In so far as that is possible within the constraints of commodity production, the capitalist makes the decisions about the allocation of productive labour. This means primarily that decisions are made as to the allocation of constant and variable capital so as to maximise the (value) rate of profit obtained. One effect is that labour can be more forceably allocated to less desirable tasks without necessarily the incentive of increased hourly revenue found at the previous level; the more destitute individuals will even have to perform these tasks for lower wages. This allocation is, however, conditional on capitalist investment to finance the tasks, something treated at the next level. In both cases, any apparent psychological choice of 'desirable' work now disappears, to be replaced by economic compulsion. Not only has the production process been split between two antagonistic classes, but so also has the sphere of consumption. Social need, expressed in demand, now takes two distinct and constantly evolving forms: individual means of consumption to reproduce the labour force and investment in means of production.[57]

The state, as guarantor of money and of private property, although keeping its egalitarian and autonomous appearance, becomes a repressive class relationship. Only capitalists have a reserve of money and can buy before selling;[58] only they can own means of production. Both are impossible without the state. Private law, while still based on the equality of market exchange, becomes the means of exclusion from access to the means of production. At the same time, criminal law is necessary to sanction violations.

But the members of the working class must be doubly free:[59] not only are they freed from the means of production, and from the reserve of money, but they must be free to sell their labour power as a 'commodity'. The market equality of both the buyer and the seller of labour power must be ensured by the state, as must be the freedom of this seller, in such an inherently unequal power relationship.[60]

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[57] See Marx (1967, III, pp. 181, 244), but also Lebowitz (1978).

[58] See Benetti and Cartelier (1980, pp. 64–69). This work is a typical result of Althusserian idealism, whereby each contradiction is resolved by ignoring one half of it in the name of logic. For example, like Deleplace (1979), they deny the relevance of use values. It lies strictly within bourgeois economics: the only possible social relations are ahistorical relations of exchange and the phenomenon to be explained is the exchange of products.

[59] Marx (1967, I, p. 169).

[60] This is Macpherson's (1962) "possessive market model".

In other words, the state must guarantee that the worker's labour power remains the 'peculiar commodity' of the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production and does not become an ordinary commodity, which would be slavery. This fundamental (economic) contradiction of the state, between market equality and domination in production, is the basis of the institutionalised state's role in the wage relation and in 'management' of the labour force.[61]

The first condition, listed in the previous section, for socially-necessary labour, efficiency of technique, becomes a social mechanism for technological revolution, which, in turn, means constantly changing needs for means of production. A change in productivity is ostensibly a change in the way concrete labour is performed and not a change in the quantity of abstract labour per hour of that concrete labour. The individual capitalist tries to find the means to produce the same or more use values with less abstract labour, thus gaining extra surplus value. Because no direct phenomenal relation exists between concrete labour times and abstract labour, and the inner relation is constantly being modified, reduction of concrete labour times may even occasionally have the opposite effect to that sought. In any case, such a gain is a short term phenomenon which eventually forces all capitalists to adopt the more efficient technique.[62] On the other hand, a new technique will not be accepted unless it costs less per article produced than the previous cost to the capitalist, that is constant plus variable capital, excluding surplus value.[63] The criterion of reducing total abstract labour, dominant at the previous level, disappears. Certain innovations which save labour are not now acceptable.

Although, from this description, technical progress appears to be the simple result of competition among individual capitalists for a momentary possibility of gaining extra surplus value, it is much more, for it is embedded in class conflict. Technical changes in the production process most often are made necessary by the difficulties encountered in forcing both concrete and abstract labour to be rendered. The new techniques may cost much more than the value of the labour power saved, if this can act to break worker resistance; additional cost may even be subsidised by the state.[64] Any production technique involves the integration

[61] Cartelier (1980) takes the wage relation as the minimal form of the capitalist state.

[62] In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx assumes that fixed capital can quickly be replaced when a new technique becomes available so that condition 1) for socially-necessary labour time implies the use of the most efficient technique. In volume III, he uses a weighted average of existing techniques, perhaps a more realistic assumption if and when constant capital cannot be easily converted to the new technique. These different assumptions have been most extensively debated by the Japanese Marxists; see Itoh and Yokokawa (1979) and Sekine (1975), but also Lipietz (1979a, pp. 274–279). For my argument here, the only difference is in the rate of technological change. See the Appendix for further discussion.

[63] At this level of analysis, we talk of exchange value. Decisions are, of course, actually made in terms of prices and profits. Because, at this level, only decisions within a branch are considered, this abstraction is permissible. Himmelweit (1974) and Lipietz (1980) provide discussions of changing techniques and profit rates.

[64] Such has been the case for the introduction of robots in FIAT, Italy; see CSE (1980, pp. 71–

of the production workers into a process of producing value as well as use values. Competition among individual capitalists may explain the spread of technical change; class struggle explains its origins.[65]

Suppose that the current technique is (A1) and that a new technique (A2), less costly in total abstract labour, becomes available. Then, if c and v are the constant and variable capital costs to the capitalist, and s the surplus value,[66] assuming the same rate of exploitation, s/v, we have the following value relations per commodity produced:

$$\begin{aligned} 100c + 50v + 50s &= 200 \qquad \text{(A1)} \\ 113c + 40v + 40s &= 193 \qquad \text{(A2)} \\ 103c + 45v + 45s &= 193 \qquad \text{(A3)} \\ 95c + 55v + 55s &= 205 \qquad \text{(A4)} \end{aligned}$$

Technique (A2) will not be used because it costs the capitalist more (153 units instead of 150).[67]

Now suppose that technique (A1) is being used throughout the branch and that one capitalist 'discovers' technique (A3). The prevalent value of the product is 200 but, with the new technique, the capitalist can produce it at lower cost (148 instead of 150). It can thus be sold for less, for example 198. In this way, the innovating capitalist can increase sales while at the same time gaining a higher profit rate (50/148 instead of 50/150). Because the capitalists using (A1) must now also sell at the new price, their profit rate is reduced to 48/150. Eventually, all capitalists will be forced to implement the new technique; the value will become 193 instead of 200 and the profit rate 45/148.[68]

Although technique (A2) costs society 7 units less, it costs the capitalist 3 units more, and will not be employed. This contrasts with technique (A3) which

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91). For state subsidy of more elaborate machine tools, see Noble (1978). In another context, that of full employment, Kalecki (1943) emphasises that factory discipline and political stability are more important to capitalists than are profits.

[65] "...machinery becomes in the hands of capital the objective means, systematically employed for squeezing out more labour in a given time." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 412). "It would be possible to write quite a history of the inventions, made since 1830, for the sole purpose of supplying capital with weapons against the revolts of the working-class." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 436); see also Christiansen (1976), Lipietz (1980 and 1982c), Noble (1978), Rosenberg (1969), the now vast literature on the 'labour process', and my discussion of the production process in Chapter 9 below.

[66] Throughout the discussion of this and the next two sections, it is important to remember that $v+s$ is the total new abstract labour expended, while v is that actually paid for, so that $c+v$ is the cost to the capitalist, while $c+v+s$ is the total value or cost in abstract labour of the product for the society, including that previously expended, now congealed in means of production and raw materials, and perhaps re-evalued if productivity has changed.

[67] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 392–393 and III, pp. 260–262). Luxemburg (1951, Ch. 23) also discussed this paradox. See also Lipietz (1980).

[68] We shall see in Chapter 9 that this apparent final reduction of the profit rate only results because neither the totality of exchange relations nor, most important, the relative surplus value due to increased productivity has been taken into account. In other words, I have held the rate of exploitation constant.

costs the capitalist 2 units less than technique (A1) while saving the society the same 7 units. The problem has its primary importance, of course, when only techniques (A1) and (A2) exist. Then, society is wasting abstract, and concrete, labour, although the capitalistically most efficient technique (A1) is being used.

The converse of this problem occurs when two techniques (A1) and (A4), the only available, have the same cost to the capitalist, 150. This is the well known problem of choice of techniques. Both techniques will be used, in some indeterminate proportion. Products made with both techniques will sell for the same exchange value, and this will be the cheaper one, 200.[69] However, because every item produced by technique (A4) has only a value of 200, for society it wastes 5 units of the 205 units of abstract labour consumed. The capitalist is not aware of this, nor is society, because capitalist accounting is in terms of costs to the firm, not to the society.

With the introduction of the capital relation, we also have a more elaborate process of circulation of commodities, what Marx (1967, I, p. 153–154) calls value as "the active factor in a process", and then goes on to discuss in detail in *Capital*, Volume II. Commercial capitalists become responsible for the change of ownership necessary to get the product to the final consumer. The costs of circulation add to the constant capital in determining the value of the commodity.[70] And because all capital has a money representation, that which is not immediately being used by a given individual capitalist can be centralised in the hands of financial capitalists for redistribution as loans. We can even consider capitalism to be operating in two time dimensions: the time of changing productivity and changing needs, hence changing evaluation of concrete labour and the resulting altered values, and the time of the individual commodity owner, capitalist or worker, who must exchange the commodities while struggling to keep track of the value changes in the other dimension.[71] The lengthened chain through which the commodity must pass to complete a cycle increases greatly the possibility of mismatch between production and needs. More products will be produced which cannot be sold, or bought, and, in parallel, investment will be placed in production which is not needed. As a result, the amount of labour wasted increases enormously; much concrete work accomplished is not ratified by society as productive labour. Crises develop which cause labour congealed in means of production to be discarded prematurely, increasing further the labour wasted.

Thus, at this level of analysis, the ways in which productive labour is allocated have changed. Not only have what possibilities of decision exist within the determination by commodity production been concentrated in the hands of

[69] After the transformation to prices and profits, the techniques among which the choice must be made will be different. Such an alteration applies to everything presented at this level. As already noted, this is a valid abstraction, because the principle of choice remains the same at the two levels. Himmelweit and Mohun (1978) are, thus, wrong in situating the problem of choice of techniques at level three; see Shaikh (1980 and 1981).

[70] See the discussion of the circulation working class in Chapter 7 for more details.

[71] See Lipietz (1979a, p. 165).

the capitalist class, but the criteria for decisions have been altered. Previously, concrete labour was applied to those techniques which minimised the total abstract labour in an article; this was the most productive technique. Now, only the abstract labour paid by the capitalist is minimised, and this necessarily leads to waste of total labour. The technique which provides this minimisation is most productive, not because it produces more use values in less total time, which it does not, but because it produces more surplus value for the capitalists.

This level of analysis is primarily concerned with the distribution of productive labour within a branch of production, i.e. with distribution to different ways of accomplishing the same task of producing a given commodity. The assumption is thus made that the rate of exploitation, the proportion of surplus to necessary labour is identical for all products. This assumption has classically been expressed in three more or less equivalent forms.

(1) Social capital is considered to be the aggregated capital of the society, without making subdivisions for individual capitals;[72]
(2) all capitals are assumed to have the same value composition, c/v;[73] or
(3) no competition among branches is assumed, and hence transfer of capital between branches is ignored at this level of abstraction.[74]

5.4 The equalisation of profit rates

Even those Marxists who consider the labour theory of value in terms of labour allocation seem to forget this insight when they reach the transformation of exchange values to prices of production.[75] This step becomes a closer approximation to reality which removes unacceptable assumptions. However, this reality, for them, concerns the prices of material goods. For them, the allocation of labour has been explained at previous levels of abstraction and this is now used to explain prices.[76] They ignore the fact that, after transformation, while the inner law of allocation of productive labour is still acting, it is actually this law which has been transformed. Marxist price theory is only a more realistic theory of the allocation of productive labour in capitalist society; profit is the incentive to this allocation.

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[72] This is the basis of the German 'capital logic' analysis and of the Italian 'workerists'. For the former, see Holloway and Picciotto (1978) and Rosdolsky (1977), as well as its British representatives, Bullock (1974) and Yaffe (1972); for the latter, Negri (1978a and 1979) and Tronti (1977).

[73] As, for example, by Fine and Harris (1977), Meek (1956, pp. 180–181), and Sweezy (1942, pp. 69–70). For the use of value composition, as opposed to organic composition, see Chapter 9.

[74] See, for example, the discussion by Rubin (1973, pp. 242–246).

[75] In a letter to Engels the year after the first volume of *Capital*, Marx outlined the second and third volumes, including in the latter such a section: "Further: the *changed outward form* of the laws of value and of surplus value — which were previously set forth and which are still valid *after transformation of value into price of production*." (Marx and Engels, 1975, p. 194; see also Marx, 1967, III, p. 163, quoted in a note below). Sowell (1963) and de Vroey (1979, II, pp. 96–98, 110–111, 136) are exceptions in this neglect.

[76] This is true of virtually all of the contributions to Steedman et al (1981), and contrasts with the perspective of those in Elson (1979a).

In the production of a given commodity, the capitalist seeks to reduce to a minimum the costs of production, because all identical items of a given commodity must have the same value. However, this is not the only criterion which a capitalist uses to decide in what to invest; it relates only to choice among production techniques for a given commodity. In the overall investment perspective, decisions are made in terms of the largest proportion obtainable between surplus value and total investment cost, not between surplus value and variable capital. Thus, a displacement of capital, and of productive labour, occurs among branches in search of the highest rate of profit.

Suppose we have three branches, all with the same period of rotation, with no fixed capital, and with the following total exchange value relationships:[77]

$1000c$	+	$500v$	+	$500s$	=	2000	(B1)
$2000c$	+	$500v$	+	$500s$	=	3000	(B2)
$3000c$	+	$500v$	+	$500s$	=	4000	(B3)
6000c	+	1500v	+	1500s	=	9000	Total

The rates of profit, in value terms, $s/(c+v)$, are respectively 1/3, 1/5, and 1/7. If this hypothetical situation could exist, investment, and productive labour would flow to more profitable branches so that profit rates became equal. In fact, the flow occurs because of differences in individual profit rates in actual price terms, not because the rate was originally calculated in value terms, which it was not. But, we must study its inner law, that of prices of production which refer to the totality of such exchanges at this level of abstraction, and not to the actual prices of individual transactions. The transformation from exchange values to prices of production is, thus, purely methodological:

$$1000c + 500v + 300s = 1800 \qquad \text{(C1)}$$
$$2000c + 500v + 500s = 3000 \qquad \text{(C2)}$$
$$3000c + 500v + 700s = 4200 \qquad \text{(C3)}$$

Now, the rate of profit is 1/5 in all branches.[78] This results from a certain amount of capital, and productive labour, being transferred to the more profitable branches.[79]

The labour in branch (3) is more productive because it allows capitalists located there to obtain proportionally more surplus value as measured by their use

[77] Note that, in the previous section, the equations were in terms of exchange value per item produced for various possible techniques within one branch, whereas here they refer to total exchange value in each different branch.

[78] The problem of transforming input exchange values to prices of production has been ignored here because it simplifies the presentation and does not affect the results. Dumènil (1980) and Lipietz (1979b, 1982a, and 1983, pp. 53–101) present an important new interpretation of this transformation problem, which makes the solution by Morishima and Catephores (1978, pp. 147–177) and Shaikh (1977) appear mechanistic by comparison.

[79] Usually this would involve more constant capital intensive technology in this branch, i.e. a change in the value composition of capital, but this has also been ignored to simplify the example.

of more constant capital.[80] Here (B3) two units of abstract labour, of which one unit is paid, produce $(500 + 700)/500 = 2.4$ units of 'value' (in price terms), whereas in branch (2) they produce $(500 + 500)/500 = 2.0$ units and in branch (1) $(500 + 300)/500 = 1.6$ units. Thus, before transformation to prices of production and profits, a unit of abstract labour in each branch produces the same value. After transformation, a unit in branch (3) produces $2.4/1.6 = 1.5$ times as much 'value', measured as a price of production, as does a unit in branch (1). In this sense, the workers in the more mechanised branch (3), that with the higher value composition of capital, are also the more exploited. Their rate of exploitation, in price terms, is $700/500 = 1.4$ as compared to $300/500 = 0.6$ in branch (1). Note that these differences would be considerably amplified if fixed capital were allowed in the example.

The transformation from exchange values to prices of production is in fact a transformation to a new form of abstract labour, to a different symbolic representation. It is not a transfer of *value* from one branch to another; this is a very misleading analogy.[81] Value is not a thing which can be transferred about. In the example, branch (1) does *not* lose 200 units of value. Rather, the global distribution of value differs depending on the level of abstraction. The differences are in the societal *evaluation* of the labour performed.

Remember that abstract labour is commodity-producing society's evaluation of a given type of concrete labour compared to all other types, as represented in the way their products exchange on the market. Here, the products exchange in different proportions than at previous levels so that the inner law of abstract labour has also been transformed.[82] As always, the determinants are production times and social needs, but both of these have also been radically changed since the first level. Times are only measured in terms of the part paid for by the capitalist, the variable capital. Now, there are no comparable needs of all producers. The working class's needs are tightly circumscribed by the socially-determined value of their labour power, while the capitalist's need is for more and more profit. There is, thus, no possibility of 'equilibrium', in terms of producers' revenues per

[80] "In effect, the value-composition of a capital invested in a branch of industry ... always expresses a definite degree of labour productivity." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 51). "If the same labour sets more constant capital in motion, it has become more productive." (1967, III, p. 205). Note that productivity in this section is used in a wider sense than the technical economic one of comparing different techniques for producing the same commodity. However, in both cases, it is the proper capitalist sense because productivity is a measure of surplus value produced for the capitalist; in neither case is it a measure of the total time cost per unit of commodity.

[81] See Himmelweit and Mohun (1978).

[82] Marx (1967, III, p. 161) states this clearly for wages: "As for the variable capital, the average daily wage is indeed always equal to the value produced in the number of hours the labourer must work to produce the necessities of life. But this number of hours is in its turn obscured by the deviation of the prices of production of the necessities of life from their values." Also: "On the one hand, the *cost-price* has now been singled out as a part of this value, and, on the other, the *price of production* of commodities has been developed as its converted form." (1967, III, p. 163). "...the tendency necessarily prevails to make the prices of production merely converted forms of value..." (1967, III, pp. 173–174). See, also, Duménil (1980, esp. pp. 14, 18, 64).

hour worked or otherwise, but only (antagonistic) class struggle.

In this new evaluation of concrete labour performed, the productivity of the production process, as determined in the capitalist sense by the value composition of capital, must be taken into account. This is the significance of the equalisation of profit rates. It functions in a similar way to the reduction of complex to simple labour. Here, in our example, the result of one unit of more productive abstract labour, from branch (3) exchanges against the result of one and a half units of less productive abstract labour from branch (1). This occurs even although, before transformation, the units of abstract labour, and even possibly the hours of concrete labour if the work is identical, in the two branches are equivalent in value terms.

Different branches produce different products which implies that they use different types of concrete labour. The equalisation of profit rates is the way in which the productivity of various types of concrete labour is compared in capitalist society. Thus, in this society, the comparison of the efficiency of different production processes in producing the same product, as determined by socially-necessary labour time, operates relatively independently of the comparison of the efficiency of different types of concrete labour producing different products.[83]

Just as the value of a given commodity was seen to depend on the totality of relationships among producers, so now a second totality of such relationships is added to yield the prices of production. The latter depend not only on the value of the commodities produced in the branch, but also on the average profit rate of the whole social capital.[84] Two global social relationships interact to determine production prices.

In terms of the allocation of productive labour, all of this means that decisions about the allocation of surplus labour, and thus increasingly of all productive labour, gravitate towards the most capitalised or technologically advanced branches. The profits accumulated and reinvested lead to a concentration of capital in the big firms. As the smaller, less competitive firms are eliminated, capital also becomes more centralised.

The equalisation of profit rates can be considered to be constrained within a tendential law, just as the tendency for a falling rate of profit limits the search for relative surplus value.[85] A tendential law is a law concerning something which, if all goes well, never happens. It defines a narrow path which the capitalist class must follow; the law only goes into action if and when it leaves the path.[86] Thus, with the changing structure of values, and prices of production, due to changing productivity and needs, each competing capitalist must follow the path

[83] See Marx (1967, III, p. 180) on these two types of competition and also Palloix (1977, pp. 36–42). More generally on the place of competition in Marxist theory, see Bellofiore (1985) and Shaikh (1978 and 1980).

[84] See Marx (1967, III, pp. 165–166, 196–197).

[85] See Chapter 9.

[86] I am indebted to discussion with Joao Bernardo for the interpretation of tendential laws, both here and for the rate of profit.

of constantly seeking to obtain maximum profit rates by reallocating capital, and productive labour with it. In so far as this social mechanism of competition fails to operate,[87] the capitalist class leaves the path and the tendency to state intervention takes effect to reallocate capital according to non-profit criteria, what has been termed the change from competitive to monopolistic regulation.[88] This might be called the *tendential law towards state capitalism*. Because, especially with increasing centralisation and concentration of capital, and the growing difficulty of being freed from fixed capital obligations,[89] the equalisation of profit rates has more chance of failing than does the production of relative surplus value, this tendential law becomes increasingly important as capitalism develops, something which does not happen with the tendency to a falling rate of profit. The results will be discussed in Section 6. Thus, at this level, the state takes on an additional role, a role which it, however, plays from the origins of capitalist dominance:[90] the regulation of relations among competing capitalist units.[91]

At the first level of abstraction, it was essential to start with a form of 'perfect' competition in order to demonstrate that surplus labour *is* extracted even under such conditions of equal exchange. However, given the internal dynamic of the capitalist mode of production, this is no more than a useful abstraction, which has now been overcome with the concentration and centralisation of capital[92] and the necessity of state intervention.

The subsequent subdivision of surplus value into industrial and commercial profits, interest, dividends, and rents does not influence directly the allocation of productive labour, only the class fractions which make the decisions. All have the money form and can be reinvested where most profitable. Thus, interest payments may not be kept in the financial sphere but may be invested in industry or used to buy land, etc.

The most important conclusion to be drawn from these three sections is that actual concrete labour time expended has no direct or necessary relationship to abstract labour at whatever level of analysis. Abstract labour never has a simple, unvarying, one-to-one relationship to actual concrete labour time, although, at earlier levels of abstraction, there may be a closer correspondence. The former is determined by a complex interaction between the latter, as production times, and

[87] See Hilferding (1970, pp. 261–286).

[88] See Lipietz (1979a, p. 177). Aglietta (1976) and the CEPREMAP (see, for example, Benassy et al, 1979, Boyer, 1978, and Lipietz, 1979a) have made the most important contributions to the study of these different forms of capitalist regulation. Monopolistic regulation corresponds roughly to what Negri (1978a) has called the state-as-planner. See also Coriat (1979a, pp. 149–158). State-induced class collaboration through the political structure of corporatism may accompany monopoly regulation; see Panitch (1977 and 1980).

[89] See Hilferding (1970, pp. 268–269).

[90] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 754–757).

[91] See Bernardo (1975, pp. 30–41 and 1977, esp. II, pp. 65–67) and Lipietz (1979a, pp. 104–105). For a critique of this position as the most fundamental basis of the capitalist state, see Cartelier (1980).

[92] The pioneering work here is Hilferding (1970).

social needs, mediated by the market.[93] Abstract labour is society's evaluation of concrete labour. This can, perhaps, be seen most clearly in women's wage labour, which is almost universally considered to create less value.

A second important conclusion is that, because commodity exchange is only the phenomenal form of a specific social mechanism of labour allocation, what distinguishes a social from a technical division of labour is not a juridical form but this very mechanism.[94] Within a technical division of labour, productive labour is allocated according to a plan; this always exists under capitalism — in the factory.[95] A social division of labour is distinct in that labour allocation across the divisions occurs through commodity exchange. As we have seen, labour is, thus, allocated to techniques for production of a given article and across branches producing different articles. As long as the working class sells its labour power and buys its means of subsistence as commodities on the market, this form of labour allocation continues to exist. This operates on a *post hoc* basis whereby the worker chooses the consumption articles after their production. A communist plan must somehow foresee what must be produced, not at the individual, but at the collective, statistical level of consumption, before production begins. It must be a plan elaborated by the total society, a collective pre-planning of its productive activities and not a centralised bourgeois prevision as under state capitalism. The latter must always ultimately depend on the market for exchange of products and, hence, also for evaluation of the labour performed.[96]

At three successive levels of abstraction, we have now seen how productive labour is allocated under capitalism, by interaction between labour times and market. However, we have also seen how this very dynamic both pre-supposes and yields factors which inhibit competition on the market. These factors must be studied in more detail, as two further levels of analysis, within and among branches of production.

5.5 Value theory and oligopoly

Trends at both of the preceding levels lead to increasing centralisation and concentration of capital, to oligopolisation, as a manifestation of the first aspect of the fundamental contradiction. Capitalists can gain increasing control of a branch by introducing new techniques. Those capitalists in more capitalised branches gain proportionately greater control over productive labour, which may possibly be in-

[93] See Himmelweit and Mohun's (1978) critique of embodied labour time.

[94] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 354–356).

[95] "The same bourgeois mind which praises division of labour in the workshop ... as being an organisation of labour that increases its productiveness — that same bourgeois mind denounces with equal vigour every conscious attempt to socially control and regulate the process of production ... the enthusiastic apologists of the factory system have nothing more damning to urge against a general organisation of the labour of society, than that it would turn all society into one immense factory." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 356). Sohn-Rethel (1972) considers this to be part of the transition out of capitalism.

[96] Stated in the Keynesian conception of Aglietta (1976) and de Vroey (1979), the labour performed must be validated, even although not conducted by private initiative.

vested in the less advanced branches and in new innovative branches. Other trends also operate in these directions, including the effects of crises on the smaller firms.

With oligopolisation, we have to explain the phenomenon of obtaining more than the predominant rate of profit, of 'superprofits'.[97] The most common Marxist explanation is in terms of a restriction on or lack of competition between the oligopolised branch and other branches;[98] among bourgeois economists, it is usually explained by the artificial diversification of products. The basis of the former explanation seems to be that "when the power of limiting supply is in the hands of producers so also is the power of setting prices" (Sweezy, 1942, p. 270). The logical conclusion of this argument is that the 'monopolist' not only does not let other capitalists enter the branch but that he cannot even reinvest his own profits in his own branch because that would result in increased supply, leading to lower prices and profits.[99] Alternatively, this explanation would imply a return to the situation at level two of the analysis, where profit rates are not equalised. We have seen that the methodological equalisation of profit rates arises from transformation of the meaning of abstract labour which benefits the more capitalised branches. Without this equalisation, i.e. without the competition of level three, the least capitalised branches have the highest profit rates (in value terms), as we saw in the set B, as compared to set C, of equations. This is exactly the opposite of what occurs under oligopoly, where the most advanced branches have the excess profits.

The idea that 'monopoly' profits originate from a transfer of surplus value from the competitive to the monopolised sectors, an idea explicit in Marx's work, is only defensible if the oligopolies are marginal to the economy. The impossibility of this position becomes evident if, say, 70then, can the 30superprofits to the oligopolies and still survive? Thus, these oligopolistic profits cannot be satisfactorily explained by lack of competition among branches. If superprofits are simply a question of distribution,[100] the mechanism of this distribution must be explained because it goes in the opposite direction to that indicated by the theory.

The thesis advanced here does not depend solely on such distribution arguments; it is rather that oligopolistic profits are *produced* in the oligopolised branch itself. They are derived from the specific conditions of production and are not the unique result of market redistribution. Because we are concerned with production within a branch, they must arise, in the explanation, at the second level of analysis, before competition among branches is introduced. The most important factors for oligopolisation are the size of the firm(s) and the accompanying economies of scale.[101] In certain industries, the latter are connected with very high turnover:

[97] Marxist authors treating 'monopoly' conditions include Aglietta (1976), Hilferding (1970), Koshimura (1975), Lipietz (1979a), Semmler (1982a and b), Sweezy (1942), de Vroey (1979, II), and Wheelock (1983). Baran and Sweezy (1966), having replaced a number of Marxist assumptions with Keynesian ones, consider value theory to be no longer applicable in 'monopoly' conditions.

[98] For critiques, see Semmler (1982a, b) and Wheelock (1983).

[99] Sweezy (1942, p. 275) has carried the argument to this logical extreme.

[100] See, for example, Fine (1975b, p. 73).

[101] Dockès (1975, pp. 105–106) and Sohn-Rethel (1978, pp. 144–145) emphasise the key role of in-

a rapid rate of rotation of circulating capital.[102] Economies of scale mean that a large firm has a production 'technique' which allows it to produce the same product at lower cost than smaller firms. I assume that economies of scale outweigh diseconomies. In contradistinction to the non-oligopoly case at level two, where new techniques must be adopted relatively quickly by all firms in the branch, here the other firms cannot acquire the economies of scale. They cannot obtain the capital necessary to expand to the size of the dominant firm in the branch, and in any case, a sufficient market would not exist. On the other hand, the larger firms have an interest in reinvesting their profits in the branch to increase their lead in size, as well as to attempt to capture more of the market.

Under oligopoly, the first condition for socially-necessary labour becomes modified. With only a few firms in the branch, all producing socially-required quantities of the product, the determining time is that of the smallest firm because it is the least productive.[103] As long as this smallest firm has a market, the definition of social labour, it must be able to sell its product at an exchange value or price which covers its costs plus the rate of profit prevalent in other branches. If it does not obtain this rate of profit, its capital will be reinvested in another branch. Note, however, that with so few, large firms, variation in production with change in the number of firms is far from continuous. The firms may not be able to produce in sufficient quantities for the market, while the difference between supply and demand is small enough so that another small firm does not find it profitable to enter the branch. In this situation, even the smallest one in the branch makes a certain 'superprofit'. However, the same differentials among profits in the branch remain.

Because the larger firms in the branch produce for less, they will obtain 'superprofits':[104]

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creasing returns to scale for 'monopolies'. Dockès demonstrates the difficulties bourgeois economics has in handling this phenomenon. For different reasons, economies of scale are important, for example, in the motor vehicle and electronic computer industries. However, variety of products also allows a continuous entry of new aspirants. The oil industry is a special case, because it depends on a monopoly of a natural resource.

[102] See de Gaudemar (1980b).

[103] See Hilferding (1970, pp. 272, 291–292). In this case, the assumption that socially-necessary labour time is determined by the average for the various techniques would only lower the amount of superprofits as compared to other branches. This is so because the value would be determined by the average instead of the longest time, and would thus be smaller. It is this value, and not the 'individual values', which is transformed to a price of production. On the other hand, the differences among profit rates within the branch will remain the same. The assumption of an average must, however, be rejected because it leads to an inherently unstable situation in the oligopoly case. The smaller firms will make much less than the prevailing inter-branch rate of profit after transformation. As soon as they can replace their fixed capital, they will leave the branch because they cannot obtain the more efficient technique (economies of scale). Social need will not be met and value will rise — to the maximum time required by that smaller firm, i.e. it will not leave in the first place. The other possibility is that the dominant firm expand still further. I thus disagree with Itoh and Yokokawa (1979) who consider the competitive and oligopolistic cases to be similar, both differing from the case of differential rent.

[104] These equations are similar to those of Section 3 in that they refer to individual firms in a branch and not to different branches as in Section 4. However, here, they involve varying numbers of items

$$100c + 50v + 50s = 200 \text{ for 100 items} \qquad \text{(D1)}$$
$$200c + 100v + \underline{120s} = 420 \text{ for 210 items} \qquad \text{(D2)}$$
$$400c + 200v + \underline{300s} = 900 \text{ for 450 items} \qquad \text{(D3)}$$

Each item has an exchange value of 2 units, because of the value structure of firm (D1). All firms have the same value composition of capital, 2/1. However, economies of scale allow firms (D2) and (D3) to produce proportionally more items per unit of capital invested. With the rate of exploitation of firm (D1) fixed at its level of viability, the unknowns are the amounts of surplus value for the larger firms (underlined). In this way, these firms obtain their 'superprofits'. The (value) rates of profit in the branch are $50/150 = 1/3$ for firm (D1), $120/300 = 2/5$ for firm (D2), and $300/600 = 1/2$ for firm (D3). We could proceed directly to level three now and talk in terms of prices of production and profits, if the prevailing inter-branch rate of profit were 1/3. Otherwise, this profit rate would have to be transformed, with, however, differences among firms in the branch being maintained.[105]

However, the larger firms may decide to take less 'superprofits', i.e. to sell the product below its value, in order to increase their portion of the market, perhaps driving a smaller firm out of the branch at the same time. If a true monopoly, with only one firm in the branch, could be created, the traditional concept of monopoly profits, through distributional control, might hold. If several firms remain in the branch after expansion by the larger ones, the situation must revert to the theory just outlined. Almost invariably, the latter is the case, at least in times of prosperity. Then, the large firms gain their superprofits, while guarding a cushion against crisis and depression: the possibility of excluding the smaller firms from

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produced, as opposed to one item each in Section 3. For an empirical case, the cement industry, very similar to the example given in the text, see Coriat (1980).

[105] "Our analysis has revealed how the market-value (and everything said concerning it applies with appropriate modifications to the price of production) embraces a surplus-profit for those who produce in any particular sphere of production under the most favourable conditions. ... For the market-price signifies that the same price is paid for commodities of the same kind, although they may have considerably different cost prices. ...

A surplus-profit may also arise if certain spheres of production are in a position to evade the conversion of the values of their commodities into prices of production, and thus the reduction of their profits to average profits. We shall devote more attention to the further modifications of these two forms of surplus-profit in the part dealing with ground-rent." (Marx, 1967, III, pp. 198–199).

"... the surplus-profit which some individual capital otherwise realises in a particular sphere of production ... is due, aside from fortuitous deviations, to a reduction in cost-price, in production costs. This reduction arises either from the fact that capital is used in greater than average quantities, so that the *faux frais* of production are reduced, while the general causes increasing the productiveness of labour (cooperation, division of labour, etc.) can become effective to a higher degree, with more intensity, because their field of activity has become larger; or ..." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 644).

Bernardo (1977, II, pp. 212-214) and Rey (1973, p. 38) are two to have noticed this link in Marx's work between surplus profit and differential rent. Rubin (1973, pp. 206–212) also comes close to the theory of oligopoly profits. However, as is clear from his footnote 17 on page 212, he treats it as a special case of decreasing returns to scale and hence only of theoretical and historical interest. See also Rubin (1979, p. 273).

the market.[106] More generally, here lies the principal reason for the continuing reproduction of petty commodity production under capitalism.[107]

Under oligopoly conditions, demand plays an important role,[108] because the size of the market is crucial in determining which firms can stay in the branch and, hence, which is the smallest firm. Thus, demand becomes a more important factor in affecting the value of the product than in the more competitive case; from this results the increasing significance of stable demand through forms of 'social' wage, an important condition for monopolistic regulation,[109] of forecasting markets through information analysis and control,[110] and of advertising to stimulate demand.[111] However, one must not forget that it is the specific form of oligopolistic *production* which gives demand this place of prominence. Not demand but the production process of the smallest firm determines the value of the commodity. On the other hand, lack of additional markets is often an important barrier to new capital entering the branch,[112] although this can no more explain the superprofits than can more direct control of supply. And if markets shrink significantly, the size of oligopolistic firms, with their enormous fixed capital, may prevent the exit of capital and create a situation of 'superdeficits' because the smaller firms cannot reach the normal rate of profit obtainable outside the branch.

In the 1930's, one form of the crisis was a lack of mass demand, a missing element of monopolistic regulation, coinciding with the rapid development of oligopoly. In the 1970's and 1980's, the crisis of realisation of surplus value is also an element in the crisis of capitalist control over decisions about labour allocation. But this time, it involves another aspect of the organisation of the realisation process: the circulation labour process must be restructured to reduce the costs of circulation, an imperative of the position held by demand in the developed oligopoly situation.

Under oligopoly, two cases of innovation may be distinguished. Generally, the smaller firms in the branch do most of the research and development of new models, while the bigger firms subsequently do research in order to reduce the costs of mass-producing the models so introduced. On the other hand, if exogenous demand for a specific new model appears, the big firms carry out the research and development and the small ones simply follow. In this way, the big firms reduce their risks. But in both cases, competition over productivity continues, because, when the small firms reduce their costs, the value decreases.

The oligopoly situation is similar to the equalisation of profit rates among branches, and to the reduction of complex labour, in its effects on the allocation

[106] See Hilferding (1970, pp. 283, 287).

[107] For an example in agriculture, see Mallet (1961).

[108] Koshimura (1975) and Lipietz (1979a) emphasise this aspect.

[109] See Lipietz (1979a, pp. 177, 279–282).

[110] See Warskett (1981).

[111] See Edwards (1979, pp. 85–89) and Williams (1980a, pp. 170–195).

[112] On barriers to entry, see Aglietta (1976, p. 258) and Semmler (1982a and b).

of productive labour. However, here it occurs within a branch. The product of one unit of abstract labour from the largest firm (D3) exchanges against that of 1 1/4 units from the smallest (D1), and against the same in other branches if transformation to prices has already been carried out. Again, we have a flow of the power to make decisions about the allocation of productive labour towards the largest firms. In both cases, the most capitalised or largest firms obtain greater power over future productive labour. In all cases, we have exchange of equivalents, i.e. no assumption of the cursed monopolies controlling the market, curbing competition, etc.

5.6 State capitalism

If 'monopoly' capitalism implies a restructuring of competition at the second level of analysis, within a branch, state capitalism does not. Rather, it involves changes at the third level, among branches. We have already seen how it results from a failure of the competitive equalisation of profit rates; this can depend, to a significant extent, on oligopolisation. Thus, concentration of control within a branch and unification of control across branches are distinct phenomena requiring different explanations, although the need for the latter can result because of the former. When all of the social capital is united under the control of the state, the allocation of productive labour among branches is no longer carried out by the market, according to the criteria of competition and profitability.[113] However, productive labour is still allocated to a very significant extent by commodity exchange, because the products are still sold on the market, and surplus labour is still extracted through the sale of labour power.[114] In this form, capitalism can still be the dominant mode of production in a social formation.[115]

Under state capitalism, no market-generated measure of equivalence exists

[113] Although Marx (1967, I, p. 627) did not develop this possibility theoretically, he did foresee it, and saw no incompatibility with his theory: "In any given branch of industry centralisation would reach its extreme limit if all the individual capitals invested in it were fused into a single capital. In a given society the limit would be reached only when the entire social capital was united in the hands of either a single capitalist or a single capitalist company." Note that he sees monopoly over a branch and state capitalism as being the same thing carried out to different degrees. See also Engels (1947, pp. 329–331). Hilferding (1970, pp. 328–329) also sees it in this way, but believes that money will then be abolished. Mattick (1969, pp. 278–331) sees state capitalism as simply the logical extension of Keynesianism. Reservations about the possibility of state capitalism have been expressed by Fine (1975a, p. 13) and Therborn (1976, p. 382). Both place their objections at the level of circulation. Fine considers "that capitalist circulation appears to depend upon at least two independent capitalists", because he believes that means of production must be exchanged among capitalist producers. Therborn states that "as a social mechanism, production for the accumulation of surplus-value necessitates the distribution of the means of production among individuals. . . The pursuit of this objective further presupposes competition among the different productive units." See also Weeks (1981, pp. 77–85), but also his "hypothetical example" (p. 82). As argued in the text, capitalist relations of production and a capitalist dynamic of accumulation can exist without free market allocation of capital among branches.

[114] See Csikos-Nagy (1975, esp. pp. 77–82).

[115] See Bernardo (1975, pp. 141–179), Bettelheim (1968, 1970, 1974, and 1977), Castoriadis (1973), Lipietz (1979a, pp. 93–94, 123–125, 333–334, 372–373), Mattick (1969 and 1978), and Paramio (1975).

among the different types of concrete labour of different branches. Instead, the decisions are centralised and 'rationalised'; they are taken at the level of the entire society and involve the state: a wide variety of criteria may be used for making such decisions. On the other hand, we should remember that non-market reallocation of productive labour exists to a significant extent in the most 'free-market' capitalist economy. Tax incentives, differential corporate tax rates, grants for investment in deprived or high unemployment areas, construction of infrastructure, nationalisations, and many other government measures affect investment flow among branches.[116]

Because the state determines the allocation of capital investment among branches, and the total society does not pre-plan its production and consumption, a capitalist 'rationality' is still followed even although it does not depend solely on the market in this situation. Because such allocation must remain essentially *post hoc*, no matter how authoritarian, the market must still play an important role in allocating goods to the consumers. The state cannot put itself accurately inside the head of every consumer. Thus, productivity remains measured by the costs to the state, not the costs to society. The state is concerned with reducing $c + v$, the direct and indirect labour which it pays for, and not with reducing $c + v + s$, the total labour consumed. The profit criterion remains in effect.[117] Hence, state capitalism, with its elimination of inter-branch competition, in no way implies that intra-branch competition must disappear. Managers of firms within a branch will compete to produce their product more efficiently by changing to more productive techniques and, hence, reducing $c + v$.[118] Because the profitability criterion is applied within the branch, the wastes of productive labour discussed in Section 3 will still occur.

A theory of state capitalism implies other important changes which cannot be developed here. Perhaps the most significant is that the capitalist is no longer a competitive 'individual' facing the worker. All workers are employed by the state and can have no possibility of changing employer. The state is also the only supplier of consumption goods. The ideology of fair and equal contract on the market is no longer viable, so that the ideology of individualism may be severely reduced in such a society[119] to be replaced by an ideology of national *unity*.[120] This may explain the increased importance of an ideological class in ensuring the reproduction of the relations of production in this type of society. It is also the second form of the crisis of the 1970's and 1980's. Not only must circulation labour, but also ideologico-repressive labour, be restructured in this evolving context, as the tendency towards state capitalism tightens its grip.[121]

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[116] On the development of capitalist planning, see Warren (1972).

[117] See, especially, Paramio (1975); Csikos-Nagy (1975, esp. pp. 22–29, 118–123) can only be interpreted in this way.

[118] See, for example, Dobb (1969, pp. 140–141) and Csikos-Nagy (1975, pp. 123–128).

[119] Note that Macpherson's (1962, pp. 46–70) model assumes competing individual capitalists.

[120] See Bettelheim and Chavance (1979).

[121] See also Chapters 7 and 9.

In the transitional phase, as the state becomes increasingly responsible for labour allocation while private capitalists continue to exist, the state must often take responsibility for investment errors of the private firms. When a firm finds itself in a position where it cannot pay back investment loans, perhaps because of unforeseen technical advances, the state comes to consolidate the debts. The increased money in circulation, privately created as loans advanced, but not subsequently validated by production of value, can lead to inflation,[122] accompanied by stagnation due to the lack of clarity about the relative roles of the market and the state. Stagflation is one form taken by the struggle between private and state capital, that over the control of money creation.

State capitalism develops through the inadequacy of market allocation of investment among branches. It is very important in less advanced capitalist countries[123] where only the state has sufficient power to accumulate the capital necessary for major investments. Many or all major industries are state-owned and -controlled. Because of the emphasis on control of means of production, and nationalisation,[124] this has become known as socialism, whether in the eastern European socialist countries, in African socialism, or elsewhere.

5.7 Appendix: Marx on socially-necessary labour

Marx's concept of socially-necessary labour has been brought into question by the neo-Ricardians, especially Steedman (1977).[125] For the present analysis, the question is primarily one of level of abstraction, i.e. whether or not one assumes that fixed capital is easily replaceable. As we have seen, this has little importance for the non-oligopolistic case because lack of quick replaceability of fixed capital only slows down the rate of technological change. On the other hand, in the oligopoly situation, fixed capital within the branch cannot be replaced in order to obtain greater economies of scale so that the situation is different.

In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx assumes rapid replacement of fixed capital. He introduces the concept in the first chapters, when treating the production of commodities:

> The labour-time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time. The introduction of power-looms into England probably reduced by one-half the labour required to weave a given quantity of yarn into cloth. The hand-loom weavers, as a matter of fact, continued to require the same time as before; but for all that, the product of one hour of their labour represented after the change only one half an hour's social labour, and consequently fell to one-half its former value. (p. 39)

[122] See de Brunhoff and Cartelier (1974) and de Brunhoff (1979, p. 62).

[123] The meaning of "less advanced" will be clarified in Chapter 8.

[124] Bernardo (1975) analyses, in detail, the confusions between state capitalism and socialism.

[125] This is also the one point where Rubin (1973, Ch. 16) departs from his usual methodological rigour. Elsewhere, he carefully distinguishes between simple commodity and capitalist production; here he confuses the two.

We suppose him to have spent on his product only that amount of labour-time that is on an average socially necessary. The price then, is merely the money-name of the quantity of social labour realised in his commodity. But without the leave, and behind the back, of our weaver, the old-fashioned mode of weaving undergoes a change. The labour-time that yesterday was without doubt socially necessary to the production of a yard of linen, ceases to be so to-day... (p. 107)

Marx in no way suggests that an average of times taken by power loom and hand loom workers is the measure of the socially-necessary time. Even when most workers still used hand looms, the power looms determined what was socially necessary. The situation does not change fundamentally at the next level of analysis, with the capital relationship, for Marx returns to the same example.

Moreover, only so much of the time spent in the production of any article is counted, as, under given social conditions, is necessary. The consequences of this are various. In the first place, it becomes necessary that the labour should be carried on under normal conditions. If a self-acting mule is the implement in general use for spinning, it would be absurd to supply the spinner with a distaff and spinning wheel. ... But whether the material factors of the process are of normal quality or not, depends not upon the labourer, but entirely upon the capitalist. Then again, the labour-power itself must be of average efficacy. In the trade in which it is being employed, it must possess the average skill, handiness and quickness prevalent in that trade, and our capitalist took good care to buy labour-power of such normal goodness. This power must be applied with the average amount of exertion and with the usual degree of intensity; and the capitalist is as careful to see that this is done, as that his workmen are not idle for a single moment. ... Lastly, and for this purpose our friend has a penal code of his own, all wasteful consumption of raw material or instruments of labour is strictly forbidden, because what is so wasted represents labour superfluously expended, labour that does not count in the product or enter into its value. (pp. 195–196; see also III, pp. 264–265)

We should thus be able to assume that, just as value depends on socially-necessary labour time, although "some people might think that if the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labour spent on it, the more idle and unskilful the labour, the more valuable would his commodity be, because more time would be required in its production" (Marx, 1967, I, p. 39), so a commodity which took longer to make because the capitalist had not acquired the *most* efficient technique would have no more value than the minimum.

Marx also describes how these conditions for socially-necessary labour time operate to promote technological innovation.

... each article costs one shilling: sixpence for the value of the means of production, and sixpence for the value newly added in working with those means. Now let some one capitalist contrive to double the productiveness of labour, and to produce in the working-day of 12 hours, 24 instead of 12 such articles. The value of the means of production remaining the same, the value of each article will fall to ninepence ... The individual value of each of these articles is now below their social value; in other words, they have cost less labour-time than the great bulk of the same article produced under the average social conditions. Each article costs, on an average, one shilling, and represents 2 hours of social labour; but under the altered mode of production it costs only ninepence, or contains only 1 1/2

hours' labour. The real value of a commodity is, however, not its individual value, but its social value: that is to say, the real value is not measured by the labour-time that the article in each individual case costs the producer, but by the labour-time socially required for its production. If therefore, the capitalist who applies the new method, sells his commodity at its social value of one shilling, he sells it for threepence above its individual value, and thus realises an extra surplus-value of threepence. ... Other things being equal, his commodities can command a more extended market only by a diminution of their prices. He will therefore sell them above their individual but under their social value, say at tenpence each. ...

... Hence, the capitalist who applies the improved method of production appropriates to surplus labour a greater portion of the working-day, than the other capitalists in the same trade. He does individually, what the whole body of capitalists engaged in producing relative surplus-value, do collectively. On the other hand, however, this extra surplus-value vanishes, so soon as the new method of production has become general, and has consequently caused the difference between the individual value of the cheapened commodity and its social value to vanish. (pp. 316–319)

Nowhere does Marx assume an average over times taken by different techniques (although he does occasionally talk ambiguously about "average social conditions"). For him, in the first volume, the average is over variations in individual labour power. This contrasts with his analysis in other places, especially in the third volume of *Capital* where he talks of market value.

On the one hand, market-value is to be viewed as the average value of commodities produced in a single sphere, and, on the other, as the individual value of the commodities produced under average conditions of their respective sphere and forming the bulk of the products of that sphere. It is only in extraordinary combinations that commodities produced under the worst, or the most favourable, conditions regulate the market-value, which, in turn, forms the centre of fluctuation for market-prices. (p. 178; see also Marx, 1968, pp. 206–208)

Here, for Marx, the technique which determines the market value depends only on the relation between supply and demand:

At a certain price, a commodity occupies just so much place on the market. This place remains the same in case of a price change only if the higher price is accompanied by a drop in the supply of the commodity, and a lower price by an increase of supply. And if the demand is so great that it does not contract when the price is regulated by the value of commodities produced under the least favourable conditions, then these determine the market-value. This is not possible unless demand is greater than usual, or if supply drops below the usual level. Finally, if the mass of the produced commodities exceeds the quantity disposed of at average market-values, the commodities produced under the most favourable conditions regulate the market-value. (1967, III, p. 179; see also p. 185)

Whether value is determined by the most efficient technique or by the average of techniques used, various firms using different techniques must earn different rates of profit within the branch. If the average is in effect, this will put even less pressure on the least efficient firms to change, because the difference between their profit rate and the prevalent inter-branch rate will be the same as that between

theirs and the average of the branch. This difference is less than if their profit rate were smaller by the difference between the most and the least efficient techniques in the branch.

The comparison works in the opposite direction in the oligopoly situation, because determination by the least efficient technique (smallest firm) gives that firm the prevalent inter-branch profit rate, while determination by the average would give it a smaller rate and eventually drive it out of the branch.

6
The peculiar 'commodity': labour power

6.1 Production, reproduction, and women

Each specific mode of production has its own particular means of reproducing human beings and, most important, of reproducing the direct producers.[1] This reproduction is intimately tied to the mode of production and is determined by the relations of production: human beings must be produced in a manner suitable for the form of allocation of productive labour and extraction of surplus labour specific to the mode of production.[2] A person brought up to wage labour will not be suitable either as a slave or as a serf. Thus, this process cannot be considered in isolation from the specific context of the mode of production.[3]

As we have seen, in the pure corvée-tributary mode of production, the direct producers make the decisions about the allocation of the necessary social labour and, thus, reproduce themselves communally. Although a sexual division of labour exists, no *separate* 'domestic production' occurs. Or, alternatively, we may say that necessary and domestic labour coincide. The entire community is responsible for its reproduction so that the nuclear family is non-existent within the subordinate class. In the slave mode of production, the dominant class is responsible for the reproduction of the labour force, whether by war or by breeding. Once again, no separate nuclear family with domestic production exists within the subordinate class. On the other hand, under neither mode of production is there any reason why the dominant class *may* not reproduce itself in the nuclear family.

[1] Edholm et al (1977) have emphasised the important distinctions among social reproduction (the subject of this book), reproduction of the labour force (the subject of this chapter), and biological reproduction.

[2] Gramsci (1971, pp. 294–306) is one of the classical Marxist writers to have expressed most clearly the link between the production process, reproduction of labour power, and the family. Reservations about Engels (1948) will be mentioned below.

[3] A domestic mode of production, common to many or all periods of history, and explaining women's exploitation, is an ahistorical, ethnocentric, non-sense. Examples of such analysis, and the related 'production of value by domestic labour', are common, and include dalla Costa and James (1975), Delphy (1972), Gough and Harrison (1975), Harrison (1973b), Meillassoux (1975), Nazzari (1980), and Seccombe (1974). The extreme case occurs with the radical feminists, such as Firestone (1970), who attempt a 'class' analysis of sex, necessarily ending up with an asocial, biological determinism. For an excellent review of the debate, see Kaluzynska (1980). For incisive critiques, see Barrett (1980), Barrett and McIntosh (1979), Himmelweit and Mohun (1977), and Molyneux (1979).

The nuclear family is both historically and class specific.[4]

Only under the capitalist mode of production is productive activity, social labour, necessarily split so that a part of it, domestic labour, is relegated to the nuclear family.[5] The very word, family, only entered the English language no earlier than the end of the fourteenth century. And at least until the English revolution in the middle of the seventeenth century, it referred exclusively to the kin-group, now called the extended family, and then subsequently, up until the industrial revolution, to a more or less nuclear family plus servants. Only later did it take on its modern meaning as the family of bourgeois society.[6] As another example of our ethnocentrism, a word for mother, in our biological sense, did not, and does not exist in languages used under the primitive communal mode of production, with its important kinship structure. Words which anthropologists have erroneously translated as 'mother' refer to a large group of females, all having the same social relations to a given individual.[7] The same also holds for the terms used for other members of our modern family.

The very split between productive and domestic labour within social labour makes domestic labour appear, under capitalism, as a separate form of production. The split is essential because of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, and, specifically, what I called its third aspect in the previous chapter. Everything tends to become a commodity; most important, labour power is a 'commodity'. But commodities must be produced by a capitalist production process and are then owned by the capitalist. If labour power were so produced, it would belong to the capitalist producing it.[8] The 'free' labourer would no longer be free to sell his/her labour power.[9] The family unit consumes capitalist commodities in

[4] See the many anthropological studies, some of which are cited in notes below, and the historical studies, again some cited below, as well as in Chapter 4. This does not mean that dominant class families have universally been of the nuclear form; far from it as Stone (1979) demonstrates. For a valiant attempt to explain historical differences in family types in terms of control of the means of production, of property rights, see Creighton (1980).

[5] Benston (1969) was the first feminist to see the importance of this division; see also Vogel (1973).

[6] See Barrett (1980, pp. 199–204), Guerreau (1980, pp. 189–190), Laslett (1965), Stone (1979), and Williams (1976, pp. 108–111). In spite of her misplaced analogy between the bourgeois family and feudalism, Nazzari (1980) provides a good discussion of recent developments in the American family.

[7] See, for example, Leacock (1981, pp. 107–108) and Reed (1975, pp. 12–15).

[8] "...to the extent that labour-power circulates in the market, it is not capital, no form of commodity-capital. It is not capital at all; the labourer is not a capitalist, although he brings a commodity to market, namely his own skin. Not until labour-power has been sold, been incorporated in the process of production, hence not until it has ceased to circulate as a commodity, does it become a constituent of productive capital — variable capital as the source of surplus value ..." (Marx, 1967, II, pp. 206–207). See also Sweezy (1942, p. 84).

[9] Aumeeruddy et al (1978), Bullock (1974), and Lautier and Tortajada (1977 and 1978) make this point. Few feminists seem to have noted it. Himmelweit and Mohun (1977), in their decisive paper, as well as Himmelweit (1979), seem to be the first to have introduced it into the domestic labour debate, from which Kaluzynska (1980) picked it up. The collection of articles in Fox (1980a), with one exception, is built around it; note, especially, Briskin (1980), who elaborates it, and Seccombe (1980), who develops its implications in great detail.

increasing numbers, and yet, this process must have a limit, because the 'commodity', labour power, can never be produced entirely by means of commodities under capitalism.[10] This is the basic explanation for the continued existence of household production in the nuclear family and must necessarily form the core of any understanding of the accompanying sexual oppression.[11]

A sexual division of labour, in itself, bears no necessary implications for the subordination and oppression of women.[12] In capitalist society, commodity production is valorised because it produces surplus value for the capitalist class and because it is thus an inherent site of class struggle. In other words, the subordinate class, in its struggle against exploitation, gives predominance to this type of labour, while, at the same time, the dominant class also does so as an ideological justification of surplus labour extraction. However, the production of use values in the form of commodities is not inherently more worthwhile than their domestic production. This ideological difference is determined by the relations of production, and finds its expression even in the common connotation of such terms as 'productive' and 'value' used here. This ideology takes its specific household form in patriarchy, which ensures the predominance of productive over domestic labour, while reproducing the oppression of women.[13]

Sacks (1974) suggests that the oppression of women in class societies originates with the distinction between "social adults" and wives. Public labour, pro-

[10]Certain bourgeois social scientists attempt to theorise the production of labour power, locating it in a capitalist production process and calling it 'human capital' or 'cultural capital'. This arises from a basic misunderstanding, a form of commodity fetishism, which does not see domestic labour as external to the law of value although intrinsic to capitalism.

[11]In this context, we can understand the Stalinist reconstitution of the family in the USSR; see Buckley (1981), Castoriadis (1973, II, pp. 423–439), and Rosenthal (1977). Most Marxist feminists consider that household labour could disappear under capitalism, and then rely on economic, psychological, and ideological factors to explain its continuation, instead of discerning the underlying contradiction. Gardiner (1975) and Morton (1970) state this position most clearly. Barrett (1980, pp. 187–226) provides a critique of these functionalist explanations, but then cannot move beyond functionalism to see the fundamental contradiction. Humphries (1976, 1977a and b) has emphasised the other side of the contradiction: the importance of the family to the working class, again without putting her finger on the contradiction.

[12]Although no known societies have been dominated by women, an increasing number of studies, such as Brown (1970), Cameron (1981), Caulfield (1977), Draper (1975), Faithorn (1975), Halperin (1980), Leacock (1977 and 1981), LeVine (1966), Mintz (1971), Muller (1977), Reed (1975), Rey-Hulmann (1978), Rogers (1975), Rohrlich-Leavitt (1977), Rohrlich-Leavitt et al (1975), Sacks (1979), and Stacey and Price (1980), demonstrate the existence of sexually egalitarian societies. For a critical review of some of the literature, see Rogers (1978). Universal male domination has been shown to be the production of the imagination of male anthropologists. However, for a somewhat different interpretation than mine, see Godelier (1981); Milton (1979) misunderstands this feminist revolution in anthropological thought. More generally, on feminist illusions based on the capitalist ideology of equality, see Nelson (1974) and Nelson and Olesen (1977), although the latter rely on a thesis of the universal existence of hierarchy.

[13]Many of the classics of the women's movement, such as Greer (1971), Millett (1972), and Mitchell (1971 and 1975), as well as Eisenstein (1979) and Macciocchi (1978), are studies of this ideology. Work from a more Marxist orientation includes Barrett (1980), Hartmann (1979), Kuhn (1978), McDonough and Harrison (1978), Reiter (1975b), Robinson (1979), and Rowbotham (1973a and b). Beechey (1979) provides a concise summary of the debate.

ductive labour in my sense, is the criterion for social adulthood. As extraction of surplus labour develops, production of the means of subsistence becomes more precarious. The dominant class, thus, tends to select the men from whom to extract the surplus, partly because they are more mobile, but also because "they can be more intensively exploited than women, not having to nurse and rear children." (Sacks, 1974, p. 220).[14] One must remember that replacements for extended nursing of children are a very recent innovation among the subordinate class.[15] However, this sexual division is, in fact, not directly possible under all modes of production. The distinction is most easily created in the corvée form of the corvée-tributary mode and under capitalism. Under the slave mode, where the dominant class is responsible for the means of subsistence of the slave, and under the tribute form of the corvée-tributary mode where the united community produces the tribute, such a separation does not normally exist. Where it can and does occur, this separation forms a basis for development of state legal systems and of ideology, used to divide and rule sexually. The woman is only a wife, and not a social adult, because she does not contribute directly to the surplus labour provided to the dominant class. The sexual oppression of women under capitalism is, then, for specific reasons, one particular form of this more general sexual oppression.

Thus, biological differences are never sufficient to explain women's oppression. They must be placed in their specific social context. For example, abstractly, women's power to produce children might 'logically' give them dominance over society, just as easily as making them subject to male dominance.[16] As with racism, all theories of a universal female condition ultimately rest on a biological or innate psychological foundation: physically inferior females or the 'natural' urge of men to dominate (and of women to obey).

Domestic labour is not limited to nuclear families of the working class. For labour power is obviously a peculiar 'commodity'.[17] Not only can it not be produced by a capitalist production process, but it must undergo a prolonged period of formation, of education. In order to have a 'use value', labour power must be capable of performing the appropriate types of labour. But, more importantly, it must be prepared to submit to exploitation, to the specific capitalist process of extracting surplus labour. Education, as an essential part of the domestic production of labour power, must incorporate two elements: training in skills and ideological inculcation. However, because the latter is not the production of a use value, it is

[14] See also Aries (1973, pp. 420–421). Himmelweit and Mohun (1977) hint at a similar argument, but do not develop it. Middleton (1981) does so, but in the context of control of property. Godelier (1981) places this argument in the context of sexual oppression in pre-class societies. The work of Beneria (1979) can also be interpreted along similar lines.

[15] On "wet-nursing", see Shorter (1975, pp. 176–190) and Stone (1979, pp. 267–273). On working mothers giving opiates to their babies, see Engels (1969, p. 172), Marx (1967, I, p. 395, n.1), Stone (1979, p. 296), Thompson (1968, p. 362), and Wilson (1977, p. 45). This contrasts wtih Shorter's (1975, p. 178) claim that factory workers not using wet-nursing indicates a 'modern attitude'.

[16] See Reed (1975, p. 44).

[17] See Lautier and Tortajada (1977) and Tronti (1977, pp. 178–179, 197–204).

not social labour, hence not domestic labour either. It is briefly treated in the next chapter.

This classification of part of educational labour within domestic labour follows from the development of the concepts of productive and domestic labour in Chapter 1, whereby the latter encompasses all social labour not covered by the former definition. As well as educational labour, the term, *domestic labour*, must include welfare services, in addition to what is traditionally called 'domestic labour'. I shall, thus, call the latter *household labour* and household production. However, only this household labour is essential to the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction, because only it is the basis of *individual* sale of labour power.

I have chosen to extend the meaning of the term domestic labour to cover all social labour which is not productive labour in order to emphasise the lack of adequate conceptual elaboration on the part of certain feminists who so particularise the traditional notion of domestic labour as to attempt to conceive of women as a class. But such a move can only coherently be sustained if all other labour creating use values in non-commodity form is also included.[18] The concept then ceases to refer to a sexual division, because the labour of many men must also be concerned.

Under the capitalist mode of production, as under the corvée-tributary mode, the direct producers are responsible for their livelihood. However, under capitalism, the workers are neither united communally in this production process nor in possession of their means of production. Each individual, or more accurately, each nuclear family, is, in principle, alone responsible for survival. The dominant class takes no part in this responsibility. However, this very lack of responsibility creates a tension in two ways: with uncontrolled exploitation, the reproduction of labour power is not ensured and, in addition, may provoke resistance and rebellion on the part of the working class. For this reason, a state, distinct from the dominant class, is essential because of a contradiction in the reproduction of the system.

Domestic production under capitalism is non-commodity production of use values for consumption.[19] It takes the two forms just described: household labour within each family unit and the state supply of welfare services and education. Domestic production takes place outside the valorisation process, described in

[18] If household production in the family unit were a 'mode of production', so logically would all domestic production have to be included. As Lebowitz (1976a, p. 3) remarks, "that poses the question as to whether we want to designate the household as a mode of production. Why not, then, other *forms* of private labour — e.g. the walking to work mode of production?" Also Smith (1978, p. 208): "there is no social mechanism which defines the necessary tasks which are supposed to contribute to the value of labour power — if cooking meals is necessary for its production, why not eating them? One might as well argue that since sleeping is necessary for the replenishment of the capacity to labour, it too is value creating labour."

[19] Power's (1983) distinction between domestic "production" and "maintenance" is not pertinent because her production from raw materials never occurs "outside of and independent from capitalist production" (p. 75). Both are non-commodity production of use values.

the last chapter, because it does not produce commodities, except the final product, labour power. Thus, there is no question of value being added by domestic production. The value of labour power equals the value of the products to be obtained by each family unit *as commodities* in the value circuit. Those supplied by the two forms of domestic production are not bought as commodities in this way. Thus, the standard of living of the working class is determined by two factors: the value of labour power received and the amount of domestic labour, both household and state, provided.

The demand for wages for housework results from a basic misunderstanding of the functioning of the capitalist mode of production. The male workers' wages pay, not for the work which they do, but for the value of their labour power, i.e. the cost of reproducing the family, including the housewife and the children.[20] The problem is rather that husbands receive it, and often control it, although much less frequently in working class families than in bourgeois ones. The result is oppression, not exploitation. If housewives, as such, succeeded in obtaining a wage, the male workers' wages would necessarily eventually correspondingly decrease so that the total still equalled the value of labour power, in the same way that a reduction in taxes leads, in the long run, to decreased wages.

The analysis of domestic labour under capitalism, thus, depends on a prior theory of the allocation and expropriation of productive labour. The two forms of domestic labour just outlined can be studied as successive levels of analysis, although each level will be treated in two steps. The goal is not to understand the historical development of the division between productive and domestic labour, but rather why it is an essential part of developed capitalist society.[21]

6.2 Domestic labour

What one tends to forget when studying domestic labour is that *all* commodities must have use values. Because the goal of capitalist production is value, and surplus value, this tends to be lost in the confusion. All commodity production, although directed towards value, must ultimately result in consumable goods. This is true even of the production of means of production, because they become the means to produce directly consumable commodities.[22]

On the other hand, labour power is not produced for its value and its production yields no surplus value. Unlike other commodities, it cannot even be

[20] See Marx (1967, I, p. 395).

[21] Innumerable studies have appeared recently incorporating facets of the historical development. Work in anthropology is also important in this context; see, for example, Reiter (1975a), Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974), and the special number *9/10* (1977) of Critique of Anthropology. They contrast sharply with the work of the ahistorical proponents of a domestic mode of production cited above. In a certain sense, Engels (1948) is as guilty of ahistoricism as these modern writers, in that he relates everything to private property in the means of production. Recent discussions of his work include Aaby (1977), Beechey (1977), Bodemann (1980), Burstyn (1983), Delmar (1976), Sacks (1974), and Zaretsky (1976, pp. 90–97). Leacock (1981) provides a well-argued up-dating of Engels' approach.

[22] At this level of abstraction, I ignore production of weapons and so on, because the ideologico-repressive apparatus has not yet been taken into consideration. See the next chapters.

marketed by its principal producer, but only by its bearer. Nor can it be resold, as such, by its capitalist buyer. The process of production of labour power, using domestic labour, is two-fold. It involves the production of direct use values to be consumed while, at the same time, creating that peculiar 'commodity', labour power. In fact, at this level of analysis, labour power is not a commodity at all, because of this, but is only fetishised as one. On the other hand, at the level of abstraction of the labour theory of value, it is a 'commodity', because its value is determined by the *productive* labour required to produce it, domestic labour being ignored.[23] Commodities result when "useful articles are produced for the purpose of being exchanged, and their character as values has therefore to be taken into account, beforehand, during production" (Marx, 1967, I, p. 73). Capitalism attempts to turn labour power into such an article, to turn members of the working class into things which only eat, sleep, and produce in order to sell their labour power. However, the reverse is the case: workers only submit to capitalistically-controlled jobs in order to live.[24]

Domestic labour is, thus, not commodity-producing labour, not labour allocated by the law of value.[25] This can be seen, also, by consideration of abstract labour and socially-necessary labour time, neither of which applies to domestic labour. Domestic labour does not occupy a branch of capitalist production. Changes in the value of labour power and of other commodities do not result in transfer of labour and means of production from domestic production to capitalist production or back.[26] The phenomenon of women entering or leaving the labour market does not involve significant change in domestic production, because household labour must still be done whether or not the women hold a paying job. Overproduction of labour power, unemployment, does not result in a cutback in its production. However, the market in labour power does influence its production to a certain extent. Children are brought up in a way which parents consider best for their survival as wage labourers,[27] and, in times of unemployment or when an individual has difficulty finding a job, recycling or further training is often tried.[28] No matter what happens, the working class must continue to produce

[23] As already pointed out in the previous chapter, Aumeeruddy et al (1978) and Lautier and Tortajada (1977 and 1978) forget this distinction and claim that Marx is wrong in stating that it has a value.

[24] For this reason, Marx (1967, I, p. 572) can state "The maintenance and reproduction of the working-class is, and must ever be, a necessary condition to the reproduction of capital. But the capitalist may safely leave its fulfilment to the labourer's instincts of self-preservation and of propagation." See also Lipietz (1979a, pp. 135–138) and Seccombe (1980).

[25] Smith (1978) and Fox (1980b) have most convincingly argued this case, at the same time most effectively demolishing the positions that household production is a mode of production and/or that household labour creates surplus value. The discussion in this paragraph relies heavily on these articles, as well as on Gardiner et al (1975), which makes the same points more obliquely; more generally, see also Gerstein (1973) and Himmelweit and Mohun (1977).

[26] See Sweezy (1942, p. 84).

[27] See, for example, Kohn (1969).

[28] In this sense, Smith (1978, p. 206) exaggerates the independence of domestic labour from the market.

and to reproduce itself. Within the 'branch' of domestic production, no mechanism for the determination of socially-necessary labour time exists. 'Inefficient' households are not eliminated nor forced to convert to a more efficient technique, although their labour power product may receive inferior wages or have difficulty obtaining a job. Nothing forces domestic labour time to be reduced to a minimum.[29] In summary, to quote Smith (1978, p. 209), "Thus, although the commodity labour power achieves equivalence with all other commodities through its sale, domestic labour does not become equalised with all other forms of labour and so is not reduced to socially necessary and abstract labour. Because, under commodity production, abstract labour is the only form in which private labour becomes social labour, domestic labour, despite being materialised in a social use value, remains private."

This lack of regulation of domestic labour, as abstract labour, has immediate implications for the family. The husbands' productive labour and the wives' domestic labour are incommensurable; they cannot be compared quantitatively. No trend exists to equalise working conditions, to transfer labour from one type to the other, especially because the relationship is guaranteed by the marriage contract.

Domestic labour is not allocated by the relations of production. Nor do the relations of production determine the allocation of the different types of concrete domestic labour, except by exclusion. This allocation is left to the 'private' realm of the household. Because domestic labour, whether household or state, has no such specific relationship to the relations of production, the definition of social classes, it cannot constitute a social class.[30] Domestic labour is outside the law of value and is directly antinomic to it: it is the privileged preserve of the working class, that labour not allocated by an alien force; it is here that the appearance that labour power is a commodity disappears. Domestic labour is, thus, the only one of the five categories of labour, or antagonistic social practices, under capitalism, which does not constitute a social class. Housewives, or women in general do not have their own social class; in any case, that would be a definition in terms of individuals and not of relations among practices. On the other hand, when not performing productive labour, they are ideologically influenced to some extent by their husbands' class, as well as by their fathers'.[31] But then, many other people, such as students, the unemployed (to some degree), etc. are in similar situations. In this way, domestic labour does not dissolve and disappear, but is highlighted by

[29] Again Smith (1978, p. 208) ignores a certain influence of the market.

[30] Women as a class always remains at the level of a proclamation, for any 'class' *analysis* in terms of production would demonstrate that everyone who eats and sleeps belongs to it. More seriously, it would have to include, not only women's household production, but, at least, labour in education and welfare services. For an interesting discussion of the methodology which leads to this perspective, see Burkett (1977), who concludes her attempt to discover "a commonality of female experience across class, racial, and ethnic lines" (p. 20) as follows "I was viewing men as the norm against which to judge female experience. I was then, in a word guilty of an implicitly sexist approach. When I began to look at the experience and feelings of women, not as compared to men, but as a focus in its own right, the centrality of the [social] class issue became apparent" (p. 25).

[31] For the particular position of 'working' women, see especially Robinson (1979).

its distinctiveness from all other categories of antagonistic social practice under capitalism.

6.3 Household labour

The preceding section has been essentially negative, and has treated domestic labour in general at this first level of analysis. The specificity of household labour must now be considered. Household labour is particular to capitalism and cannot be analysed before the functioning of the mode of production is understood. In other words, it cannot be analysed in abstraction from the labour theory of value. But, in the latter, both exploitative and productive labour are already present. Thus, two forms of household production must exist to make possible these two forms of labour; the division becomes even more complex with subsequent class analysis, carried out in the next chapter, which reacts back and enlarges the number of types of household production. However, the essential distinction between bourgeois and proletarian families remains. Labour within capitalist and within working class households are very different.[32] The two cases only appear similar because they both take the juridical form of the nuclear family consecrated by marriage and consolidated by patriarchy. As well, the family forms under capitalism did not appear full blown, but developed historically with the mode of production.[33] What I am concerned with here is its developed present day forms.

The capitalist class is concerned with appropriating surplus value. It is also concerned with consuming a portion of it as well as with providing heirs to inherit the power to make future labour allocation decisions and surplus value extraction. Any surplus consumed by the capitalist class serves, not simply to reproduce the individuals performing the labour of that class, but to reproduce its global control over the social mechanism of allocation of productive labour. It serves as a means of dominance and display, reproducing the dominance of the relations of production.[34] The individual capitalist (almost exclusively male), as the support of exploitative labour, thus, must, as part of conscious practice on the social, control the activities of *his* household and direct them to this end. What labour the

[32] See, especially, Alzon (1973) and Kollontai (1977, pp. 39–73).

[33] Of the many recent histories of the family, the four most well-known must be mentioned. Laslett (1965) denies class distinctions. (For the many defects of this book, see Hill, 1967, and Macpherson, 1966.) Both he and Shorter (1975) contrast "traditional society" with our "modern" one, the dividing line being the industrial revolution. However, their "traditional society" refers to the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, a period when capitalism was already dominant, first in England, but very soon also on the continent. As Fox-Genovese (1982), Hamilton (1978), Le Goff (1964, pp. 354–357), and Stone (1979, passim, esp. pp. 172–174, 414–421), among others, have shown, this transition to capitalism, not industrialisation, is critical. Shorter (1975) is also extremely ethnocentric, judging everything by present day standards and presenting the "traditional" family as constrained by 'unnatural' social relations from which it is now liberated. In spite of his theoretical proclamations, his work rests on a faulty historical comparison between French village peasants and the German petty bourgeoisie, ignoring the key growth of wage labour. The two national studies, by Aries (1973) and Stone (1979), are much superior, both in the historical finesse and in their frank admission of the lack of information on the lower classes.

[34] The classic discussion of this is by Veblen (1953).

wife performs is another part of this conscious practice on this social, going to enhance her husband's position of power and to dissipate tensions generated in his work. In doing this, she supports the dominant order of capitalism in terms of which his life is regulated.[35]

The working class, defined by productive labour, is, however, primarily concerned with living, and, thus, most essentially, with domestic labour. But one necessary means to this end is the sale of labour power. The equality implied in this sale is only formal, concealing the inequality resulting from labour power being property only in appearance. In fact, the working class alienates labour power due to need.[36] Without this sale, the households cannot survive under capitalism, so that all household activity must turn around it. In spite of ideological infringements from the dominant class, the relationship among the sexes is much more equal,[37] because unity and cooperation are necessary to survival. However, because this unity poses a threat to the capitalist class, as does the village community unity to the corvée-tributary lord, sexual divisions play a key ideological role.

The wives have much more control of their domestic labour activities, and are usually virtually solely responsible for managing the house and bringing up the children. This, of course, does not mean that there are no socio-cultural factors which influence household labour activities. These are very important (keeping up with the Jones family), but are not relations of production. The wives' hours will be longer, although perhaps less intense, than the wage earners', because of the lack of pressure from transformation to abstract labour described above. But, as long as wives remains at home, the contribution to the support of the family can be more or less equally shared, in spite of the dominant patriarchal ideology indicating the contrary. However, I repeat that no social mechanism exists to regulate this equality, or even to allow it to be measured. On the other hand, when working class wives are forced to seek wage labour, along with the husbands, the latter must benefit in so far as they contribute less to housework.

As long as men are the primary suppliers of productive labour under capitalism, they obtain a 'family' wage, which covers the commodity requirements of the whole family. Because employed women are not considered, ideologically, to be supporting a family, they only receive an individual wage, irrespective of their situation. Hence, female wages are very considerably lower than male wages.[38] Access to technical innovations for household labour leads to the same amount of work raising the families' standards of living rather than to freeing the wives for

[35] See Smith (1973), who provides an interesting discussion of the difference between working and 'middle class' families, the latter, however, referring to characteristics of both the capitalist and ideological classes.

[36] See Colletti (1972, pp. 94–95) and Heller (1976, p. 57).

[37] See, for example, Barrett (1980, pp. 216–217).

[38] See Beechey (1977), Cameron (1983), Humphries (1977a), and Land (1980). For a critique of the family wage, which mixes in a confusing manner what they think should be (i.e. a guaranteed family wage) with what exists, see Barrett and McIntosh (1980).

wage labour outside the home.[39] However, all of this does not imply that married women have not contributed to the monetary income of the family. In certain situations, petty commodity production may play a significant role,[40] but here we leave the level of abstraction assumed in this chapter.

Under industrial capitalism, the value of labour power has been considerably inflated by the extended period during which children take no part in productive activities. Even if compulsory education is free, the children must still be supported. This contrasts with the pre-industrial development of capitalism, and with other modes of production, where children participate in production from a very early age. Two distinct forms of such involvement occurred in the manufacturing period of capitalism. If the parents were producing at home, the children often helped. But, in many cases, children were placed as servants in other people's homes, yielding the enlarged family already mentioned.[41]

When the trend for both spouses to work becomes generalised, the value of labour power eventually becomes split and distributed more or less equally over the two wages. The male wage is no longer a family wage. This, in turn, obliges still more wives to seek wage labour. The necessary double 'freedom' of the sale of labour power, then, enters into contradiction with the usual oppression felt by wives within the family structure.[42] Here, the reformist remedy would be state intervention, as 'wages for housework', for those wives unable to take wage labour. Such a measure would act to preserve the family so threatened.[43] Thus, female wage labour has cheapened wage labour costs in several ways. Not only are women's wages lower, but, as a supplement to the husbands' wages, they eventually lower the latter.[44] Women working also reduce costs to the state by decreasing the benefits paid to the poorer families.

For the working class, the family is a centre of struggle and defence against capitalist exploitation, of both antagonistic and conscious practice on the social.[45] It is used as an informal popular 'welfare system' for non-labouring members; manipulation of who works for wages within the family can be used to act on the determination of the value of labour power;[46] and, in spite of being the support for individual sale of labour power, it provides a source of class consciousness and struggle and a means of its transmission.[47]

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[39] See Cowan (1974).

[40] For the USA, see Jensen (1980).

[41] See Minge-Kalman (1978) and Stone (1979, pp. 84, 135, 265, 295).

[42] See Landes (1975).

[43] Again see Landes (1975).

[44] "The value of labour-power was determined, not only by the labour-time necessary to maintain the individual adult labourer, but also by that necessary to maintain his family. Machinery, by throwing every member of that family on to the labour-market, spreads the value of the man's labour power over his whole family. It thus depreciates his labour-power." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 395). For empirical description of such a situation, see Hareven (1975).

[45] See Kergoat (1982, pp. 19, 32).

[46] See, for example, Hareven (1975) and Hollis (1973, pp. 193–194).

[47] For the historical importance of the family to the British working class, see Humphries (1977a

Working class families are the site of absorption of the reserve army of unemployed. They must look after those judged too young or too old to work and those unable to due to sickness or disability, because, at this first level, the role of the state is ignored. But they must also invent means of survival when the principal wage earner becomes unemployed. In both cases, the housewives are responsible. But, in a certain sense, they also form part of the reserve army to be drawn upon when the capitalist economy sees fit. As often as not, this is in times of crisis when the male workers are increasingly unemployed. Because of their desperate situation, working class wives can be forced to accept jobs at much lower levels of pay. Because crisis is always based on increasing difficulties for the capitalist class to make decisions about labour allocation, this introduction of female wage labour may be used to discipline the labour force.[48] In times of prosperity, when more jobs are available but labour allocation is functioning more smoothly, the housewives may be pushed back to their domestic labour. However, dominant ideology does not necessarily closely follow this. In times of high unemployment, women may be encouraged to return to homemaking, but this suggestion is followed primarily by bourgeois women who have the choice. This ideology, thus, directs attention away from social class relations, by pointing to working women as the cause of men's unemployment. In any case, working class housewives are in a situation of 'mobility' between domestic and productive labour, although they never escape the former.[49]

That working class housewives are oppressed by capitalism and not by their husbands can most readily be seen in periods of crisis and extended unemployment. When the husbands cannot find a job, and, thus, do not bring home a wage (nor create surplus value for the capitalist class), they lose all authority in the family. Their dominance comes from their activity in capitalist commodity production being ideologically superior to household labour, not from an inherent male characteristic. The problem lies in this capitalist domination being mediated through one specific individual.[50]

In many ways, working class wives are the key and dominant figure. Historically, when the working class was kept at a bare physical subsistence level, they had to make the most sacrifices for nutrition, medical care, and so on.[51] But, this

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and b), from whom these points are taken. However, her analogical "primitive communal core" to the working class family is, to say the least, problematic. For further development of Humphries' work, see Sen (1980). For a particular case of the historical importance of the family in American industrial development, see Hareven (1975). For some of the ambiguities of the role of the family, see Barrett and McIntosh (1982).

[48] On increased employment of women in times of economic crisis, see Barrett (1980, pp. 160–162), Fine and Harris (1975 and 1976a), Humphries (1976), Milkman (1976), and Smith (1977, pp. 44–46). Anthias (1980), Bruegel (1979), Power (1983), and Yang and Smith (1983) provide a critique of women as forming part fo the ordinary reserve army of labour.

[49] See Beechey (1977 and 1978), Hartmann (1979), and Quick (1975). In spite of centring on 'wages for housework', Edmond and Fleming (1975) also provide useful information on this subject.

[50] See Engels (1969, pp. 173–175), Safa (1976), and Smith (1973).

[51] See Oren (1973).

centrality continues to be especially apparent in times of unemployment, when they alone are responsible for the family's continuation. They must work harder in the home to stretch the available wage, or they must go out to find employment, in addition to their household labour, to make ends meet.[52] The dominant class uses this situation to its advantage, not only in obtaining cheaper female labour power, cheaper because of necessity,[53] but in playing on women's family responsibility in order to break strikes. The more that the ideology of the superiority of commodity production to domestic labour, and the accompanying patriarchal relations, can be made to enter the working class family, the firmer is the grip of capitalist exploitation.

The bourgeois feminist movement has been instrumental in this in its attempts to break up the family unit without changing the underlying capitalist relationships. Although perhaps giving more breathing space to the more male-oppressed wives of the bourgeoisie, it has acted to weaken the working class, both male and female.[54] This, however, is not a polemic against the feminist movement in general. The production of labour power, and the accompanying split between productive and domestic labour, is one aspect of the *fundamental* contradiction of capitalism and can quite possibly be used to overthrow it.

6.4 The welfare state

Household labour forms the basic unit of domestic production. However, it cannot provide all of the use values necessary for the production of labour power. The household is characterised by its particularity and individuality because it is the support for the individual, freely selling labour power. Yet, this labour power must have certain universal characteristics for it to find a market. The individualised worker's labour power must be capable of transformation into abstract labour. It is here that the 'neutral' administrative side of the state must intervene to provide certain non-commodity use values, an intervention which, of course, serves ideologically to demonstrate the supposed impartiality of the state and hence to hide its ideologico-repressive role. This is what Weberians call 'legitimation' of the state.

At the first level of analysis, we saw how the family, and household labour, were responsible for absorbing problems created by the vagaries of the market. In a truly individualised capitalist society, the analysis might conceivably stop there. For several reasons, some of which have already been evoked in the previous section, such a situation is not possible. The crisis nature of capitalism would continually place the reproduction of the labour force in danger. As well, those potential wage labourers who are unemployed could only survive by begging, theft, household labour, or dependence on relatives. In addition, labour power

[52] See Fox (1980b) and Luxton (1983).

[53] By restricting female eligibility for social security or welfare benefits, the state acts to make women more vulnerable to use as cheap labour power. See McIntosh (1978).

[54] See Gramsci (1971, p. 300) and Kollontai (1977, pp. 39–73).

is not an inert commodity, much as the capitalist class would like it to be. The working class is concerned with living, and constantly struggles to do so. Part of its struggle is for the elimination of such hazards of the market, for a form of insurance. Thus, social welfare measures are in the interests of both classes, and are increasingly enlarged as capitalism develops.[55] However, because of the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction, the extension of welfare measures has certain bounds, however ill-defined, which can only be exceeded for limited periods, such as in time of war.[56]

One important function of the capitalist state is, thus, the management of labour power.[57] We have already seen its economic basis in the previous chapter. The state gains control of part of the necessary labour of society and administers it in the 'interest' of the working class, but, of course, also of the capitalist class. For necessary labour in the wide sense, under capitalism, must include all domestic labour as well as the wage equivalent. The workers receive, as a wage, a sum sufficient to cover day to day needs of a normal, minimal family. State intervention is necessary to provide for deviations from the norm. The state also manages that part of necessary labour which is required for other circumstances. Children's allowances cover some of the additional costs of reproducing the new labour force. Pensions cover the expenses of those no longer able to work. Unemployment benefits provide for those temporarily or permanently out of work. Accident and health insurances cover the expenses of exceptional wear on labour power on the job, as well as the unforeseen. However, these transfer payments are supplements paid for the value of labour power, and not for domestic labour. They are simply adjustments to the family wage.[58] This indirect wage acts to guarantee mass consumption, one aspect of monopolistic regulation.[59]

But the welfare state also provides a number of direct use values. These include social assistance, day-care centres, subsidised housing, a free (i.e. non-toll) road system, sewage disposal, and recreation parks. The work involved here is domestic labour.

Medicine is, in many ways, in a special situation. As domestic labour, the latter has retained an autonomy which is basically incompatible with the development of capitalism. This can only be explained by its ideological role, in removing control of one's own body from the working class.[60] Thus, as we shall

[55] See Gough (1979) and Therborn (1984a and b). For the relations between welfare measures and the family, see Wilson (1977).

[56] See, for example, the study of war-time nurseries by Riley (1979).

[57] See especially Aumeeruddy et al (1978), de Brunhoff (1976b), Cartelier (1980), Lautier and Tortajada (1977), and McIntosh (1978). Negri (1978b) analyses state expenditure from an essentially consumption, not production, point of view. Once again, I am not here concerned with the state's ideologico-repressive role.

[58] See Land (1980). On the historical role of the indirect wage as a weapon to discipline the working class, see Coriat (1979a, pp. 127–135).

[59] See Aglietta (1976) and Lipietz (1979a).

[60] See, especially, Cleaver (1977b).

see in the Appendix to the next chapter, Marx places doctors in the ideological class. In the long run, a healthy working class is essential to capitalism. But the demands of competition force each capitalist to exploit workers to the utmost. Health and safety standards are ignored where possible, unless imposed uniformly on all members of the class. Pollution of the environment, for example, can be turned to profit if it concerns the consumers, while stopping pollution for the direct producers always enters into the direct costs of production of each competing capitalist. With the constantly increasing intensity of labour, labour power bears more strain and wear. Thus, the health of the working class cannot be left to individual solutions, but must be covered comprehensively, controlled by the state. Of course, as with the other welfare measures, it is also in the interest of the working class to struggle for control of the medical profession and for comprehensive health care.

6.5 The educational system

Capitalist production is essentially production, not for use, but for exchange. The concrete use value of a commodity is irrelevant, as long as it has one, i.e. as long as someone will buy it on the market. Education of the subordinate class under other modes of production is education to produce concrete use values. It is, thus, closely integrated with production itself. The child becomes involved in adult activities, many of which concern production for consumption, from a very early age. Such cannot be the case under capitalism.

Because productive and household labour are radically separated, the children in the household cannot learn the methods of commodity production from the direct producers who, in fact, leave the unit to work. However, this is secondary, because it would, in any case, involve learning concrete labour skills. The children must be brought up in abstraction. This can only be accomplished by also removing them from the particular activities of the household, those of productive labour already being isolated from the family. The school provides complete submersion in abstraction from the ultimate objective: activities are performed which have no apparent goal or usefulness. Access to the global pre-planning of the learning act is denied to the students. 'Knowledge' must be acquired with no reasons given, just as later the productive workers must produce without knowing what or why. Such is the form taken under capitalism by the transmission of the conceptual moment of practice on nature to the future direct producers. This is the essential role of institutionalised education in a commodity producing society and is the reason why such compulsory education is unique to the capitalist mode of production.[61]

I repeat that at this level of analysis, the ideological functions of the school are ignored. Only use values are under consideration. For example, the close historical connection between compulsory education and capitalist employment

[61] See the work of Sohn-Rethel (1978) in this context.

in nineteenth century England, although following on working class struggle, resulted only in working children being obliged, and allowed, to attend school; unemployed working class children could not attend.[62] On the other hand, the earlier development of compulsory education in Germany (early in the eighteenth century)[63] was related to its ideological, not its use value, role in combatting the subordinate class threat, with the accompanying conflict among the dominant classes, generated within the specific articulation of modes of production, including the capitalist one.[64]

It must, however, be noted that, when compulsory education began to be extended to all working class children in Britain late in the nineteenth century, this included girls as well as boys and was hence aimed not just at future wage workers. It served the ideological role of re-establishing and strengthening the family.[65]

The abstraction from concrete activities and goals serves the future worker in another way. For the children do obtain other essential use values: they learn to read, write, and calculate, besides being able to reason abstractly, at least in a certain fashion. This common basic knowledge allows a mobility of labour power among different types of concrete labour, and a suitability for almost any one. The school does not prepare for a specific concrete job but for labour, any labour, in capitalist society.

The third important type of knowledge which the children acquire is the grasp of abstract time. The activities of the day are arbitrarily and uniformly cut up and a rigid time sequence followed. Successive activities have no relationship to each other. The essential is to be present and on time.

Such is the working class school. In spite of an appearance of a unified system, at least in some capitalist countries, the school is always divided institutionally,[66] internally by achievement, but also by track or stream and often externally by type. These divisions follow social class lines, although certainly only partially those of the parents. For the school is a prime site of selection whereby the dominant classes attempt to acquire the cream of the working class children.[67] The future social class divisions can already be distinguished in the divisions of the

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[62] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 482–483, 495), Lawson and Silver (1973, pp. 275–276), and Simon (1960, p. 173). This does not imply that the reasons were not deeply ideological; see Colls (1976).

[63] See Hartmann et al (1974, pp. 53–56). In this context, it is interesting to note that a clearly circumscribed police force was also being instituted in Germany at this early date; see Knemeyer (1980).

[64] With his empiricism and mechanical determinism, Hussain (1976) mistakenly denies this link between capitalism and compulsory education, citing "pre-capitalist" eighteenth century Germany as a counter-example.

[65] See Davin (1979).

[66] For divisions in the French capitalist school, see Baudelot and Establet (1971). Their work must be situated at the level of analysis where we now find ourselves, because it ignores (denies) the more complicated social class divisions which must be introduced after a complete class analysis has been accomplished.

[67] "The more a ruling class is able to assimilate the foremost minds of a ruled class, the more stable and dangerous becomes its rule." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 601). See also Bloch (1939, p. 448).

school, just as some of the old ones are being effaced.

The knowledge acquired by future members of the capitalist class is specific to the labour of exploitation. They learn how to write and speak in a sophisticated, mystifying way, how to lead (command) others, how to reason rationally in terms of means and ends. The same basic skills, reading, writing, and arithmetic, are appropriated and applied in a very different way.

Institutionalised education is a preparation for capitalist commodity production. It cannot be a direct formation of household labour because of its abstract nature. Nevertheless, the productive/domestic labour division appears here primarily ideologically, in the sexist prejudices engendered by the school.

The labour of teaching, thus, forms part of domestic labour,[68] as well as being ideologico-repressive labour, as we shall see in the next chapter. Teachers provide use values to children, but very specific use values, particular to capitalism.

State employees, as producers of use values, whether in education or in welfare services, receive a wage to cover their necessary consumption, although this ignores ideological differentials which may disproportionately increase the wage. These are primarily based on the ideological labour of these workers, which does not enter at this level of analysis. However, no value is created and no surplus value extracted, for the reasons given above in the second section. The value represented by the salaries and goods used in the production of these use values disappears from the value circuit. It does not come specifically from constant or from variable capital, nor from surplus value, but must be deducted from the total value available before these quantities can be calculated. This labour for the state is as much domestic labour as is household labour, and, thus, has no mechanism to reduce it to abstract labour, although the labour market does have more influence here than for household labour.

6.6 Productive versus domestic labour

The limits of domestic labour are never clearly defined under capitalism.[69] They are always the subject of class struggle. In times of 'crisis', the capitalist class attempts to reduce the necessary labour time. This does not just involve a restriction on the size of wages. Housewives are drawn from their household labour to

[68] Lautier and Tortajada (1978) attempt a tortuous demonstration that learning acquired at school is not related to the division of labour and to the wage hierarchy. However, they remain within the problematic of bourgeois economics in the sense that they do not see the specific relationship between education and the allocation of social labour, instead becoming entangled in a debate over 'human capital'.

[69] But they are situated within capitalism. Rey (1973, pp. 139–155) and especially Meillassoux (1975) resurrect Bauer's critique of Luxemburg, which is in fact just a transposition of the latter's theory of the demise of capitalism. Instead of insufficient markets, they find that capitalism cannot produce its own labour force, and must rely on "pre-capitalist modes of production", and, specifically, on domestic communities. (For Meillassoux, domestic labour under capitalism is a simple transformation of these primitive communities.) When the pre-capitalist modes have been eliminated, capitalism must apparently dissolve. This is a thinly disguised form of demographic determinism or Malthusianism which ignores Marx's theory of the reserve army of labour. Critiques of this position include Edholm et al (1977), Mackintosh (1977), O'Laughlin (1977), and Sweezy (1942, pp. 209–213).

take (low-paying) jobs. Attempts are made to cut back social and welfare services and to cut down on the costs of education. These measures mean that a greater portion of social activity can be applied to producing — surplus value.

Variations in domestic labour with productive labour can take two contradictory forms. By the extension of absolute surplus value, productive labour infringes directly on domestic labour. This has taken its most explicit form with the "volunteer" Saturday work, whether in Nazi Germany or in the Comecon countries and China.[70] On the other hand, the production of relative surplus value may decrease the need for domestic labour, for example, if both the wage and the standard of living remain constant. Let us look at these contradictory forms more closely.

The struggle over necessary labour time centres around the basic division between productive and domestic labour.[71] The capitalist class as a whole has a contradictory perspective on this division. On the one hand, it would like to eliminate domestic labour completely, because it produces no surplus value, thus, providing no extension of its control over productive labour. This elimination would also yield further markets for the commodities produced, because all labour would be congealed in the commodity form, and all consumption be based on it. On the other hand, in the first place, for the individual capitalist, the more necessary labour is covered by domestic labour, the lower is the value of labour power which he must pay. However, such a saving in labour does not necessarily occur on the societal scale, because consumption commodities most often require less labour time than corresponding use values produced by household labour.[72] This results from the lower productivity of the latter due to lack of pressure from transformation to abstract labour. The trade-off point occurs when the ratio of productivities of domestic and productive labour equals the ratio of necessary (v) to total $(v + s)$ productive labour time. (However, housewives never make decisions about whether to produce or to buy a given use value on such 'rational' grounds.) Secondly, and most important, as we have seen, the division cannot be abolished because labour power would then no longer exist as a 'commodity', and

[70] For the USSR, see Sirianni (1982, pp. 226–227).

[71] This is a possible interpretation of the analyses of the 'workerist' movement in Italy, which concentrates on non-wage workers and the "refusal of work"; see Negri (1978a) and Tronti (1977). However, by subsuming domestic labour, as well as the circulation of commodities, under the working class, they lose the specificity of this aspect of the contradiction and struggle. They see capitalists as unilaterally struggling to reduce non-commodity domestic labour, and the working class to increase it. This analysis turns around consumption, not production, criteria. On the other hand, and in spite of this, this movement is one of the few to provide concrete study and analysis of contemporary class struggle, both in Europe and in America. Perhaps the best presentation and development of the 'workerist' approach available in English is provided by Cleaver (1979). Other examples of its application can be found in the two numbers of the journal, *Zerowork* and in the collection of texts published by the CSE (1979), which contains translations of some of Negri's and Tronti's writings.

[72] See Fox (1980b), Molyneux (1979), and Quick (1975). Molyneux, however, is wrong in considering that this undermines any argument that domestic labour is essential to capitalism. For the connections between the changing relationship of domestic labour to commodity purchases and the organisation of productive labour, see Aglietta (1976, pp. 129–145), Braverman (1974, pp. 271–283), and Coriat (1979a, pp. 103–135).

surplus value would no longer be produced at all.

Nevertheless, as use values increasingly become commodities and as working class survival based uniquely on a wage becomes increasingly precarious, the *tendential law towards the welfare state* develops out of the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction.[73] In turn, this limits the possibility for the capitalist class to control and to discipline the working classes through the wage. Perhaps most important, unemployment no longer has the mass effect it once had. This also allows some loosening of the grip of the family; the availability of certain welfare measures frees both spouses from some responsibility and permits greater mobility.[74]

In the market, the working class struggles to obtain the highest wage possible which, in turn, will provide more commodities for consumption. But, in a certain sense, the working class must also struggle to extend domestic labour to the maximum, for the more use values it can obtain in this way, the less it is exploited. Under the capitalist mode of production, only the production of a commodity involves direct decisions about allocation of labour made by the capitalist class with the accompanying extraction of surplus labour. In this perspective, not only the feminist movement, but also the communal, alternative technology, and ecological movements can be seen to play important roles in the struggle to overthrow capitalism. They are all concentrating, in their own ways, on the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction. But this, in turn, shows their very one-sidedness.[75]

The *bourgeois* feminist movements, concentrating on equal wages, etc., must, however, be excluded from this positive evaluation. They are playing the capitalist game and reinforcing its domination. They accept the ideology of individualism instead of seeing the potentialities of complementarity,[76] which is *not* to say that such differences are sex-typed. Recent "equal opportunity" legislation has been found to have a regressive effect not only on the position of women, but on the working class as a whole.[77] On the other hand, the struggle for wages for housework, especially in the form of a guaranteed family wage, can, in certain specific situations, be a revolutionary demand, if it works to demystify the ideology of wages as being paid for labour done, showing them rather to be the value of labour power.[78]

Thus, a great paradox of capitalism is that the productive activities of life in the domestic sector are devalued, while only those productive activities which involve enormous extraction of surplus labour are seen to be worthwhile. The restriction of productive labour to commodity-producing labour is a capitalist per-

[73] See the further discussion in Chapter 9.

[74] See Menahem (1979).

[75] See Vogel (1973).

[76] See, especially, Sampson (1977).

[77] For Britain, see Coyle (1980) and Gregory (1982).

[78] See dalla Costa and James (1975) and Land (1980), but also the excellent critiques by Freeman (1973) and Landes (1975).

spective imposed upon the subordinate class; the working class perspective is that of productive labour in general, of social labour, that which includes domestic labour. The feminist movement, in its envy of the position of men, is as much a victim of this capitalist illusion as the men themselves.[79]

[79] See, especially, Elson and Pearson (1981a and b). Marxism, from Engels on, is as guilty as any approach in promoting involvement in productive (wage) labour as a step towards the resolution of this aspect of the fundamental contradiction.

7
Social classes in capitalist society

7.1 Social classes in the perspective of social practice

In Chapter 5, I outlined the ways in which productive labour is allocated under the capitalist mode of prduction. As already pointed out in the first chapter, although this allocation of labour is the most fundamental, it is by no means the only one in capitalist society. A second facet, discussed in the previous chapter, is the domestic labour involved in the direct production of that special commodity, labour power. Social class theory enlarges the discussion further to complete the process of allocation of antagonistic social practices. It complements the previous discussions in one more important aspect, analysing the specific activities necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist production process from the point of view of what is produced, i.e. the circulation of value and the realisation of surplus value, and what is exploited, i.e. reproduction of the relations of production. It must, then, lead on to the study of class consciousness.

Much work has been done on social class analysis in recent years. One need only mention Carchedi (1977), Crompton and Gubbay (1977), the Ehrenreichs (1977), Kay (1979), Poulantzas (1968 and 1974), Przeworski (1977), Resnick and Wolff (1982), and Wright (1978). I shall not discuss this work in detail here because I have done so elsewhere.[1] All tend to accept the tenets of orthodox Marxism; to a large extent, they neglect the perspective of social practice, outlined in Chapter 2.

The study of social class antagonism must necessarily take on a certain 'structural' tone if it is not to dissolve into a jumble of historical detail.[2] What is required is the study of the specific ways in which labour is allocated in and around the relations of production. Such a study must be specific to the mode of produc-

[1] See Lindsey (1980 and 1983). Sections 2 through 5 of this chapter provide a further development, and correction, of the positive aspects of the first paper.

[2] As, for example, in Thompson (1968). This appreciation does not devalue its worth as a study of class consciousness and culture, but argues that such a study cannot replace the conception of social class and, indeed, presupposes it, a position which Thompson (1978b and 1981), more recently, seems to have admitted; see also Wood (1982). The opposite, structural, extreme can be found, for example, in Cohen (1978, p. 73), who states that "a person's class is established by nothing but his objective place in the network of ownership relations." In a footnote, he affirms that behaviour, i.e. practice, is not an essential part of the definition. A work much closer to my approach is the recently published underground classic study of the formation of the Canadian working class, Pentland (1981).

tion, in our present case, the capitalist one.

In my development of the theory of social classes in historical materialism, I shall be concerned almost exclusively with the second, third, and fourth levels of analysis outlined in Chapter 2: the capitalist mode of production, its circulation process, and the corresponding economic formation of society. I thus initially restrict myself to relations arising around the valorisation process. Class consciousness, culture, etc. can only be understood on this basis; they must follow it in the analysis and are discussed (too) briefly in the last section. We shall see that four social classes integral to the capitalist economic formation of society can be derived, the capitalist class, the production and circulation working classes, and the ideological class.[3] Only brief reference will be made to other social classes which appear at the fifth level, that of the social formation.

7.2 The capitalist and production working classes

This section will repeat and enlarge upon certain details about the most basic level for social class analysis, the mode of production, already discussed in Chapter 5. Under capitalism, production is determined by a relationship of power to make decisions about the allocation of productive labour, with appropriation of surplus labour as surplus value from one social class by another. This relationship, called capital, follows the law of value and forms the relations of production which characterise the capitalist mode of production. The capitalist class consists of the practices of that group which has control over capital, i.e. makes the decisions in this relationship of allocation and expropriation. By control is meant power to allocate capital in such ways as to maximise production of surplus value in the form of profit. The allocation includes decisions about the partition and use of both constant and variable capital. As we have seen, this is the mechanism by which available productive labour under the capitalist mode of production is assigned to various tasks; the capitalists as a class have control of this mechanism, but are, in turn, constrained by the fact that they must act within the framework of commodity production. As a result of the capital relationship, labour of the capitalist class involves making the decisions about the use of surplus value which is the key to the dynamic expansion in the capitalist mode of production. This control, however, is substantive and not relational until the surplus value is transformed into additional capital. In other words, accumulation is only phenomenally a process of increasing surplus value in the form of wealth, but is essentially an extension of the power to make decisions about the allocation of productive labour.

It might appear at first sight that the capitalist class is restricted in this way to a group of practices responsible for the technical allocation of resources in society. This appearance has developed into the dominant ideology in such societies of state capitalism as the Soviet Union. However, it is only appearance. We have

[3] Wolpe (1976, p. 230) suggests in passing a similar analysis into four basic classes in capitalist society, but provides no theoretical development of them. Although he does not speak of social classes, de Vroey (1979, I) also produces a similar "typology" of categories of labour.

already seen that the process is in fact one involving decisions as to the uses to which productive labour is put. The allocation of resources under the capitalist mode of production in no way involves primarily technical decisions but is a means of exploitation. For example, factors in the choice of a new, more productive technique include the aggressivity of the workers in the production process and the relationship between working class salaries and the rate of profit, both indices of the relative strengths of the two classes in the class struggle. In addition, because such allocations involve variable as well as constant capital, they can be used very directly as a political and ideological weapon against the working class. Decisions to move production investment from an area of labour unrest to a more docile region are direct means of control over the working class. One way in which the decision-making power to allocate productive labour is dissimilated is through the joint stock company. The human support of such decisions is not easily isolated individuals, but seems to be a vague collective of human beings deciding where to invest their money, and, in this way carrying out a part of the exploitative practice of allocating productive labour. However, this hides the increasing control by the few who have controlling interests.[4] As a central operation of capitalist society, resource and labour allocations become even more important with the change from 'free enterprise' to oligopoly conditions. Decisions about investment are now made much more 'rationally' and not left entirely to the vagaries of the market.

Juridical ownership must be distinguished from real economic control. In spite of their juridical attachment, state-owned productive enterprises enter the analysis at the level of the mode of production.[5] Although they may not ostensibly produce a profit, they do contribute directly to the production of surplus value at the global social level, at least in part thereby contributing to the increased profits of private capitalists. State enterprises not yielding a profit are primarily involved in constructing and maintaining the infrastructure and 'services': roads, railways, airports, telephone, utilities. Those which do are most often nationalised, commodity-producing firms.

At this level of analysis, the capitalist class consists only of industrial capitalists, that is, of the practices of that group directly involved with the production process. At subsequent levels, we shall see that this is only one fraction of that class.

At the other pole of the fundamental relationship for the capitalist mode of production lies the production working class. This class is defined by the other extreme of the capital relation: as the creator of use values in the form of commodities, it is also the producer of all value and surplus value and has no control either over the means of production or over a reserve of money, over capital. As

[4] See Colletti (1972, p. 98), Hilferding (1970, pp. 177–178), Lenin (1916), and de Vroey (1975).

[5] "... the social capital is equal to the sum of the individual capitals (including the joint-stock capital or the state capital, so far as governments employ productive wage-labour in mines, railways, etc., perform the function of industrial capitalists)..." (Marx, 1967, II, p. 97). See Gramsci (1971, pp. 314–315) on the role of the state in investment.

previously noted, production under the capitalist mode of production need have nothing directly to do with a physical product; although production of use values must involve a transformation of nature, it may only result in a service instead of a good.[6] The idea of material production is a substantive description and not a relational concept. Under this mode of production, labour is productive only if surplus value is produced, i.e. only if the labour falls under the capital relationship. The use value produced must be a commodity containing surplus value which is extracted from one class by another.

The production working class is not defined as an aggregate of individuals each of whom has the required relationship by being a productive labourer. Under the capitalist mode of production, the production process is socialised, consisting of a complex of inter-related parts. Within a given unit of production, all work necessary for this complex organisation with its refined division of labour forms part of the collective worker and hence of the production working class. This includes the work of those responsible for producing technical innovations used in the production process, the engineers and scientists directly involved with this type of production.[7] This type of labour is part of the moment of conception of the use values to be produced; it is what Marx (1967, III, p. 104) calls universal labour. It plays an important part in the revolutionary development of the productive forces, the progressive aspect of capitalism. It is increasingly being submitted to rigid control of intensity of work in the same way as is manual labour.[8] But we shall see soon that this also involves important divisions within the collective worker.

In a wider sense still, the whole class is a collective worker, because it is only as a totality that it produces abstract labour and value. A given commodity is only valorised in relation to all other commodities.[9] Thus, the capital relationship, as relations of production, is a relationship among groups of practices and not among individuals.

Within a complex production process carried on by the collective worker, the functions of coordination and unity within the technical division of labour are es-

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[6]For the specific analysis of one important non-material commodity, cleaning services, see de Vroey (1980).

[7]"...the development of the productive power of labour ...may again be partly connected with progress in the field of intellectual production, notably natural science and its practical application ...Such a development of productive power is again traceable in the final analysis to the social nature of the labour engaged ...to the development of intellectual labour, especially in the natural sciences." (Marx, 1967, III, pp. 81–82; see also 1973a, pp. 540, 706). See also Cohen (1978, pp. 45–47), Pannekoek (1982, I, pp. 36–37), and Shaw (1978, pp. 20–24); more practically, see Wainwright and Elliott (1982) on how technical and engineering staff are essential to workers' alternative plans. We shall see below that these technical innovations are not simply progressive and neutral, as many orthodox Marxist tend to believe. However, students of the 'labour process' sometimes tend to go too far in the opposite direction, suggesting that all innovations only act to reinforce exploitation; see, especially, the essays in Gorz (1973). For the relationship between these two aspects, see, especially, Coriat (1976) and Warren (1980).

[8]See Cooley (1980, pp. 1–40).

[9]See Aumeeruddy et al (1978).

sential to its operation. Note that coordination and unity involve some allocation of concrete labour to tasks within the process of producing a given use value, but are therefore distinct from exploitative labour which allocates the proportions of concrete labour going to production of different use values as well as deciding what and how use values are produced. The work of all those implicated in the functions of coordination and unity, including foremen, supervisors, and so on, is involved in the production of value. In this sense, this labour belongs to the category of the collective worker and of the production working class, although, as individuals, they may not appear to have any productive function. I am analytically distinguishing here between the function of coordination and unity which is central to any complex production process as such, and any functions involving the relationships concerned with ensuring the extraction of surplus value, i.e. control and surveillance.[10] The second part of this dichotomy will be developed below in Section 4 when I study the economic formation of society.

For capitalism to function, a reserve army of unemployed is necessary. Although, at any given moment, these people are not working productively, in the larger class context of the collective worker, their practices are directly necessary for capitalist production and form part of this class. Certain disguised forms of unemployment, such as that of some students and conscripted soldiers, must in specific situations also be included here.

The two social classes theoretically produced at this point are the fundamental classes of any society where the capitalist mode of production is dominant. All further questions centre around them, especially problems of taking common political positions within the class struggle.

Thus, from the beginning of the analysis, social class 'structure' and social class relations are necessarily antagonistic. No separate structure nor any separate consciousness of this antagonism exists. At this level, the two classes are already fighting it out, in performing their productive labour and in making decisions about its allocation, without even perhaps consciously knowing it, as the Italian 'workerist' study of the "refusal of work" amply illustrates.

7.3 The circulation working class

Under commodity production, and especially its developed form as capitalist production, the economic process is not completed with the actual production because this has not been carried out primarily to yield use values. Any product of capitalist production must normally pass through an intricate circulation process before reaching the consumer, whether the individual buying consumption goods

[10] Although the terms have been adapted from Marx (1967, I, pp. 330–332 and III, pp. 383–390) by Carchedi (1977), the concepts used here are different from those employed by the latter author. Control is restricted to labour and not applied to capital as a whole, and thus refers to reproduction of the relations of production. The distinction, then, is not between the capitalist class with only the function of control and surveillance and the "new middle class" with both that function and the function of coordination and unity but, as we shall see, between the ideological class with the former function and the collective worker of the production working class with the latter.

or the firm buying means of production and raw materials. This is a juridical process of transfer of ownership made necessary by the existence of commodities as private property.[11] Unless the process is completed, the surplus value is not realised, is not transferred to the capitalist class and the relations of production are not reproduced. Under 'monopoly' capitalism, the vertically integrated conglomerate represents one attempt to bypass this difficulty, at least at the intermediate stages of producing a finished consumer product.

Care must be taken with the question of circulation labour. Under capitalism, the results of all wage labour appear to be commodities. I have already discussed in Chapter 1 the general problems of the dominant class always appearing to provide something in exchange for the surplus. A similar problem exists here, for the acts of circulation appear, at the phenomenal level, to result in commodities, which could then be subject to the law of value and contain surplus value. Banking services are sold, for example, and have a 'use value', in the loose sense of the term. But this is no more than a fetishised appearance when taken in the total context of capitalism, because no transformation of nature has taken place. Juridical changes of ownership no more result in use values than do capitalist decisions about capital investment, although both may sometimes appear to take commodity forms. Circulation does not involve practice on nature, the material pre-condition for productive labour; its social relations are not those of productive labour.

The circulation process consists of two primary moments, financial and commercial capital, corresponding to the circulation of money and of commodities. We rediscover the basic dichotomy of the law of value, that between value and use value; both are closely linked to the two fundamental roles of the state, those of guaranteeing money and private property. Here, production capital circulates in other forms and, hence, takes other forms of the same fundamental capital relationship. We have two further fractions of the capitalist class, the practices of those groups making decisions about the allocation of the capital in these two spheres. This involves both direct allocation of circulation labour and, more indirectly, allocation of productive labour. However, as already stated, the relationship is juridical. It is, thus, not one of direct extraction of surplus value, because no use values, and hence no value, or surplus value, are produced in circulation, although the value of the costs of circulation is transferred to the product. This demonstrates how much more central decisions about labour allocation, rather than extraction of surplus labour, are to exploitative labour. For their parts in ensuring that the surplus value extracted in the production process is in fact realised, these fractions of the capitalist class are able to appropriate a portion of that surplus value. Because the financial and commercial fractions of the capitalist class have control over capital in the same way as the industrial fraction, they have

[11] Rubin (1973, Ch.19) provides a clear discussion of the distinction between production and non-production workers under capitalism and of the role of property rights in the circulation process. Crompton and Gubbay (1977, pp. 85–98) also give a good discription of these circulation workers, but unfortunately do not follow through in their subsequent class analysis.

the same relationship to the production working class, although mediated by the different forms which capital takes.

The financial fraction of the capitalist class is in an especially powerful position, because it concentrates and controls the use of a significant portion of the total social capital, while not being divided in deadly competition to the same extent as the industrial fraction.[12] Two factors work to counteract this trend: the existence of joint stock companies and the internal investment of huge 'monopolies'.

The financial and commercial fractions of the capitalist class do not themselves perform the labour required in the circulation process. They hire salaried workers to do it; the labour of these workers forms the circulation working class which is necessary in the capitalist mode of production to ensure that the value of commodities is realised, that the commodities are sold and can be consumed. This cost of circulation increases the value of the commodity by the preservation of the value of the labour power, so purchased, in it. But, because the market exchange adds no use value to the commodity, neither can it add surplus value. The capitalist class gains no further control of surplus labour at this stage: nothing results which it can either consume or use to extend its control over labour allocation. Hence, these salaries are a form of 'constant capital'.[13] The relationships of the circulation working class to the respective fractions of the capitalist class are, thus, not similar to those of the production working class. This class only submits to a relation of exploitation in a partial sense, in that its labour is allocated in a class relationship, but without extraction of surplus labour. It is not a relation of production. The concepts of value and surplus value are not applicable to the labour of this class, because no use values are produced by it. Circulation labour involves only juridical changes of ownership. The existence of this class enables the financial and commercial capitalists to appropriate a portion of the surplus value created in the production process. The harder the circulation working class can be forced to labour, the more such surplus value can be so appropriated.

Besides the labour of employees in financial and commercial institutions, the work of certain state employees must be included at this level, that involved in the production and control of money, that state-validated commodity, and that in the maintenance of private law, the enforcement of contracts. In addition, the increasingly important work of collecting and analysing information in order to reduce uncertainty about the realisation of profits belongs in this social class.[14] Advertising and other means to stimulate and control consumer demand, which assume increasing importance under 'monopoly' conditions, must also be included here, because they are used primarily to promote the circulation of commodities. Although ideology is involved, it is ideology in the practice of buying and selling,

[12] See Marx (1967, III, p. 368) and Hilferding (1970).

[13] See Marx (1967, III, pp. 292–301 and 1976, pp. 1042–1043, and also 1967, II, pp. 129–152) and Lindsey (1983).

[14] See Warskett (1981).

and only secondarily for maintenance of the relations of production, thus appearing here as well as at the next level, that of the institutionalised superstructure.[15] As we have already seen, both information-collecting and advertising work increase under oligopoly conditions. As with the production working class, in the circulation working class, with its complex divisions of labour and bureaucratic hierarchy, the functions of coordination and unity also exist. In Chapter 5, we saw how the restructuring of this circulation labour process is one form of the crisis of the 1970's and 1980's, as oligopoly conditions created increasing demands on the circulation process.

Objectively, the circulation working class does not have the strongly antagonistic relationship to the capitalist class which the production working class does, because no surplus value is extracted. This is reflected at the phenomenal (conjunctural) level in the weaker position which circulation labour in commerce holds, for example, with regard to strikes. As long as production continues, the final sale of many products can be accomplished at a later date. Just as with the financial fraction of the capitalist class, the case of circulation labour in finance is somewhat different because closing all banks can have similar effects to a general strike of all the production working class: very soon no surplus value can be realised. However, subjectively, member-'bearers' of labour of this entire circulation working class may feel the antagonism to somewhat the same extent as the production working class, in that the same amount of extra labour may be extracted. Often this is not the case. Instead there may be a distinct differentials of wages or of labour intensity which help to promote a division between the two working classes and to impede possible common class political positions.

The relationship between the two working classes is mediated but important, passing through the capitalist class and the entire structure of the capitalist mode of production. It is non-antagonistic and these two classes form 'natural allies' in class struggle. All of their oppressive relationships can only be abolished by dismantling the capitalist system. However, this possibility of a common political position is not objectively grounded in the apparent extraction of surplus labour, which is only a phenomenal similarity, and plays no role in the inner laws of the capitalist mode of production. If necessary, some or all of the extra labour in the circulation process can be paid for; the same is not true of surplus value extracted in the production process, because it is central to the existence of this mode of production and cannot be eliminated without destroying it.

It is arguable that the two working classes theorised here form fractions of the same class in the same way that we have the fractions of the capitalist class. I must submit that this is not the case because the inter-class relationships *are* different: surplus value is only extracted from the production working class. Decisions about the allocation of these two categories of labour are made in very different ways. On the other hand, all fractions of the capitalist class emanate

[15] On advertising in the oligopoly situation, see Edwards (1979, pp. 85–89) and Wiliams (1980a, pp. 170–195).

from relations of direct control over capital, over the allocation of labour. Although this relationship within the relations of production does take on different forms, because of the ultimate exchangeability of all capital for money capital, all of these fractions do have the same social class relationships.

7.4 The ideological class

The capitalist production process is regulated by an exploitative and inherently antagonistic relationship among social classes which cannot be maintained and reproduced solely by means of the mechanisms available within the mode of production itself. Although most important, separation of the direct producers from the means of production and from a reserve of money is not sufficient. Note that this separation compels the capitalist class to act as such as much as it puts pressure on the working class, because the former cannot operate the means of production alone by itself, even if such operation were the goal. The relations of production, as the law of value, are concentrated most specifically in the allocation of productive labour. Such allocation decisions are carried out by the capitalist class while production and control of this labour become the activity of a distinct social class.

Capitalist exploitation entails one specific, peculiar 'commodity', labour power. The value of this 'commodity' can never be completely determined within the economic process; it always involves other forms of intervention, the "historical and moral element".[16] The ideological and repressive measures, which we shall now study at the level of the economic formation of society, are, thus, necessary in order to ensure reproduction of the relations of production. These are the specific province of the institutionalised superstructure. Central to this level, where the regulation of the relations of production is introduced, are the state and civil society. Accompanying them, but larger than either because it penetrates the economic base, is a social class of "ideological occupations", as Marx (1967, I, p. 446) called it.[17]

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[16] See Marx (1967, I, p. 171) and also Lukacs (1978, II, p. 35).

[17] Unfortunately, confusion may arise here with Althusser's (1970) distinction between ideological and repressive state apparatuses. However, it seems most preferable to retain the term used by Marx; see the Appendix to this chapter. I include members of the repressive apparatus in this ideological class (as did Marx). Gramsci (1971, p. 12) also includes both of these groups within the dominant class's organic intellectuals, but repeatedly denies (e.g. p. 60) that they form a separate class. Bernardo (1975, pp. 113–119 and 1977, III, pp. 7–151), Castoriadis (1973 and 1974), the Ehrenreichs (1977), Hodges (1971), and James (1980, pp. 61, 200–201, 221) appear to be among the few who have attempted a theorisation of this class. The Ehrenreichs call it the professional-managerial class (PMC), a term rejected here because of its sociological occupation-based reference. Bernardo calls it the technocracy (*a tecnocracia*) or managers (*os gestores*), terms which seem to refer primarily to business (private or state), and thus suggest a certain economism. On the other hand, he has a tendency to enlarge the class so much as to risk to include the circulation working class within it. Castoriadis and Hodges both refer to a bureaucratic class, which, thus, encompasses only certain of its institutionalised forms, although Hodges also refers specifically to an ideological class. Earlier, Hodges (1960) had mentioned the labour of this class as included in "indirect exploitation", but, due to his concentration on surplus value instead of the law of value, missed its specificity. One of the major historical changes in capitalist

The state is an institution, but a contradictory one, because it does not appertain only to the superstructure. It plays a fundamental role in the circulation of commodities, both in validating money and in ensuring contracts. When the mechanism equalising profit rates is not properly functioning, it must include performance of exploitative labour in the form of managing capital investment, with the tendency towards state capitalism. As a result of the contradictions in the reproduction of labour power, it must provide certain domestic labour. Finally, at the superstructural level, ideologico-repressive labour must be performed within it by the ideological class. Although all of these roles of the state act to ensure reproduction of capitalism, they do so in very different ways, involving distinct categories of labour: exploitative, circulation, domestic, and ideologico-repressive. With the inclusion of nationalised, commodity-producing industries, we also find productive labour, so that all five fundamental categories of social practice of the capitalist mode of production may be included within the state. To add to the confusion, and to the ideology of neutral arbiter, the same individual 'civil servant' usually personifies several of these categories. Thus, as we shall see in Chapter 9, the three aspects of the fundamental contradiction, with their accompanying tendencies, combine to create an important higher level contradiction within the state.

In distinction from the circulation working class, the ideological class preserves no value in the product,[18] and, of course, produces no surplus value. Ideologico-repressive labour is concerned with the relations of surplus labour extraction, not with the totality of labour or value in the products, as is circulation labour. Hence, it must be paid by deduction from the surplus value extracted from the production working class,[19] much of it in the form of taxes. And it is also susceptible to the contradictions of this extraction process. We have here a further distinct way in which decisions are made about allocation of a category of labour.

This class, then, has two relationships to the production working class, those of ideologico-repressive control and of consuming surplus value, and only one, the former, to the circulation working class. On the other hand, labour of the ideological class is not always obtained by the capitalist class directly hiring wage or salaried workers. Instead, the ideological class holds a much more autonomous relationship, although mediated dependence still persists through the transfer of surplus value. This dependence is least for the ideologico-repressive labour in the state superstructure through the autonomy permitted by the apparently direct

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class structure is, not the appearance, but the *modification* of this class, a fact which was already very evident in Marx's day. I, thus, disagree with the Ehrenreichs' (1977) contention that the class appeared with monopoly capitalism. They neglect the long term historical development of capitalist society, with its specific adaptations from previous modes, such as religion, and the early importance of new forms, such as property laws. Thompson (1978b) discusses such changes but fails to realise that he is speaking of a specific class.

[18] "Laws, morals, and government are not used by men to produce products. When they are used, as they may be, to get men to produce, they are means not of production but of motivating producers." (Cohen, 1978, p. 32).

[19] See Marx (1967, III, pp. 358, 388–389).

extraction of surplus as taxes. However, this surplus is still produced by capitalist means, and only subsequently distributed to the dominant classes.[20]

Domestic labour can, then, be seen to be distinctly different from both circulation and ideologico-repressive labour, in that it is, in no way, imbricated in the law of value, in the relations of production. Even the value consumed in state domestic labour must first leave the value circuit and is, thus, definitively lost. Sale of labour power is simply an external constraint on the working classes: although subject to ideological and political influences and pressures, domestic labour, is a site of autonomous action of the working classes.

One of the most important reasons for the apparent autonomy of the ideological class, arising out of the contradictions of the mode of production, lies in its very special relationship to the capitalist class. Under classical, competitive capitalism, all capitalists, as individual units, are in a necessarily competitive position with regard to each other; they have little internal means of uniting to defend their class interests in the way which the working classes do: although divided on the labour market, the production working class is united in the socialised production process. This does not mean that the ideological class is not closely linked to the capitalist class, but only that it has a certain liberty of action. On the other hand, under 'monopoly' capitalism, certain means of combination do become available to the members of the capitalist class. With the development of centralisation and concentration of capital, and the introduction of forms of economic 'planning', the capitalist and ideological classes enter into conflict over private versus nationalised control of the means of production.[21] If the ideological class predominates, with the further reduction in competition under state capitalism, the possibility of union is actualised, not only among all capitalists, but also with the ideological class: the apparent autonomy disappears.

Such a contradiction in the possibilities of unity within the capitalist class has required this apparently autonomous ideological class to represent and protect its interests. This is in addition to and linked with a state which is autonomous from the capitalist class as a whole although not necessarily always from all of its members or fractions. Often measures taken by the state go directly against the individual interests of the members of the capitalist class, even of one entire fraction of the class. But they are necessary for the continued dominance of all capitalists as a class. The ideological class never acts as mere functionaries of the capitalist class.

This unique position of the ideological class, apparently outside the relation-

[20] "The division of surplus-value — which must always be first in the hands of the industrial capitalists — into various categories, as vehicles of which there appear, aside from the industrial capitalist, the landlord (for ground-rent), the usurer (for interest), etc., furthermore the government and its employees, etc." (Marx, 1967, II, p. 421). "... surplus-value may be broken up into various sub-forms, such as interest on capital, ground-rent, taxes, etc. ..." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 49). Unfortunately, Marx did not treat the government and taxes in the third volume of *Capital*. Note, however, that this does not mean that all taxes come from surplus value; see Gough (1979, pp. 116–117).

[21] See Bernardo (1975, *passim*).

ships between the two fundamental classes, leads it to have its own very specific ideology. It believes in the unity of the natural and the social sciences, both of which can be objectively studied, and predictions made, independently of social class position. This ideological class embodies the observer looking on society from the outside.

At the second level, that of capitalist production, the production working class is bound into the relations of production by the lack of control over the means of production. However, because of the contradictions and antagonisms entailed by the relations of production, as well as the competition arising at the level of circulation, this is not sufficient to ensure reproduction of the relations of production. The inherent antagonisms necessarily lead to conscious class struggle. The ideological class attempts, with varying degrees of success, to overcome these contradictions, but, at the same time, becomes bound up in them.

The most important relationship of the ideological class to the two working classes is one of repressive and ideological production and control of social labour. Such production and control constitute a struggle to prevent the subordinate classes from performing conscious practice on the social. The ideological aims at the conceptual source of such practice, while the repressive strikes at the actual moment of changing social reality. Central to this production and control is the absolute maintenance of private property and of commodity valuation around which turns the ideology of possessive individualism and of capitalism as the eternal system. To these ends, certain institutions exist: the political-juridical system of government and bureaucracy, the military-police apparatus, the educational system, the mass media. All contribute to what Gramsci called the hegemony of the dominant classes. All must exist in the capitalist economic formation of society, but none have an absolutely predetermined form at this level. The exact form and inter-relationships of these institutions are further determined at the level of the social formation, depending on what modes of production are present and on their relative importance, and still further at the historical conjunctural level.

Relationships tending to maintain and reproduce the relations of production are not found exclusively outside the production process.[22] The functions of control and surveillance are concerned with these specific relationships within that process. Those practices responsible, not for the coordination and unity required by the technical division of labour, but to enforce continuation of the production process within the context of the capital relationship of allocation of productive labour and extraction of surplus form this group.[23] A type of relationship exists

[22] See Gramsci (1971, pp. 5, 97, n.**) on the composition of "intellectuals".

[23] "But, when considering the capitalist mode of production, he, on the contrary, treats the work of control made necessary by the cooperative character of the labour-process as identical with the different work of control, necessitated by the capitalist character of that process and the antagonism of interests between capitalist and labourer." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 332). See also de Vroey (1975). Friedman (1977) and Sohn-Rethel (1978) provide detailed analyses of the means by which the exploitative relation is maintained within the production process under monopoly capitalism. Stark (1980) shows how the ideological class, with its 'ideology' of Taylorism, came into conflict with the capitalists as well as with the working classes. More generally on class struggles involving the ideological and

which is distinct from that presented above between the capitalist and production working classes, and which is identical to the relationship already discussed between the ideologico-repressive labour outside the production process and the working classes. The capitalist class directly and indirectly allocates productive labour in order to extract surplus labour, whereas the ideological class acts to ensure that this exploitative relationship is maintained and reproduced. The latter occurs within the production process, as the functions of control and surveillance, as well as outside it. In terms of the relations of production, ideologico-repressive labour within the production process is primarily control of productive labour while outside it is primarily production of productive labour.

Friedman (1977, p. 78) has distinguished two basic forms of control of the production process: direct control and responsible autonomy. The former refers to Taylorism and Fordism, the latter to various forms of 'workers control'. Thus, one manifestation of the ideological class which the present analysis highlights was the move in the 1970s on the part of the dominant classes in many advanced capitalist countries towards forms of this 'workers control' or 'workers participation'.[24] Especially when the initiative, or willing acquiescence, comes from these dominant classes, it is essential that the working classes not be misled into believing that this is an important step towards the abolition of capitalist relations of production. Rather, it contributes, especially at the ideological level, to the maintenance of these relations of allocation of productive labour, while, perhaps, improving certain of the workers' short term substantive conditions.

This superstructural level reacts back on the collective worker at the production level to create further internal contradictions. Those workers performing functions of coordination and unity will, almost invariably, be involved in control and surveillance as well. This introduces a division directly among the people performing the labour of the production working class. A similar split appears with the technical and scientific workers whose knowledge is essential to the production process. Thus, the strictly technical manual/intellectual division of labour of the second level appears, at this fourth level, to be insurmountable, but for political and ideological reasons. Note that we have here important changes in what was previously analysed, and not a simple superposition of elements as in Althusserian structuralism.

The same individual technician may create a new technique which greatly increases material production while simultaneously working in other ways to increase exploitation. Technicians can, thus, be involved in two ways in maintaining the relations of production within the production process. Often, they work directly at control and surveillance; for many engineers, this is a promotion from 'purely technical' work. But technicians are also responsible for developing in-

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capitalist classes, see the Bernardo (1975) and Ehrenreichs (1979).

[24] On workers' participation, see especially Blumberg (1968), de Gaudemar (1982, pp. 61–76), and Swartz (1981). For a history of workers' struggles for such control in the USA, see Montgomery (1979).

novations in the production process which increase the amount of use values produced as well as the surplus labour extracted.[25] In the same way, a state employee may provide both domestic labour and ideologico-repressive labour. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the former does not involve class relationships although the latter certainly does. Thus, some state employees, supplying only domestic labour, may have no class position. We have already seen that the circulation process also involves labour which is doubly ideologico-repressive and circulation, in the form of advertising.

I emphasise again that social classes are concrete entities in society, defined by concrete social relations.[26] However, they, in no way, necessarily correspond to discrete groups of individuals in the society, even at the seventh level of analysis, of a concrete society, because given individuals often have several sets of social class relations, i.e. have various portions of their social practices allocated in different ways. Which set or portion predominates in a given conjunctural situation, i.e. which side a given individual takes in the class struggle and any changes of side, depends on a complex of factors not covered by social class theory which is limited to these seven levels. Not only class antagonisms, but class consciousness, must be taken into account. We have contradictory individual, not class, locations. Because of this, ideologico-repressive labour must not only aim at reproducing the fundamental class relations; it must also be directed towards individuals. The many sided positions of individuals can be played upon to place class conflict in the shadow of other social group distinctions, creating heterogeneous social forces, such as religious, linguistic, or ethnic ones.

As with the two working classes, the labour process within the ideological class has a complex division of labour. The collective ideological worker, in its role of maintaining and reproducing the capitalist relations of production, necessarily incorporates a wide variety of tasks, both intellectual and manual.[27] As we have seen in Chapter 5, the crisis of the 1970's and 1980's also centres around the restructuring of this ideologico-repressive labour process to conform to the increasing tendency towards state capitalism.[28]

A considerable number of types of ideologico-repressive labour have been revealed in the preceding development. There is the labour directly responsible for repression, the armed forces and police; that involved in governmental and juridical functions, including politicians, civil servants, judges, lawyers; that involved in strictly ideological functions, including schools, churches, and mass media;

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[25] Hales' (1980) term "preconceptualisation" cannot handle this distinction.

[26] "Can one find a unitary criterion to characterise equally all the diverse and disparate activities of intellectuals and to distinguish these at the same time and in an essential way from the activities of other social groupings? The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations." (Gramsci, 1971, p. 8).

[27] See Gramsci (1971, p. 13).

[28] See, for example, Nichols and Beynon (1977, pp. 30–67) and Revelli (1982).

that most specifically concerned with circulation, advertising; and that in control and surveillance of the production process, the appropriate members of 'management', as well as the union bureaucracy in many instances. The different types of this labour extend across the state and civil society to reach directly into contact with the capitalist production process.

Without question, the place of the union *bureaucracy* is not a simple matter. Its role has, most often, lain primarily at the level of circulation, uniting the working classes in an inherently divisive area, the market for labour power. On the other hand, there where the greatest possibilities for change exist, in the production process,[29] it has often come to perform the work of control and surveillance. For these reasons and others, many on the left, especially the Italians,[30] reject its usefulness for the working classes at the present point in history. One must not forget, however, that, for the working classes, any strike must be political, striking at the antagonism of the relations of production. Rarely, if ever, do subsequent wage gains compensate for wages lost during a strike. The same is true for the capitalist class, who is more concerned with the political effects than with lost production,[31] as can be seen from the importance of lockouts.

Any moves by the working classes to struggle together with a part of the ideological class are fraught with many dangers.[32] In spite of certain superficial resemblances to the circulation working class, this class is definitely 'on the other side of the barricades'. The capitalist and ideological classes, forming the *bourgeoisie*, are on one side and the two working classes, forming the *proletariat*, on the other. With respect to the ideological class, the question is not one of 'alliances', but rather of acting on its specific contradictions to neutralise the class and to destroy the associated institutions.[33] In addition to the apparent similarities between the ideological and circulation working classes, the presence of other, non-class, social forces, especially those arising at the two subsequent levels, with the articulation of modes of production and the interaction among nation-states, acts to obscure even further the problem.

On the other hand, given the somewhat autonomous nature of the ideological class with respect to the capitalist class, and the fact that many people perform other labour besides that which is strictly ideologico-repressive, certain individuals may change their social practices for those across the class boundaries, at least at the ideological level. This class even provides certain of the intellectual leaders of the working class. However, here we have not a class but an individual phenomenon.[34]

Because the concrete forms of the institutionalised superstructure depend on

[29] For a history of union struggle over the production process in the USA, see Montgomery (1979).

[30] For example, Negri (1978a) and Tronti (1977).

[31] See Kalecki (1943).

[32] See Williams (1980b).

[33] See Chapter 9 for some further discussion of the contradictions of the state.

[34] See, for example, Albert and Hahnel (1978, p. 205) and Hodges (1971).

the specific social formation, that is on the other modes of production present, and on the conjuncture, here we may often find evidence of early changes within a transitional social formation.[35] Hence follows Gramsci's emphasis on the need for the working class of advanced capitalist countries to conquer hegemony through a "war of position" as a first necessary step in the transition to communism, before the final assault through a "war of movement".[36]

7.5 Other classes in the social formation

The theoretically most predictable combination of modes of production in a social formation under the dominance of the capitalist mode is with simple commodity production, because the latter is only an undeveloped form of the former, unable to exist on its own as a dominant mode of production. Several 'social classes' may be distinguished within simple commodity production: independent manufacturers (artisans and craftsmen), small shopkeepers, and peasants or small farmers.[37] In a capitalist social formation, these are often taken as fractions of one class, the petty bourgeoisie. This class is not integral to capitalist society, however, because it does not appear at the level of the economic formation of society.

In advanced capitalist social formations, combination with petty commodity production is most usual. Often it is the only other form of production present. The same is not true for theoretical capitalist social formations suitable for the analysis of less-advanced capitalist countries. Here, certain other modes of production, especially the primitive communal and corvée-tributary modes will often be present.

Further details of analysis at this level will not be presented here, because many distinct combinations are possible depending on the relationships among the modes of production. In every case, the capitalist mode of production will act to distort the 'pure' form of the other modes and the capitalist superstructure will be suitably modified to incorporate the other modes within the social formation. For example, corvée and tribute take the form of money rent paid to the landlord when the corvée-tributary mode is dominated by the capitalist one.[38]

Unless the social formation is in the transitional stage towards communism, the social classes appearing at this level will all be essentially reactionary. For example, the petty bourgeoisie acts to preserve commodity production in the only form it knows, the capitalist one. But it sees the golden age as one of individuals

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[35] See the comments in the previous chapter on the difference in development of compulsory education in England and in Germany and also Rey (1973, pp. 83–84).

[36] For example, Gramsci (1971, p. 57, 182, 236); see also Anderson (1977).

[37] Methodologically, peasants and artisans arise at the first level. However, in the analysis of capitalist society they disappear again at the second level because of the division into the capitalist and production working classes. On the other hand, they remain, and the shopkeepers appear, if we move directly from the first to the third level, skipping this crucial second level. Note, however, that a social class of peasants may also result from articulation with other modes of production, for example the corvée-tributary.

[38] See especially Rey (1973).

in free and equal competition and feels threatened by monopoly. This is directly opposite to the position of the circulation working class and the ideological class, both of which thrive on the jobs provided in 'monopoly' conditions. Thus, any working class strategy must take such factors into account and meet the social classes arising at this level only on short-term tactical grounds.

7.6 Class antagonism and class consciousness

My analysis so far in this chapter has concentrated on social class relations in the context of what I have called social class antagonism. By the very way in which the social classes relate to each other in their practices within the relations of production, they are in antagonistic positions. These practices have, however, only the antagonistic form of practices on the social because they do not involve conscious attempts to change the reality of the relations of production.[39] One might even say that class antagonism is the 'unconscious' of class struggle, in the sense which Volosinov (1976) uses the term as involving "inner language". Class antagonism is lived and transmitted by the very language, and modes of thought, in which a class is submerged.[40]

When a person whose labour is part of the working class thinks of or calls the police "cop", (s)he is not consciously aiming to overthrow the capital relation. But the lived class antagonisms are being expressed. The same is true of working class sabotage (the wrench rattling in the panel of a new car), of the "refusal of work", of the occasional theft, and so on.

If class antagonism is class "in itself", class consciousness is class "for itself". In terms of social practice, this latter must mean conscious organisation to change the social relations, the relations of production, creating the antagonism. Class consciousness is not just a realisation that, as a worker, one is different than a capitalist. That is only antagonism. Class consciousness is awareness of the class power to act on and to change the existing relations of production.[41] It is situated at the level of the superstructure, while antagonism remains at the level of the base. One important part of class struggle is the attempt to destroy the opposing class consciousness, and, on the part of the dominant class, to reduce the struggle to the level of antagonism. It is part of the ideological conflict already referred to above and in Chapter 2.

I have chosen the terms, antagonism and consciousness, to express the fundamentality of the former and the necessity of the latter. This is an explicit choice to counteract those who see social classes as existing only when their members have

[39] Such a distinction between antagonistic and conscious class relations is in no way restricted to capitalist societies. See, for example, Coornaert (1948), Hilton (1973, pp. 214–232 and 1975, pp. 14–15), and Le Goff (1964, pp. 369–375) for peasant consciousness in feudal society and Dockès (1979) for slave consciousness in slave society.

[40] Bernstein (1973) and Labov (1972a and b) are important in this context.

[41] See Gramsci (1971, esp. p. 333) on the relation between the "philosophy of praxis" and the "masses" in relation to the creation of a new hegemony.

a class consciousness. Does such a proposition then mean that, at night, when these members are asleep, the class ceases to exist?

Under capitalism, one class, the ideological class, is in a peculiar situation with respect to this distinction between antagonism and consciousness. For the labour performed by this class is a conscious practice on the social, at least when the class is taken as a whole. Its job is to act within the relations of production, but, at the same time, on them to maintain and reproduce them. Under this mode of production, the dominant capitalist class has delegated part of its 'class consciousness', the day-to-day part, to this other class. In this way, certain areas of conscious class struggle are institutionalised. The term, ideological class, is especially appropriate in this context, because ideologico-repressive labour primarily acts to reduce conscious class struggle to antagonistic class struggle, i.e. to destroy working class consciousness, or rather to prevent its emergence. One of the most successful ways this has come about has been by making the working class distrustful of *all* intellectual effort, including left-wing thought.[42]

However, we should not mislead ourselves, because this is not a delegation of much real power. Just as the capitalist class retains the essential decisions about allocation of productive labour, so it still is at the centre of conscious class struggle. When the working class pushes its struggle to the conscious level, the capitalist class relies primarily on its power to invoke crisis and capital restructuration, something which, however, is neither automatic, nor entirely under its control, and which is particularly dangerous for each individual capitalist.

Thus, the working classes, the proletariat, must constantly struggle to bring the class struggle up to the conscious level, to be able, itself, to practise on the social. The resolution of the contradictions of capitalism, and its overthrow, depend on this endeavour.

7.7 Appendix: Marx on social class

Marx's position on the capitalist and production working classes is clear and well-known. Quotations are not necessary here. On the other hand, his use of the term 'middle class' is often ambiguous and must always be placed in context. Most often he refers to the petty bourgeoisie. However, occasionally it is clear that he is referring to the circulation working class and/or the ideological class. With respect to Ricardo, for example, he states:

> What he forgets to emphasise is the constantly growing number of the middle classes, those who stand between the workman on the one hand and the capitalist and landlord on the other. The middle classes maintain themselves to an ever increasing extent directly out of revenue, they are a burden weighing heavily on the working base and increase the social security and power of the upper ten thousand. (Marx, 1968, p. 573; see also 1967, I, p. 530)

Marx called the circulation working class the workers necessary to realise the surplus value. He discusses them in most detail in *Capital*, Volume II, Chapter 6.

[42] See especially Carter (1979).

Rubin (1973, p. 270) has described their labour most concisely:

The function of circulation of capital is only to transfer the right of ownership of a product from one person to another, only a transformation of value from a commodity form to a money form, or inversely, only a realization of produced value. It is an ideal or formal transition, but not a real one.[43]

Marx's discussion of the ideological class is much less well-known. In *Capital*, Volume I, (p. 446), there is an isolated phrase: "the 'ideological classes' such as government officials, priests, lawyers, soldiers, etc." (Classes here translates *Stande*, or 'estates'.) Again, in Volume II (p. 372; see also pp. 410–411):

All members of society not directly engaged in reproduction, with or without labour, can obtain their share of the annual commodity product ... primarily only out of the hands of those classes to which the product first accrues — productive labourers, industrial capitalists, and landlords. ... the recipients of these revenues, derived in this sense, draw them by virtue of their social functions as a king, priest, professor, prostitute, soldier, etc., and they may therefore, regard these functions as the original sources of their revenue.

Elsewhere, he elaborates further:

The great mass of so-called 'higher grade' workers — such as state officials, military people, artists, doctors, priests, judges, lawyers, etc. — some of whom are not only not productive but in essence destructive, but who know how to appropriate to themselves a very great part of the 'material' wealth partly through the sale of their 'immaterial' commodities and partly by forcibly imposing the latter on other people... Political economy in its classical period, like the bourgeoisie itself in its *parvenu* period, adopted a severely critical attitude to the machinery of the State, etc. At a later stage it realised and — as was shown too in practice — learnt from experience that the necessity for the inherited social combination of all these classes, which in part were totally unproductive, arose from its own organisation.

In so far as those 'unproductive labourers' ... are necessary or make themselves necessary because of physical infirmities (like doctors), or spiritual weakness (like parsons), or because of the conflict between private interests and national interests (like statesmen, all lawyers, police and soldiers) — they are regarded by Adam Smith, as by the industrial capitalists themselves and the working class, as incidental expenses of production, which are therefore to be cut down to the most indispensable minimum and provided as cheaply as possible. Bourgeois society reproduces in its own form everything against which it had fought in feudal or absolutist form. In the first place therefore it becomes a principal task for the sycophants of this society, and especially of the upper classes, to restore in theoretical terms even the purely parasitic sections of these 'unproductive labourers', or to justify the exaggerated claims of the section which is indispensable. The *dependence* of the ideological, etc., classes on the *capitalists* was in fact proclaimed. (Marx, 1963, pp. 174–175)

This is the language of the still revolutionary bourgeoisie, which has not yet subjected to itself the whole of society, the State, etc. All these illustrious and time-honoured occupations — sovereign, judge, officer, priest, etc., — with all the old ideological professions

[43] On the importance of private law at this level of analysis, the base rather than the superstructure, see Pashukanis (1978).

to which they give rise, their men of letters, their teachers and priests ... are mere *servants* of the public ... They live on the produce of *other* people's *industry*, therefore they must be reduced to the smallest number. State, church, etc., are only justified in so far as they are committees to superintend or administer the common interests of the productive bourgeoisie ...

When on the other hand the bourgeoisie has won the battle and has partly itself taken over the State, partly made a compromise with its former possessors; and has likewise given recognition to the ideological professions as flesh of its flesh and everywhere transformed them into its functionaries, of like nature to itself; when it itself no longer confronts these as the representative of productive labour, but when the real productive labourers rise against it and moreover tell it that it lives on other people's industry; when it is enlightened enough not to be entirely absorbed in production, but to want also to consume 'in an enlightened way'; when the spiritual labours themselves are more and more performed in its *service* and enter into the service of capitalist production — then things take a new turn, and the bourgeoisie tries to justify 'economically', from its own standpoint, what at an earlier stage it had criticised and fought against. (ibid., p. 300–301)

He also discusses that fraction of the ideological class responsible for control and surveillance of the production process as separate from the capitalist, except during the early development of capitalism.

Just as at first the capitalist is relieved from actual labour so soon as his capital has reached that minimum amount with which capitalist production, as such, begins so now, he hands over the work of direct and constant supervision of the individual workmen, and groups of workmen, to a special kind of wage-labourer. An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers), and sergeants (foremen, overlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist. The work of supervision becomes their established and exclusive function. (Marx, 1967, I, p. 332)

The capitalist mode of production has brought matters to a point where the work of supervision, entirely divorced from the ownership of capital, is always readily obtainable. It has, therefore, come to be useless for the capitalist to perform it himself. ... The industrial capitalist is a worker, compared to the money-capitalist but a worker in the sense of capitalist, i.e., an exploiter of the labour of others. The wage which he claims and pockets for this labour is exactly equal to the appropriated quantity of another's labour and depends directly upon the rate of exploitation of this labour, in so far as he undertakes the effort required for exploitation; it does not, however, depend on the degree of exertion that such exploitation demands, and which he can shift to a manager for moderate pay. (Marx, 1967, III, pp. 386–387; see also 1967, I, p. 332 and 1971, pp. 496–497).

8
The nation-state

8.1 Imperialist labour allocation

Imperialism occupies a separate chapter, not because its contents, in the present context, require as much room as that of the other chapters, but because of its critical importance.

Imperialism involves the relationships among nation-states under capitalism. By its own internal dynamic, capitalism tends to expand to a world system, submitting all people to the capital relation. If this is so, we must ask why then is the world divided into distinct countries or nation-states? The answer must be found in the social mechanisms of capitalist labour allocation. The nation-state is an entity which appeared as capitalism developed to a dominant mode of production and which must disappear with it.[1] The communist revolution must be international or the result will be barbary.

A fundamental characteristic of the capitalist mode of production, which distinguishes it from all previous modes, is the apparent 'freedom' of all individuals. They are no longer tied down by relations of community, slavery, or bondage. One of the first results of the 'liberation' of direct producers from their means of production in Europe was an enormous growth of vagabondage. The newly mobile sources of labour had to be geographically restricted to force them to sell their labour power.[2] The previously more static society had created regional differences of language and culture which could be played upon. However, these variations were not accepted as such; the dominant classes created the countries to suit their needs, often uniting numerous contrasting cultural regions. Eventually, a unified compulsory educational system became important, creating qualifications, including knowledge of mother tongue, only recognised within the nation-state.[3] For example, France results from a half dozen language groups being brought together under the domination of one, submitting them all to the power of the language of these classes, French.[4] The same can be seen to a somewhat lesser extent in the British Isles, which, however, had the geographical advantage of

[1] See Ehrenreich (1983) although I do not agree with his pessimistic conclusions.

[2] See Marx (1967, I, pp. 734–737). For the role of state education in the control of vagabondage, see Aries (1973, pp. 265–278, 338–341) and Hartmann et al (1974, pp. 67–73).

[3] Gellner (1973) suggests the importance of this factor.

[4] See Achard (1980), Calvet (1974, esp. pp. 161–185), and Guénée (1967).

being situated on islands.

The creation of nation-states led to a more efficient control of the movements of the direct producers while still leaving them 'free'. It led ultimately to passports, work permits, identity cards, and secret police files, as well as, usually, to a single-language educational system. The essential industrial reserve army could be generated, and contained, within specific borders.[5] But the creation of nation-states also generated two important ideologies, nationalism, or us, and racism, or them.

As we have seen, capitalism, through competition, leads to ever greater expansion. Because such expansion requires increasing inputs of raw materials and ever larger markets, imperialism has classically been analysed in these terms.[6] But however real, both are only phenomenal forms of the growing power of the capitalist class to make decisions about labour allocation. Although national boundaries are essential to such power, the capitalist class uses these very boundaries to extend its control beyond them.[7]

The establishment of nation-states results in the contradictions of capitalism developing at different rates within them. This depends first on when capitalist production is actually installed in the area, as well as on whether it develops out of the contradictions of another mode of production and the articulations with it or is imposed from outside by the expansion of the most advanced capitalist nation-states. But given this beginning, it depends fundamentally on the antagonistic and conscious class struggles within the country and on how these operate to work on these developing contradictions. Thus, imperialism involves, not only relationships among nation-states at more or less the same stage of development of their contradictions, but also those where a nation-state is much less advanced than another and, hence, subject to domination. This domination acts back on the development of contradictions within subordinate countries, so that the term, advanced, does not imply a progression whereby less advanced countries will eventually 'develop' in the same way as more advanced ones. The two most important keys to such domination are high levels of productivity, with the accompanying greater relative surplus value, and a suitably disciplined labour force. On the other hand, as mentioned in Chapter 5, situations of subordination most often necessitate forms of state capitalism, as the only possible means of allocating investment capital.

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[5]Nation state boundaries, as opposed to state institutions, have been little studied by Marxists. The exceptions, such as Murray (1971), Rodinson (1968), Terray (1973), and Vilar (1981), usually miss the centrality of labour control. The question of why nation states are essential to capitalism has rarely been posed. An exception is de la Pradelle (1979, pp. 159–160, 176–177). For a brief survey of classical Marxist writers on the national question, see Lowy (1976). Both Anderson (1974b) and Hechter and Brustein (1980) find the origins of the nation-state in feudalism, rather than in the emerging capitalism; see, however, Marx (1967, I, p. 754).

[6]Wayne (1981) argues that raw materials were most important for Britain and markets for France.

[7]See, especially, Hilferding (1970, pp. 421–454), who, however, places too much emphasis on protective tariffs.

Imperialism cannot simply be seen in terms of markets[8] because extension of markets means that the buyers have something to offer in exchange, that they have produced something which the imperialist country wants. This requires some form of involvement in decisions about labour allocation, even if it is still within a non-capitalist mode of production. Nor can imperialism mean simply a search for raw materials. Firstly, someone must produce or extract these materials in the country from which they originate. But, as well, capitalism is not aimed towards the production of use values so that what specific raw material is 'required' is irrelevant; substitutes can always be found or produced or another final product produced, each of which would yield as much profit.[9] No, the underlying goal is neither markets nor raw materials nor even outlets for capital investment, but the decisions about labour allocation.[10]

Imperialist decisions about labour allocation through the market differ in no important aspect from such decisions within the boundaries of a nation-state, as treated in Chapter 5. Thus, they will not be further discussed here. Two other important and complementary means of imperialist power must, however, be studied. National boundaries may be used to control the supply of labour within a given nation-state through labour migration.[11] Or power may be expanded through the export of the capital relation using foreign investment, including that for producing raw materials.

8.2 Labour migration

An historical means of installing capitalist relations of production has been by colonisation: labour migration towards a non-capitalist region. But the major problem for the capitalist class was to ensure the maintenance of these relations in such an area by keeping the direct producers separated from the means of production.[12] Plentiful land provided a means of escape. Thus, most areas of extensive colonisation have past through a stage of more or less petty commodity production because the capitalist class of the colonising country could not maintain the capitalist relations of production. Instead of a labour market, 'personal labour relationships'[13] develop, whereby the capitalist employer, instead of the state, assumes the workmen's overhead costs in order to attract scarce labour, but

[8] The classic works are Luxemburg (1951) and Luxemburg and Bukharin (1972).

[9] See Warren (1980, p. 240).

[10] Even as interesting works as Kay (1975) and Oxaal et al (1975) miss the point entirely. The circulationism of the centre-periphery theory of Amin (1973), Emmanuel (1972a), and Frank (1969a and b) has already been mentioned in notes to Chapters 3 and 4.

[11] This is an important aspect of imperialism, developed by Bauer as the fundamental factor, but ignored by most Marxists. However, Bauer's claim that lack of labour power is the basic cause of imperialism cannot be accepted; see Luxemburg's critique in Luxemburg and Bukharin (1972, pp. 90–150), and, also, de Gaudemar (1976, pp. 227–238). I have already criticised the revival of Bauer's theory by Meillassoux (1975) and Rey (1973) in a note to Chapter 6.

[12] See Marx's (1967, I, pp. 765–774) discussion of Wakefield's discoveries and Pentland (1981).

[13] See Pentland (1981, pp. 24–60).

also to be able to expect to retain workers indefinitely.

However, two cases must be distinguished. Where the native population, and hence the pre-capitalist modes of production, could be eliminated, the process developed relatively smoothly and generally yielded advanced capitalist countries. Where the colonisers were a minority, they set up a local petty capitalism and often came to oppose the international imperialists.[14]

Specific imperialist measures are often necessary to force potential workers to leave their traditional production in order to seek employment elsewhere. The most common way, besides direct expropriation of the land and forced labour, has been by the insertion of the local population into a 'money economy'. The imperialist power imposes a tax, most usually a poll tax, not a tax on wealth, which must be paid in money.[15] The creation of a colonial bureaucracy, with the imposition of chiefs on formerly chiefless societies,[16] usually accompanies this process. The only source of this money, if a market has not developed, is wage labour. Even if local produce (foodstuffs and raw materials) can be marketted, low prices act to promote wage labour. Because jobs cannot be found locally, this means labour migration. Even when certain market outlets are available for local products, wage labour is often the only source of sufficient cash. Often the women become solely responsible for the subsistence agricultural production in the village, as the men leave to work in the mines and factories.[17] This process has been historically especially important in Africa, with its multitude of 'arbitrary' nation state boundaries.[18]

In the advanced capitalist countries, another form of labour migration can involve the ultimate capitalist 'liberation' of the individual. Individuals leave their native country to seek work elsewhere. Not only are they 'freed' from the means of production, but also from the means of reproduction, at least while temporarily located in the 'host' country. We have seen how the 'free' individual selling labour power necessarily needs a support in domestic labour. The capitalist class cannot make decisions about the allocation of this labour. However, national boundaries can be used to ensure that such domestic labour does not take place within them.[19] The migrant worker is often only allowed entry without a family and only for so long as employed. Such a situation of individual migration occurs when capitalism requires a temporary and fluctuating work force. The parcellisation and dequalification of tasks under Taylorism and Fordism has made the use of such masses of unskilled workers possible.[20] When the requirement is a stable work

[14] See Emmanuel (1972b).

[15] See Coquery-Vidrovitch (1968) and Hilferding (1970, pp. 431–432).

[16] See Tignor (1971).

[17] See Arrighi and Saul (1973), Deere (1976), LeVine (1966), and Meillassoux (1975).

[18] See, for example, Arrighi and Saul (1973), Meillassoux (1975), van Onselen (1973), and Wolpe (1972 and 1979).

[19] For the importance of the political element in creating migrant labour, see Burawoy (1976).

[20] See Coriat (1979a, pp. 161–178). See the next chapter for a discussion of this development.

force, family migration is most often sollicited.[21]

Individual labour migration is important to the capitalist class in that it can reduce the costs of state domestic labour. This represents a previous saving to the state and not directly a saving to individual capitalists, because the value of their labour power, their wage, is not affected by this factor. Migrant workers often do not have any right to social security benefits, even if they pay a contribution. They arrive after their expenses of education have been covered by their home nation-state and most often must leave before retirement.[22] However, if they come with a family, they may have numerous children, raising local educational costs. Another exception is the 'brain drain' of highly qualified workers who are welcome to stay, but who cost even more to the 'donor' nation-state.

All this said, it must be emphasised that temporary individual migrant labour is only a second best solution for capitalism. The savings in state domestic labour do not offset the lower intensity of labour provided by a less disciplined labour force, nor the fact that migrants are only subject to capitalist surplus value production for a portion of their working lives. This lower rate of production of surplus value is not compensated by domestic labour performed under another mode of production. If it were, industrial workers of the advanced capitalist countries would long ago all have their own subsistence plots of land,[23] although the drawback for the dominant class is the power of resistance which such plots permit in times of strike.

Thus, more important, such individual migration permits the capitalist class to surmount the 'natural' limits of reproduction of the labour force and, hence, to obtain more direct control over the size of the industrial reserve army.[24] Workers are welcomed when jobs are available and immediately sent home when unemployed. This applies, however, only to a part of the migrants, because others come to stay permanently for reasons specific to the evolving labour requirements as opposed to a more static structure of the indigenous labour force.

In addition, because migrants, in general, have no political rights,[25] they provide an essentially passive sector of the labour force. They often occupy primarily certain low-paid segments of the labour market, separated from the native workers. Immigrant labour, thus, creates divisions within the collective worker, both nationally and internationally, which can be played up by the capitalist class to inhibit conscious class struggle. As well as the very differences of culture and lan-

[21] See Hareven (1975).

[22] See Castells (1975). On the experiences of migrant workers in Europe, see, for example, Berger and Mohr (1975), Linhart (1978), and Morokvasic (1972).

[23] In fact, during the industrial revolution in England, the majority of rural labourers probably had such plots (see Chambers and Mingay, 1966, p. 98), as do workers today in the Comecon countries and China. See also Braverman (1974, pp. 272–274) and Coriat (1979a, pp. 104–106).

[24] See Berger and Mohr (1975), Carchedi (1979), Castells (1975), Castles and Kosack (1972), and Viale (1973). Gorz (1970) emphasises the over-riding importance of non-economic factors.

[25] On the problems of juridical definition of what are political rights for immigrants, see Edelman (1971).

guage created by the nation-states, such struggle may take the ideological forms of racism or of a contrast of migrants with an 'aristocracy of labour'.[26]

However, labour migration plays a fourth very important role in the imperialist extension of power over decisions about labour allocation. In their 'host' country, migrant workers learn how to submit to the discipline of capitalist production. This is much more easily enforced on workers who, from a non-capitalist context, arrive in a situation where the majority of workers have submitted for generations to such capitalist discipline.[27] If and when they return to their home countries, the migrant workers take their experiences with them. This subsequently facilitates the imperialist introduction of capitalist production in those nation-states. But, on the other hand, migration permits an international socialisation of the working class.[28] Returning workers report on the organisation and struggles in the 'host' country. Unfortunately, the reciprocal effect on international solidarity within the advanced capitalist countries is usually minimal, for the ideological reasons mentioned above.

In its varying forms, labour migration has been an important factor in imperialist labour allocation throughout the history of capitalism, and will remain so as long as the dominant capitalist mode of production, with its nation-state, continues to exist.

8.3 Capital migration

The earliest historical form of imperialist capital migration was colonisation. The capitalist took both his means of production and his labour force with him to the as yet non-capitalist region. This procedure encountered the difficulties already discussed in the previous section, but, with petty commodity production dependent on international capital relations, did lay a firm basis for the development of an indigenous capitalism.

The more developed forms of capital migration extend decisions about labour allocation primarily through financial means.[29] Capital is invested outside the national boundaries in other nation-states where certain conditions for profit maximisation may be more favourable. Local capitalist production is installed. This, however, does not necessarily mean that finance capital is sent abroad from the imperialist country. Profits may simply be reinvested locally rather than being repatriated.

At a first stage, this involved primarily the production of raw materials for final treatment in the advanced capitalist countries. Local extraction and produc-

[26] See Castells (1975), Castles and Kosack (1972), and Viale (1973).

[27] "The advance of capitalist production develops a working-class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 737; see also p. 477); see also Kula (1960) and Thompson (1967).

[28] Lenin (1913) first pointed out this potential.

[29] The classic works here are Bukharin (1973) and Lenin (1916). For a fundamental critique, see Warren (1980, pp. 48–83).

tion of such raw materials was used to convert local production of use values to production of commodities under the capital relation. The first step of simply buying materials produced by non-capitalist means quickly yielded place to more explicitly capitalist organisation of production. This process, of course, also integrated the direct producers into the consumer market. But more important, it laid the foundations of a capitalist labour force; the local population began to learn the habits and discipline of capitalist production. That this imperialist expansion was never primarily a search for basics and raw materials can be seen from the present situation of the USA as the major world producer and exporter of many such materials, including rice and wheat,[30] and, at the other extreme, the unprospected wealth of the African subsoil.

Once the basis was created by raw material production and labour migration, the way was open for major imperialist investment in full-scale capitalist industrial production.[31] A wave of independence declarations occurred in the colonies.[32] Now the more complex industrial processes can only operate where a suitably disciplined labour force is available, a situation which is still far from occurring in most less advanced capitalist countries.[33] Although this recently created labour force does not have as long a tradition nor as formal an organisation for sustained class struggle in the capitalist context as do the workers of the advanced capitalist countries, this lack of bureaucratisation can also have advantages.[34] It has not raised the historically and socially determined value of its labour power. And yet this does not mean that it is necessarily more heavily exploited, as measured by s/v, than the working class of the advanced capitalist countries, because its productivity is often also much lower, primarily due to a lower level of mechanisation.[35] As a small minority, the wage labour force is under constant pressure from the massive surrounding industrial reserve army. Extensive use of female labour is also an important factor.[36] With the massive rural exodus, the government is not able to handle the flux of workers and the growth of the industrial reserve army.[37] The allocation of labour gets out of hand, posing a threat to stability, so that attempts to attract foreign investment on very favourable terms are made in order to create employment.[38] Ideal conditions are being created for di-

[30] See, especially, Cleaver (1977a).

[31] For this change in Africa, see, for example, Arrighi and Saul (1973, pp. 45–46, 107, 121, 216–218).

[32] This maturation of the labour force was the fundamental factor, and not, as Emmanuel (1972b) proposes, growing opposition of the colonial settlers, although the latter often served as an important catalyst.

[33] See, for example, Coriat (1981).

[34] For examples of the ways in which such an organisation is developing, see Humphrey (1979), Tavares de Almeida (1982), and, especially, the collection of articles by Cohen et al (1979). The impression of a lack of workers' struggles in these countries is primarily a result of our ignorance.

[35] See Marx (1967, I, p. 560 and III, pp. 150–151, 214–215, 819–820) and also Bettelheim (1972).

[36] See CSE (1980, pp. 17–21), Elson and Pearson (1981a and b), Safa (1976), and Tissier (1981).

[37] On ways workers handle these pressures of unemployment, see Bourdieu (1962).

[38] See Freyssenet (1977, pp. 186–187) for the case of Tunisia.

rectly capitalist labour allocation.[39] As well, a process is also in motion which is creating ever more disciplined labour forces in these less advanced countries.[40] Complete separation of the labour force from the means of production, with the accompanying reduction or end of temporary migration, and enormous state budgets for education are two important aspects of this development.

This international process of value creation operates in a way similar to that described in Chapter 5. Commodities which are produced in a country for internal consumption without competition from imports will only be subject to a national law of value. But all other commodities follow an international law of value. As always, all units of such a commodity have the same value. However production in a less advanced country will most usually involve a less disciplined labour force working less intensively and often with lower productivity due to less advance techniques. This does not mean that people work less hard, but that they are not submitting to a capitalist form of organisation and discipline. Longer concrete labour time is required to produce the same value, and the same amount of a given commodity, as in an advanced capitalist country. As with the various cases considered in Chapter 5, the exchange of equal values is the 'exchange' of unequal concrete labour times.[41] This means that both the rate of exploitation and the value of labour power must be lower (unless one is so low as to compensate for the other). However, the less advanced countries very often produce commodities, especially raw materials, not produced elsewhere. Lower intensity and productivity then lead to corresponding lower value of these primary products. The fact that subsistence commodities, exchanged for the value of labour power, are often subject to the national, and not to the international law of value further complicates the situation. These differential rates of exploitation and values of labour power are only possible because of the minimal mobility of the labour power, as compared to commodities, across nation-state boundaries.

The development of the less advanced capitalist countries to the point where major industrial production is possible[42] is important not only for the extension of capitalist control in these areas. In the imperialist context, this industrialisation within world integration of capitalist production does not create conditions for an 'independent' capitalist development in the less advanced countries.[43] On

[39]Taylor (1979, pp. 187–214) provides an historical overview of this development. This work is probably one of the best recent theoretical ones on imperialism. However, its basis in Althusserianism creates serious weaknesses. In spite of excellent criticisms of the functionalism of development theory and the ideal type of "potential surplus" of underdevelopment theory, Taylor uses the functionalism of "reproductive requirements" of a mode of production (p. 227) and the ideal type of "independent industrialisation" (p. 220) unattainable by the less advanced countries.

[40]See Humphrey (1980) for the importance, not of skill, but of discipline to high labour intensity. On the difficulties of this expansion, see Lipietz (1982b).

[41]This is the explanation of 'unequal exchange' and not lower salaries, as suggested by Emmanuel (1972a). Taylor (1979, pp. 67–68) gives a similar explanation to mine, but with his implicit Ricardian assumption of embodied labour times, believes that a non-equivalent exchange of values occurs.

[42]For empirical data on this process, see Warren (1973 and 1980).

[43]See Cardoso (1972) and Taylor (1979, pp. 49–60). Specific case studies include Coriat (1981)

the other hand, it does give added strength to the capitalist class in its struggle to maintain its power to make decisions about labour allocation even in the advanced capitalist countries. It permits crisis management by international capital restructuration. Industries in the advanced capitalist countries where working class militancy is such that decision-making about labour allocation is made difficult can be simply shut down and set up where conditions are more favourable. Entire countries can be placed in crisis in this way when the labour force becomes unmanageable. The crisis that began in the 1970's is no more than the capitalist response to the militancy of the 1960's.

The only possible working class response is international unity. The positive possibilities of labour migration must be developed to overcome the divisive tactics, based on racism, nationalism, and so on, used by the bourgeoisie. Only internationalisation of the class struggle can counteract such a capitalist offensive.[44]

and Humphrey (1980) for Brazil and Corten and Tahon (1982) and Palloix (1980) for Algeria.

[44] For some discussion of the problems involved, see Dockès (1975, esp. pp. 259–281).

9
Contradictions of capitalism

9.1 Is there a principal contradiction?

The relations of production of each mode of production are defined by the extraction of surplus labour, but most important by the way in which the production, allocation, and control of productive labour operate. Under capitalism, surplus labour is extracted as surplus value, while productive labour is allocated by the exchange of commodities. Capitalism cannot be definitively overthrown simply by eliminating surplus value. Commodity exchange must also be done away with. The question is how different types of concrete labour can then be compared in order to plan production communistically?[1]

Any discussion of the contradictions of capitalism must, thus, centre around the production, allocation, and extraction of productive labour, around the distinctions between abstract and concrete labour, between productive and domestic labour. The classical Marxist response has been in terms of nationalisation (state control) of the means of production,[2] which is actually control by a united ideological and capitalist class. This has been rejected from the beginning of this work, because it remains at the phenomenal level and demonstrates little understanding of the functioning of capitalist society. Such control only leads to state capitalism.[3]

Marxist discussion of contradictions in capitalism inevitably seems eventually to come around to reliance on the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. Such a tendency, as a law, has never been satisfactorily demonstrated, either theoretically or empirically. As the ultimate in economism, such a position, to which even the most anti-economistic Marxists seem to give lip service, assumes a mechanical, virtually automatic process by which capitalism is to be eliminated. It leaves no place for conscious class struggle, for human beings to change their history. In

[1] The vast literature on central planning in the 'Socialist' countries testifies to the fact that this problem is far from being solved. See also Albert and Hahnel (1978, pp. 261–274), Bettelheim (1968 and 1970), and Heller (1976, pp. 96–130).

[2] This can be traced back to certain phrases of Engels (1947), for example, p. 335, but see also pp. 366–367 where it is nuanced.

[3] "'Nationalisation' and 'nationalised property' are antimarxist and antiscientific expressions. To nationalise means to give to the nation. But what is the 'nation'? The 'nation' is an abstraction; in fact, the nation is torn by class antagonisms. Give to the nation means, in fact, give to the dominant class of this nation." (Castoriadis, 1973, I, p. 226, my translation).

the next section, this tendency will be examined in more detail.

Besides the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, the other main candidate for the principal contradiction under capitalism has always been that between the private control of the means of production and the increasing centralisation and socialisation of the production process.[4] In Chapter 1, I reformulated this as the contradiction between the privatisation of the decisions about allocation of productive labour and the increasing centralisation and socialisation of the production process. In Chapter 5, we saw that this was one, the first, aspect of the fundamental contradiction between relations in the production process and relations of struggle, between antagonism and consciousness. This aspect is essential because socialisation of labour means unity and provides a basis for class consciousness.[5]

Until this chapter, I have only studied the relationship between abstract and concrete labour, between labour power and labour, rather abstractly in the labour theory of value. The question is much more complex and demands study of the production process itself. The fact that the capitalist class makes the decisions about the allocation of concrete labour, as mediated by abstract labour, by spending its variable capital to buy labour power does not mean that it has the final word as to how that concrete labour is performed. Thus, the production process is an essential site of contradiction and class conflict, what I have called the second aspect of the fundamental contradiction.

A further aspect, which I called the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction, also appears in the theory of value, but only can be properly understood within the capitalist economic formation of society. This is the contradiction between productive and domestic labour, centring around the 'free' sale of labour power, which I studied in Chapter 6. All three aspects of the fundamental contradiction involve, in different ways, the distinction between social abstract labour, value plus surplus value, and private concrete labour, a distinction which must be overcome.

9.2 The falling rate of profit

The theory that the rate of profit has a tendency to fall is relatively straightforward.[6] Consider total capital in value terms, divided between constant capital, c,

[4] "The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated." (Marx, 1967, I, p. 763; see also III, p. 264). This whole section near the end of Volume I is typical of the mechanical aspect of Marx's work, whereby working class struggle appears to have little role except as resistance. The best critique of this has come from the Italian 'workerist' movement.

[5] See, for example, Gramsci (1977, p. 73).

[6] Marx seems simply to have taken over this postulate from the classical economists, and then tried to prove it; see, for example, Ricardo (1971, p. 139). Contributions to the recent controversy include Alberro and Persky (1979), Appelbaum (1978), Armstrong and Glyn (1980), Bettelheim (1959), Castoriadis (1979, II, pp. 205–220), Christiansen (1976), Farjoun and Machover (1983, pp. 158–171),

and variable capital, v, with s the surplus value produced. Then, the global rate of profit, in value terms, is $s/(c+v)$, and the organic composition of capital is c/v. Marx's (1967, III, pp. 211–266) argument is that, if the rate of exploitation, s/v, remains constant, while the organic composition of capital increases, then the rate of profit must fall. As it stands, algebraically, this is a tautology.

Let us reformulate this in terms of productive labour. If the division between necessary and surplus labour in society remains constant, while the ratio of labour congealed in means of production to (necessary) living labour increases, then the ratio of surplus labour to necessary plus congealed labour must decrease.

Now consider the two conditions in turn. First, take the constant rate of exploitation. Variable capital is determined by the level of subsistence of the production working class, as well as by productivity. As productivity increases, the time necessary to produce subsistence goods decreases. The subsistence level can even rise while this time, and the value, decreases. Thus, the division between necessary and surplus labour can continually be moving in favour of more surplus labour. In other words, the rate of exploitation continually increases with what Marx called changes in *relative surplus value*. Because the working classes' economic struggle is obstensibly in terms of their standard of living, and not in terms of the division of value, it provides little break to this trend. However, because the means to this standard of living must always be received as a wage, the struggle is in fact over the repartition of the value created. The constant rate of exploitation is a strange assumption: this continuous creation of relative surplus value seems to be a more fundamental law than the falling rate of profit.

But, take now the increasing organic composition of capital, or more precisely, the value composition. For Marx (1967, I, p. 612) distinguishes the technical, value, and organic compositions of capital. The latter is identical to the value composition only in so far as it reflects the technical composition, i.e. so long as no changes in productivity occur, which devalue the means of production.

First, it is fairly obvious that, in so far as the term has a meaning, the technical composition is increasing: fewer workers run more machines. However, this does not mean that each worker is put into contact with more constant capital. In the same way that means of consumption decrease in value, so do the means of production, as productivity increases. Thus, although technical composition increases, value composition need not necessarily.[7] It will depend on the relative productivity of the department producing means of production as compared to that producing means of subsistence. On the other hand, if the technical compo-

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Fine and Harris (1976b and 1977), Himmelweit (1974), Hodgson (1974 and 1977), Hunt (1983), Lebowitz (1976b and 1982), Lipietz (1979a, pp. 300–310 and 1982c), Meek (1960), Nakatani (1980), Okishio (1977), Roemer (1977 and 1979), Rosdolsky (1956), Shaikh (1978), Weeks (1981, pp. 196–213 and 1982), Weisskopf (1979), and Yaffe (1972). For a comprehensive review of the debate, see van Parijs (1980).

[7]For empirical evidence that it had not, at least until the late 1960's, see Rowthorn (1976), who makes the distinction between technical and value composition. Heap (1980), who does not, seems to indicate that value composition has increased in the 1970's, but he is reluctant to draw this conclusion. See also Castoriadis (1979, II, pp. 207–210).

sition increases, then, by definition, the organic composition must also increase. However, the organic composition is a value measure in the old units. The present rate of profit is not calculated in those units, but in present value units. Thus, not the organic, but the value composition is relevant for changes in the profit rate, and the latter composition shows no inherent trend towards increase.

Now note that labour congealed in means of production is not accumulated indefinitely, but is all eventually transferred to consumption goods or is rendered obsolete and disappears. It is also continually devalued, because it must always be measured at current levels of productivity, not in terms of time formerly taken. There appears to be no inherent reason for the ratio c/v to increase.[8]

A concrete example may make this clearer. Suppose that, some years ago, the value composition of capital was $c/v = 1/1$, as was the rate of exploitation $(s/v = 1/1)$, so that the rate of profit was $s/(c + v) = 1/2$. A unit of abstract labour was divided equally between the necessary and surplus parts. One unit of abstract labour could produce means of subsistence for two workers, or it could produce, say, two units of machinery.

Suppose at present, that five times as much machinery is used by each worker, i.e. that the technical composition has increased five fold. Then, by definition, the organic composition has also increased to $c/v = 5/1$. But, this is measured in abstract labour of the former period. If we proceeded on this basis, assuming the same rate of exploitation, then the profit rate would have fallen to $s/(c+v) = 1/6$. However, due to increases in productivity, the capitalist now does not pay five times as much for his five machines as he did for one before.

As a first example, we may suppose him to pay only one fifth as much per machine, in which case the value composition is still $c'/v' = 1/1$ and the rate of profit is still $s'/(c' + v') = 1/2$, both measured in the new value units. One unit of abstract labour is still equally divided and still can produce subsistence for two. However, it can now produce ten units of machinery, due to increased productivity.

In this example, I have ignored the fact that, in the global society, this increased productivity will yield relative surplus value if the machines produce, directly or indirectly, means of subsistence for the production working class. Their decreased value means that the workers' consumption goods will, in turn, be reduced in value, so that v' will decrease and the rate of profit increase. This can be seen in a second example. Thus, suppose, instead, that each machine costs,

[8] We can thus be astonished by the statement of Marx (1967, I, p. 387) "And it is clear as noon-day, that machines and systems of machinery, the characteristic instruments of labour of Modern Industry, are incomparably more loaded with value than the implements used in handicrafts and manufacture." (See also 1971, pp. 366–367). The fact that he resorts to such language should already indicate that he has no basis for his claim. (Ironically, it is the same phrase that he uses in a quote which I gave in a footnote to the Introduction to this book.) Although Marx states many times that the ratio of constant to variable capital constantly increases, he nowhere demonstrates it, and indeed, in Volume III (1967, III, Ch.5), shows the opposite. Those most adamant recent defenders of the falling rate of profit, such as Lipietz (1979a, pp. 214, n.2, 308–310), simply state that this increasing ratio is an undemonstrable principle of Marxism!

not one fifth, but two fifths, of what it previously did, in abstract labour. But, suppose also that the increased productivity has reduced the value of the means of subsistence so that the rate of exploitation is now $s'/v' = 2/1$. A change in relative surplus value has resulted, such that, if the same increase in productivity has occurred as in production of means of production (2.5 times), the real standard of living will have increased, even although the relative value of labour power has decreased. Then, because necessary labour has diminished, the value composition is $c'/v' = 3/1$, and again, the rate of profit is $s'/(c' + v') = 1/2$. A unit of abstract labour is split with only one third being necessary. Thus, it can produce (increased) subsistence for three workers, because productivity has increased here, or it can produce five units of machinery, because productivity has also increased in this department, but less than in the previous example.

A note must be included here on accumulation of capital. Accumulation without change of technique means that constant and variable capital expand at the same rate, and hence that such accumulation does not influence the profit rate, as long as the rate of exploitation remains constant. Next consider the case of a static labour force, with no increase in working hours or in intensity.[9] Total new value created, $(v+s)$, must remain constant so that all accumulation must go to increase constant capital, (c), i.e. to change of technique, and hence must involve increasing value composition. However, such a situation is impossible in Department II (production of means of consumption), because any increase of c here must have a corresponding increase in $v + s$ in Department I (production of means of production), in other words, a larger labour force.[10] Thus restricted to Department I, such accumulation of constant capital only is immediately in a vicious circle of positive feedback.[11] Hence, we can eliminate accumulation without change in the labour force, either in size or in time and intensity worked. We are left with a third case, accumulation with change of technique and a growing labour force.[12] Excluding long term demographic growth, the increase must come either from increased intensity of labour, from elimination of non-competitive firms (restructuration), from the industrial reserve army, or from outside the capitalist mode of production or at least outside the nation-state. Thus, here, the profit rate can be maintained not only by increase in productivity and in relative surplus value, but also by elimination of firms with low profit rates.

The valorisation process is, thus, circular with replacement of constant capital

[9] Marx only considers the case of a growing labour force in *Capital*, Vol.II (for example, p. 501).

[10] This could occur if $v + s$ of Department II correspondingly decreased so that the total remained constant. But this would mean a very rapid and enormous inflation of the value composition for this department.

[11] The condition for a constant profit rate with static labour force is that the relation between accumulating constant capital and increasing surplus value (or decreasing variable capital) be $ds/dc = -dv/dc = s/(c + v + s)$. This process soon reaches a limit, $\max(c) = (c + v)(v + s)/s$, when variable capital is zero.

[12] "... reproduction on a progressive scale, i.e., accumulation, reproduces the capital-relation on a progressive scale, more capitalists or larger capitalists at this pole, more wage workers at that. ... Accumulation of capital is, therefore, increase of the proletariat." (Marx, 1967, I, pp. 613–314).

and purchase of labour power ever transferring value back in. If the circle is to widen, by accumulation, the amount of labour power purchased must increase as well as that of constant capital. Any surplus value not so accumulated must be ejected out of the circle, either as non-productive consumption or as the destruction of constant capital.

The rate of profit can remain stable as long as, with increasing technical composition of capital, the productivity of one or both of production of means of production and means of subsistence also increases correspondingly, and, of course, there is no other capitalistic reason for technical composition to increase. For a given level of subsistence, increased productivity in the department producing means of subsistence necessarily implies increased exploitation, an increase in relative surplus value. If the production working class improves its level of subsistence, this only implies that productivity increases must be somewhat greater to have the same effect. Increasing productivity in the department producing means of production must also be central, because it directly affects the value composition, as well as the rate of exploitation, if the machines produced will be directly or indirectly involved in producing means of subsistence for the production working class.

In summary, the profit rate, $s/(c + v)$, depends on two factors, the rate of exploitation, s/v, and the value composition of capital, c/v. In turn, the rate of exploitation depends directly on workers' market power, which determines the value of labour power, and indirectly on productivity; the value composition depends on accumulation of constant capital, the size of the labour force, productivity, and labour intensity. Thus, the first is affected by working class struggle in the market place and the second by such struggle in the production process.[13]

If we return to the meaning of all this in terms of productive labour, we see that increasing value composition with a decreasing profit rate can make no sense. If the value of means of production per worker increases, this same value must eventually be transmitted to a final product to be consumed. Such consumption can occur as means of subsistence for the production and circulation working classes, in which case, if a commodity, the value is transferred back into the system through the value of labour power and variable or 'constant' capital, or, if state domestic labour, it is lost. Or the two other social classes can consume it in their work or directly, thus as non-productive surplus value which disappears from the value circuit.[14] The only other possibility is that the means of production be scrapped, and their value discarded. Thus, any increase in constant capital per worker must eventually be compensated by an increase in the total of variable capital plus unaccumulated surplus value per worker for the consumption to occur, which only adds a further detail to the fact that accumulation must be accom-

[13]Heap (1980) provides an excellent empirical discussion of recent changes in these factors in various advanced capitalist countries.

[14]Marx (1967, II, p. 520) refers to this when there is insufficient accumulation, which, we have seen, can occur when labour time is not growing. See also Bettelheim (1959).

plished by a growing labour force. Or capital must be restructured so that huge quantities of means of production are rendered obsolete. Capitalist production can only remain stable with an increasing value composition as long as relative surplus value is rapidly being expanded or surplus value is increasingly being consumed unproductively. This does not imply that a trend to such an increase in consumption exists. Nor does it tell anything about what is actually consumed, because the argument is in value terms. It is therefore unrelated to any under-consumptionist position. On the other hand, it is a basis of capitalist crisis. As well as being a weapon to combat an over-aggressive working class, capital restructuration performs the necessary destruction of constant capital which allows capitalism to continue on.

What most participants in the debate about the falling rate of profit forget is that, concretely, the profit rate with which they are concerned involves the sum of industrial and commercial profits plus interest, rent, many state expenditures, the salaries of the ideological class, and the personal consumption of the capitalist class.

Marx always claimed the falling rate of profit to be a tendency — with its "counteracting influences".[15] But the question is what he meant by this. In Chapter 5, we have already seen the tendential law towards state capitalism. A fundamental limit for the capitalist class is to find means of creating ever more relative surplus value. As soon as, and if ever, the capitalist class leaves this narrow path, it falls directly upon the *tendential law towards a falling rate of profit*. This is a law within which all capitalist activities must occur, but it is not a law which is continuously in direct operation throughout the history of capitalism. It only directly takes effect during those periods when capitalism is in difficulty, when the capitalist class can no longer allocate productive labour in such ways as to yield relative surplus value. There is, thus, not a contradiction between increasing accumulation of constant capital and a falling rate of profit, but a limit forcing the capitalist class to an ever renewed search for relative surplus value.[16]

The myth of the falling rate of profit has remained too long as the prop upon which Marxists can fall back as the ultimate contradiction leading to the downfall of capitalism.[17] For too long, it has replaced serious analysis of the operation of capitalist society, of how decisions about the allocation of labour are made and surplus labour is extracted. Profit is not a thing acquired by the capitalist class, but is power to make decisions about the future allocation of productive labour. This power shows no inherent trend to diminish, even relatively.

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[15] See Marx (1967, III, pp. 232–266). Certain authors, such as Fine and Harris (1979, pp. 58–75) and Sweezy (1942, pp. 97–100), emphasise these counter-tendencies, but this is clearly not sufficient to explain the demise of capitalism.

[16] See Bernardo (1977, II, pp. 134–141).

[17] "It may be ruled out that immediate economic crises themselves produce fundamental historical events; they can simply create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions ..." (Gramsci, 1971, p. 184).

9.3 The production process

In Chapters 5 and 6, we saw certain ways in which labour power is a very peculiar 'commodity'. In the first place, it is not produced by a capitalist production process, but by domestic labour. In addition, its value is determined, not only by labour time, but by class struggle, because the means of subsistence are historically and socially variable. We must now study another important peculiarity. The 'use value' of labour power is the amount of labour which the capitalist class manages to force out of the working class, an unknown, determined by struggle.[18] The fact that a contract is made at the beginning while the wage is paid at the end of the period of use of the labour power reflects but one aspect of this struggle.

The relations between social classes, between capitalists and workers, are necessarily antagonistic. One can be neither worker nor capitalist without being engaged in struggle, struggle in the market place, but also in production. In the market, individual seems to meet individual, in equality, and the worker is always the loser. However, in production, the production process is continually becoming more socialised, the workers are collectivised opposite the capitalist, and the workers *know* the work. Thus, the direct control of the production process is a site of struggle over what work will be done for the labour power bought.

In Chapter 5, we saw how a unit of abstract labour was not fixed. But, the hour of concrete labour is also variable. Neither the level of techniques available nor any 'economic laws' is sufficient to fix it. It can only be determined by the struggle between capitalist and workers. In other words, the relationship between the value of labour power and the result produced by putting the labour power to work is indeterminate. Linking production levels to wages is only a way of displacing the struggle towards the determination of norms, the control of quality and quantity, the means of measuring results, etc.

Thus, control and surveillance must be separated, not only from the direct work, but from coordination and unity. However, they do not involve decisions about the allocation of productive labour, but about the use of labour power, of its 'use value', after the goal of production has been decided. This is one means by which the exploitative relations must be reproduced. As we saw in Chapter 7, this is not a relationship between the production working class and the capitalist class, but between the former and the ideological class.

In order to direct the production process, to institute control and surveillance, the ways of concrete labour must be known. A manual/intellectual division of labour must be created whereby the direct producers know as little as possible about what is being produced.[19] This is the dequalification and "degradation" of work.[20] The labour of coordination and unity must be isolated, as much as possible, from the actual execution of tasks: the collective worker must be divided.

[18] See Castoriadis (1974, I, p. 89), de Gaudemar (1982, passim, esp. pp. 77–98), and Tronti (1977, p. 200).

[19] See especially Freyssenet (1977).

[20] See, especially, Braverman (1974) and the essays in S. Wood (1982) and Zimbalist (1979).

The links with the school are obvious here. For the ideological class to know concrete labour, it must be able to measure it. This leads to a division of tasks, to the establishment of norms, in short to Taylorism.[21]

We immediately find a series of contradictions. The workers can be forced to work more intensively but even high wages are not sufficient to compensate for deteriorating labour power; absenteeism and large turnover rates result, although the latter may itself sometimes be used to discipline the labour force.[22] Tasks must be divided and the direct producers atomised, while the trend is for production to be collectivised. Knowledge is controlled as far as possible by the ideological class, while only the direct producers can react to the unpredictable and to work changes, as new techniques are introduced.[23] Thus, there must be a continual renegociation of norms. While the ideological class attempts, not to produce, but to control knowledge, the source of this knowledge is in the production process, in the hands of the direct producers. The process of division, of separation of this knowledge from these direct producers, is never ending.[24] But even those who become responsible for producing the new concepts, the scientists, engineers, and technicians, do not escape this Taylorisation.[25]

The ultimate step in the process of separation between conception and execution comes with automation and computer control. But the very computer programmes can often not be developed theoretically; they must be based directly on the experiences and activities of the direct producers.[26]

In the face of these contradictions, the workers must continually organise, for, if production does not proceed, the responsibility, and the penalties, ultimately fall back on them. But this organisation is fought by the ideological class, and, in each case, eventually coopted.[27]

If the separation between manual and intellectual labour becomes great, if there is too much parcellisation, productivity drops. As well, the separation means a constant increase in the ideological labour required. One remedy is to introduce forms of 'workers control' into the production process. With the production process organised by the workers' own organisations, primarily the trade unions, productivity can be increased while the costs of ideological labour are reduced for each competing capitalist, although not necessarily for society as a whole. At the

[21] The recent literature on Taylorism is immense. See, especially, Braverman (1974), Castoriadis (1974), Coriat (1976 and 1979a), Friedman (1977), Heron (1975), and Palloix (1976 and 1977), and, for state capitalism, Chanvier (1975).

[22] See Coriat (1981), Gramsci (1971, pp. 310–312), and Humphrey (1980).

[23] "... it is only the experience of the combined labourer which discovers and reveals the where and how of saving, the simplest methods of applying discoveries, and the ways to overcome the practical frictions arising from carrying out the theory — in its application to the production process — etc." (Marx, 1967, III, p. 104). See Freyssenet (1977, passim, esp. pp. 57–59).

[24] In general, see Cooley (1980). For some recent assembly line changes, see Coriat (1979a, pp. 237–261 and 1979b), Dina (1977), and Palloix (1976 and 1977, pp. 183–185).

[25] See Cooley (1980, pp. 1–40), CSE (1980, pp. 31–40), Duncan (1981), and Kraft (1979).

[26] See Coriat (1979a, pp. 203–214, 1980, and 1983), Ditton (1976), and Roy (1952 and 1954).

[27] See, for example, Bernoux (1972).

same time, this does not affect the goal of capitalist production, profit; it does not influence the specific social mechanism for the allocation of productive labour. In this way, the working class is forced, by its 'own' organisation, to ensure, to a certain extent, the reproduction of its own relations as exploited.[28]

Labour of the ideological and circulation working classes has traditionally been controlled primarily by ideological means. For example, in the predominantly feminine sectors, such as secretarial work, this has meant patriarchal relations. However, many forms of resistance develop, lowering 'productivity'. Thus, a specific form of Taylorism is being introduced, through office automation. This has implications, not only for the subordinate groups in these social classes, but also for control of the activities of managers and so on.[29]

In the production process, 'intellectual' labour has two distinct roles. It must produce innovations to increase the productivity of labour, but also to increase its intensity.[30] Under capitalism, these two types of 'technical' change are inseparable, although the first corresponds to productive labour and the second to ideologico-repressive labour. Thus, 'workers control' involves a further penetration of the ideological class into the heart of the working classes. On the other hand, we have seen that state capitalism leads to a more complete unity between the capitalist and ideological classes.

We can now distinguish four different types of control of the production process.[31] The classical, and basic, form is direct supervision; foremen direct the work. The next two types are modifications of this basic one, but in different directions. Bureaucratic control and Taylorism involve a change towards detailed specification and timing of the tasks involved in a job. An elaborate system of rewards and punishments and a job hierarchy or carreer system must usually also be developed. As with any bureaucracy, this solution is costly in ideological labour. An alternative is 'technical' control or Fordism, symbolised by the assembly line: work speed is 'technically' enforced.[32] The main drawback here is its socialisation of the workforce and the possibility for a small group of organised workers to bring a large factory to a halt. The last type is 'workers control' or 'self-

[28] See Bernoux and Ruffer (1974), Durand (1974), de Montmollin (1974), Nichols (1975), Rinehart (1984), and Swartz (1981).

[29] See Barker and Downing (1980), CSE (1980, pp. 41–50), Duncan (1981), Freyssenet (1977, pp. 85–103), Glenn and Feldberg (1979), Harring (1980), and Verdier (1983).

[30] Reactions to this by academic intellectuals have been remarkably uniform. Left-wing sociologists, represented, for example, by Gouldner (1979), see the ideological class as the new dominant class. Other left intellectuals, following the Ehrenreichs (1977), consider that the working classes should ally themselves with this class, because it is also salaried and does not have control of its means of production. (There is some confusion here between the ideological and circulation working classes.) A further extension of this comes when the working classes are considered to be helpless against the measures of the ideological class. Then, a revolutionary movement, apparently emanating from this very class, must work to convince it to stop producing such innovations which are harmful to the working classes!

[31] de Gaudemar (1982) proposes a somewhat similar classification but appears to group direct supervision and bureacracy while distinguishing factory towns as a further type.

[32] For assembly line work, see Beynon (1973) and, especially, Linhart (1978).

management'. This has the disadvantage of taking certain decisions out of the hands of the ideological class with no precise limit to the process; it can lead to frustration or to fundamentally unacceptable demands. Not all of these types of control can be used to produce just any commodity, and, of course, several may be used in combination.

Two radical responses to control of the production process can be noted. Castoriadis (1974) emphasises a struggle against the 'bureaucracy'. The Italian 'workerists', especially Negri (1978a) and Tronti (1977), formulate the "refusal of work", work being taken in the sense of productive labour, commodity-producing labour. They see the fundamental question as being a struggle for or against work, and not over who makes the decisions about the allocation of labour. Even although both proposals move beyond the economism of control of the means of production, they do not resolve the problem about who makes decisions about the allocation of social labour.

9.4 Dividing the socialised working class

The struggle over socialisation of the production process is not limited to what occurs within the process itself. The dominant classes also use other tactics to divide the working class and to impede the tendencies towards greater cohesion.

One important means is the use of the market, for example, by an ideological and political hierarchy of wages. The differentials may be justified by apparent variations in 'qualifications' ('knowledge'), in 'capabilities', in 'responsibilities' or even by a shortage of certain types of concrete labour.[33] These represent transfers of differentials, produced by conflict in production, to the labour market. A more developed form of this is labour market segmentation, whereby virtually no labour mobility occurs among certain broad categories of jobs. Thus, certain employment is categorised, for example, as feminine.[34]

Wage increases are also often linked to 'productivity' increases. However, here, no distinction is ever made between increases in productivity and in intensity. When productivity changes, the production process is reorganised, with altered norms, increased unemployment, and so on. The attempt is, thus, made to prevent the transfer of the benefits of such increases to the working class. On the other hand, increases in output without changes in productivity result from increased work intensity, usually accompanied by deteriorating work conditions and slackened safety standards. Any rise in wages here recompenses increased effort and can only change the standard of living very little. If wage differentials transpose divisions in the production process to the labour market, wages indexed

[33] See Castoriadis (1974, II, pp. 427–444). More generally on the wage as divider of the socialised working class, see Aumeeruddy et al (1978), Lautier and Tortajada (1977), Magaud (1974), and Stone (1974).

[34] See, for example, Phillips and Taylor (1980), Reich et al (1973) and Weisskoff (1972). For the USA, Edwards (1979, pp. 163–183) attempts to link labour market segmentation to the varying means of control in the production process.

to productivity represent an attempt to use the market to introduce competitive divisions into the production process.

With increased centralisation and concentration of capital, larger masses of workers are brought together in one place in huge factory complexes, facilitating the socialisation of the production process. The capitalist class can take certain steps to counteract this trend. Although subcontracting of the production of unfinished products may rationally appear to be more expensive, it yields a needed geographical dispersion of the working class, the disseminated worker.[35] Although labour may be less productive, it is more intense and less subject to costly organised work stoppages. Subcontracting may also allow the parent firm to reduce costs of stocking goods and to adjust production more easily to market fluctuations, but these are relatively minor considerations. Many small enterprises come to depend on a giant one for their survival. Not only these enterprises, but also the workers themselves, are in constant insecurity. Subcontracting creates separation plus job insecurity. We, thus, find part-time work, short-term contracts, etc., associated with such employment, and a marginalised labour force, composed often of migrant workers, women, and students who can be paid less. Although such a ('spontaneous') trend has been most noticeable in Italy,[36] state projects to support small enterprises exist in many countries. In each case, they are directed to very specific types of production, thus making available a well-structured group of subcontracting firms, while being disguised as the promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit. Another aspect of this struggle occurs in certain industries where the workers are being forced to set up individually as 'independent' contractors, each with their own means of production. The firm's claim to added flexibility to adjust to market demand simply hides the attempt to break the socialised production process.

However, the move towards the disseminated worker can have another face as well. Large numbers of workers find themselves outside the traditional restraining structures of the organised unions. Independent organisation and action can and do take place. Wildcat strikes and long bitter struggles often occur in these smaller firms, sometimes gaining support from a wide sector of the population.

A useful distinction, that between centre or core and periphery, summarises some of these divisions.[37] At the centre are large companies, the 'monopolies', where the production process is more productive, and perhaps less intense. Control of the production process more often involves the workers, 'workers control', as they are more closely integrated into capitalism. At the periphery are the small enterprises, often involved in subcontracting, but always in a state of insecurity, near bankruptcy. The turnover and replacement of such companies is rapid. With a marginalised labour force and less investment in means of production, work is less productive and necessarily much more intense. To enforce the pace, technical

[35] See Bologna (1979), Belforte et al (1980), Magaud (1974), and Murray (1983).

[36] See, for example, Belforte et al (1980).

[37] See Edwards (1979) and Friedman (1977).

means, such as the assembly line, are relied upon: Taylorism and Fordism; so are psychological means: paternalism, sexism verging on prostitution, the blackmail of poverty.[38]

All of the struggles over the socialised and centralised production process illustrate how a capitalist class continues to make private decisions about the activities of a constantly more united working class.

9.5 Contradictions and tendencies: the developing crisis

The very essence of the capitalist dynamic leads to a concentration and centralisation of the power to make decisions about labour allocation, but, at the same time, also to the socialisation of the labour in the production process. Equal concrete labour times are not exchanged as equal values; small firms are eliminated through crisis; and so on. So the first aspect of the fundamental contradiction develops. This very concentration and centralisation leads to oligopoly whereby increased circulation costs raise constant capital, which means that more relative surplus value must be produced to maintain profit rates. But, more important, capital, and labour, increasingly cannot be allocated among branches through the market. The capitalist class becomes more and more limited in its decision-making possibilities by the tendency to state capitalism required to regulate this allocation. This also has important effects on the ideological class within the state.

The separation between labour power bought and labour performed yields the second aspect of the fundamental contradiction. Lack of control of the means of production forces the working classes to sell their labour power, but this compulsion is only barely felt once within the labour process. Other means must be used to extract the maximum possible labour. That which has proved most important with increasing socialisation of labour in the twentieth century has been parcellisation of tasks and the separation of conception and execution, with the accompanying development of the intellectual workers who are occupied both with this conception and with ideologico-repressive labour. As this aspect of the fundamental contradiction has developed, with Taylorism, Fordism, and 'workers control', the amount of surplus value necessary to finance the ideological class has greatly increased. If the tendency to a falling rate of profit is the general framework within which relative surplus value must be generated, then a falling rate of *industrial* profit is the tendential law associated with this second aspect of the fundamental contradiction. The increasing costs of the ideological class, both within and outside the production process, mean that less surplus value is left for investment as industrial profit, even if the global profit rate is constant. Hence appears the necessity for a drastic restructuring of this ideologico-repressive labour, examples being the rapid development of computerisation and robotisation.[39] For industrial profit is essential to continuing control of the allocation of productive labour, and the capitalist class is caught within tightening limits.

[38] See Elson and Pearson (1981b).

[39] For one example of how the ideological class fights this restructuration, see Revelli (1982).

Developing capitalism leads to ever more commodification of use values, and hence to a continuing attack on domestic labour. If it were dependent only on the direct wage, working class life would become more and more precarious. But domestic labour must remain the basis of the 'free' sale of labour power — the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction. The state must intervene to protect the nuclear family, by providing domestic labour and compensations to the family wage for case deviating from the norm — the tendency to the welfare state. Wage compensations provide a basis for mass consumption, an important element of monopoly regulation. But they also increasingly restrict the capitalists' power to dominate the working classes through the wage paid for 'work done'. In time of crisis, unemployment benefits are crucial here.

All three aspects are but manifestations of the fundamental contradiction between the relations in the production process and the relations of conscious struggle generated by the antagonisms of that very process. They are the most important ways in which capitalist control of decisions about allocation of productive labour yields conscious struggle over these relations of production. The first aspect is most fundamental because of its effects on the other two. The socialisation of the production process renders even more imperative, and difficult, the problem of extracting a maximum of labour from the labour power bought. The concentration and centralisation of capital make unique dependence on a direct wage even more precarious because of the arbitrariness of the possibility of being hired by the few large firms or by the state and the increasing need for surplus value.

But this first aspect is also in direct conflict with the other two in one important sense. In a developing crisis, the capitalist class tries to reassert its power to allocate labour. The tendency to state capitalism leads to increasing dependence on the state to manage investment. But the tendency to a falling rate of industrial profit means that expenditures on the ideological class, including state expenditures, must be reduced, and, then, restructured. And the tendency to the welfare state leads to increasing lack of control over the working classes through the wage so that these costs must also be cut.[40] If the state serves as functionaries of the capitalist class, it must do so in many and varied, conflicting and contradictory ways. The state is not a category of social practice, but is rather a contradictory combination of several categories: ideologico-repressive, exploitative, circulation, and domestic labour are all crucial. In the ideological struggle, all serve to justify each other. We, thus, discover a second order contradiction, at the level of the ideological class and the state, which becomes more and more manifest as the fundamental contradiction develops.

It may be useful to turn now to the phenomenal forms taken by the developing crisis: inflation and unemployment. After the second world war, the working classes of the advanced capitalist countries were able to take the offensive, at least on the economic front. They obtained a major progression of the welfare state,

[40] O'Connor (1973) analyses certain of these fiscal consequences of the developing crisis for the American state.

but, more important in the present context, nominal wage rates which were inflexible downwards. For several decades, the only repost that the capitalist class was able to make was a downward rigidity of prices accompanied by a determined offensive in the introduction of more productive techniques. With little unemployment and increasing productivity, the amount of use values produced increased rapidly. But with non-decreasing nominal wages accompanying this increasing productivity, the only way that relative surplus value can be obtained is through rising prices. This, then, led necessarily to the need for a greater quantity of money, either through a greater velocity of its circulation or through monetary creation.[41] On the other hand, increasing productivity means lower unit values, while prices were increasing when they should have been decreasing, leading to the ineluctable and steady inflation of the post-war period.

The offensive strength and combativity of the working classes reached a climax with the events of the late 1960s. The capitalist class was placed in a position where it had to react more positively. Passing to the offensive, it discovered that production in the advanced capitalist countries was no longer profitable; the working classes were not doing what they were told. A production and investment strike in these countries, accompanied by international restructuration, means a reduction in productive labour performed, through less overtime, reduced work weeks, unemployment, and so on, and, hence, less value created. However, this can have little effect on the amount of use values produced, as productivity continues to climb through work reductions removing the slack in capacity which had developed in the first period. At the same time, consumption demands do not diminish proportionately because of the welfare measures. Then, this reduction in labour performed, with still rigid prices and increasing productivity results in the fast mounting inflation of the 1970s and 1980s. Investment misjudgements and bad debts, especially among smaller firms most affected by the crisis, leading to state consolidation of the debts, as discussed in Chapter 5, enhance this fundamental inflationary trend. But behind this trend lies the class struggle.

9.6 The contradictions of capitalist labour allocation

We have now seen how labour is allocated in capitalist society, and how much more complex it is than under other modes of production. We have also studied briefly certain aspects of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism and their associated tendential laws. The former may be summarised as contradictions

(1) between private decisions about labour allocation and an increasingly centralised and socialised production process;
(2) between labour power bought and labour performed; and
(3) between productive labour and domestic labour.

All three aspects result from the capitalist relations of production: the extraction of surplus labour by the purchase of labour power from ‘free’ individuals

[41] Note that, in this situation, more money would be required even without rising prices.

in a society where productive labour is allocated by commodity production and exchange.

Through its control of all social capital, the capitalist class also has the power to make decisions about the allocation of productive labour to specific activities. However, the dynamic of this allocation, regulated by the market and by the profit criterion, and not by use, necessarily leads to an increasing centralisation and socialisation of the actual production process. Those whose labour activities are controlled and from whom the surplus labour is extracted tend to become, at least objectively, more and more united, with the connected possibility of growing class consciousness, in spite of counter-measures by the dominant classes.

Thus, the capitalist mode of production develops not only the technical productive forces, but, much more importantly, the production process. From the point of view of labour allocation, the organisation of the production process is most important: its increasing collectivisation. It is this development which is fettered by the capitalist relations of production and not that of the productive forces in the technical sense.[42] Thus, Marx, in later life, could look to the Russian *obshchina* or village community as a possible basis for planned communism, in spite of the lower technical level of development of that society.[43] There are indications that this aspect of the fundamental contradiction is maturing: the problems with assembly lines and the attempts at workers' participation, the push to automation, the switch to the disseminated worker, the moves to less advanced capitalist countries, and so on.[44] The highly centralised private decision-making about labour allocation through the market is increasingly forcing the search for new solutions, yielding new and greater forms of the fundamental contradiction, faced with this collectivised worker.

A conclusion from this analysis is that the transition to communism need not await some high level of development of the technical productive forces permitting universal affluence. The contradiction is social and not technical. Its resolution depends on the introduction of new relations of production, of labour allocation, which will radically restructure the production process, and not, for example, on some miraculous means of overcoming the current 'energy crisis'. The latter is, rather, part of a move by the capitalist class to resolve the contradiction in its favour by restructuring capital and reasserting its power to make decisions about labour allocation.

As the second aspect of the fundamental contradiction, decisions about the allocation of productive labour are mediated by the value relation. They must pass

[42] See Williams (1980b).

[43] See, for example, Marx's letter to Zasulich in Marx and Engels (1975, pp. 319–320), the three rough drafts of this letter in CERM (1973, pp. 318–342), the letter to the Russian journal 'Annals of the Fatherland', also in Marx and Engels (1975, pp. 291–294), and the preface to the second Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto in Marx and Engels (1965, pp. 5–6).

[44] Coriat (1979a, pp. 187–202, 217–234) tries to explain the crisis of the 1970's as a result of Taylorism and Fordism, i.e. as emanating primarily from the second aspect of the fundamental contradiction.

through the intermediary of labour power and abstract labour, before touching the concrete labour actually performed. The capitalist buys labour power, the capacity to work, for a certain period of time. But, the quantity of concrete labour delivered cannot be fixed by this act.

In addition, the very fact that such decisions necessarily involve the purchase of labour power means that the direct producer must remain 'free' to accomplish this act of sale. By this means, the contradiction of the corvée-tributary and slave modes of production, between responsibility for subsistence linked with unity and independence of the subordinate class, on the one hand, or complete lack of responsibility, on the other, had been overcome. But this has been at the cost of a further aspect of the fundamental contradiction, because all labour under capitalism can never be subsumed under commodity production. A certain portion, for the production of labour power, must remain non-commodity domestic labour.

The classical solution to the first aspect of the fundamental contradiction is property of the means of production, which this book has demonstrated to be untenable. An important recent development is the well-known workers' alternative plans for socially-useful production, initiated by the Lucas Combine Shop Stewards Committee.[45]

An appealing solution to the second aspect has come from the workers councils movement.[46] However, as we have seen, and as the 'workerist' movement repeatedly points out, within the capitalist context, this has reduced, not so much to a revolutionary form of action, as to a means by which the workers manage their own exploitation. But the early failure of the workers' council movement must be seen, not as the absolute failure of workers' control, but of its failure in specific cases when the class struggle was in an insufficiently industrialised phase: the contradiction of collectivisation had not yet sufficiently developed. Coinciding with this has been the difficulty of withdrawing from the market.[47] Opposing this, the Italian 'workerists' now see the "refusal of work" as the present inherent working class 'strategy'. However, this appears even more limited than the workers' councils, because it remains primarily at the level of class antagonism and not class consciousness. Although, by this means, the system may be momentarily stopped, it appears to lead the way to a Leninist *coup d'Etat*, which eventually puts the system back in motion, as state capitalism.

Movements less closely linked to the working class have been associated with attempts to resolve the third aspect of the fundamental contradiction, notably, the feminists, the squatters, and the ecologists. Their most revolutionary proposal is the extension of non-commodity production, revenue, and consumption by the

[45] See Beynon and Wainwright (1979, pp. 182–194), Casassus and Clark (1978), Coates (1978), Cooley (1980, pp. 63–82), Elliott (1975), and Wainwright and Elliott (1982). Note that Combine Committees do not (yet) form part of the institutionalised trade union structure; see, for example, Beynon and Wainwright (1979, pp. 146–150).

[46] See, for example, Anweiler (1974), Bricianer (1977), Gramsci (1977), Mattick (1978), Rurup (1968), Sirianni (1982), Sofri (1974), Spriano (1975), and Williams (1975).

[47] See Lipietz (1979a, pp. 370–372).

working class, but this immediately encounters the problem of a possible compensatory reduction in the value of labour power. On the other hand, the ecologists' proposals for alternative, labour intensive technologies is not progressive. They most often judge a technique in terms of jobs created, as do many Marxists in time of economic crisis. But, the point is not to submit everyone to more work, however interesting it may be, nor to increase capitalist wage labour.

In some ways, certain of these groups, especially among the ecologists, have a theoretical basis close to orthodox Marxism. Both ecologists and orthodox Marxists are primarily concerned with the use of the technical productive forces. However, while orthodox Marxists push (or wait) for their maximum development so as to permit a planned communist society, ecologists are concerned with 'natural' limits to them, especially to raw materials and the environment, and with alternative forms of living. In the perspective of social practice and labour allocation, both show a restricted and short-sighted viewpoint.[48] The question is neither development nor limitations of means of production and raw materials, but the social mechanism by which human activities are allocated.

More generally, all of these analyses of society[49] may be seen to arise from the developing contradictions and tendencies of capitalism, as manifested in oligopolisation and state capitalism, worker resistance in the production process and the falling rate of profit, domestic labour and the welfare state, which generated the conficts of the 1960's. Of course, these analyses all also have roots going much further back. Each places capitalist labour allocation in question in its own, however onesided, way. But it must not be forgotten that the crisis of the 1970's and 1980's is also no more and no less than the dominant class response to these developing contradictions and tendencies.[50] The question is where to go from here?

In the first place, the labour process is the major case of collectivisation under the capitalist mode of production, of an example where producers are united with the potential of taking decisions in common. However, this is in direct contradiction to the authoritarianism of the valorisation aspect of this same process.[51] For this very reason, such collectivisation may have to be abolished to establish communism, just as guild production had to be eliminated as capitalism developed in agriculture and in the free port areas. In the second place, domestic labour is the only case of productive activity from which surplus labour is not extracted. But the nuclear family, as the support for the sale of labour power, is specific to

[48] As 'alternative technologies' are being increasingly coopted to capitalist production, certain ecology groups are becoming more aware of the larger social context. See, for example, Athanasiou (1977), the continuing debate in the English magasine, *Undercurrents*, and Spence (1982). For a detailed critique of the very heterogeneous ecologist movement, see Bernardo (1979).

[49] Albert and Hahnel (1978) attempt an integrated analysis of the multiple factors at work in advanced capitalist society. However, because they have no concept of determination, but only a hodgepodge of elements, and because their basic unit of analysis is the individual, so that responsibility for change must lie there and not on the collectivity and class struggle, their approach to capitalism can only be called liberal marxism.

[50] For one vivid illustration of this capitalist response, see Ahsan (1981).

[51] See Lipietz (1979a, pp. 352–366) and Sohn-Rethel (1972).

capitalism and must be abolished.[52] It is important to note that, in a certain sense, that part of domestic labour performed by the state is also collectivised. Social security measures, won by working class struggle, provide a collective protection against the anarchy of capitalist production, albeit now completely out of the control of that class. Over-riding the two are the relations of production: sale of labour power linked to commodity production and exchange. The three aspects of the fundamental contradiction can only be abolished by their synthesis, whereby commodities disappear, including labour power, collective decisions are made, and all productive activity becomes non-exploitatively so.[53] One fundamental link missing in this solution is how different types of incommensurable concrete labour can come to be compared and hence allocated in such a society. Such a link must come, not as an intellectual blueprint, but through continuing social practice. However, even the embryo of that link and of the synthesis is as yet difficult to perceive in capitalist society.

What are urgently required, at the conceptual level, are concrete studies of the development of workers' organisations in struggle,[54] of the rare cases when the social relations within working class struggles have begun to be transformed into relations of production, and of the relations between technology and representations of ideology, such as art.[55] These should provide some clues to such a synthesis.

Associated with any such solution must be an abolition of the capitalist separation among the different moments of practice. Under capitalism, intellectual abstraction arises from two sources: the production of commodities for unknown use and the control of the production process.[56] Conception must be reunited with perception and participation in changing reality. This does not mean an abolition of the division of labour, although it will radically change, but of social classes. Neither does it mean that abstract, theoretical thought will disappear, because a specificity of human beings is to have language and a history. Once acquired, such knowledge can be passed on through the generations. Direct producers are collectivised, but no longer in opposition to dominant classes. Their knowledge becomes common knowledge. One aspect of this must be the disappearance of the school, not in Illich's sense, where it is turned into (petty) commodity production, but by the integration of education with productive activity.[57] The ideology of individualism and equality must also disappear, so that individual differences,

[52] In contrast, as described by Molyneux (1981), progress in the situation of women in Comecon countries has taken primarily capitalist forms: female wage labour, stability of the nuclear family, formal education, and so on.

[53] A pioneer work on this is Bernardo (1975, esp. pp. 67–108).

[54] As, for example, Cherki and Wieviorka (1975), Collonges and Randal (1976), Leitao et al (1978), and Moises and Stolcke (1980).

[55] See, especially, the works of Williams (for example, 1973b) on literature.

[56] Sohn-Rethel (1978) is important in this respect.

[57] See Pannekoek (1982, I, p. 101). I, thus, disagree fundamentally with the perspective which Gramsci (1971, pp. 26–43) takes on the school. See also Entwistle (1979) and Lombardi (1971).

including sex differences, are highlighted and developed, but no longer as a means of oppression.

I cannot here begin to undertake an analysis of ideology and hegemony generated by the contradictions of capitalism. That must be the subject of further work. The present book can only be seen as a prelude to such a study, as the foundations for it, in so much as, roughly speaking, an understanding of how people's time and activity is controlled must precede an understanding of how their thoughts are formed. *The work that must be done is to resolve these contradictions in practice.*

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