

# The “Fragment on Machines”

Karl Marx

**The labour process. – Fixed capital. Means of labour. Machine. – Fixed capital. Transposition of powers of labour into powers of capital both in fixed and in circulating capital. – To what extent fixed capital (machine) creates value. – Lauderdale. Machine presupposes a mass of workers.**

Capital which consumes itself in the production process, or fixed capital, is the *means of production* in the strict sense. In a broader sense the entire production process and each of its moments, such as circulation – as regards its material side – is only a means of production for capital, for which value alone is the end in itself. Regarded as a physical substance, the raw material itself is a means of production for the product etc.

But the determination that the use value of fixed capital is that which eats itself up in the production process is identical to the proposition that it is used in this process only as a means, and itself exists merely as an agency for the transformation of the raw material into the product. As such a means of production, its use value can be that it is merely the technological condition for the occurrence of the process (the site where the production process proceeds), as with buildings etc., or that it is a direct condition of the action of the means of production proper, like all *matières instrumentales*. Both are in turn only the material presuppositions for the production process generally, or for the employment and maintenance of the means of labour. The latter, however, in the proper sense, serves only within production and for production, and has no other use value.

Originally, when we examined the development of value into capital, the labour process was simply included within capital, and, as regards its physical conditions, its material presence, capital appeared as the totality of the conditions of this process,

and correspondingly sorted itself out into certain qualitatively different parts, *material of labour* (this, not raw material, is the correct expression of the concept), *means of labour* and *living labour*. On one side, capital was divided into these three elements in accordance with its material composition; on the other, the *labour process* (or the merging of these elements into each other within the process) was their moving unity, the product their static unity. In this form, the material elements – material of labour, means of labour and living labour – appeared merely as the essential moments of the labour process itself, which capital appropriates. But this material side – or, its character as use value and as real process – did not at all coincide with its formal side. In the latter,

(1) the three elements in which it appears before the exchange with labour capacity, before the real process, appeared merely as quantitatively different portions of itself, as quantities of value of which it, itself, as sum, forms the unity. The physical form, the use value, in which these different portions existed did not in any way alter their formal identity from this side. As far as

their formal side was concerned, they appeared only as quantitative subdivisions of capital;

(2) within the process itself, as regards the form, the elements of labour and the two others were distinct only in so far as the latter were specified as constant values, and the former as value-positing. But as far as their distinctness as use values, their material side was concerned, this fell entirely outside the capital's specific character as form. Now, however, with the distinction between circulating capital (raw material and product) and *fixed capital* (means of labour), the distinctness of the elements as use values is posited simultaneously as a distinction within capital as capital, on its formal side. The relation between the factors, which had been merely quantitative, now appears as a qualitative division within capital itself, and as a determinant of its total movement (turnover). Likewise, the material of labour and the product of labour, this neutral precipitate of the labour process, are already, as *raw material* and *product*, materially specified no longer as

material and product of labour, but rather as the use value of capital itself in different phases.

As long as the means of labour remains a means of labour in the proper sense of the term, such as it is directly, historically, adopted by capital and included in its realization process, it undergoes a merely formal modification, by appearing now as a means of labour not only in regard to its material side, but also at the same time as a particular mode of the presence of capital, determined by its total process – as *fixed capital*. But, once adopted into the production process of capital, the means of labour passes through different metamorphoses, whose culmination is the *machine*, or rather, an *automatic system of machinery* (system of machinery: the *automatic* one is merely its most complete, most adequate form, and alone transforms machinery into a system), set in motion by an automaton, a moving power that moves itself; this automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages. In the machine, and even more in

machinery as an automatic system, the use value, i.e. the material quality of the means of labour, is transformed into an existence adequate to fixed capital and to capital as such; and the form in which it was adopted into the production process of capital, the direct means of labour, is superseded by a form posited by capital itself and corresponding to it. In no way does the machine appear as the individual worker's means of labour. Its distinguishing characteristic is not in the least, as with the means of labour, to transmit the worker's activity to the object; this activity, rather, is posited in such a way that it merely transmits the machine's work, the machine's action, on to the raw material – supervises it and guards against interruptions. Not as with the instrument, which the worker animates and makes into his organ with his skill and strength, and whose handling therefore depends on his virtuosity. Rather, it is the machine which possesses skill and strength in place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it; and it consumes coal, oil etc. (*matières instrumentales*), just as the worker consumes food, to

keep up its perpetual motion. The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery, and not the opposite. The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts upon him through the machine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself. The appropriation of living labour by objectified labour – of the power or activity which creates value by value existing for-itself – which lies in the concept of capital, is posited, in production resting on machinery, as the character of the production process itself, including its material elements and its material motion. The production process has ceased to be a labour process in the sense of a process dominated by labour as its governing unity. Labour appears, rather, merely as a conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers at numerous points of the mechanical system; subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself, as itself only a link of the system, whose unity

exists not in the living workers, but rather in the living (active) machinery, which confronts his individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism. In machinery, objectified labour confronts living labour within the labour process itself as the power which rules it; a power which, as the appropriation of living labour, is the form of capital. The transformation of the means of labour into machinery, and of living labour into a mere living accessory of this machinery, as the means of its action, also posits the absorption of the labour process in its material character as a mere moment of the realization process of capital. The increase of the productive force of labour and the greatest possible negation of necessary labour is the necessary tendency of capital, as we have seen. The transformation of the means of labour into machinery is the realization of this tendency. In machinery, objectified labour materially confronts living labour as a ruling power and as an active subsumption of the latter under itself, not only by appropriating it, but in the real production process itself; the relation of capital as value which appropriates value-creating activity is, in fixed capital existing



as machinery, posited at the same time as the relation of the use value of capital to the use value of labour capacity; further, the value objectified in machinery appears as a presupposition against which the value-creating power of the individual labour capacity is an infinitesimal, vanishing magnitude; the production in enormous mass quantities which is posited with machinery destroys every connection of the product with the direct need of the producer, and hence with direct use value; it is already posited in the form of the product's production and in the relations in which it is produced that it is produced only as a conveyor of value, and its use value only as condition to that end. In machinery, objectified labour itself appears not only in the form of product or of the product employed as means of labour, but in the form of the force of production itself. The development of the means of labour into machinery is not an accidental moment of capital, but is rather the historical reshaping of the traditional, inherited means of labour into a form adequate to capital. The accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain, is

thus absorbed into capital, as opposed to labour, and hence appears as an attribute of capital, and more specifically of fixed capital, in so far as it enters into the production process as a means of production proper. *Machinery* appears, then, as the most adequate form of *fixed capital*, and fixed capital, in so far as capital's relations with itself are concerned, appears as the *most adequate form of capital* as such. In another respect, however, in so far as fixed capital is condemned to an existence within the confines of a specific use value, it does not correspond to the concept of capital, which, as value, is indifferent to every specific form of use value, and can adopt or shed any of them as equivalent incarnations. In this respect, as regards capital's external relations, it is *circulating capital* which appears as the adequate form of capital, and not fixed capital.

Further, in so far as machinery develops with the accumulation of society's science, of productive force generally, general social labour presents itself not in labour but in capital. The productive force of society is measured in *fixed capital*, exists there in its objective form; and, inversely, the productive

force of capital grows with this general progress, which capital appropriates free of charge. This is not the place to go into the development of machinery in detail; rather only in its general aspect; in so far as the *means of labour*, as a physical thing, loses its direct form, becomes *fixed capital*, and confronts the worker physically as *capital*. In machinery, knowledge appears as alien, external to him; and living labour [as] subsumed under self-activating objectified labour. The worker appears as superfluous to the extent that his action is not determined by [capital's] requirements.

The full development of capital, therefore, takes place – or capital has posited the mode of production corresponding to it – only when the means of labour has not only taken the economic form of *fixed capital*, but has also been suspended in its immediate form, and when *fixed capital* appears as a machine within the production process, opposite labour; and the entire production process appears as not subsumed under the direct skillfulness of the worker, but rather as the technological application of science. [It is,] hence, the tendency

of capital to give production a scientific character; direct labour [is] reduced to a mere moment of this process. As with the transformation of value into capital, so does it appear in the further development of capital, that it presupposes a certain given historical development of the productive forces on one side – science too [is] among these productive forces – and, on the other, drives and forces them further onwards.

Thus the quantitative extent and the effectiveness (intensity) to which capital is developed as fixed capital indicate the general degree to which capital is developed as capital, as power over living labour, and to which it has conquered the production process as such. Also, in the sense that it expresses the accumulation of objectified productive forces, and likewise of objectified labour. However, while capital gives itself its adequate form as use value within the production process only in the form of machinery and other material manifestations of fixed capital, such as railways etc. (to which we shall return later), this in no way means that this use value – machinery as such – is capital, or that its existence as machinery is identical

with its existence as capital; any more than gold would cease to have use value as gold if it were no longer *money*. Machinery does not lose its use value as soon as it ceases to be capital. While machinery is the most appropriate form of the use value of fixed capital, it does not at all follow that therefore subsumption under the social relation of capital is the most appropriate and ultimate social relation of production for the application of machinery.

To the degree that labour time – the mere quantity of labour – is posited by capital as the sole determinant element, to that degree does direct labour and its quantity disappear as the determinant principle of production – of the creation of use values – and is reduced both quantitatively, to a smaller proportion, and qualitatively, as an, of course, indispensable but subordinate moment, compared to general scientific labour, technological application of natural sciences, on one side, and to the general productive force arising from social combination [*Gliederung*] in total production on the other side – a combination which appears as a natural fruit of social labour

(although it is a historic product). Capital thus works towards its own dissolution as the form dominating production.

While, then, in one respect the transformation of the production process from the simple labour process into a scientific process, which subjugates the forces of nature and compels them to work in the service of human needs, appears as a quality of *fixed capital* in contrast to living labour; while individual labour as such has ceased altogether to appear as productive, is productive, rather, only in these common labours which subordinate the forces of nature to themselves, and while this elevation of direct labour into social labour appears as a reduction of individual labour to the level of helplessness in face of the communality [*Gemeinsamkeit*] represented by and concentrated in capital; so does it now appear, in another respect, as a quality of *circulating capital*, to maintain labour in one branch of production by means of *coexisting labour* in another. In small-scale circulation, capital advances the worker the wages which the latter exchanges for products necessary for his consumption. The money he obtains has this power only

because others are working alongside him at the same time; and capital can give him claims on alien labour, in the form of money, only because it has appropriated his own labour. This exchange of one's own labour with alien labour appears here not as mediated and determined by the simultaneous existence of the labour of others, but rather by the advance which capital makes. The worker's ability to engage in the exchange of substances necessary for his consumption during production appears as due to an attribute of the part of circulating capital which is paid to the worker, and of *circulating capital* generally. It appears not as an exchange of substances between the simultaneous labour powers, but as the metabolism [*Stoffwechsel*] of capital; as the existence of circulating capital. Thus all powers of labour are transposed into powers of capital; the productive power of labour into fixed capital (posited as external to labour and as existing independently of it (as object [*sachlich*])); and, in circulating capital, the fact that the worker himself has created the conditions for the repetition of his labour, and that the exchange of this, his labour, is mediated by

the co-existing labour of others, appears in such a way that capital gives him an advance and posits the simultaneity of the branches of labour. (These last two aspects actually belong to accumulation.) Capital in the form of circulating capital posits itself as mediator between the different workers.

*Fixed capital*, in its character as means of production, whose most adequate form [is] machinery, produces value, i.e. increases the value of the product, in only two respects: (1) in so far as it *has* value; i.e. is itself the product of labour, a certain quantity of labour in objectified form; (2) in so far as it increases the relation of surplus labour to necessary labour, by enabling labour, through an increase of its productive power, to create a greater mass of the products required for the maintenance of living labour capacity in a shorter time. It is therefore a highly absurd bourgeois assertion that the worker shares with the capitalist, because the latter, with fixed capital (which is, as far as that goes, itself a product of labour, and of *alien* labour merely appropriated by capital) makes labour easier for him (rather, he robs it of all independence and



attractive character, by means of the machine), or makes his labour shorter. Capital employs machinery, rather, only to the extent that it enables the worker to work a larger part of his time for capital, to relate to a larger part of his time as time which does not belong to him, to work longer for another. Through this process, the amount of labour necessary for the production of a given object is indeed reduced to a minimum, but only in order to realize a maximum of labour in the maximum number of such objects. The first aspect is important, because capital here – quite unintentionally – reduces human labour, expenditure of energy, to a minimum. This will redound to the benefit of emancipated labour, and is the condition of its emancipation. From what has been said, it is clear how absurd Lauderdale is when he wants to make fixed capital into an independent source of value, independent of labour time. It is such a source only in so far as it is itself objectified labour time, and in so far as it posits surplus labour time. The employment of machinery itself historically presupposes – see above, Ravenstone – superfluous hands. Machinery inserts itself to replace labour

only where there is an overflow of labour powers. Only in the imagination of economists does it leap to the aid of the individual worker. It can be effective only with masses of workers, whose concentration relative to capital is one of its historic presuppositions, as we have seen. It enters not in order to replace labour power where this is lacking, but rather in order to reduce massively available labour power to its necessary measure. Machinery enters only where labour capacity is on hand in masses. (Return to this.)

Lauderdale believes himself to have made the great discovery that machinery does not increase the productive power of labour, because it rather replaces the latter, or does what labour cannot do with its own power. It belongs to the concept of capital that the increased productive force of labour is posited rather as the increase of a force [*Kraft*] outside itself, and as labour's own debilitation [*Entkräftung*]. The hand tool makes the worker independent – posits him as proprietor. Machinery – as fixed capital - - posits him as dependent, posits him as appropriated. This effect of machinery holds only in so

far as it is cast into the role of fixed capital, and this it is only because the worker relates to it as wage-worker, and the active individual generally, as mere worker.

Fixed capital and circulating capital as two particular kinds of capital. Fixed capital and continuity of the production process. – Machinery and living labour. (Business of inventing) While, up to now, fixed capital and circulating capital appeared merely as different passing aspects of capital, they have now hardened into two particular modes of its existence, and fixed capital appears separately alongside circulating capital. They are now two particular kinds of capital. In so far as a capital is examined in a particular branch of production, it appears as divided into these two portions, or splits into these two kinds of capital in certain p[ro]portions.

The division within the production process, originally between means of labour and material of labour, and finally product of labour, now appears as circulating capital (the last two) and fixed capital [the first]. The split within capital as

regards its merely physical aspect has now entered into its form itself, and appears as differentiating it.

From a viewpoint such as Lauderdale's etc., who would like to have capital as such, separately from labour, create *value* and hence also surplus value (or profit), fixed capital – namely that whose physical presence or use value is machinery – is the form which gives their superficial fallacies still the greatest semblance of validity. The answer to them, e.g. in *Labour Defended*, [is] that the road-builder may share [profits] with the road-user, but the 'road' itself cannot do so' (Hodgskin, p. 16).

Circulating capital – presupposing that it really passes through its different phases – brings about the decrease or increase, the brevity or length of circulation time, the easier or more troublesome completion of the different stages of circulation, a decrease of the surplus value which could be created in a given period of time without these interruptions – either *because the number of reproductions grows smaller, or*

because the quantity of *capital continuously engaged in the production process* is reduced. In both cases this is not a reduction of the initial value, but rather a reduction of the rate of its growth. From the moment, however, when fixed capital has developed to a certain extent – and this extent, as we indicated, is the measure of the development of large industry generally – hence fixed capital increases in proportion to the development of large industry's productive forces – it is itself the objectification of these productive forces, as presupposed product – from this instant on, every interruption of the production process acts as a direct reduction of capital itself, of its initial value. The value of fixed capital is reproduced only in so far as it is used up in the production process. Through disuse it loses its use value without its value passing on to the product. Hence, the greater the scale on which fixed capital develops, in the sense in which we regard it here, the more does *the continuity of the production process* or the constant flow of reproduction become an externally compelling condition for the mode of production founded on capital.

In machinery, the appropriation of living labour by capital achieves a direct reality in this respect as well: It is, firstly, the analysis and application of mechanical and chemical laws, arising directly out of science, which enables the machine to perform the same labour as that previously performed by the worker. However, the development of machinery along this path occurs only when large industry has already reached a higher stage, and all the sciences have been pressed into the service of capital; and when, secondly, the available machinery itself already provides great capabilities. Invention then becomes a business, and the application of science to direct production itself becomes a prospect which determines and solicits it. But this is not the road along which machinery, by and large, arose, and even less the road on which it progresses in detail. This road is, rather, dissection [*Analyse*] – through the division of labour, which gradually transforms the workers' operations into more and more mechanical ones, so that at a certain point a mechanism can step into their places. (See *under economy of power*.) Thus, the specific mode of working

here appears directly as becoming transferred from the worker to capital in the form of the machine, and his own labour capacity devalued thereby. Hence the workers' struggle against machinery. What was the living worker's activity becomes the activity of the machine. Thus the appropriation of labour by capital confronts the worker in a coarsely sensuous form; capital absorbs labour into itself – 'as though its body were by love possessed' (Goethe's *Faust*).

**Contradiction between the foundation of bourgeois production (value as measure) and its development. Machines etc.**

The exchange of living labour for objectified labour – i.e. the positing of social labour in the form of the contradiction of capital and wage labour – is the ultimate development of the *value-relation* and of production resting on value. Its presupposition is – and remains – the mass of direct labour

time, the quantity of labour employed, as the determinant factor in the production of wealth. But to the degree that large industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed than on the power of the agencies set in motion during labour time, whose 'powerful effectiveness' is itself in turn out of all proportion to the direct labour time spent on their production, but depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology, or the application of this science to production. (The development of this science, especially natural science, and all others with the latter, is itself in turn related to the development of material production.) Agriculture, e.g., becomes merely the application of the science of material metabolism, its regulation for the greatest advantage of the entire body of society. Real wealth manifests itself, rather – and large industry reveals this – in the monstrous disproportion between the labour time applied, and its product, as well as in the qualitative imbalance between labour, reduced to a pure abstraction, and the power of the production process it superintends. Labour no



longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather, the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator to the production process itself. (What holds for machinery holds likewise for the combination of human activities and the development of human intercourse.) No longer does the worker insert a modified natural thing [*Naturgegenstand*] as middle link between the object [*Objekt*] and himself; rather, he inserts the process of nature, transformed into an industrial process, as a means between himself and inorganic nature, mastering it. He steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor. In this transformation, it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body – it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth. The *theft of alien labour time, on which the present wealth is based*, appears a

miserable foundation in face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself. As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The *surplus labour of the mass* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of the few*, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time so as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them. Capital itself is the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole

measure and source of wealth. Hence it diminishes labour time in the necessary form so as to increase it in the superfluous form; hence posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition – question of life or death – for the necessary. On the one side, then, it calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value. Forces of production and social relations – two different sides of the development of the social individual – appear to capital as mere means, and are merely means for it to produce on its limited foundation. In fact, however, they are the material conditions to blow this foundation sky-high. ‘Truly wealthy a nation, when the working day is 6 rather than 12 hours. *Wealth* is not command over surplus labour time’ (real wealth), ‘but rather, *disposable time* outside that needed in direct production, for every

*individual and the whole society.*' (*The Source and Remedy* etc. 1821, p. 6.)

Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are *organs of the human brain, created by the human hand*; the power of knowledge, objectified. The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production*, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it. To what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also as immediate organs of social practice, of the real life process.

**Significance of the development of fixed capital (for the development of capital generally). Relation between the creation of fixed capital and circulating capital. Disposable time. To create it, chief role of capital. Contradictory form of the same in capital. – Productivity of labour and production of fixed capital. (The Source and Remedy.) – Use and consume: Economist. Durability of fixed capital.**

*The development of fixed capital indicates in still another respect the degree of development of wealth generally, or of capital. The aim of production oriented directly towards use value, as well as of that directly oriented towards exchange value, is the product itself, destined for consumption. The part of production which is oriented towards the production of fixed capital does not produce direct objects of individual gratification, nor direct exchange values; at least not directly realizable exchange values. Hence, only when a certain degree of productivity has already been reached – so that a part of*

*production time is sufficient for immediate production – can an increasingly large part be applied to the production of the means of production.* This requires that society be able to wait; that a large part of the wealth already created can be withdrawn both from immediate consumption and from production for immediate consumption, in order to employ this part for labour which is *not immediately productive* (within the material production process itself). This requires a certain level of productivity and of relative overabundance, and, more specifically, a level directly related to the transformation of circulating capital into fixed capital. As the *magnitude of relative surplus labour depends on the productivity of necessary labour*, so does the *magnitude of labour time* – living as well as objectified – *employed on the production of fixed capital depend on the productivity of the labour time spent in the direct production of products.* *Surplus population* (from this standpoint), as well as *surplus production*, is a condition for this. That is; the output of the time employed in direct production must be larger, relatively, than is directly required for the

reproduction of the capital employed in these branches of industry. The *smaller* the direct fruits borne by *fixed capital*, the less it intervenes in the *direct production process*, the greater must be this *relative surplus population and surplus production*; thus, more to build railways, canals, aqueducts, telegraphs etc. than to build the machinery directly active in the direct production process. Hence – a subject to which we will return later – in the constant under- and overproduction of modern industry – constant fluctuations and convulsions arise from the disproportion, when sometimes too little, then again too much circulating capital is transformed into fixed capital.

*The creation of a large quantity of disposable time* apart from necessary labour time for society generally and each of its members (i.e. room for the development of the individuals' full productive forces, hence those of society also), this creation of not-labour time appears in the stage of capital, as of all earlier ones, as not-labour time, free time, for a few. What capital adds is that it increases the surplus labour time of the mass by all the means of art and science, because its wealth consists directly

in the appropriation of surplus labour time; since *value directly its purpose*, not use value. It is thus, despite itself, instrumental in creating the means of social disposable time, in order to reduce labour time for the whole society to a diminishing minimum, and thus to free everyone's time for their own development. But its tendency always, on the one side, *to create disposable time, on the other, to convert it into surplus labour*. If it succeeds too well at the first, then it suffers from surplus production, and then necessary labour is interrupted, because *no surplus labour can be realized by capital*. The more this contradiction develops, the more does it become evident that the growth of the forces of production can no longer be bound up with the appropriation of alien labour, but that the mass of workers must themselves appropriate their own surplus labour. Once they have done so – and disposable time thereby ceases to have an *antithetical* existence – then, on one side, necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other, the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that, even



though production is now calculated for the wealth of all, disposable time will grow for all. For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. The measure of wealth is then not any longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time. *Labour time as the measure of value posits* wealth itself as founded on poverty, and disposable time as existing *in and because of the antithesis to surplus labour time*; or, the positing of an individual's entire time as labour time, and his degradation therefore to mere worker, subsumption under labour. *The most developed machinery thus forces the worker to work longer than the savage does, or than he himself did with the simplest, crudest tools.*

'If the entire labour of a country were sufficient only to raise the support of the whole population, there would be no surplus labour, consequently nothing that could be allowed to accumulate as capital. If in one year the people raises enough for the support of two years, one year's consumption must perish, or for one year men must cease from productive labour. But the possessors of [the] surplus produce or capital... employ

people upon something not directly and immediately productive, e.g. in the erection of machinery. So it goes on.' (*The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties*, p. 4.) As the basis on which large industry rests, the appropriation of alien labour time, ceases, with its development, to make up or to create wealth, so does direct labour as such cease to be the basis of production, since, in one respect, it is transformed more into a supervisory and regulatory activity; but then also because the product ceases to be the product of isolated *direct labour*, and the *combination* of social activity appears, rather, as the producer. 'As soon as the division of labour is developed, almost every piece of work done by a single individual is a part of a whole, *having no value or utility of itself*. *There is nothing on which the labourer can seize: this is my produce, this I will keep to myself.*' (*Labour Defended*, p. 25, 1, 2, XI.) In direct exchange, individual direct labour appears as realized in a particular product or part of the product, and its communal, social character – its character as objectification of general labour and satisfaction of the general need – as posited

through exchange alone. In the production process of large-scale industry, by contrast, just as the conquest of the forces of nature by the social intellect is the precondition of the productive power of the means of labour as developed into the automatic process, on one side, so, on the other, is *the labour of the individual in its direct presence posited as suspended individual, i.e. as social, labour. Thus the other basis of this mode of production falls away.*

The labour time employed in the production of fixed capital relates to that employed in the production of circulating capital, within the production process of capital itself, as does *surplus labour time to necessary labour time*. To the degree that production aimed at the satisfaction of immediate need becomes more productive, a greater part of production can be directed towards the need of production itself, or the production of means of production. In so far as the production of *fixed capital*, even in its physical aspect, is directed immediately not towards the production of direct use values, or towards the production of values required for the direct reproduction of

capital – i.e. those which themselves in turn represent use value in the value-creation process – but rather towards the production of the means of value creation, that is, not towards value as an immediate object, but rather towards value creation, towards the means of realization, as an immediate object of production – the production of value posited physically in the object of production itself, as the aim of production, the objectification of productive force, the value-producing power of capital – to that extent, it is in the production of *fixed capital that capital posits itself as end-in-itself* and appears active as capital, *to a higher power than it does in the production of circulating capital*. Hence, in this respect as well, the dimension already possessed by fixed capital, which its production occupies within total production, is the measuring rod of *the development* of wealth founded on the mode of production of capital.

‘The number of workers depends as much on *circulating capital* as it depends on the quantity of *products of co-existing labour*, which labourers are allowed to consume.’ (*Labour*

*Defended*, p. 20.) In all the excerpts cited above from various economists fixed capital is regarded as the part of capital which is locked into the production process. 'Floating capital is consumed; fixed capital is merely used in the great process of production.' (*Economist*, VI, 1.) 4 This wrong, and holds only for the part of circulating capital which is itself consumed by the fixed capital, the I. The only thing consumed 'in the great process of production', if this means the immediate production process, is fixed capital. Consumption within the production process is, however, in fact *use, wearing-out*. Furthermore, the *greater durability of fixed capital* must not be conceived as a purely physical quality. The iron and the wood which make up the bed I sleep in, or the stones making up the house I live in, or the marble statue which decorates a palace, are just as durable as iron and wood etc. used for machinery. But *durability* is a condition for the instrument, the means of production, not only on the technical ground that metals etc. are the chief material of all machinery, but rather because the instrument is destined to play the same role constantly in

repeated processes of production. Its durability as means of production is a required quality of its use value. The more often it must be replaced, the costlier it is; the larger the part of capital which would have to be spent on it uselessly. Its durability is its existence as means of production. Its duration is an increase of its productive force. With circulating capital, by contrast, in so far as it is not transformed into fixed capital, durability is in no way connected with the act of production itself and is therefore not a conceptually posited moment. The fact that among the articles thrown into the consumption fund there are some which are in turn characterized as *fixed capital* because they are consumed slowly, and can be consumed by many individuals in series, is connected with further determinations (renting rather than buying, interest etc.) with which we are not yet here concerned.

‘Since the general introduction of soulless mechanism in British manufactures, people have with rare exceptions been treated as a secondary and subordinate machine, and far more attention has been given to the perfection of the raw materials

of wood and metals than to those of body and spirit.' (p. 31. Robert Owen: *Essays on the Formation of the Human Character*, 1840, London.)

**Real saving – economy – = saving of labour time = development of productive force. Suspension of the contradiction between free time and labour time. – True conception of the process of social production.**

Real economy – saving – consists of the saving of labour time (minimum (and minimization) of production costs); but this saving identical with development of the productive force. Hence in no way *abstinence from consumption*, but rather the development of power, of capabilities of production, and hence both of the capabilities as well as the means of consumption. The capability to consume is a condition of consumption, hence its primary means, and this capability is the development of an individual potential, a force of production. 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. From the standpoint of the direct production process it can be regarded as the production of *fixed capital*, this fixed capital being man himself. It goes without saying, by the way, that direct labour time itself cannot remain in the abstract antithesis to free time in which it appears from the perspective of bourgeois economy. Labour cannot become play, as Fourier would like, although it remains his great contribution to have expressed the suspension not of distribution, but of the mode of production itself, in a higher form, as the ultimate object. Free time – which is both idle time and time for higher activity – has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and, at the same time, practice [*Ausübung*], experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the



human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society. For both, in so far as labour requires practical use of the hands and free bodily movement, as in agriculture, at the same time exercise. As the system of bourgeois economy has developed for us only by degrees, so too its negation, which is its ultimate result. We are still concerned now with the direct production process. When we consider bourgeois society in the long view and as a whole, then the final result of the process of social production always appears as the society itself, i.e. the human being itself in its social relations. Everything that has a fixed form, such as the product etc., appears as merely a moment, a vanishing moment, in this movement. The direct production process itself here appears only as a moment. The conditions and objectifications of the process are themselves equally moments of it, and its only subjects are the individuals, but individuals in mutual relationships, which they equally reproduce and produce anew. The constant process of their own movement, in

which they renew themselves even as they renew the world of wealth they create.

*Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Penguin/New Left Review, 1973), pp. 690-712

Translation: Martin Nicolaus