

Chapter One: Commodities

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SECTION 1

THE TWO FACTORS OF A COMMODITY: USE-VALUE AND VALUE (THE SUBSTANCE OF VALUE AND THE MAGNITUDE OF VALUE)

The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as “an immense accumulation of commodities,”^[1] its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.

A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference.^[2] Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production.

Every useful thing, as iron, paper, &c., may be looked at from the two points of view of quality and quantity. It is an assemblage of many properties, and may therefore be of use in various ways. To discover the various uses of things is the work of history.^[3] So also is the establishment of socially-recognized standards of measure for the quantities of these useful objects. The diversity of these measures has its origin partly in the diverse nature of the objects to be measured, partly in convention.

The utility of a thing makes it a use value.^[4] But this utility is not a thing of air. Being limited by the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from that commodity. A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use value, something useful. This property of a commodity is independent of the amount of labour required to appropriate its useful qualities. When treating of use value, we always assume to be dealing with definite quantities, such as dozens of watches, yards of linen, or tons of iron. The use values of commodities furnish the material for a special study, that of the commercial knowledge of commodities.^[5] Use values become a reality only by use or consumption: they also constitute the substance of all wealth, whatever may be the social form of that wealth. In the form of society we are about to consider, they are, in addition, the material depositories of

exchange value.

Exchange value, at first sight, presents itself as a quantitative relation, as the proportion in which values in use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort,^[6] a relation constantly changing with time and place. Hence exchange value appears to be something accidental and purely relative, and consequently an intrinsic value, *i.e.*, an exchange value that is inseparably connected with, inherent in commodities, seems a contradiction in terms.^[7] Let us consider the matter a little more closely.

A given commodity, *e.g.*, a quarter of wheat is exchanged for x blacking, y silk, or z gold, &c. – in short, for other commodities in the most different proportions. Instead of one exchange value, the wheat has, therefore, a great many. But since x blacking, y silk, or z gold &c., each represents the exchange value of one quarter of wheat, x blacking, y silk, z gold, &c., must, as exchange values, be replaceable by each other, or equal to each other. Therefore, first: the valid exchange values of a given commodity express something equal; secondly, exchange value, generally, is only the mode of expression, the phenomenal form, of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it.

Let us take two commodities, *e.g.*, corn and iron. The proportions in which they are exchangeable, whatever those proportions may be, can always be represented by an equation in which a given quantity of corn is equated to some quantity of iron: *e.g.*, 1 quarter corn = x cwt. iron. What does this equation tell us? It tells us that in two different things – in 1 quarter of corn and x cwt. of iron, there exists in equal quantities something common to both. The two things must therefore be equal to a third, which in itself is neither the one nor the other. Each of them, so far as it is exchange value, must therefore be reducible to this third.

A simple geometrical illustration will make this clear. In order to calculate and compare the areas of rectilinear figures, we decompose them into triangles. But the area of the triangle itself is expressed by something totally different from its visible figure, namely, by half the product of the base multiplied by the altitude. In the same way the exchange values of commodities must be capable of being expressed in terms of something common to them all, of which thing they represent a greater or less quantity.

This common “something” cannot be either a geometrical, a chemical, or any other natural property of commodities. Such properties claim our attention only in so far as they affect the utility of those commodities, make them use values. But the exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterised by a total abstraction from use value. Then one use value is just as good as another, provided only it be present in sufficient quantity. Or, as old Barbon says,

“one sort of wares are as good as another, if the values be equal. There is no difference or distinction in things of equal value ... An hundred pounds’ worth of lead or iron, is of as great value as one hundred pounds’ worth of silver or gold.”^[8]

As use values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use value.

If then we leave out of consideration the use value of commodities, they have only one common property left, that of being products of labour. But even the product of labour itself has undergone a change in our hands. If we make abstraction from its use value, we make abstraction at the same time from the material elements and shapes that make the product a use value; we see in it no longer a table, a house, yarn, or any other useful thing. Its existence as a material thing is put out of sight. Neither can it any longer be regarded as the product of the labour of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or of any other definite kind of productive labour. Along with the useful qualities of the products themselves, we put out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labour embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labour; there is nothing left but what is common to them all; all are reduced to one and the same sort of labour, human labour in the abstract.

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

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

A use value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it. How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? Plainly, by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article. The quantity of labour, however, is measured by its duration, and labour time in its turn finds its standard in weeks, days, and hours.

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 labourer, the more valuable would his commodity be, because more time would be required in its production. The labour, however, that forms the substance of value, is homogeneous human labour, expenditure of one uniform labour power. The total labour power of society, which is embodied in the sum total of the

values of all commodities produced by that society, counts here as one homogeneous mass of human labour power, composed though it be of innumerable individual units. Each of these units is the same as any other, so far as it has the character of the average labour power of society, and takes effect as such; that is, so far as it requires for producing a commodity, no more time than is needed on an average, no more than is socially necessary. The labour time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with 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 half an hour's social labour, and consequently fell to one-half its former value.

We see then that that which determines the magnitude of the value of any article is the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour time socially necessary for its production.^[9] Each individual commodity, in this connexion, is to be considered as an average sample of its class.^[10] Commodities, therefore, in which equal quantities of labour are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value. The value of one commodity is to the value of any other, as the labour time necessary for the production of the one is to that necessary for the production of the other. "As values, all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labour time."^[11]

The value of a commodity would therefore remain constant, if the labour time required for its production also remained constant. But the latter changes with every variation in the productiveness of labour. This productiveness is determined by various circumstances, amongst others, by the average amount of skill of the workmen, the state of science, and the degree of its practical application, the social organisation of production, the extent and capabilities of the means of production, and by physical conditions. For example, the same amount of labour in favourable seasons is embodied in 8 bushels of corn, and in unfavourable, only in four. The same labour extracts from rich mines more metal than from poor mines. Diamonds are of very rare occurrence on the earth's surface, and hence their discovery costs, on an average, a great deal of labour time. Consequently much labour is represented in a small compass. Jacob doubts whether gold has ever been paid for at its full value. This applies still more to diamonds. According to Eschwege, the total produce of the Brazilian diamond mines for the eighty years, ending in 1823, had not realised the price of one-and-a-half years' average produce of the sugar and coffee plantations of the same country, although the diamonds cost much more labour, and therefore represented more value. With richer mines, the same quantity of labour would embody itself in more diamonds, and their value would fall. If we could succeed at a small expenditure of labour, in converting carbon into diamonds, their value might fall below that of bricks. In general, the greater the productiveness of labour, the less is the labour time required for the production of an article, the less is the amount of labour crystallised in that article, and the less is its value; and

vice versa, the less the productiveness of labour, the greater is the labour time required for the production of an article, and the greater is its value. The value of a commodity, therefore, varies directly as the quantity, and inversely as the productiveness, of the labour incorporated in it. [\[A\]](#)

A thing can be a use value, without having value. This is the case whenever its utility to man is not due to labour. Such are air, virgin soil, natural meadows, &c. A thing can be useful, and the product of human labour, without being a commodity. 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. (And not only for others, without more. The mediaeval peasant produced quit-rent-corn for his feudal lord and tithe-corn for his parson. But neither the quit-rent-corn nor the tithe-corn became commodities by reason of the fact that they had been produced for others. To become a commodity a product must be transferred to another, whom it will serve as a use value, by means of an exchange.)^[12] Lastly nothing can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value.

SECTION 2

THE TWOFOLD CHARACTER OF THE LABOUR EMBODIED IN COMMODITIES

At first sight a commodity presented itself to us as a complex of two things – use value and exchange value. Later on, we saw also that labour, too, possesses the same twofold nature; for, so far as it finds expression in value, it does not possess the same characteristics that belong to it as a creator of use values. I was the first to point out and to examine critically this twofold nature of the labour contained in commodities. As this point is the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy turns, we must go more into detail.

Let us take two commodities such as a coat and 10 yards of linen, and let the former be double the value of the latter, so that, if 10 yards of linen = W, the coat = 2W.

The coat is a use value that satisfies a particular want. Its existence is the result of a special sort of productive activity, the nature of which is determined by its aim, mode of operation,

subject, means, and result. The labour, whose utility is thus represented by the value in use of its product, or which manifests itself by making its product a use value, we call useful labour. In this connection we consider only its useful effect.

As the coat and the linen are two qualitatively different use values, so also are the two forms of labour that produce them, tailoring and weaving. Were these two objects not qualitatively different, not produced respectively by labour of different quality, they could not stand to each other in the relation of commodities. Coats are not exchanged for coats, one use value is not exchanged for another of the same kind.

To all the different varieties of values in use there correspond as many different kinds of useful labour, classified according to the order, genus, species, and variety to which they belong in the social division of labour. This division of labour is a necessary condition for the production of commodities, but it does not follow, conversely, that the production of commodities is a necessary condition for the division of labour. In the primitive Indian community there is social division of labour, without production of commodities. Or, to take an example nearer home, in every factory the labour is divided according to a system, but this division is not brought about by the operatives mutually exchanging their individual products. Only such products can become commodities with regard to each other, as result from different kinds of labour, each kind being carried on independently and for the account of private individuals.

To resume, then: In the use value of each commodity there is contained useful labour, *i.e.*, productive activity of a definite kind and exercised with a definite aim. Use values cannot confront each other as commodities, unless the useful labour embodied in them is qualitatively different in each of them. In a community, the produce of which in general takes the form of commodities, *i.e.*, in a community of commodity producers, this qualitative difference between the useful forms of labour that are carried on independently by individual producers, each on their own account, develops into a complex system, a social division of labour.

Anyhow, whether the coat be worn by the tailor or by his customer, in either case it operates as a use value. Nor is the relation between the coat and the labour that produced it altered by the circumstance that tailoring may have become a special trade, an independent branch of the social division of labour. Wherever the want of clothing forced them to it, the human race made clothes for thousands of years, without a single man becoming a tailor. But coats and linen, like every other element of material wealth that is not the spontaneous produce of Nature, must invariably owe their existence to a special productive activity, exercised with a definite aim, an activity that appropriates particular nature-given materials to particular human wants. So far therefore as labour is a creator of use value, is useful labour, it is a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and Nature,

and therefore no life.

The use values, coat, linen, &c., *i.e.*, the bodies of commodities, are combinations of two elements – matter and labour. If we take away the useful labour expended upon them, a material substratum is always left, which is furnished by Nature without the help of man. The latter can work only as Nature does, that is by changing the form of matter.^[13] Nay more, in this work of changing the form he is constantly helped by natural forces. We see, then, that labour is not the only source of material wealth, of use values produced by labour. As William Petty puts it, labour is its father and the earth its mother.

Let us now pass from the commodity considered as a use value to the value of commodities.

By our assumption, the coat is worth twice as much as the linen. But this is a mere quantitative difference, which for the present does not concern us. We bear in mind, however, that if the value of the coat is double that of 10 yds of linen, 20 yds of linen must have the same value as one coat. So far as they are values, the coat and the linen are things of a like substance, objective expressions of essentially identical labour. But tailoring and weaving are, qualitatively, different kinds of labour. There are, however, states of society in which one and the same man does tailoring and weaving alternately, in which case these two forms of labour are mere modifications of the labour of the same individual, and not special and fixed functions of different persons, just as the coat which our tailor makes one day, and the trousers which he makes another day, imply only a variation in the labour of one and the same individual. Moreover, we see at a glance that, in our capitalist society, a given portion of human labour is, in accordance with the varying demand, at one time supplied in the form of tailoring, at another in the form of weaving. This change may possibly not take place without friction, but take place it must.

Productive activity, if we leave out of sight its special form, *viz.*, the useful character of the labour, is nothing but the expenditure of human labour power. Tailoring and weaving, though qualitatively different productive activities, are each a productive expenditure of human brains, nerves, and muscles, and in this sense are human labour. They are but two different modes of expending human labour power. Of course, this labour power, which remains the same under all its modifications, must have attained a certain pitch of development before it can be expended in a multiplicity of modes. But the value of a commodity represents human labour in the abstract, the expenditure of human labour in general. And just as in society, a general or a banker plays a great part, but mere man, on the other hand, a very shabby part,^[14] so here with mere human labour. It is the expenditure of simple labour power, *i.e.*, of the labour power which, on an average, apart from any special development, exists in the organism of every ordinary individual. Simple average labour, it is true, varies in character in different countries and at different times, but in a particular society it is given. Skilled labour counts only as simple labour intensified, or rather, as multiplied simple labour, a given quantity of skilled being considered

equal to a greater quantity of simple labour. Experience shows that this reduction is constantly being made. A commodity may be the product of the most skilled labour, but its value, by equating it to the product of simple unskilled labour, represents a definite quantity of the latter labour alone.^[15] 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, appear to be fixed by custom. For simplicity's sake we shall henceforth account every kind of labour to be unskilled, simple labour; by this we do no more than save ourselves the trouble of making the reduction.

Just as, therefore, in viewing the coat and linen as values, we abstract from their different use values, so it is with the labour represented by those values: we disregard the difference between its useful forms, weaving and tailoring. As the use values, coat and linen, are combinations of special productive activities with cloth and yarn, while the values, coat and linen, are, on the other hand, mere homogeneous congelations of undifferentiated labour, so the labour embodied in these latter values does not count by virtue of its productive relation to cloth and yarn, but only as being expenditure of human labour power. Tailoring and weaving are necessary factors in the creation of the use values, coat and linen, precisely because these two kinds of labour are of different qualities; but only in so far as abstraction is made from their special qualities, only in so far as both possess the same quality of being human labour, do tailoring and weaving form the substance of the values of the same articles.

Coats and linen, however, are not merely values, but values of definite magnitude, and according to our assumption, the coat is worth twice as much as the ten yards of linen. Whence this difference in their values? It is owing to the fact that the linen contains only half as much labour as the coat, and consequently, that in the production of the latter, labour power must have been expended during twice the time necessary for the production of the former.

While, therefore, with reference to use value, the labour contained in a commodity counts only qualitatively, with reference to value it counts only quantitatively, and must first be reduced to human labour pure and simple. In the former case, it is a question of How and What, in the latter of How much? How long a time? Since the magnitude of the value of a commodity represents only the quantity of labour embodied in it, it follows that all commodities, when taken in certain proportions, must be equal in value.

If the productive power of all the different sorts of useful labour required for the production of a coat remains unchanged, the sum of the values of the coats produced increases with their number. If one coat represents x days' labour, two coats represent $2x$ days' labour, and so on. But assume that the duration of the labour necessary for the production of a coat becomes doubled or halved. In the first case one coat is worth as much as two coats were before; in the second case, two coats are only worth as much as one was before, although in both cases one coat renders the same service as before, and the useful labour embodied in it remains of the

same quality. But the quantity of labour spent on its production has altered.

An increase in the quantity of use values is an increase of material wealth. With two coats two men can be clothed, with one coat only one man. Nevertheless, an increased quantity of material wealth may correspond to a simultaneous fall in the magnitude of its value. This antagonistic movement has its origin in the twofold character of labour. Productive power has reference, of course, only to labour of some useful concrete form, the efficacy of any special productive activity during a given time being dependent on its productiveness. Useful labour becomes, therefore, a more or less abundant source of products, in proportion to the rise or fall of its productiveness. On the other hand, no change in this productiveness affects the labour represented by value. Since productive power is an attribute of the concrete useful forms of labour, of course it can no longer have any bearing on that labour, so soon as we make abstraction from those concrete useful forms. However then productive power may vary, the same labour, exercised during equal periods of time, always yields equal amounts of value. But it will yield, during equal periods of time, different quantities of values in use; more, if the productive power rise, fewer, if it fall. The same change in productive power, which increases the fruitfulness of labour, and, in consequence, the quantity of use values produced by that labour, will diminish the total value of this increased quantity of use values, provided such change shorten the total labour time necessary for their production; and *vice versa*.

On the one hand all labour is, speaking physiologically, an expenditure of human labour power, and in its character of identical abstract human labour, it creates and forms the value of commodities. On the other hand, all labour is the expenditure of human labour power in a special form and with a definite aim, and in this, its character of concrete useful labour, it produces use values.^[16]

SECTION 3

THE FORM OF VALUE OR EXCHANGE VALUE

Commodities come into the world in the shape of use values, articles, or goods, such as iron, linen, corn, &c. This is their plain, homely, bodily form. They are, however, commodities, only because they are something twofold, both objects of utility, and, at the same time, depositories of value. They manifest themselves therefore as commodities, or have the form of commodities,

only in so far as they have two forms, a physical or natural form, and a value form.

The reality of the value of commodities differs in this respect from Dame Quickly, that we don't know "where to have it." The value of commodities is the very opposite of the coarse materiality of their substance, not an atom of matter enters into its composition. Turn and examine a single commodity, by itself, as we will, yet in so far as it remains an object of value, it seems impossible to grasp it. If, however, we bear in mind that the value of commodities has a purely social reality, and that they acquire this reality only in so far as they are expressions or embodiments of one identical social substance, viz., human labour, it follows as a matter of course, that value can only manifest itself in the social relation of commodity to commodity. In fact we started from exchange value, or the exchange relation of commodities, in order to get at the value that lies hidden behind it. We must now return to this form under which value first appeared to us.

Every one knows, if he knows nothing else, that commodities have a value form common to them all, and presenting a marked contrast with the varied bodily forms of their use values. I mean their money form. Here, however, a task is set us, the performance of which has never yet even been attempted by *bourgeois* economy, the task of tracing the genesis of this money form, of developing the expression of value implied in the value relation of commodities, from its simplest, almost imperceptible outline, to the dazzling money-form. By doing this we shall, at the same time, solve the riddle presented by money.

The simplest value-relation is evidently that of one commodity to some one other commodity of a different kind. Hence the relation between the values of two commodities supplies us with the simplest expression of the value of a single commodity.

A. Elementary or Accidental Form Of Value

x commodity A = y commodity B, or
x commodity A is worth y commodity B.

20 yards of linen = 1 coat, or
20 Yards of linen are worth 1 coat.

1. The two poles of the expression of value. Relative form and Equivalent form

The whole mystery of the form of value lies hidden in this elementary form. Its analysis, therefore, is our real difficulty.

Here two different kinds of commodities (in our example the linen and the coat), evidently play two different parts. The linen expresses its value in the coat; the coat serves as the material in which that value is expressed. The former plays an active, the latter a passive, part. The value of the linen is represented as relative value, or appears in relative form. The coat officiates as equivalent, or appears in equivalent form.

The relative form and the equivalent form are two intimately connected, mutually dependent and inseparable elements of the expression of value; but, at the same time, are mutually exclusive, antagonistic extremes – *i.e.*, poles of the same expression. They are allotted respectively to the two different commodities brought into relation by that expression. It is not possible to express the value of linen in linen. 20 yards of linen = 20 yards of linen is no expression of value. On the contrary, such an equation merely says that 20 yards of linen are nothing else than 20 yards of linen, a definite quantity of the use value linen. The value of the linen can therefore be expressed only relatively – *i.e.*, in some other commodity. The relative form of the value of the linen presupposes, therefore, the presence of some other commodity – here the coat – under the form of an equivalent. On the other hand, the commodity that figures as the equivalent cannot at the same time assume the relative form. That second commodity is not the one whose value is expressed. Its function is merely to serve as the material in which the value of the first commodity is expressed.

No doubt, the expression 20 yards of linen = 1 coat, or 20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat, implies the opposite relation. 1 coat = 20 yards of linen, or 1 coat is worth 20 yards of linen. But, in that case, I must reverse the equation, in order to express the value of the coat relatively; and, so soon as I do that the linen becomes the equivalent instead of the coat. A single commodity cannot, therefore, simultaneously assume, in the same expression of value, both forms. The very polarity of these forms makes them mutually exclusive.

Whether, then, a commodity assumes the relative form, or the opposite equivalent form, depends entirely upon its accidental position in the expression of value – that is, upon whether it is the commodity whose value is being expressed or the commodity in which value is being expressed.

2. The Relative Form of value

(a.) The nature and import of this form

In order to discover how the elementary expression of the value of a commodity lies hidden in the value relation of two commodities, we must, in the first place, consider the latter entirely apart from its quantitative aspect. The usual mode of procedure is generally the reverse, and in the value relation nothing is seen but the proportion between definite quantities of two different

sorts of commodities that are considered equal to each other. It is apt to be forgotten that the magnitudes of different things can be compared quantitatively, only when those magnitudes are expressed in terms of the same unit. It is only as expressions of such a unit that they are of the same denomination, and therefore commensurable. [\[17\]](#)

Whether 20 yards of linen = 1 coat or = 20 coats or = x coats – that is, whether a given quantity of linen is worth few or many coats, every such statement implies that the linen and coats, as magnitudes of value, are expressions of the same unit, things of the same kind. Linen = coat is the basis of the equation.

But the two commodities whose identity of quality is thus assumed, do not play the same part. It is only the value of the linen that is expressed. And how? By its reference to the coat as its equivalent, as something that can be exchanged for it. In this relation the coat is the mode of existence of value, is value embodied, for only as such is it the same as the linen. On the other hand, the linen's own value comes to the front, receives independent expression, for it is only as being value that it is comparable with the coat as a thing of equal value, or exchangeable with the coat. To borrow an illustration from chemistry, butyric acid is a different substance from propyl formate. Yet both are made up of the same chemical substances, carbon (C), hydrogen (H), and oxygen (O), and that, too, in like proportions – namely, $C_4H_8O_2$. If now we equate butyric acid to propyl formate, then, in the first place, propyl formate would be, in this relation, merely a form of existence of $C_4H_8O_2$; and in the second place, we should be stating that butyric acid also consists of $C_4H_8O_2$. Therefore, by thus equating the two substances, expression would be given to their chemical composition, while their different physical forms would be neglected.

If we say that, as values, commodities are mere congelations of human labour, we reduce them by our analysis, it is true, to the abstraction, value; but we ascribe to this value no form apart from their bodily form. It is otherwise in the value relation of one commodity to another. Here, the one stands forth in its character of value by reason of its relation to the other.

By making the coat the equivalent of the linen, we equate the labour embodied in the former to that in the latter. Now, it is true that the tailoring, which makes the coat, is concrete labour of a different sort from the weaving which makes the linen. But the act of equating it to the weaving, reduces the tailoring to that which is really equal in the two kinds of labour, to their common character of human labour. In this roundabout way, then, the fact is expressed, that weaving also, in so far as it weaves value, has nothing to distinguish it from tailoring, and, consequently, is abstract human labour. It is the expression of equivalence between different sorts of commodities that alone brings into relief the specific character of value-creating labour, and this it does by actually reducing the different varieties of labour embodied in the different kinds of commodities to their common quality of human labour in the abstract. [\[18\]](#)

There is, however, something else required beyond the expression of the specific character of

the labour of which the value of the linen consists. Human labour power in motion, or human labour, creates value, but is not itself value. It becomes value only in its congealed state, when embodied in the form of some object. In order to express the value of the linen as a congealment of human labour, that value must be expressed as having objective existence, as being a something materially different from the linen itself, and yet a something common to the linen and all other commodities. The problem is already solved.

When occupying the position of equivalent in the equation of value, the coat ranks qualitatively as the equal of the linen, as something of the same kind, because it is value. In this position it is a thing in which we see nothing but value, or whose palpable bodily form represents value. Yet the coat itself, the body of the commodity, coat, is a mere use value. A coat as such no more tells us it is value, than does the first piece of linen we take hold of. This shows that when placed in value-relation to the linen, the coat signifies more than when out of that relation, just as many a man strutting about in a gorgeous uniform counts for more than when in mufti.

In the production of the coat, human labour power, in the shape of tailoring, must have been actually expended. Human labour is therefore accumulated in it. In this aspect the coat is a depository of value, but though worn to a thread, it does not let this fact show through. And as equivalent of the linen in the value equation, it exists under this aspect alone, counts therefore as embodied value, as a body that is value. A, for instance, cannot be “your majesty” to B, unless at the same time majesty in B’s eyes assumes the bodily form of A, and, what is more, with every new father of the people, changes its features, hair, and many other things besides.

Hence, in the value equation, in which the coat is the equivalent of the linen, the coat officiates as the form of value. The value of the commodity linen is expressed by the bodily form of the commodity coat, the value of one by the use value of the other. As a use value, the linen is something palpably different from the coat; as value, it is the same as the coat, and now has the appearance of a coat. Thus the linen acquires a value form different from its physical form. The fact that it is value, is made manifest by its equality with the coat, just as the sheep’s nature of a Christian is shown in his resemblance to the Lamb of God.

We see, then, all that our analysis of the value of commodities has already told us, is told us by the linen itself, so soon as it comes into communication with another commodity, the coat. Only it betrays its thoughts in that language with which alone it is familiar, the language of commodities. In order to tell us that its own value is created by labour in its abstract character of human labour, it says that the coat, in so far as it is worth as much as the linen, and therefore is value, consists of the same labour as the linen. In order to inform us that its sublime reality as value is not the same as its buckram body, it says that value has the appearance of a coat, and consequently that so far as the linen is value, it and the coat are as like as two peas. We may here remark, that the language of commodities has, besides Hebrew, many other more or less correct dialects. The German “Wertsein,” to be worth, for instance, expresses in a less striking

manner than the Romance verbs “valere,” “valer,” “valoir,” that the equating of commodity B to commodity A, is commodity A’s own mode of expressing its value. *Paris vaut bien une messe*. [Paris is certainly worth a mass]

By means, therefore, of the value-relation expressed in our equation, the bodily form of commodity B becomes the value form of commodity A, or the body of commodity B acts as a mirror to the value of commodity A.^[19] By putting itself in relation with commodity B, as value *in propriâ personâ*, as the matter of which human labour is made up, the commodity A converts the value in use, B, into the substance in which to express its, A’s, own value. The value of A, thus expressed in the use value of B, has taken the form of relative value.

(b.) Quantitative determination of Relative value

Every commodity, whose value it is intended to express, is a useful object of given quantity, as 15 bushels of corn, or 100 lbs of coffee. And a given quantity of any commodity contains a definite quantity of human labour. The value form must therefore not only express value generally, but also value in definite quantity. Therefore, in the value relation of commodity A to commodity B, of the linen to the coat, not only is the latter, as value in general, made the equal in quality of the linen, but a definite quantity of coat (1 coat) is made the equivalent of a definite quantity (20 yards) of linen.

The equation, 20 yards of linen = 1 coat, or 20 yards of linen are worth one coat, implies that the same quantity of value substance (congealed labour) is embodied in both; that the two commodities have each cost the same amount of labour of the same quantity of labour time. But the labour time necessary for the production of 20 yards of linen or 1 coat varies with every change in the productiveness of weaving or tailoring. We have now to consider the influence of such changes on the quantitative aspect of the relative expression of value.

I. Let the value of the linen vary,^[20] that of the coat remaining constant. If, say in consequence of the exhaustion of flax-growing soil, the labour time necessary for the production of the linen be doubled, the value of the linen will also be doubled. Instead of the equation, 20 yards of linen = 1 coat, we should have 20 yards of linen = 2 coats, since 1 coat would now contain only half the labour time embodied in 20 yards of linen. If, on the other hand, in consequence, say, of improved looms, this labour time be reduced by one-half, the value of the linen would fall by one-half. Consequently, we should have 20 yards of linen = $\frac{1}{2}$ coat. The relative value of commodity A, *i.e.*, its value expressed in commodity B, rises and falls directly as the value of A, the value of B being supposed constant.

II. Let the value of the linen remain constant, while the value of the coat varies. If, under these circumstances, in consequence, for instance, of a poor crop of wool, the labour time necessary for the production of a coat becomes doubled, we have instead of 20 yards of linen = 1 coat, 20

yards of linen = $\frac{1}{2}$ coat. If, on the other hand, the value of the coat sinks by one-half, then 20 yards of linen = 2 coats. Hence, if the value of commodity A remain constant, its relative value expressed in commodity B rises and falls inversely as the value of B.

If we compare the different cases in I and II, we see that the same change of magnitude in relative value may arise from totally opposite causes. Thus, the equation, 20 yards of linen = 1 coat, becomes 20 yards of linen = 2 coats, either, because the value of the linen has doubled, or because the value of the coat has fallen by one-half; and it becomes 20 yards of linen = $\frac{1}{2}$ coat, either, because the value of the linen has fallen by one-half, or because the value of the coat has doubled.

III. Let the quantities of labour time respectively necessary for the production of the linen and the coat vary simultaneously in the same direction and in the same proportion. In this case 20 yards of linen continue equal to 1 coat, however much their values may have altered. Their change of value is seen as soon as they are compared with a third commodity, whose value has remained constant. If the values of all commodities rose or fell simultaneously, and in the same proportion, their relative values would remain unaltered. Their real change of value would appear from the diminished or increased quantity of commodities produced in a given time.

IV. The labour time respectively necessary for the production of the linen and the coat, and therefore the value of these commodities may simultaneously vary in the same direction, but at unequal rates or in opposite directions, or in other ways. The effect of all these possible different variations, on the relative value of a commodity, may be deduced from the results of I, II, and III.

Thus real changes in the magnitude of value are neither unequivocally nor exhaustively reflected in their relative expression, that is, in the equation expressing the magnitude of relative value. The relative value of a commodity may vary, although its value remains constant. Its relative value may remain constant, although its value varies; and finally, simultaneous variations in the magnitude of value and in that of its relative expression by no means necessarily correspond in amount. [\[21\]](#)

3. The Equivalent form of value

We have seen that commodity A (the linen), by expressing its value in the use value of a commodity differing in kind (the coat), at the same time impresses upon the latter a specific form of value, namely that of the equivalent. The commodity linen manifests its quality of having a value by the fact that the coat, without having assumed a value form different from its bodily form, is equated to the linen. The fact that the latter therefore has a value is expressed by

saying that the coat is directly exchangeable with it. Therefore, when we say that a commodity is in the equivalent form, we express the fact that it is directly exchangeable with other commodities.

When one commodity, such as a coat, serves as the equivalent of another, such as linen, and coats consequently acquire the characteristic property of being directly exchangeable with linen, we are far from knowing in what proportion the two are exchangeable. The value of the linen being given in magnitude, that proportion depends on the value of the coat. Whether the coat serves as the equivalent and the linen as relative value, or the linen as the equivalent and the coat as relative value, the magnitude of the coat's value is determined, independently of its value form, by the labour time necessary for its production. But whenever the coat assumes in the equation of value, the position of equivalent, its value acquires no quantitative expression; on the contrary, the commodity coat now figures only as a definite quantity of some article.

For instance, 40 yards of linen are worth – what? 2 coats. Because the commodity coat here plays the part of equivalent, because the use-value coat, as opposed to the linen, figures as an embodiment of value, therefore a definite number of coats suffices to express the definite quantity of value in the linen. Two coats may therefore express the quantity of value of 40 yards of linen, but they can never express the quantity of their own value. A superficial observation of this fact, namely, that in the equation of value, the equivalent figures exclusively as a simple quantity of some article, of some use value, has misled Bailey, as also many others, both before and after him, into seeing, in the expression of value, merely a quantitative relation. The truth being, that when a commodity acts as equivalent, no quantitative determination of its value is expressed.

The first peculiarity that strikes us, in considering the form of the equivalent, is this: use value becomes the form of manifestation, the phenomenal form of its opposite, value.

The bodily form of the commodity becomes its value form. But, mark well, that this *quid pro quo* exists in the case of any commodity B, only when some other commodity A enters into a value relation with it, and then only within the limits of this relation. Since no commodity can stand in the relation of equivalent to itself, and thus turn its own bodily shape into the expression of its own value, every commodity is compelled to choose some other commodity for its equivalent, and to accept the use value, that is to say, the bodily shape of that other commodity as the form of its own value.

One of the measures that we apply to commodities as material substances, as use values, will serve to illustrate this point. A sugar-loaf being a body, is heavy, and therefore has weight: but we can neither see nor touch this weight. We then take various pieces of iron, whose weight has been determined beforehand. The iron, as iron, is no more the form of manifestation of weight, than is the sugar-loaf. Nevertheless, in order to express the sugar-loaf as so much weight, we put

it into a weight-relation with the iron. In this relation, the iron officiates as a body representing nothing but weight. A certain quantity of iron therefore serves as the measure of the weight of the sugar, and represents, in relation to the sugar-loaf, weight embodied, the form of manifestation of weight. This part is played by the iron only within this relation, into which the sugar or any other body, whose weight has to be determined, enters with the iron. Were they not both heavy, they could not enter into this relation, and the one could therefore not serve as the expression of the weight of the other. When we throw both into the scales, we see in reality, that as weight they are both the same, and that, therefore, when taken in proper proportions, they have the same weight. Just as the substance iron, as a measure of weight, represents in relation to the sugar-loaf weight alone, so, in our expression of value, the material object, coat, in relation to the linen, represents value alone.

Here, however, the analogy ceases. The iron, in the expression of the weight of the sugar-loaf, represents a natural property common to both bodies, namely their weight; but the coat, in the expression of value of the linen, represents a non-natural property of both, something purely social, namely, their value.

Since the relative form of value of a commodity – the linen, for example – expresses the value of that commodity, as being something wholly different from its substance and properties, as being, for instance, coat-like, we see that this expression itself indicates that some social relation lies at the bottom of it. With the equivalent form it is just the contrary. The very essence of this form is that the material commodity itself – the coat – just as it is, expresses value, and is endowed with the form of value by Nature itself. Of course this holds good only so long as the value relation exists, in which the coat stands in the position of equivalent to the linen.^[22] Since, however, the properties of a thing are not the result of its relations to other things, but only manifest themselves in such relations, the coat seems to be endowed with its equivalent form, its property of being directly exchangeable, just as much by Nature as it is endowed with the property of being heavy, or the capacity to keep us warm. Hence the enigmatical character of the equivalent form which escapes the notice of the bourgeois political economist, until this form, completely developed, confronts him in the shape of money. He then seeks to explain away the mystical character of gold and silver, by substituting for them less dazzling commodities, and by reciting, with ever renewed satisfaction, the catalogue of all possible commodities which at one time or another have played the part of equivalent. He has not the least suspicion that the most simple expression of value, such as 20 yds of linen = 1 coat, already propounds the riddle of the equivalent form for our solution.

The body of the commodity that serves as the equivalent, figures as the materialisation of human labour in the abstract, and is at the same time the product of some specifically useful concrete labour. This concrete labour becomes, therefore, the medium for expressing abstract human labour. If on the one hand the coat ranks as nothing but the embodiment of abstract

human labour, so, on the other hand, the tailoring which is actually embodied in it, counts as nothing but the form under which that abstract labour is realised. In the expression of value of the linen, the utility of the tailoring consists, not in making clothes, but in making an object, which we at once recognise to be Value, and therefore to be a congelation of labour, but of labour indistinguishable from that realised in the value of the linen. In order to act as such a mirror of value, the labour of tailoring must reflect nothing besides its own abstract quality of being human labour generally.

In tailoring, as well as in weaving, human labour power is expended. Both, therefore, possess the general property of being human labour, and may, therefore, in certain cases, such as in the production of value, have to be considered under this aspect alone. There is nothing mysterious in this. But in the expression of value there is a complete turn of the tables. For instance, how is the fact to be expressed that weaving creates the value of the linen, not by virtue of being weaving, as such, but by reason of its general property of being human labour? Simply by opposing to weaving that other particular form of concrete labour (in this instance tailoring), which produces the equivalent of the product of weaving. Just as the coat in its bodily form became a direct expression of value, so now does tailoring, a concrete form of labour, appear as the direct and palpable embodiment of human labour generally.

Hence, the second peculiarity of the equivalent form is, that concrete labour becomes the form under which its opposite, abstract human labour, manifests itself.

But because this concrete labour, tailoring in our case, ranks as, and is directly identified with, undifferentiated human labour, it also ranks as identical with any other sort of labour, and therefore with that embodied in the linen. Consequently, although, like all other commodity-producing labour, it is the labour of private individuals, yet, at the same time, it ranks as labour directly social in its character. This is the reason why it results in a product directly exchangeable with other commodities. We have then a third peculiarity of the equivalent form, namely, that the labour of private individuals takes the form of its opposite, labour directly social in its form.

The two latter peculiarities of the equivalent form will become more intelligible if we go back to the great thinker who was the first to analyse so many forms, whether of thought, society, or Nature, and amongst them also the form of value. I mean Aristotle.

In the first place, he clearly enunciates that the money form of commodities is only the further development of the simple form of value – *i.e.*, of the expression of the value of one commodity in some other commodity taken at random; for he says:

5 beds = 1 house – (clinai pente anti oiciac)

is not to be distinguished from

5 beds = so much money. – (clinai pente anti ... oson ai pente clinai)

He further sees that the value relation which gives rise to this expression makes it necessary that the house should qualitatively be made the equal of the bed, and that, without such an equalisation, these two clearly different things could not be compared with each other as commensurable quantities. “Exchange,” he says, “cannot take place without equality, and equality not without commensurability”. (out isothç mh ousçç snmmetriaç). Here, however, he comes to a stop, and gives up the further analysis of the form of value. “It is, however, in reality, impossible (th men oun alhqeia adunaton), that such unlike things can be commensurable” – *i.e.*, qualitatively equal. Such an equalisation can only be something foreign to their real nature, consequently only “a makeshift for practical purposes.”

Aristotle therefore, himself, tells us what barred the way to his further analysis; it was the absence of any concept of value. What is that equal something, that common substance, which admits of the value of the beds being expressed by a house? Such a thing, in truth, cannot exist, says Aristotle. And why not? Compared with the beds, the house does represent something equal to them, in so far as it represents what is really equal, both in the beds and the house. And that is – human labour.

There was, however, an important fact which prevented Aristotle from seeing that, to attribute value to commodities, is merely a mode of expressing all labour as equal human labour, and consequently as labour of equal quality. Greek society was founded upon slavery, and had, therefore, for its natural basis, the inequality of men and of their labour powers. The secret of the expression of value, namely, that all kinds of labour are equal and equivalent, because, and so far as they are human labour in general, cannot be deciphered, until the notion of human equality has already acquired the fixity of a popular prejudice. This, however, is possible only in a society in which the great mass of the produce of labour takes the form of commodities, in which, consequently, the dominant relation between man and man, is that of owners of commodities. The brilliancy of Aristotle’s genius is shown by this alone, that he discovered, in the expression of the value of commodities, a relation of equality. The peculiar conditions of the society in which he lived, alone prevented him from discovering what, “in truth,” was at the bottom of this equality.

4. The Elementary Form of value considered as a whole

The elementary form of value of a commodity is contained in the equation, expressing its value relation to another commodity of a different kind, or in its exchange relation to the same. The value of commodity A, is qualitatively expressed, by the fact that commodity B is directly exchangeable with it. Its value is quantitatively expressed by the fact, that a definite quantity of

B is exchangeable with a definite quantity of A. In other words, the value of a commodity obtains independent and definite expression, by taking the form of exchange value. When, at the beginning of this chapter, we said, in common parlance, that a commodity is both a use value and an exchange value, we were, accurately speaking, wrong. A commodity is a use value or object of utility, and a value. It manifests itself as this twofold thing, that it is, as soon as its value assumes an independent form – viz., the form of exchange value. It never assumes this form when isolated, but only when placed in a value or exchange relation with another commodity of a different kind. When once we know this, such a mode of expression does no harm; it simply serves as an abbreviation.

Our analysis has shown, that the form or expression of the value of a commodity originates in the nature of value, and not that value and its magnitude originate in the mode of their expression as exchange value. This, however, is the delusion as well of the mercantilists and their recent revivers, Ferrier, Ganilh,^[23] and others, as also of their antipodes, the modern bagmen of Free-trade, such as Bastiat. The mercantilists lay special stress on the qualitative aspect of the expression of value, and consequently on the equivalent form of commodities, which attains its full perfection in money. The modern hawkers of Free-trade, who must get rid of their article at any price, on the other hand, lay most stress on the quantitative aspect of the relative form of value. For them there consequently exists neither value, nor magnitude of value, anywhere except in its expression by means of the exchange relation of commodities, that is, in the daily list of prices current. Macleod, who has taken upon himself to dress up the confused ideas of Lombard Street in the most learned finery, is a successful cross between the superstitious mercantilists, and the enlightened Free-trade bagmen.

A close scrutiny of the expression of the value of A in terms of B, contained in the equation expressing the value relation of A to B, has shown us that, within that relation, the bodily form of A figures only as a use value, the bodily form of B only as the form or aspect of value. The opposition or contrast existing internally in each commodity between use value and value, is, therefore, made evident externally by two commodities being placed in such relation to each other, that the commodity whose value it is sought to express, figures directly as a mere use value, while the commodity in which that value is to be expressed, figures directly as mere exchange value. Hence the elementary form of value of a commodity is the elementary form in which the contrast contained in that commodity, between use value and value, becomes apparent.

Every product of labour is, in all states of society, a use value; but it is only at a definite historical epoch in a society's development that such a product becomes a commodity, viz., at the epoch when the labour spent on the production of a useful article becomes expressed as one of the objective qualities of that article, *i.e.*, as its value. It therefore follows that the elementary value form is also the primitive form under which a product of labour appears historically as a

commodity, and that the gradual transformation of such products into commodities, proceeds *pari passu* with the development of the value form.

We perceive, at first sight, the deficiencies of the elementary form of value: it is a mere germ, which must undergo a series of metamorphoses before it can ripen into the price form.

The expression of the value of commodity A in terms of any other commodity B, merely distinguishes the value from the use value of A, and therefore places A merely in a relation of exchange with a single different commodity, B; but it is still far from expressing A's qualitative equality, and quantitative proportionality, to all commodities. To the elementary relative value form of a commodity, there corresponds the single equivalent form of one other commodity. Thus, in the relative expression of value of the linen, the coat assumes the form of equivalent, or of being directly exchangeable, only in relation to a single commodity, the linen.

Nevertheless, the elementary form of value passes by an easy transition into a more complete form. It is true that by means of the elementary form, the value of a commodity A, becomes expressed in terms of one, and only one, other commodity. But that one may be a commodity of any kind, coat, iron, corn, or anything else. Therefore, according as A is placed in relation with one or the other, we get for one and the same commodity, different elementary expressions of value.^[24] The number of such possible expressions is limited only by the number of the different kinds of commodities distinct from it. The isolated expression of A's value, is therefore convertible into a series, prolonged to any length, of the different elementary expressions of that value.

B. Total or Expanded Form of value

z Com. A = u Com. B or v Com. C or = w Com. D or = Com. E or = &c.
(20 yards of linen = 1 coat or = 10 lbs tea or = 40 lbs. coffee or
= 1 quarter corn or = 2 ounces gold or = ½ ton iron or = &c.)

1. The Expanded Relative form of value

The value of a single commodity, the linen, for example, is now expressed in terms of numberless other elements of the world of commodities. Every other commodity now becomes a mirror of the linen's value.^[25] It is thus, that for the first time, this value shows itself in its true light as a congelation of undifferentiated human labour. For the labour that creates it, now stands

expressly revealed, as labour that ranks equally with every other sort of human labour, no matter what its form, whether tailoring, ploughing, mining, &c., and no matter, therefore, whether it is realised in coats, corn, iron, or gold. The linen, by virtue of the form of its value, now stands in a social relation, no longer with only one other kind of commodity, but with the whole world of commodities. As a commodity, it is a citizen of that world. At the same time, the interminable series of value equations implies, that as regards the value of a commodity, it is a matter of indifference under what particular form, or kind, of use value it appears.

In the first form, 20 yds of linen = 1 coat, it might, for ought that otherwise appears, be pure accident, that these two commodities are exchangeable in definite quantities. In the second form, on the contrary, we perceive at once the background that determines, and is essentially different from, this accidental appearance. The value of the linen remains unaltered in magnitude, whether expressed in coats, coffee, or iron, or in numberless different commodities, the property of as many different owners. The accidental relation between two individual commodity-owners disappears. It becomes plain, that it is not the exchange of commodities which regulates the magnitude of their value; but, on the contrary, that it is the magnitude of their value which controls their exchange proportions.

2. The particular Equivalent form

Each commodity, such as, coat, tea, corn, iron, &c., figures in the expression of value of the linen, as an equivalent, and, consequently, as a thing that is value. The bodily form of each of these commodities figures now as a particular equivalent form, one out of many. In the same way the manifold concrete useful kinds of labour, embodied in these different commodities, rank now as so many different forms of the realisation, or manifestation, of undifferentiated human labour.

3. Defects of the Total or Expanded form of value

In the first place, the relative expression of value is incomplete because the series representing it is interminable. The chain of which each equation of value is a link, is liable at any moment to be lengthened by each new kind of commodity that comes into existence and furnishes the material for a fresh expression of value. In the second place, it is a many-coloured mosaic of disparate and independent expressions of value. And lastly, if, as must be the case, the relative

value of each commodity in turn, becomes expressed in this expanded form, we get for each of them a relative value form, different in every case, and consisting of an interminable series of expressions of value. The defects of the expanded relative value form are reflected in the corresponding equivalent form. Since the bodily form of each single commodity is one particular equivalent form amongst numberless others, we have, on the whole, nothing but fragmentary equivalent forms, each excluding the others. In the same way, also, the special, concrete, useful kind of labour embodied in each particular equivalent, is presented only as a particular kind of labour, and therefore not as an exhaustive representative of human labour generally. The latter, indeed, gains adequate manifestation in the totality of its manifold, particular, concrete forms. But, in that case, its expression in an infinite series is ever incomplete and deficient in unity.

The expanded relative value form is, however, nothing but the sum of the elementary relative expressions or equations of the first kind, such as:

$$\begin{aligned} 20 \text{ yards of linen} &= 1 \text{ coat} \\ 20 \text{ yards of linen} &= 10 \text{ lbs of tea, etc.} \end{aligned}$$

Each of these implies the corresponding inverted equation,

$$\begin{aligned} 1 \text{ coat} &= 20 \text{ yards of linen} \\ 10 \text{ lbs of tea} &= 20 \text{ yards of linen, etc.} \end{aligned}$$

In fact, when a person exchanges his linen for many other commodities, and thus expresses its value in a series of other commodities, it necessarily follows, that the various owners of the latter exchange them for the linen, and consequently express the value of their various commodities in one and the same third commodity, the linen. If then, we reverse the series, 20 yards of linen = 1 coat or = 10 lbs of tea, etc., that is to say, if we give expression to the converse relation already implied in the series, we get,

C. The General Form of Value

$$\begin{aligned} &1 \text{ coat} \\ &10 \text{ lbs of tea} \\ &40 \text{ lbs of coffee} \\ &1 \text{ quarter of corn} \\ &2 \text{ ounces of gold} \\ &\frac{1}{2} \text{ a ton of iron} \\ &x \text{ Commodity A,} \\ &\text{etc.} \end{aligned} = 20 \text{ yards of linen}$$

1. The altered character of the form of value

All commodities now express their value (1) in an elementary form, because in a single commodity; (2) with unity, because in one and the same commodity. This form of value is elementary and the same for all, therefore general.

The forms A and B were fit only to express the value of a commodity as something distinct from its use value or material form.

The first form, A, furnishes such equations as the following: – 1 coat = 20 yards of linen, 10 lbs of tea = $\frac{1}{2}$ a ton of iron. The value of the coat is equated to linen, that of the tea to iron. But to be equated to linen, and again to iron, is to be as different as are linen and iron. This form, it is plain, occurs practically only in the first beginning, when the products of labour are converted into commodities by accidental and occasional exchanges.

The second form, B, distinguishes, in a more adequate manner than the first, the value of a commodity from its use value, for the value of the coat is there placed in contrast under all possible shapes with the bodily form of the coat; it is equated to linen, to iron, to tea, in short, to everything else, only not to itself, the coat. On the other hand, any general expression of value common to all is directly excluded; for, in the equation of value of each commodity, all other commodities now appear only under the form of equivalents. The expanded form of value comes into actual existence for the first time so soon as a particular product of labour, such as cattle, is no longer exceptionally, but habitually, exchanged for various other commodities.

The third and lastly developed form expresses the values of the whole world of commodities in terms of a single commodity set apart for the purpose, namely, the linen, and thus represents to us their values by means of their equality with linen. The value of every commodity is now, by being equated to linen, not only differentiated from its own use value, but from all other use values generally, and is, by that very fact, expressed as that which is common to all commodities. By this form, commodities are, for the first time, effectively brought into relation with one another as values, or made to appear as exchange values.

The two earlier forms either express the value of each commodity in terms of a single commodity of a different kind, or in a series of many such commodities. In both cases, it is, so to say, the special business of each single commodity to find an expression for its value, and this it does without the help of the others. These others, with respect to the former, play the passive parts of equivalents. The general form of value, C, results from the joint action of the whole world of commodities, and from that alone. A commodity can acquire a general expression of its value only by all other commodities, simultaneously with it, expressing their values in the same equivalent; and every new commodity must follow suit. It thus becomes evident that since the

existence of commodities as values is purely social, this social existence can be expressed by the totality of their social relations alone, and consequently that the form of their value must be a socially recognised form.

All commodities being equated to linen now appear not only as qualitatively equal as values generally, but also as values whose magnitudes are capable of comparison. By expressing the magnitudes of their values in one and the same material, the linen, those magnitudes are also compared with each other. For instance, 10 lbs of tea = 20 yards of linen, and 40 lbs of coffee = 20 yards of linen. Therefore, 10 lbs of tea = 40 lbs of coffee. In other words, there is contained in 1 lb of coffee only one-fourth as much substance of value – labour – as is contained in 1 lb of tea.

The general form of relative value, embracing the whole world of commodities, converts the single commodity that is excluded from the rest, and made to play the part of equivalent – here the linen – into the universal equivalent. The bodily form of the linen is now the form assumed in common by the values of all commodities; it therefore becomes directly exchangeable with all and every of them. The substance linen becomes the visible incarnation, the social chrysalis state of every kind of human labour. Weaving, which is the labour of certain private individuals producing a particular article, linen, acquires in consequence a social character, the character of equality with all other kinds of labour. The innumerable equations of which the general form of value is composed, equate in turn the labour embodied in the linen to that embodied in every other commodity, and they thus convert weaving into the general form of manifestation of undifferentiated human labour. In this manner the labour realised in the values of commodities is presented not only under its negative aspect, under which abstraction is made from every concrete form and useful property of actual work, but its own positive nature is made to reveal itself expressly. The general value form is the reduction of all kinds of actual labour to their common character of being human labour generally, of being the expenditure of human labour power.

The general value form, which represents all products of labour as mere congelations of undifferentiated human labour, shows by its very structure that it is the social resumé of the world of commodities. That form consequently makes it indisputably evident that in the world of commodities the character possessed by all labour of being *human* labour constitutes its specific social character.

2. The Interdependent Development of the Relative Form of Value, and of the Equivalent Form

The degree of development of the relative form of value corresponds to that of the equivalent

form. But we must bear in mind that the development of the latter is only the expression and result of the development of the former.

The primary or isolated relative form of value of one commodity converts some other commodity into an isolated equivalent. The expanded form of relative value, which is the expression of the value of one commodity in terms of all other commodities, endows those other commodities with the character of particular equivalents differing in kind. And lastly, a particular kind of commodity acquires the character of universal equivalent, because all other commodities make it the material in which they uniformly express their value.

The antagonism between the relative form of value and the equivalent form, the two poles of the value form, is developed concurrently with that form itself.

The first form, 20 yds of linen = one coat, already contains this antagonism, without as yet fixing it. According as we read this equation forwards or backwards, the parts played by the linen and the coat are different. In the one case the relative value of the linen is expressed in the coat, in the other case the relative value of the coat is expressed in the linen. In this first form of value, therefore, it is difficult to grasp the polar contrast.

Form B shows that only one single commodity at a time can completely expand its relative value, and that it acquires this expanded form only because, and in so far as, all other commodities are, with respect to it, equivalents. Here we cannot reverse the equation, as we can the equation 20 yds of linen = 1 coat, without altering its general character, and converting it from the expanded form of value into the general form of value.

Finally, the form C gives to the world of commodities a general social relative form of value, because, and in so far as, thereby all commodities, with the exception of one, are excluded from the equivalent form. A single commodity, the linen, appears therefore to have acquired the character of direct exchangeability with every other commodity because, and in so far as, this character is denied to every other commodity. [\[26\]](#)

The commodity that figures as universal equivalent, is, on the other hand, excluded from the relative value form. If the linen, or any other commodity serving as universal equivalent, were, at the same time, to share in the relative form of value, it would have to serve as its own equivalent. We should then have 20 yds of linen = 20 yds of linen; this tautology expresses neither value, nor magnitude of value. In order to express the relative value of the universal equivalent, we must rather reverse the form C. This equivalent has no relative form of value in common with other commodities, but its value is relatively expressed by a never ending series of other commodities. Thus, the expanded form of relative value, or form B, now shows itself as the specific form of relative value for the equivalent commodity.

3. Transition from the General form of value to the Money form

The universal equivalent form is a form of value in general. It can, therefore, be assumed by any commodity. On the other hand, if a commodity be found to have assumed the universal equivalent form (form **C**), this is only because and in so far as it has been excluded from the rest of all other commodities as their equivalent, and that by their own act. And from the moment that this exclusion becomes finally restricted to one particular commodity, from that moment only, the general form of relative value of the world of commodities obtains real consistence and general social validity.

The particular commodity, with whose bodily form the equivalent form is thus socially identified, now becomes the money commodity, or serves as money. It becomes the special social function of that commodity, and consequently its social monopoly, to play within the world of commodities the part of the universal equivalent. Amongst the commodities which, in form **B**, figure as particular equivalents of the linen, and, in form **C**, express in common their relative values in linen, this foremost place has been attained by one in particular – namely, gold. If, then, in form **C** we replace the linen by gold, we get,

D. The Money-Form

20 yards of linen	=	
1 coat	=	
10 lbs of tea	=	
40 lbs of coffee	=	
1 quarter of corn	=	= 2 ounces of gold
2 ounces of gold	=	
½ a ton of iron	=	
x Commodity A	=	

In passing from form **A** to form **B**, and from the latter to form **C**, the changes are fundamental. On the other hand, there is no difference between forms **C** and **D**, except that, in the latter, gold has assumed the equivalent form in the place of linen. Gold is in form **D**, what linen was in form **C** – the universal equivalent. The progress consists in this alone, that the character of direct and universal exchangeability – in other words, that the universal equivalent form – has now, by social custom, become finally identified with the substance, gold.

Gold is now money with reference to all other commodities only because it was previously, with reference to them, a simple commodity. Like all other commodities, it was also capable of

...serving as an equivalent, either as simple equivalent in isolated exchanges, or as particular equivalent by the side of others. Gradually it began to serve, within varying limits, as universal equivalent. So soon as it monopolises this position in the expression of value for the world of commodities, it becomes the money commodity, and then, and not till then, does form **D** become distinct from form **C**, and the general form of value become changed into the money form.

The elementary expression of the relative value of a single commodity, such as linen, in terms of the commodity, such as gold, that plays the part of money, is the price form of that commodity. The price form of the linen is therefore

20 yards of linen = 2 ounces of gold, or, if 2 ounces of gold when
coined are £2, 20 yards of linen = £2.

The difficulty in forming a concept of the money form, consists in clearly comprehending the universal equivalent form, and as a necessary corollary, the general form of value, form **C**. The latter is deducible from form **B**, the expanded form of value, the essential component element of which, we saw, is form **A**, 20 yards of linen = 1 coat or x commodity **A** = y commodity **B**. The simple commodity form is therefore the germ of the money form.

SECTION 4

THE FETISHISM OF COMMODITIES AND THE SECRET THEREOF

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labour. It is as clear as noon-day, that man, by his industry, changes the forms of the materials furnished by Nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, every-day thing, wood. But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its

head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than “table-turning” ever was. [\[26a\]](#)

The mystical character of commodities does not originate, therefore, in their use value. Just as little does it proceed from the nature of the determining factors of value. For, in the first place, however varied the useful kinds of labour, or productive activities, may be, it is a physiological fact, that they are functions of the human organism, and that each such function, whatever may be its nature or form, is essentially the expenditure of human brain, nerves, muscles, &c. Secondly, with regard to that which forms the ground-work for the quantitative determination of value, namely, the duration of that expenditure, or the quantity of labour, it is quite clear that there is a palpable difference between its quantity and quality. 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. [\[27\]](#) And lastly, from the moment that men in any way work for one another, their labour assumes a social form.

Whence, then, arises the enigmatical character of the product of labour, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities? Clearly from this form itself. The equality of all sorts of human labour is expressed objectively by their products all being equally values; the measure of the expenditure of labour power by the duration of that expenditure, takes the form of the quantity of value of the products of labour; and finally the mutual relations of the producers, within which the social character of their labour affirms itself, take the form of a social relation between the products.

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. In the same way the light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself. But, in the act of seeing, there is at all events, an actual passage of light from one thing to another, from the external object to the eye. There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. There, the existence of the things *quâ* commodities, and the value relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is

in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.

This Fetishism of commodities has its origin, as the foregoing analysis has already shown, in the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them.

As a general rule, articles of utility become commodities, only because they are products of the labour of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work independently of each other. The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labour of society. Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers. To the latter, therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things. It is only by being exchanged that the products of labour acquire, as values, one uniform social status, distinct from their varied forms of existence as objects of utility. This division of a product into a useful thing and a value becomes practically important, only when exchange has acquired such an extension that 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. From this moment the labour of the individual producer acquires socially a twofold character. On the one hand, it must, as a definite useful kind of labour, satisfy a definite social want, and thus hold its place as part and parcel of the collective labour of all, as a branch of a social division of labour that has sprung up spontaneously. On the other hand, it can satisfy the manifold wants of the individual producer himself, only in so far as the mutual exchangeability of all kinds of useful private labour is an established social fact, and therefore the private useful labour of each producer ranks on an equality with that of all others. The equalisation of the most different kinds of labour can be the result only of an abstraction from their inequalities, or of reducing them to their common denominator, viz. expenditure of human labour power or human labour in the abstract. The twofold social character of the labour of the individual appears to him, when reflected in his brain, only under those forms which are impressed upon that labour in every-day practice by the exchange of products. In this way, the character that his own labour possesses of being socially useful takes the form of the condition, that the product must be not only useful, but useful for others, and the social character that his particular labour has of being the equal of all other particular kinds of labour, takes the form that all the physically different articles that are the products of labour. have one common quality, viz., that of having value.

Hence, when we bring the products of our labour into relation with each other as values, it is

not because we see in these articles the material receptacles of homogeneous human labour. Quite the contrary: whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended upon them. We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it.^[28] Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language. The recent scientific discovery, that the products of labour, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labour spent in their production, marks, indeed, an epoch in the history of the development of the human race, but, by no means, dissipates the mist through which the social character of labour appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves. The fact, that in the particular form of production with which we are dealing, viz., the production of commodities, the specific social character of private labour carried on independently, consists in the equality of every kind of that labour, by virtue of its being human labour, which character, therefore, assumes in the product the form of value – this fact appears to the producers, notwithstanding the discovery above referred to, to be just as real and final, as the fact, that, after the discovery by science of the component gases of air, the atmosphere itself remained unaltered.

What, first of all, practically concerns producers when they make an exchange, is the question, how much of some other product they get for their own? in what proportions the products are exchangeable? When these proportions have, by custom, attained a certain stability, they appear to result from the nature of the products, so that, for instance, one ton of iron and two ounces of gold appear as naturally to be of equal value as a pound of gold and a pound of iron in spite of their different physical and chemical qualities appear to be of equal weight. The character of having value, when once impressed upon products, obtains fixity only by reason of their acting and re-acting upon each other as quantities of value. These quantities vary continually, independently of the will, foresight and action of the producers. To them, their own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule the producers instead of being ruled by them. It requires a fully developed production of commodities before, from accumulated experience alone, the scientific conviction springs up, that all the different kinds of private labour, which are carried on independently of each other, and yet as spontaneously developed branches of the social division of labour, are continually being reduced to the quantitative proportions in which society requires them. And why? Because, in the midst of all the accidental and ever fluctuating exchange relations between the products, the labour time socially necessary for their production forcibly asserts itself like an over-riding law of Nature. The law of gravity thus asserts itself when a house falls about our ears.^[29] The determination of the magnitude of value by labour time is therefore a secret, hidden under the apparent fluctuations in the relative values of commodities. Its discovery, while removing all appearance of mere accidentality from the determination of the magnitude of the values of products, yet in

no way alters the mode in which that determination takes place.

Man's reflections on the forms of social life, and consequently, also, his scientific analysis of those forms, take a course directly opposite to that of their actual historical development. He begins, *post festum*, with the results of the process of development ready to hand before him. The characters that stamp products as commodities, and whose establishment is a necessary preliminary to the circulation of commodities, have already acquired the stability of natural, self-understood forms of social life, before man seeks to decipher, not their historical character, for in his eyes they are immutable, but their meaning. Consequently it was the analysis of the prices of commodities that alone led to the determination of the magnitude of value, and it was the common expression of all commodities in money that alone led to the establishment of their characters as values. It is, however, just this ultimate money form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers. When I state that coats or boots stand in a relation to linen, because it is the universal incarnation of abstract human labour, the absurdity of the statement is self-evident. Nevertheless, when the producers of coats and boots compare those articles with linen, or, what is the same thing, with gold or silver, as the universal equivalent, they express the relation between their own private labour and the collective labour of society in the same absurd form.

The categories of bourgeois economy consist of such like forms. They are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities. The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour as long as they take the form of commodities, vanishes therefore, so soon as we come to other forms of production.

Since Robinson Crusoe's experiences are a favourite theme with political economists,^[30] let us take a look at him on his island. Moderate though he be, yet some few wants he has to satisfy, and must therefore do a little useful work of various sorts, such as making tools and furniture, taming goats, fishing and hunting. Of his prayers and the like we take no account, since they are a source of pleasure to him, and he looks upon them as so much recreation. In spite of the variety of his work, he knows that his labour, whatever its form, is but the activity of one and the same Robinson, and consequently, that it consists of nothing but different modes of human labour. Necessity itself compels him to apportion his time accurately between his different kinds of work. Whether one kind occupies a greater space in his general activity than another, depends on the difficulties, greater or less as the case may be, to be overcome in attaining the useful effect aimed at. This our friend Robinson soon learns by experience, and having rescued a watch, ledger, and pen and ink from the wreck, commences, like a true-born Briton, to keep a set of books. His stock-book contains a list of the objects of utility that belong to him, of the operations necessary for their production; and lastly, of the labour time that definite quantities of

those objects have, on an average, cost him. All the relations between Robinson and the objects that form this wealth of his own creation, are here so simple and clear as to be intelligible without exertion, even to Mr. Sedley Taylor. And yet those relations contain all that is essential to the determination of value.

Let us now transport ourselves from Robinson's island bathed in light to the European middle ages shrouded in darkness. Here, instead of the independent man, we find everyone dependent, serfs and lords, vassals and suzerains, laymen and clergy. Personal dependence here characterises the social relations of production just as much as it does the other spheres of life organised on the basis of that production. But for the very reason that personal dependence forms the ground-work of society, there is no necessity for labour and its products to assume a fantastic form different from their reality. They take the shape, in the transactions of society, of services in kind and payments in kind. Here the particular and natural form of labour, and not, as in a society based on production of commodities, its general abstract form is the immediate social form of labour. Compulsory labour is just as properly measured by time, as commodity-producing labour; but every serf knows that what he expends in the service of his lord, is a definite quantity of his own personal labour power. The tithe to be rendered to the priest is more matter of fact than his blessing. No matter, then, what we may think of the parts played by the different classes of people themselves in this society, the social relations between individuals in the performance of their labour, appear at all events as their own mutual personal relations, and are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour.

For an example of labour in common or directly associated labour, we have no occasion to go back to that spontaneously developed form which we find on the threshold of the history of all civilised races.^[31] We have one close at hand in the patriarchal industries of a peasant family, that produces corn, cattle, yarn, linen, and clothing for home use. These different articles are, as regards the family, so many products of its labour, but as between themselves, they are not commodities. The different kinds of labour, such as tillage, cattle tending, spinning, weaving and making clothes, which result in the various products, are in themselves, and such as they are, direct social functions, because functions of the family, which, just as much as a society based on the production of commodities, possesses a spontaneously developed system of division of labour. The distribution of the work within the family, and the regulation of the labour time of the several members, depend as well upon differences of age and sex as upon natural conditions varying with the seasons. The labour power of each individual, by its very nature, operates in this case merely as a definite portion of the whole labour power of the family, and therefore, the measure of the expenditure of individual labour power by its duration, appears here by its very nature as a social character of their labour.

Let us now picture to ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour power of all the

different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour power of the community. All the characteristics of Robinson's labour are here repeated, but with this difference, that they are social, instead of individual. Everything produced by him was exclusively the result of his own personal labour, and therefore simply an object of use for himself. The total product of our community is a social product. One portion serves as fresh means of production and remains social. But another portion is consumed by the members as means of subsistence. A distribution of this portion amongst them is consequently necessary. The mode of this distribution will vary with the productive organisation of the community, and the degree of historical development attained by the producers. We will assume, but merely for the sake of a parallel with the production of commodities, that the share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by his labour time. Labour time would, in that case, play a double part. Its apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community. On the other hand, it also serves as a measure of the portion of the common labour borne by each individual, and of his share in the part of the total product destined for individual consumption. The social relations of the individual producers, with regard both to their labour and to its products, are in this case perfectly simple and intelligible, and that with regard not only to production but also to distribution.

The religious world is but the reflex of the real world. And for a society based upon the production of commodities, in which the producers in general enter into social relations with one another by treating their products as commodities and values, whereby they reduce their individual private labour to the standard of homogeneous human labour – for such a society, Christianity with its *cultus* of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, &c., is the most fitting form of religion. In the ancient Asiatic and other ancient modes of production, we find that the conversion of products into commodities, and therefore the conversion of men into producers of commodities, holds a subordinate place, which, however, increases in importance as the primitive communities approach nearer and nearer to their dissolution. Trading nations, properly so called, exist in the ancient world only in its interstices, like the gods of Epicurus in the Intermundia, or like Jews in the pores of Polish society. Those ancient social organisms of production are, as compared with bourgeois society, extremely simple and transparent. But they are founded either on the immature development of man individually, who has not yet severed the umbilical cord that unites him with his fellowmen in a primitive tribal community, or upon direct relations of subjection. They can arise and exist only when the development of the productive power of labour has not risen beyond a low stage, and when, therefore, the social relations within the sphere of material life, between man and man, and between man and Nature, are correspondingly narrow. This narrowness is reflected in the ancient worship of Nature, and in the other elements of the popular religions. The religious reflex of the real world can, in any case, only then finally vanish, when the practical relations of every-day life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to

his fellowmen and to Nature.

The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan. This, however, demands for society a certain material ground-work or set of conditions of existence which in their turn are the spontaneous product of a long and painful process of development.

Political Economy has indeed analysed, however incompletely,^[32] value and its magnitude, and has discovered what lies beneath these forms. But it has never once asked the question why labour is represented by the value of its product and labour time by the magnitude of that value.^[33] These formulæ, which bear it stamped upon them in unmistakable letters that they belong to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him, such formulæ appear to the bourgeois intellect to be as much a self-evident necessity imposed by Nature as productive labour itself. Hence forms of social production that preceded the bourgeois form, are treated by the bourgeoisie in much the same way as the Fathers of the Church treated pre-Christian religions.^[34]

To what extent some economists are misled by the Fetishism inherent in commodities, or by the objective appearance of the social characteristics of labour, is shown, amongst other ways, by the dull and tedious quarrel over the part played by Nature in the formation of exchange value. Since exchange value is a definite social manner of expressing the amount of labour bestowed upon an object, Nature has no more to do with it, than it has in fixing the course of exchange.

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. Hence its Fetish character is comparatively easy to be seen through. But when we come to more concrete forms, even this appearance of simplicity vanishes. Whence arose the illusions of the monetary system? To it gold and silver, when serving as money, did not represent a social relation between producers, but were natural objects with strange social properties. And modern economy, which looks down with such disdain on the monetary system, does not its superstition come out as clear as noon-day, whenever it treats of capital? How long is it since economy discarded the physiocratic illusion, that rents grow out of the soil and not out of society?

But not to anticipate, we will content ourselves with yet another example relating to the commodity form. Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: Our use value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects. What, however, does belong to us as objects, is our value. Our natural intercourse as commodities proves it. In the eyes of each other

we are nothing but exchange values. Now listen how those commodities speak through the mouth of the economist.

“Value” – (*i.e.*, exchange value) “is a property of things, riches” – (*i.e.*, use value) “of man. Value, in this sense, necessarily implies exchanges, riches do not.”^[35] “Riches” (use value) “are the attribute of men, value is the attribute of commodities. A man or a community is rich, a pearl or a diamond is valuable...” A pearl or a diamond is valuable as a pearl or a diamond.^[36]

So far no chemist has ever discovered exchange value either in a pearl or a diamond. The economic discoverers of this chemical element, who by-the-bye lay special claim to critical acumen, find however that the use value of objects belongs to them independently of their material properties, while their value, on the other hand, forms a part of them as objects. What confirms them in this view, is the peculiar circumstance that the use value of objects is realised without exchange, by means of a direct relation between the objects and man, while, on the other hand, their value is realised only by exchange, that is, by means of a social process. Who fails here to call to mind our good friend, Dogberry, who informs neighbour Seacoal, that, “To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by Nature.”^[37]

Footnotes

1. Karl Marx, “[Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie.](#)” Berlin, 1859, p. 3.
2. “Desire implies want, it is the appetite of the mind, and as natural as hunger to the body... The greatest number (of things) have their value from supplying the wants of the mind.” Nicholas Barbon: “[A Discourse Concerning Coining the New Money Lighter. In Answer to Mr. Locke’s Considerations, &c.](#)”, London, 1696, pp. 2, 3.
3. “Things have an intrinsick vertue” (this is Barbon’s special term for value in use) “which in all places have the same vertue; as the loadstone to attract iron” ([l.c., p. 6](#)). The property which the magnet possesses of attracting iron, became of use only after by means of that property the polarity of the magnet had been discovered.
4. “The natural worth of anything consists in its fitness to supply the necessities, or serve the conveniencies of human life.” (John Locke, “[Some Considerations on the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest](#), 1691,” in Works Edit. Lond., 1777, Vol. II., p. 28.) In English writers of the 17th century we frequently find “worth” in the sense of value in use, and “value” in the sense of exchange value. This is quite in accordance with the spirit of a language that likes to use a Teutonic word for the actual thing, and a Romance word for its reflexion.
5. In bourgeois societies the economic *fictio juris* prevails, that every one, as a buyer, possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of commodities.
6. “La valeur consiste dans le rapport d’échange qui se trouve entre telle chose et telle autre

entre telle mesure d'une production et telle mesure d'une autre." ["Value consists in the exchange relation between one thing and another, between a given amount of one product and a given amount of another"] (Le Trosne: "De l'Intérêt Social." Physiocrates, Ed. Daire. Paris, 1846. p. 889.)

7. "Nothing can have an intrinsic value." (N. Barbon, t. c., p. 6); or as Butler says – "The value of a thing is just as much as it will bring."

8. N. Barbon, l.c., p. 53 and 7.

9. "The value of them (the necessaries of life), when they are exchanged the one for another, is regulated by the quantity of labour necessarily required, and commonly taken in producing them." ("Some Thoughts on the Interest of Money in General, and Particularly in the Publick Funds, &." Lond., p. 36) This remarkable anonymous work written in the last century, bears no date. It is clear, however, from internal evidence that it appeared in the reign of George II, about 1739 or 1740.

10. "Toutes les productions d'un même genre ne forment proprement qu'une masse, dont le prix se détermine en général et sans égard aux circonstances particulières." ["Properly speaking, all products of the same kind form a single mass, and their price is determined in general and without regard to particular circumstances"] (Le Trosne, l.c., p. 893.)

11. K. Marx. l.c., p.6.

A. The following passage occurred only in the first edition.

Now we know the *substance* of value. It is *labour*. We know the *measure of its magnitude*. It is *labour time*. The *form*, which stamps *value* as *exchange-value*, remains to be analysed. But before this we need to develop the characteristics we have already found somewhat more fully.

Taken from the Penguin edition of *Capital*, translated by Ben Fowkes.

12. I am inserting the parenthesis because its omission has often given rise to the misunderstanding that every product that is consumed by some one other than its producer is considered in Marx a commodity. [Engels, 4th German Edition]

13. Tutti i fenomeni dell'universo, sieno essi prodotti della mano dell'uomo, ovvero delle universali leggi della fisica, non ci danno idea di attuale creazione, ma unicamente di una modificazione della materia. Accostare e separare sono gli unici elementi che l'ingegno umano ritrova analizzando l'idea della riproduzione: e tanto e riproduzione di valore (value in use, although Verri in this passage of his controversy with the Physiocrats is not himself quite certain of the kind of value he is speaking of) e di ricchezze se la terra, l'aria e l'acqua ne' campi si trasmutino in grano, come se colla mano dell'uomo il glutine di un insetto si trasmuti in velluto ovvero alcuni pezzetti di metalio si organizzino a formare una ripetizione." ["All the phenomena of the universe, whether produced by the hand of man or through the universal laws of physics, are not actual new creations, but merely a modification of matter. Joining together and separating are the only elements which the human mind always finds on analysing the concept of reproduction.' and it is just the same

with the reproduction of value” (value in use, although Verri in this passage of his controversy with the Physiocrats is not himself quite certain of the kind of value he is speaking of) “and of wealth, when earth, air and water in the fields are transformed into corn, or when the hand of man transforms the secretions of an insect into silk, or some pieces of metal are arranged to make the mechanism of a watch.”] – Pietro Verri, “Meditazioni sulla Economia Politica” [first printed in 1773] in Custodi’s edition of the Italian Economists, Parte Moderna, t. XV., p. 22.

14. Comp. Hegel, “[Philosophie des Rechts](#).” Berlin, 1840. p. 250.

15. The reader must note that we are not speaking here of the wages or value that the labourer gets for a given labour time, but of the value of the commodity in which that labour time is materialised. Wages is a category that, as yet, has no existence at the present stage of our investigation.

16. In order to prove that labour alone is that all-sufficient and real measure, by which at all times the value of all commodities can be estimated and compared, Adam Smith says, “Equal quantities of labour must at all times and in all places have the same value for the labourer. In his normal state of health, strength, and activity, and with the average degree of skill that he may possess, he must always give up the same portion of his rest his freedom, and his happiness.” (“[Wealth of Nations](#),” b. I. ch. V.) On the one hand Adam Smith here (but not everywhere) confuses the determination of value by means of the quantity of labour expended in the production of commodities, with the determination of the values of commodities by means of the value of labour, and seeks in consequence to prove that equal quantities of labour have always the same value. On the other hand he has a presentiment, that labour, so far as it manifests itself in the value of commodities, counts only as expenditure of labour power, but he treats this expenditure as the mere sacrifice of rest, freedom, and happiness, not as at the same time the normal activity of living beings. But then, he has the modern wage-labourer in his eye. Much more aptly, the anonymous predecessor of Adam Smith, quoted above in Note 1, p. 39 [note 9 etext]. says “one man has employed himself a week in providing this necessary of life ... and he that gives him some other in exchange cannot make a better estimate of what is a proper equivalent, than by computing what cost him just as much labour and time which in effect is no more than exchanging one man’s labour in one thing for a time certain, for another man’s labour in another thing for the same time.” (l.c., p. 39.) [The English language has the advantage of possessing different words for the two aspects of labour here considered. The labour which creates use value, and counts qualitatively, is Work, as distinguished from Labour, that which creates Value and counts quantitatively, is Labour as distinguished from Work - Engels]

17. The few economists, amongst whom is S. Bailey, who have occupied themselves with the analysis of the form of value, have been unable to arrive at any result, first, because they confuse the form of value with value itself; and second, because, under the coarse influence of the practical bourgeois, they exclusively give their attention to the quantitative aspect of the question. “The command of quantity ... constitutes value.” (“Money and its Vicissitudes.” London, 1837, p. 11. By S. Bailey.)

18. The celebrated Franklin, one of the first economists, after Wm. Petty, who saw through

the nature of value, says: “Trade in general being nothing else but the exchange of labour for labour, the value of all things is ... most justly measured by labour.” (“The works of B. Franklin, &c.,” edited by Sparks. Boston, 1836, Vol. II., p. 267.) Franklin is unconscious that by estimating the value of everything in labour, he makes abstraction from any difference in the sorts of labour exchanged, and thus reduces them all to equal human labour. But although ignorant of this, yet he says it. He speaks first of “the one labour,” then of “the other labour,” and finally of “labour,” without further qualification, as the substance of the value of everything.

19. In a sort of way, it is with man as with commodities. Since he comes into the world neither with a looking glass in his hand, nor as a [Fichtian](#) philosopher, to whom “I am I” is sufficient, man first sees and recognises himself in other men. Peter only establishes his own identity as a man by first comparing himself with Paul as being of like kind. And thereby Paul, just as he stands in his Pauline personality, becomes to Peter the type of the *genus homo*.

20. Value is here, as occasionally in the preceding pages, used in sense of value determined as to quantity, or of magnitude of value.

21. This incongruity between the magnitude of value and its relative expression has, with customary ingenuity, been exploited by vulgar economists. For example – “Once admit that A falls, because B, with which it is exchanged, rises, while no less labour is bestowed in the meantime on A, and your general principle of value falls to the ground... If he [Ricardo] allowed that when A rises in value relatively to B, B falls in value relatively to A, he cut away the ground on which he rested his grand proposition, that the value of a commodity is ever determined by the labour embodied in it, for if a change in the cost of A alters not only its own value in relation to B, for which it is exchanged, but also the value of B relatively to that of A, though no change has taken place in the quantity of labour to produce B, then not only the doctrine falls to the ground which asserts that the quantity of labour bestowed on an article regulates its value, but also that which affirms the cost of an article to regulate its value’ (J. Broadhurst: “Political Economy,” London, 1842, pp. 11 and 14.) Mr. Broadhurst might just as well say: consider the fractions 10/20, 10/50, 10/100, &c., the number 10 remains unchanged, and yet its proportional magnitude, its magnitude relatively to the numbers 20, 50, 100 &c., continually diminishes. Therefore the great principle that the magnitude of a whole number, such as 10, is “regulated” by the number of times unity is contained in it, falls to the ground. [The author explains in section 4 of this chapter, pp. 80-81, note 2 (note 33 etext), what he understands by “Vulgar Economy.” – Engels]

22. Such expressions of relations in general, [called by Hegel reflex categories](#), form a very curious class. For instance, one man is king only because other men stand in the relation of subjects to him. They, on the contrary, imagine that they are subjects because he is king.

23. F. L. A. Ferrier, sous-inspecteur des douanes, “Du gouvernement considéré dans ses rapports avec le commerce,” Paris, 1805; and Charles Ganilh, “Des Systèmes d’Economie Politique, – 2nd ed., Paris, 1821.

24. In Homer, for instance, the value of an article is expressed in a series of different things II. VII. 472-475.

25. For this reason, we can speak of the coat value of the linen when its value is expressed in coats, or of its corn value when expressed in corn, and so on. Every such expression tells us, that what appears in the use values, cost, corn, &c., is the value of the linen. “The value of any commodity denoting its relation in exchange, we may speak of it as ... corn value, cloth value, according to the commodity with which it is compared; and hence there are a thousand different kinds of value, as many kinds of value as there are commodities in existence, and all are equally real and equally nominal.” (“A Critical Dissertation on the Nature, Measures and Causes of Value: chiefly in reference to the writings of Mr. Ricardo and his followers.” By the author of “Essays on the Formation, &c., of Opinions.” London, 1825, p. 39.) S. Bailey, the author of this anonymous work, a work which in its day created much stir in England, fancied that, by thus pointing out the various relative expressions of one and the same value, he had proved the impossibility of any determination of the concept of value. However narrow his own views may have been, yet, that he laid his finger on some serious defects in the Ricardian Theory, is proved by the animosity with which he was attacked by Ricardo’s followers. See the *Westminster Review* for example.

26. It is by no means self-evident that this character of direct and universal exchangeability is, so to speak, a polar one, and as intimately connected with its opposite pole, the absence of direct exchangeability, as the positive pole of the magnet is with its negative counterpart. It may therefore be imagined that all commodities can simultaneously have this character impressed upon them, just as it can be imagined that all Catholics can be popes together. It is, of course, highly desirable in the eyes of the petit bourgeois, for whom the production of commodities is the *nec plus ultra* of human freedom and individual independence, that the inconveniences resulting from this character of commodities not being directly exchangeable, should be removed. Proudhon’s socialism is a working out of this Philistine Utopia, a form of socialism which, as I have elsewhere shown, does not possess even the merit of originality. Long before his time, the task was attempted with much better success by Gray, Bray, and others. But, for all that, wisdom of this kind flourishes even now in certain circles under the name of “science.” Never has any school played more tricks with the word science, than that of Proudhon, for “wo Begriffe fehlen, Da stellt zur rechten Zeit ein Wort sich ein.” [“Where thoughts are absent, Words are brought in as convenient replacements,” Goethe’s, *Faust*, See Proudhon’s *Philosophy of Poverty*]

26a. In the German edition, there is the following footnote here: “One may recall that China and the tables began to dance when the rest of the world appeared to be standing still – *pour encourager les autres* [to encourage the others].” The defeat of the 1848-49 revolutions was followed by a period of dismal political reaction in Europe. At that time, spiritualism, especially table-turning, became the rage among the European aristocracy. In 1850-64, China was swept by an anti-feudal liberation movement in the form of a large-scale peasant war, the Taiping Revolt. – Note by editors of *MECW*.

27. Among the ancient Germans the unit for measuring land was what could be harvested in a day, and was called Tagwerk, Tagwanne (jurnale, or terra jurnalnis, or diornalis), Mannsmaad, &c. (See G. L. von Maurer, “Einleitung zur Geschichte der Mark, &c. Verfassung,” Munchen, 1854, p. 129 sq.)

28. When, therefore, Galiani says: Value is a relation between persons – “La Ricchezza e una ragione tra due persone,” – he ought to have added: a relation between persons

expressed as a relation between things. (Galiani: Della Moneta, p. 221, V. III. of Custodi's collection of "Scrittori Classici Italiani di Economia Politica." Parte Moderna, Milano 1803.)

29. What are we to think of a law that asserts itself only by periodical revolutions? It is just nothing but a law of Nature, founded on the want of knowledge of those whose action is the subject of it." (Friedrich Engels: "Umrisse zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie," in the "Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher," edited by Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx. Paris. 1844.)

30. Even Ricardo has his stories *à la Robinson*. "He makes the primitive hunter and the primitive fisher straightway, as owners of commodities, exchange fish and game in the proportion in which labour time is incorporated in these exchange values. On this occasion he commits the anachronism of making these men apply to the calculation, so far as their implements have to be taken into account, the annuity tables in current use on the London Exchange in the year 1817. The parallelograms of Mr. Owen appear to be the only form of society, besides the bourgeois form, with which he was acquainted." (Karl Marx: "[Zur Kritik, &c.](#)," pp. 38, 39)

31. "A ridiculous presumption has latterly got abroad that common property in its primitive form is specifically a Slavonian, or even exclusively Russian form. It is the primitive form that we can prove to have existed amongst Romans, Teutons, and Celts, and even to this day we find numerous examples, ruins though they be, in India. A more exhaustive study of Asiatic, and especially of Indian forms of common property, would show how from the different forms of primitive common property, different forms of its dissolution have been developed. Thus, for instance, the various original types of Roman and Teutonic private property are deducible from different forms of Indian common property." (Karl Marx, "[Zur Kritik, &c.](#)," p. 10.)

32. The insufficiency of Ricardo's analysis of the magnitude of value, and his analysis is by far the best, will appear from the 3rd and 4th books of this work. As regards value in general, it is the weak point of the classical school of Political Economy that it nowhere expressly and with full consciousness, distinguishes between labour, as it appears in the value of a product, and the same labour, as it appears in the use value of that product. Of course the distinction is practically made, since this school treats labour, at one time under its quantitative aspect, at another under its qualitative aspect. But it has not the least idea, that when the difference between various kinds of labour is treated as purely quantitative, their qualitative unity or equality, and therefore their reduction to abstract human labour, is implied. For instance, Ricardo declares that he agrees with Destutt de Tracy in this proposition: "As it is certain that our physical and moral faculties are alone our original riches, the employment of those faculties, labour of some kind, is our only original treasure, and it is always from this employment that all those things are created which we call riches... It is certain, too, that all those things only represent the labour which has created them, and if they have a value, or even two distinct values, they can only derive them from that (the value) of the labour from which they emanate." (Ricardo, "[The Principles of Pol. Econ.](#)," 3 Ed. Lond. 1821, p. 334.) We would here only point out, that Ricardo puts his own more profound interpretation upon the words of Destutt. What the latter really says is, that on the one hand all things which constitute wealth represent the labour that creates them, but that on the other hand, they acquire their "two different values" (use value and

exchange value) from “the value of labour.” He thus falls into the commonplace error of the vulgar economists, who assume the value of one commodity (in this case labour) in order to determine the values of the rest. But Ricardo reads him as if he had said, that labour (not the value of labour) is embodied both in use value and exchange value. Nevertheless, Ricardo himself pays so little attention to the twofold character of the labour which has a twofold embodiment, that he devotes the whole of his chapter on “Value and Riches, Their Distinctive Properties,” to a laborious examination of the trivialities of a J.B. Say. And at the finish he is quite astonished to find that Destutt on the one hand agrees with him as to labour being the source of value, and on the other hand with J. B. Say as to the notion of value.

33. It is one of the chief failings of classical economy that it has never succeeded, by means of its analysis of commodities, and, in particular, of their value, in discovering that form under which value becomes exchange value. Even [Adam Smith](#) and [Ricardo](#), the best representatives of the school, treat the form of value as a thing of no importance, as having no connection with the inherent nature of commodities. The reason for this is not solely because their attention is entirely absorbed in the analysis of the magnitude of value. It lies deeper. The value form of the product of labour is not only the most abstract, but is also the most universal form, taken by the product in bourgeois production and stamps that production as a particular species of social production, and thereby gives it its special historical character. If then we treat this mode of production as one eternally fixed by Nature for every state of society, we necessarily overlook that which is the *differentia specifica* of the value form, and consequently of the commodity form, and of its further developments, money form, capital form, &c. We consequently find that economists, who are thoroughly agreed as to labour time being the measure of the magnitude of value, have the most strange and contradictory ideas of money, the perfected form of the general equivalent. This is seen in a striking manner when they treat of banking, where the commonplace definitions of money will no longer hold water. This led to the rise of a restored mercantile system (Ganilh, &c.), which sees in value nothing but a social form, or rather the unsubstantial ghost of that form. Once for all I may here state, that by classical Political Economy, I understand that economy which, since the time of [W. Petty](#), has investigated the real relations of production in bourgeois society in contradistinction to vulgar economy, which deals with appearances only, ruminates without ceasing on the materials long since provided by scientific economy, and there seeks plausible explanations of the most obtrusive phenomena, for bourgeois daily use, but for the rest, confines itself to systematising in a pedantic way, and proclaiming for everlasting truths, the trite ideas held by the self-complacent bourgeoisie with regard to their own world, to them the best of all possible worlds.

34. “Les économistes ont une singulière manière de procéder. Il n’y a pour eux que deux sortes d’institutions, celles de l’art et celles de la nature. Les institutions de la féodalité sont des institutions artificielles celles de la bourgeoisie sont des institutions naturelles. Ils ressemblent en ceci aux théologiens, qui eux aussi établissent deux sortes de religions. Toute religion qui n’est pas la leur, est une invention des hommes tandis que leur propre religion est une émanation de Dieu -Ainsi il y a eu de l’histoire, mais il n’y en a plus.” [“Economists have a singular method of procedure. There are only two kinds of institutions for them, artificial and natural. The institutions of feudalism are artificial institutions, those of the bourgeoisie are natural institutions. In this they resemble the theologians, who likewise

establish two kinds of religion. Every religion which is not theirs is an invention of men, while their own is an emanation from God. ... Thus there has been history, but there is no longer any”] (Karl Marx. [Misère de la Philosophie. Réponse a la Philosophie de la Misère par M. Proudhon](#), 1847, p. 113.) Truly comical is M. Bastiat, who imagines that the ancient Greeks and Romans lived by plunder alone. But when people plunder for centuries, there must always be something at hand for them to seize; the objects of plunder must be continually reproduced. It would thus appear that even Greeks and Romans had some process of production, consequently, an economy, which just as much constituted the material basis of their world, as bourgeois economy constitutes that of our modern world. Or perhaps Bastiat means, that a mode of production based on slavery is based on a system of plunder. In that case he treads on dangerous ground. If a giant thinker like Aristotle erred in his appreciation of slave labour, why should a dwarf economist like Bastiat be right in his appreciation of wage labour? I seize this opportunity of shortly answering an objection taken by a German paper in America, to my work, “Zur Kritik der Pol. Oekonomie, 1859.” In the estimation of that paper, my view that each special mode of production and the social relations corresponding to it, in short, that the economic structure of society, is the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised and to which definite social forms of thought correspond; that the mode of production determines the character of the social, political, and intellectual life generally, all this is very true for our own times, in which material interests preponderate, but not for the middle ages, in which Catholicism, nor for Athens and Rome, where politics, reigned supreme. In the first place it strikes one as an odd thing for any one to suppose that these well-worn phrases about the middle ages and the ancient world are unknown to anyone else. This much, however, is clear, that the middle ages could not live on Catholicism, nor the ancient world on politics. On the contrary, it is the mode in which they gained a livelihood that explains why here politics, and there Catholicism, played the chief part. For the rest, it requires but a slight acquaintance with the history of the Roman republic, for example, to be aware that its secret history is the history of its landed property. On the other hand, Don Quixote long ago paid the penalty for wrongly imagining that knight errantry was compatible with all economic forms of society.

35. “Observations on certain verbal disputes in Pol. Econ., particularly relating to value and to demand and supply” Lond., 1821, p. 16.

36. S. Bailey, l.c., p. 165.

37. The author of “Observations” and S. Bailey accuse Ricardo of converting exchange value from something relative into something absolute. The opposite is the fact. He has explained the apparent relation between objects, such as diamonds and pearls, in which relation they appear as exchange values, and disclosed the true relation hidden behind the appearances, namely, their relation to each other as mere expressions of human labour. If the followers of Ricardo answer Bailey somewhat rudely, and by no means convincingly, the reason is to be sought in this, that they were unable to find in Ricardo’s own works any key to the hidden relations existing between value and its form, exchange value.

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Chapter Two: Exchange

It is plain that commodities cannot go to market and make exchanges of their own account. We must, therefore, have recourse to their guardians, who are also their owners. Commodities are things, and therefore without power of resistance against man. If they are wanting in docility he can use force; in other words, he can take possession of them. ^[1] In order that these objects may enter into relation with each other as commodities, their guardians must place themselves in relation to one another, as persons whose will resides in those objects, and must behave in such a way that each does not appropriate the commodity of the other, and part with his own, except by means of an act done by mutual consent. They must therefore, mutually recognise in each other the rights of private proprietors. This juridical relation, which thus expresses itself in a contract, whether such contract be part of a developed legal system or not, is a relation between two wills, and is but the reflex of the real economic relation between the two. It is this economic relation that determines the subject-matter comprised in each such juridical act. ^[2]

The persons exist for one another merely as representatives of, and, therefore, as owners of, commodities. In the course of our investigation we shall find, in general, that the characters who appear on the economic stage are but the personifications of the economic relations that exist between them.

What chiefly distinguishes a commodity from its owner is the fact, that it looks upon every other commodity as but the form of appearance of its own value. A born leveller and a cynic, it is always ready to exchange not only soul, but body, with any and every other commodity, be the same more repulsive than Maritornes herself. The owner makes up for this lack in the commodity of a sense of the concrete, by his own five and more senses. His commodity possesses for himself no immediate use-value. Otherwise, he would not bring it to the market. It has use-value for others; but for himself its only direct use-value is that of being a depository of exchange-value, and, consequently, a means of exchange. ^[3] Therefore, he makes up his mind to part with it for commodities whose value in use is of service to him. All commodities are non-use-values for their owners, and use-values for their non-owners. Consequently, they must all change hands. But this change of hands is what constitutes their exchange, and the latter puts them in relation with each other as values, and realises them as values. Hence commodities must be realised as values before they can be realised as use-values.

On the other hand, they must show that they are use-values before they can be realised as

values. For the labour spent upon them counts effectively, only in so far as it is spent in a form that is useful for others. Whether that labour is useful for others, and its product consequently capable of satisfying the wants of others, can be proved only by the act of exchange.

Every owner of a commodity wishes to part with it in exchange only for those commodities whose use-value satisfies some want of his. Looked at in this way, exchange is for him simply a private transaction. On the other hand, he desires to realise the value of his commodity, to convert it into any other suitable commodity of equal value, irrespective of whether his own commodity has or has not any use-value for the owner of the other. From this point of view, exchange is for him a social transaction of a general character. But one and the same set of transactions cannot be simultaneously for all owners of commodities both exclusively private and exclusively social and general.

Let us look at the matter a little closer. To the owner of a commodity, every other commodity is, in regard to his own, a particular equivalent, and consequently his own commodity is the universal equivalent for all the others. But since this applies to every owner, there is, in fact, no commodity acting as universal equivalent, and the relative value of commodities possesses no general form under which they can be equated as values and have the magnitude of their values compared. So far, therefore, they do not confront each other as commodities, but only as products or use-values. In their difficulties our commodity owners think like Faust: “Im Anfang war die Tat.” [“In the beginning was the deed.” – Goethe, *Faust*.] They therefore acted and transacted before they thought. Instinctively they conform to the laws imposed by the nature of commodities. They cannot bring their commodities into relation as values, and therefore as commodities, except by comparing them with some one other commodity as the universal equivalent. That we saw from the analysis of a commodity. But a particular commodity cannot become the universal equivalent except by a social act. The social action therefore of all other commodities, sets apart the particular commodity in which they all represent their values. Thereby the bodily form of this commodity becomes the form of the socially recognised universal equivalent. To be the universal equivalent, becomes, by this social process, the specific function of the commodity thus excluded by the rest. Thus it becomes – money. “Illi unum consilium habent et virtutem et potestatem suam bestiae tradunt. Et ne quis possit emere aut vendere, nisi qui habet characterem aut nomen bestiae aut numerum nominis ejus.” [“These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.” Revelations, 17:13; “And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Revelations, 13:17.] (*Apocalypse*.)

Money is a crystal formed of necessity in the course of the exchanges, whereby different products of labour are practically equated to one another and thus by practice converted into commodities. The historical progress and extension of exchanges develops the contrast, latent in commodities, between use-value and value. The necessity for giving an external expression to this contrast for the purposes of commercial intercourse, urges on the establishment of an

independent form of value, and finds no rest until it is once for all satisfied by the differentiation of commodities into commodities and money. At the same rate, then, as the conversion of products into commodities is being accomplished, so also is the conversion of one special commodity into money.^[4]

The direct barter of products attains the elementary form of the relative expression of value in one respect, but not in another. That form is x Commodity A = y Commodity B. The form of direct barter is x use-value A = y use-value B.^[5] The articles A and B in this case are not as yet commodities, but become so only by the act of barter. The first step made by an object of utility towards acquiring exchange-value is when it forms a non-use-value for its owner, and that happens when it forms a superfluous portion of some article required for his immediate wants. Objects in themselves are external to man, and consequently alienable by him. In order that this alienation may be reciprocal, it is only necessary for men, by a tacit understanding, to treat each other as private owners of those alienable objects, and by implication as independent individuals. But such a state of reciprocal independence has no existence in a primitive society based on property in common, whether such a society takes the form of a patriarchal family, an ancient Indian community, or a Peruvian Inca State. The exchange of commodities, therefore, first begins on the boundaries of such communities, at their points of contact with other similar communities, or with members of the latter. So soon, however, as products once become commodities in the external relations of a community, they also, by reaction, become so in its internal intercourse. The proportions in which they are exchangeable are at first quite a matter of chance. What makes them exchangeable is the mutual desire of their owners to alienate them. Meantime the need for foreign objects of utility gradually establishes itself. The constant repetition of exchange makes it a normal social act. In the course of time, therefore, some portion at least of the products of labour must be produced with a special view to exchange. From that moment the distinction becomes firmly established between the utility of an object for the purposes of consumption, and its utility for the purposes of exchange. Its use-value becomes distinguished from its exchange-value. On the other hand, the quantitative proportion in which the articles are exchangeable, becomes dependent on their production itself. Custom stamps them as values with definite magnitudes.

In the direct barter of products, each commodity is directly a means of exchange to its owner, and to all other persons an equivalent, but that only in so far as it has use-value for them. At this stage, therefore, the articles exchanged do not acquire a value-form independent of their own use-value, or of the individual needs of the exchangers. The necessity for a value-form grows with the increasing number and variety of the commodities exchanged. The problem and the means of solution arise simultaneously. Commodity-owners never equate their own commodities to those of others, and exchange them on a large scale, without different kinds of commodities belonging to different owners being exchangeable for, and equated as values to, one and the same special article. Such last-mentioned article, by becoming the equivalent of various other

commodities, acquires at once, though within narrow limits, the character of a general social equivalent. This character comes and goes with the momentary social acts that called it into life. In turns and transiently it attaches itself first to this and then to that commodity. But with the development of exchange it fixes itself firmly and exclusively to particular sorts of commodities, and becomes crystallised by assuming the money-form. The particular kind of commodity to which it sticks is at first a matter of accident. Nevertheless there are two circumstances whose influence is decisive. The money-form attaches itself either to the most important articles of exchange from outside, and these in fact are primitive and natural forms in which the exchange-value of home products finds expression; or else it attaches itself to the object of utility that forms, like cattle, the chief portion of indigenous alienable wealth. Nomad races are the first to develop the money-form, because all their worldly goods consist of moveable objects and are therefore directly alienable; and because their mode of life, by continually bringing them into contact with foreign communities, solicits the exchange of products. Man has often made man himself, under the form of slaves, serve as the primitive material of money, but has never used land for that purpose. Such an idea could only spring up in a bourgeois society already well developed. It dates from the last third of the 17th century, and the first attempt to put it in practice on a national scale was made a century afterwards, during the French bourgeois revolution.

In proportion as exchange bursts its local bonds, and the value of commodities more and more expands into an embodiment of human labour in the abstract, in the same proportion the character of money attaches itself to commodities that are by Nature fitted to perform the social function of a universal equivalent. Those commodities are the precious metals.

The truth of the proposition that, “although gold and silver are not by Nature money, money is by Nature gold and silver,”^[6] is shown by the fitness of the physical properties of these metals for the functions of money.^[7] Up to this point, however, we are acquainted only with one function of money, namely, to serve as the form of manifestation of the value of commodities, or as the material in which the magnitudes of their values are socially expressed. An adequate form of manifestation of value, a fit embodiment of abstract, undifferentiated, and therefore equal human labour, that material alone can be whose every sample exhibits the same uniform qualities. On the other hand, since the difference between the magnitudes of value is purely quantitative, the money commodity must be susceptible of merely quantitative differences, must therefore be divisible at will, and equally capable of being reunited. Gold and silver possess these properties by Nature.

The use-value of the money-commodity becomes two-fold. In addition to its special use-value as a commodity (gold, for instance, serving to stop teeth, to form the raw material of articles of luxury, &c.), it acquires a formal use-value, originating in its specific social function.

Since all commodities are merely particular equivalents of money, the latter being their

universal equivalent, they, with regard to the latter as the universal commodity, play the parts of particular commodities. [\[8\]](#)

We have seen that the money-form is but the reflex, thrown upon one single commodity, of the value relations between all the rest. That money is a commodity [\[9\]](#) is therefore a new discovery only for those who, when they analyse it, start from its fully developed shape. The act of exchange gives to the commodity converted into money, not its value, but its specific value-form. By confounding these two distinct things some writers have been led to hold that the value of gold and silver is imaginary. [\[10\]](#) The fact that money can, in certain functions, be replaced by mere symbols of itself, gave rise to that other mistaken notion, that it is itself a mere symbol. Nevertheless under this error lurked a presentiment that the money-form of an object is not an inseparable part of that object, but is simply the form under which certain social relations manifest themselves. In this sense every commodity is a symbol, since, in so far as it is value, it is only the material envelope of the human labour spent upon it. [\[11\]](#) But if it be declared that the social characters assumed by objects, or the material forms assumed by the social qualities of labour under the régime of a definite mode of production, are mere symbols, it is in the same breath also declared that these characteristics are arbitrary fictions sanctioned by the so-called universal consent of mankind. This suited the mode of explanation in favour during the 18th century. Unable to account for the origin of the puzzling forms assumed by social relations between man and man, people sought to denude them of their strange appearance by ascribing to them a conventional origin.

It has already been remarked above that the equivalent form of a commodity does not imply the determination of the magnitude of its value. Therefore, although we may be aware that gold is money, and consequently directly exchangeable for all other commodities, yet that fact by no means tells how much 10 lbs., for instance, of gold is worth. Money, like every other commodity, cannot express the magnitude of its value except relatively in other commodities. This value is determined by the labour-time required for its production, and is expressed by the quantity of any other commodity that costs the same amount of labour-time. [\[12\]](#) Such quantitative determination of its relative value takes place at the source of its production by means of barter. When it steps into circulation as money, its value is already given. In the last decades of the 17th century it had already been shown that money is a commodity, but this step marks only the infancy of the analysis. The difficulty lies, not in comprehending that money is a commodity, but in discovering how, why, and by what means a commodity becomes money. [\[13\]](#)

We have already seen, from the most elementary expression of value, x commodity A = y commodity B, that the object in which the magnitude of the value of another object is represented, appears to have the equivalent form independently of this relation, as a social property given to it by Nature. We followed up this false appearance to its final establishment, which is complete so soon as the universal equivalent form becomes identified with the bodily

form of a particular commodity, and thus crystallised into the money-form. What appears to happen is, not that gold becomes money, in consequence of all other commodities expressing their values in it, but, on the contrary, that all other commodities universally express their values in gold, because it is money. The intermediate steps of the process vanish in the result and leave no trace behind. Commodities find their own value already completely represented, without any initiative on their part, in another commodity existing in company with them. These objects, gold and silver, just as they come out of the bowels of the earth, are forthwith the direct incarnation of all human labour. Hence the magic of money. In the form of society now under consideration, the behaviour of men in the social process of production is purely atomic. Hence their relations to each other in production assume a material character independent of their control and conscious individual action. These facts manifest themselves at first by products as a general rule taking the form of commodities. We have seen how the progressive development of a society of commodity-producers stamps one privileged commodity with the character of money. Hence the riddle presented by money is but the riddle presented by commodities; only it now strikes us in its most glaring form.

Footnotes

1. In the 12th century, so renowned for its piety, they included amongst commodities some very delicate things. Thus a French poet of the period enumerates amongst the goods to be found in the market of Landit, not only clothing shoes, leather, agricultural implements, &c., but also “femmes folles de leur corps.”

2. Proudhon begins by taking his ideal of Justice, of “justice éternelle,” from the juridical relations that correspond to the production of commodities: thereby, it may be noted, he proves, to the consolation of all good citizens, that the production of commodities is a form of production as everlasting as justice. Then he turns round and seeks to reform the actual production of commodities, and the actual legal system corresponding thereto, in accordance with this ideal. What opinion should we have of a chemist, who, instead of studying the actual laws of the molecular changes in the composition and decomposition of matter, and on that foundation solving definite problems, claimed to regulate the composition and decomposition of matter by means of the “eternal ideas,” of “naturalité” and “affinité”? Do we really know any more about “usury,” when we say it contradicts “justice éternelle,” *équité éternelle* “mutualité éternelle,” and other *vérités éternelles* than the fathers of the church did when they said it was incompatible with “*grâce éternelle*,” “*foi éternelle*,” and “*la volonté éternelle de Dieu*”?

3. “For two-fold is the use of every object.... The one is peculiar to the object as such, the other is not, as a sandal which may be worn, and is also exchangeable. Both are uses of the sandal, for even he who exchanges the sandal for the money or food he is in want of, makes use of the sandal as a sandal. But not in its natural way. For it has not been made for the sake of being exchanged.” (Aristoteles, “De Rep.” l. i. c. 9.)

4. From this we may form an estimate of the shrewdness of the petit-bourgeois socialism which, while perpetuating the production of commodities, aims at abolishing the “antagonism” between money and commodities, and consequently, since money exists only by virtue of this antagonism, at abolishing money itself. We might just as well try to retain Catholicism without the Pope. For more on this point see my work, “Zur Kritik der Pol. Oekon.,” p. 61, sq.

5. So long as, instead of two distinct use-values being exchanged, a chaotic mass of articles are offered as the equivalent of a single article, which is often the case with savages, even the direct barter of products is in its first infancy.

6. Karl Marx, l.c., p. 135. “I metalli ... naturalmente moneta.” [“The metals ... are by their nature money.”] (Galiani, “Della moneta” in Custodi’s Collection: Parte Moderna t. iii.)

7. For further details on this subject see in my work cited above, the chapter on “The precious metals.”

8. “Il danaro è la merce universale”(Verri, l.c., p. 16).

9. “Silver and gold themselves (which we may call by the general name of bullion) are ... commodities ... rising and falling in ... value ... Bullion, then, may be reckoned to be of higher value where the smaller weight will purchase the greater quantity of the product or manufacture of the country,” &c. (“A Discourse of the General Notions of Money, Trade, and Exchanges, as They Stand in Relation each to other.” By a Merchant. Lond., 1695, p. 7.) “Silver and gold, coined or uncoined, though they are used for a measure of all other things, are no less a commodity than wine, oil, tobacco, cloth, or stuffs.” (“A Discourse concerning Trade, and that in particular of the East Indies,” &c. London, 1689, p. 2.) “The stock and riches of the kingdom cannot properly be confined to money, nor ought gold and silver to be excluded from being merchandise.” (“The East-India Trade a Most Profitable Trade.” London, 1677, p. 4.)

10. “L’oro e l’argento hanno valore come metalli anteriore all’esser moneta.” [“Gold and silver have value as metals before they are money”] (Galiani, l.c.) Locke says, “The universal consent of mankind gave to silver, on account of its qualities which made it suitable for money, an imaginary value.” Law, on the other hand. “How could different nations give an imaginary value to any single thing... or how could this imaginary value have maintained itself?” But the following shows how little he himself understood about the matter: “Silver was exchanged in proportion to the value in use it possessed, consequently in proportion to its real value. By its adoption as money it received an additional value (une valeur additionnelle).” (Jean Law: “Considérations sur le numéraire et le commerce” in E. Daire’s Edit. of “Economistes Financiers du XVIII siècle,” p. 470.)

11. “L’Argent en (des denrées) est le signe.” [“Money is their (the commodities’) symbol”] (V. de Forbonnais: “Eléments du Commerce, Nouv. Edit. Leyde, 1766,” t. II., p. 143.) “Comme signe il est attiré par les denrées.” [“As a symbol it is attracted by the commodities”] (l.c., p. 155.) “L’argent est un signe d’une chose et la représente.” [“Money is a symbol of a thing and represents it”] (Montesquieu: “Esprit des Lois,” (Oeuvres, Lond. 1767, t. II, p. 2.) “L’argent n’est pas simple signe, car il est lui-même richesse, il ne représente pas les valeurs, il les équivaut.” [“Money is not a mere symbol, for it is itself

wealth; it does not represent the values, it is their equivalents”] (Le Trosne, l.c., p. 910.) “The notion of value contemplates the valuable article as a mere symbol - the article counts not for what it is, but for what it is worth.” (Hegel, l.c., p. 100.) Lawyers started long before economists the idea that money is a mere symbol, and that the value of the precious metals is purely imaginary. This they did in the sycophantic service of the crowned heads, supporting the right of the latter to debase the coinage, during the whole of the middle ages, by the traditions of the Roman Empire and the conceptions of money to be found in the Pandects. “Qu’aucun puisse ni doive faire doute,” [“Let no one call into question,”] says an apt scholar of theirs Philip of Valois, in a decree of 1346, “que à nous et à notre majesté royale n’appartiennent seulement ... le mestier, le fait, l’état, la provision et toute l’ordonnance des monnaies, de donner tel cours, et pour tel prix comme il nous plait et bon nous semble.” [“that the trade, the composition, the supply and the power of issuing ordinances on the currency ... belongs exclusively to us and to our royal majesty, to fix such a rate and at such price as it shall please us and seem good to us”] It was a maxim of the Roman Law that the value of money was fixed by decree of the emperor. It was expressly forbidden to treat money as a commodity. “Pecunias vero nulli emere fas erit, nam in usu publico constitutas oportet non esse mercem.” [“However, it shall not be lawful to anyone to buy money, for, as it was created for public use, it is not permissible for it to be a commodity”] Some good work on this question has been done by G. F. Pagnini: “Saggio sopra il giusto pregio delle cose, 1751”; Custodi “Parte Moderna,” t. II. In the second part of his work Pagnini directs his polemics especially against the lawyers.

12. “If a man can bring to London an ounce of Silver out of the Earth in Peru, in the same time that he can produce a bushel of Corn, then the one is the natural price of the other; now, if by reason of new or more easier mines a man can procure two ounces of silver as easily as he formerly did one, the corn will be as cheap at ten shillings the bushel as it was before at five shillings, caeteris paribus.” William Petty. “A Treatise of Taxes and Contributions.” Lond., 1667, p. 32.

13. The learned Professor Roscher, after first informing us that “the false definitions of money may be divided into two main groups: those which make it more, and those which make it less, than a commodity,” gives us a long and very mixed catalogue of works on the nature of money, from which it appears that he has not the remotest idea of the real history of the theory; and then he moralises thus: “For the rest, it is not to be denied that most of the later economists do not bear sufficiently in mind the peculiarities-that distinguish money from other commodities” (it is then, after all, either more or less than a commodity!)... “So far, the semi-mercantilist reaction of Ganilh is not altogether without foundation.” (Wilhelm Roscher: “Die Grundlagen der Nationaloekonomie,” 3rd Edn. 1858, pp. 207-210.) More! less! not sufficiently! so far! not altogether! What clearness and precision of ideas and language! And such eclectic professorial twaddle is modestly baptised by Mr. Roscher, “the anatomico-physiological method” of Political Economy! One discovery however, he must have credit for, namely, that money is “a pleasant commodity.”

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Chapter Three: Money, Or the Circulation of Commodities

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SECTION 1

THE MEASURE OF VALUES

Throughout this work, I assume, for the sake of simplicity, gold as the money-commodity.

The first chief function of money is to supply commodities with the material for the expression of their values, or to represent their values as magnitudes of the same denomination, qualitatively equal, and quantitatively comparable. It thus serves as a *universal measure of value*. And only by virtue of this function does gold, the equivalent commodity *par excellence*, become money.

It is not money that renders commodities commensurable. Just the contrary. It is because all commodities, as values, are realised human labour, and therefore commensurable, that their values can be measured by one and the same special commodity, and the latter be converted

into the common measure of their values, *i.e.*, into money. Money as a measure of value, is the phenomenal form that must of necessity be assumed by that measure of value which is immanent in commodities, labour-time. [1]

The expression of the value of a commodity in gold — x commodity A = y money-commodity — is its money-form or price. A single equation, such as 1 ton of iron = 2 ounces of gold, now suffices to express the value of the iron in a socially valid manner. There is no longer any need for this equation to figure as a link in the chain of equations that express the values of all other commodities, because the equivalent commodity, gold, now has the character of money. The general form of relative value has resumed its original shape of simple or isolated relative value. On the other hand, the expanded expression of relative value, the endless series of equations, has now become the form peculiar to the relative value of the money-commodity. The series itself, too, is now given, and has social recognition in the prices of actual commodities. We have only to read the quotations of a price-list backwards, to find the magnitude of the value of money expressed in all sorts of commodities. But money itself has no price. In order to put it on an equal footing with all other commodities in this respect, we should be obliged to equate it to itself as its own equivalent.

The price or money-form of commodities is, like their form of value generally, a form quite distinct from their palpable bodily form; it is, therefore, a purely ideal or mental form. Although invisible, the value of iron, linen and corn has actual existence in these very articles: it is ideally made perceptible by their equality with gold, a relation that, so to say, exists only in their own heads. Their owner must, therefore, lend them his tongue, or hang a ticket on them, before their prices can be communicated to the outside world. [2] Since the expression of the value of commodities in gold is a merely ideal act, we may use for this purpose imaginary or ideal money. Every trader knows, that he is far from having turned his goods into money, when he has expressed their value in a price or in imaginary money, and that it does not require the least bit of real gold, to estimate in that metal millions of pounds' worth of goods. When, therefore, money serves as a measure of value; it is employed only as imaginary or ideal money. This circumstance has given rise to the wildest theories. [3] But, although the money that performs the functions of a measure of value is only ideal money, price depends entirely upon the actual substance that is money. The value, or in other words, the quantity of human labour contained in a ton of iron, is expressed in imagination by such a quantity of the money-commodity as contains the same amount of labour as the iron. According, therefore, as the measure of value is gold, silver, or copper, the value of the ton of iron will be expressed by very different prices, or will be represented by very different quantities of those metals respectively.

If, therefore, two different commodities, such as gold and silver, are simultaneously measures of value, all commodities have two prices — one a gold-price, the other a silver-price. These exist quietly side by side, so long as the ratio of The value of silver to that of gold remains

unchanged, say, at 15:1. Every change in their ratio disturbs the ratio which exists between the gold-prices and the silver-prices of commodities, and thus proves, by facts, that a double standard of value is inconsistent with the functions of a standard. [4]

Commodities with definite prices present themselves under the form; *a* commodity A = *x* gold; *b* commodity B = *z* gold; *c* commodity C = *y* gold, &c., where *a*, *b*, *c*, represent definite quantities of the commodities A, B, C and *x*, *z*, *y*, definite quantities of gold. The values of these commodities are, therefore, changed in imagination into so many different quantities of gold. Hence, in spite of the confusing variety of the commodities themselves, their values become magnitudes of the same denomination, gold-magnitudes. They are now capable of being compared with each other and measured, and the want becomes technically felt of comparing them with some fixed quantity of gold as a unit measure. This unit, by subsequent division into aliquot parts, becomes itself the standard or scale. Before they become money, gold, silver, and copper already possess such standard measures in their standards of weight, so that, for example, a pound weight, while serving as the unit, is, on the one hand, divisible into ounces, and, on the other, may be combined to make up hundredweights. [5] It is owing to this that, in all metallic currencies, the names given to the standards of money or of price were originally taken from the pre-existing names of the standards of weight.

As *measure of Value*, and as *standard of price*, money has two entirely distinct functions to perform. It is the measure of value inasmuch as it is the socially recognised incarnation of human labour; it is the standard of price inasmuch as it is a fixed weight of metal. As the measure of value it serves to convert the values of all the manifold commodities into prices, into imaginary quantities of gold; as the standard of price it measures those quantities of gold. The measure of values measures commodities considered as values; the standard of price measures, on the contrary, quantities of gold by a unit quantity of gold, not the value of one quantity of gold by the weight of another. In order to make gold a standard of price, a certain weight must be fixed upon as the unit. In this case, as in all cases of measuring quantities of the same denomination, the establishment of an unvarying unit of measure is all-important. Hence, the less the unit is subject to variation, so much the better does the standard of price fulfil its office. But only in so far as it is itself a product of labour, and, therefore, potentially variable in value, can gold serve as a measure of value. [6]

It is, in the first place, quite clear that a change in the value of gold does not, in any way, affect its function as a standard of price. No matter how this value varies, the proportions between the values of different quantities of the metal remain constant. However great the fall in its value, 12 ounces of gold still have 12 times the value of 1 ounce; and in prices, the only thing considered is the relation between different quantities of gold. Since, on the other hand, no rise or fall in the value of an ounce of gold can alter its weight, no alteration can take place in the weight of its aliquot parts. Thus gold always renders the same service as an invariable standard

of price, however much its value may vary.

In the second place, a change in the value of gold does not interfere with its functions as a measure of value. The change affects all commodities simultaneously, and, therefore, *caeteris paribus*, leaves their relative values *inter se*, unaltered, although those values are now expressed in higher or lower gold-prices.

Just as when we estimate the value of any commodity by a definite quantity of the use-value of some other commodity, so in estimating the value of the former in gold, we assume nothing more than that the production of a given quantity of gold costs, at the given period, a given amount of labour. As regards the fluctuations of prices generally, they are subject to the laws of elementary relative value investigated in a former chapter.

A general rise in the prices of commodities can result only, either from a rise in their values — the value of money remaining constant — or from a fall in the value of money, the values of commodities remaining constant. On the other hand, a general fall in prices can result only, either from a fall in the values of commodities — the value of money remaining constant — or from a rise in the value of money, the values of commodities remaining constant. It therefore by no means follows, that a rise in the value of money necessarily implies a proportional fall in the prices of commodities; or that a fall in the value of money implies a proportional rise in prices. Such change of price holds good only in the case of commodities whose value remains constant. With those, for example, whose value rises, simultaneously with, and proportionally to, that of money, there is no alteration in price. And if their value rise either slower or faster than that of money, the fall or rise in their prices will be determined by the difference between the change in their value and that of money; and so on.

Let us now go back to the consideration of the price-form.

By degrees there arises a discrepancy between the current moneynames of the various weights of the precious metal figuring as money, and the actual weights which those names originally represented. This discrepancy is the result of historical causes, among which the chief are: — (1) The importation of foreign money into an imperfectly developed community. This happened in Rome in its early days, where gold and silver coins circulated at first as foreign commodities. The names of these foreign coins never coincide with those of the indigenous weights. (2) As wealth increases, the less precious metal is thrust out by the more precious from its place as a measure of value, copper by silver, silver by gold, however much this order of sequence may be in contradiction with poetical chronology. ^[7] The word pound, for instance, was the money-name given to an actual pound weight of silver. When gold replaced silver as a measure of value, the same name was applied according to the ratio between the values of silver and gold, to perhaps 1-15th of a pound of gold. The word pound, as a money-name, thus becomes differentiated from the same word as a weight-name. ^[8] (3) The debasing of money

carried on for centuries by kings and princes to such an extent that, of the original weights of the coins, nothing in fact remained but the names. [\[9\]](#)

These historical causes convert the separation of the money-name from the weight-name into an established habit with the community. Since the standard of money is on the one hand purely conventional, and must on the other hand find general acceptance, it is in the end regulated by law. A given weight of one of the precious metals, an ounce of gold, for instance, becomes officially divided into aliquot parts, with legally bestowed names, such as pound, dollar, &c. These aliquot parts, which thenceforth serve as units of money, are then subdivided into other aliquot parts with legal names, such as shilling, penny, &c. [\[10\]](#) But, both before and after these divisions are made, a definite weight of metal is the standard of metallic money. The sole alteration consists in the subdivision and denomination.

The prices, or quantities of gold, into which the values of commodities are ideally changed, are therefore now expressed in the names of coins, or in the legally valid names of the subdivisions of the gold standard. Hence, instead of saying: A quarter of wheat is worth an ounce of gold; we say, it is worth £3 17s. 10 1/2d. In this way commodities express by their prices how much they are worth, and money serves as *money of account* whenever it is a question of fixing the value of an article in its money-form. [\[11\]](#)

The name of a thing is something distinct from the qualities of that thing. I know nothing of a man, by knowing that his name is Jacob. In the same way with regard to money, every trace of a value-relation disappears in the names pound, dollar, franc, ducat, &c. The confusion caused by attributing a hidden meaning to these cabalistic signs is all the greater, because these money-names express both the values of commodities, and, at the same time, aliquot parts of the weight of the metal that is the standard of money. [\[12\]](#) On the other hand, it is absolutely necessary that value, in order that it may be distinguished from the varied bodily forms of commodities, should assume this material and unmeaning, but, at the same time, purely social form. [\[13\]](#)

Price is the money-name of the labour realised in a commodity. Hence the expression of the equivalence of a commodity with the sum of money constituting its price, is a tautology, [\[14\]](#) just as in general the expression of the relative value of a commodity is a statement of the equivalence of two commodities. But although price, being the exponent of the magnitude of a commodity's value, is the exponent of its exchange-ratio with money, it does not follow that the exponent of this exchange-ratio is necessarily the exponent of the magnitude of the commodity's value. Suppose two equal quantities of socially necessary labour to be respectively represented by 1 quarter of wheat and £2 (nearly 1/2 oz. of gold), £2 is the expression in money of the magnitude of the value of the quarter of wheat, or is its price. If now circumstances allow of this price being raised to £3, or compel it to be reduced to £1, then although £1 and £3 may be too

small or too great properly to express the magnitude of the wheat's value; nevertheless they are its prices, for they are, in the first place, the form under which its value appears, *i.e.*, money; and in the second place, the exponents of its exchange-ratio with money. If the conditions of production, in other words, if the productive power of labour remain constant, the same amount of social labour-time must, both before and after the change in price, be expended in the reproduction of a quarter of wheat. This circumstance depends, neither on the will of the wheat producer, nor on that of the owners of other commodities.

Magnitude of value expresses a relation of social production, it expresses the connexion that necessarily exists between a certain article and the portion of the total labour-time of society required to produce it. As soon as magnitude of value is converted into price, the above necessary relation takes the shape of a more or less accidental exchange-ratio between a single commodity and another, the money-commodity. But this exchange-ratio may express either the real magnitude of that commodity's value, or the quantity of gold deviating from that value, for which, according to circumstances, it may be parted with. The possibility, therefore, of quantitative incongruity between price and magnitude of value, or the deviation of the former from the latter, is inherent in the price-form itself. This is no defect, but, on the contrary, admirably adapts the price-form to a mode of production whose inherent laws impose themselves only as the mean of apparently lawless irregularities that compensate one another.

The price-form, however, is not only compatible with the possibility of a quantitative incongruity between magnitude of value and price, *i.e.*, between the former and its expression in money, but it may also conceal a qualitative inconsistency, so much so, that, although money is nothing but the value-form of commodities, price ceases altogether to express value. Objects that in themselves are no commodities, such as conscience, honour, &c., are capable of being offered for sale by their holders, and of thus acquiring, through their price, the form of commodities. Hence an object may have a price without having value. The price in that case is imaginary, like certain quantities in mathematics. On the other hand, the imaginary price-form may sometimes conceal either a direct or indirect real value-relation; for instance, the price of uncultivated land, which is without value, because no human labour has been incorporated in it.

Price, like relative value in general, expresses the value of a commodity (*e.g.*, a ton of iron), by stating that a given quantity of the equivalent (*e.g.*, an ounce of gold), is directly exchangeable for iron. But it by no means states the converse, that iron is directly exchangeable for gold. In order, therefore, that a commodity may in practice act effectively as exchange-value, it must quit its bodily shape, must transform itself from mere imaginary into real gold, although to the commodity such transubstantiation may be more difficult than to the Hegelian "concept," the transition from "necessity" to "freedom," or to a lobster the casting of his shell, or to Saint Jerome the putting off of the old Adam. ^[15] Though a commodity may, side by side with its actual form (iron, for instance), take in our imagination the form of gold, yet it cannot at

one and the same time actually be both iron and gold. To fix its price, it suffices to equate it to gold in imagination. But to enable it to render to its owner the service of a universal equivalent, it must be actually replaced by gold. If the owner of the iron were to go to the owner of some other commodity offered for exchange, and were to refer him to the price of the iron as proof that it was already money, he would get the same answer as St. Peter gave in heaven to Dante, when the latter recited the creed —

“Assad bene e trascorsa
D’esta moneta gia la lega e’l peso,
Ma dimmi se tu l’hai nella tua borsa.”

A price therefore implies both that a commodity is exchangeable for money, and also that it must be so exchanged. On the other hand, gold serves as an ideal measure of value, only because it has already, in the process of exchange, established itself as the money-commodity. Under the ideal measure of values there lurks the hard cash.

SECTION 2

THE MEDIUM OF CIRCULATION

A. The Metamorphosis of Commodities

We saw in a former chapter that the exchange of commodities implies contradictory and mutually exclusive conditions. The differentiation of commodities into commodities and money does not sweep away these inconsistencies, but develops a *modus vivendi*, a form in which they can exist side by side. This is generally the way in which real contradictions are reconciled. For instance, it is a contradiction to depict one body as constantly falling towards another, and as, at the same time, constantly flying away from it. The ellipse is a form of motion which, while allowing this contradiction to go on, at the same time reconciles it.

In so far as exchange is a process, by which commodities are transferred from hands in which they are non-use-values, to hands in which they become use-values, it is a social circulation of matter. The product of one form of useful labour replaces that of another. When once a commodity has found a resting-place, where it can serve as a use-value, it falls out of the sphere

of exchange into that of consumption. But the former sphere alone interests us at present. We have, therefore, now to consider exchange from a formal point of view; to investigate the change of form or metamorphosis of commodities which effectuates the social circulation of matter.

The comprehension of this change of form is, as a rule, very imperfect. The cause of this imperfection is, apart from indistinct notions of value itself, that every change of form in a commodity results from the exchange of two commodities, an ordinary one and the money-commodity. If we keep in view the material fact alone that a commodity has been exchanged for gold, we overlook the very thing that we ought to observe — namely, what has happened to the form of the commodity. We overlook the facts that gold, when a mere commodity, is not money, and that when other commodities express their prices in gold, this gold is but the money-form of those commodities themselves.

Commodities, first of all, enter into the process of exchange just as they are. The process then differentiates them into commodities and money, and thus produces an external opposition corresponding to the internal opposition inherent in them, as being at once use-values and values. Commodities as use-values now stand opposed to money as exchange-value. On the other hand, both opposing sides are commodities, unities of use-value and value. But this unity of differences manifests itself at two opposite poles, and at each pole in an opposite way. Being poles they are as necessarily opposite as they are connected. On the one side of the equation we have an ordinary commodity, which is in reality a use-value. Its value is expressed only ideally in its price, by which it is equated to its opponent, the gold, as to the real embodiment of its value. On the other hand, the gold, in its metallic reality, ranks as the embodiment of value, as money. Gold, as gold, is exchange-value itself. As to its use-value, that has only an ideal existence, represented by the series of expressions of relative value in which it stands face to face with all other commodities, the sum of whose uses makes up the sum of the various uses of gold. These antagonistic forms of commodities are the real forms in which the process of their exchange moves and takes place.

Let us now accompany the owner of some commodity — say, our old friend the weaver of linen — to the scene of action, the market. His 20 yards of linen has a definite price, £2. He exchanges it for the £2, and then, like a man of the good old stamp that he is, he parts with the £2 for a family Bible of the same price. The linen, which in his eyes is a mere commodity, a depository of value, he alienates in exchange for gold, which is the linen's value-form, and this form he again parts with for another commodity, the Bible, which is destined to enter his house as an object of utility and of edification to its inmates. The exchange becomes an accomplished fact by two metamorphoses of opposite yet supplementary character — the conversion of the commodity into money, and the re-conversion of the money into a commodity. [\[16\]](#) The two phases of this metamorphosis are both of them distinct transactions of the weaver — selling, or

the exchange of the commodity for money; buying, or the exchange of the money for a commodity; and, the unity of the two acts, selling in order to buy.

The result of the whole transaction, as regards the weaver, is this, that instead of being in possession of the linen, he now has the Bible; instead of his original commodity, he now possesses another of the same value but of different utility. In like manner he procures his other means of subsistence and means of production. From his point of view, the whole process effectuates nothing more than the exchange of the product of his labour for the product of some one else's, nothing more than an exchange of products.

The exchange of commodities is therefore accompanied by the following changes in their form.

Commodity | Money | Commodity.
C | | | | | M | | | | | C.

The result of the whole process is, so far as concerns the objects themselves, C — C, the exchange of one commodity for another, the circulation of materialised social labour. When this result is attained, the process is at an end.

C — M. *First metamorphosis, or sale*

The leap taken by value from the body of the commodity, into the body of the gold, is, as I have elsewhere called it, the salto mortale of the commodity. If it falls short, then, although the commodity itself is not harmed, its owner decidedly is. The social division of labour causes his labour to be as one-sided as his wants are many-sided. This is precisely the reason why the product of his labour serves him solely as exchange-value. But it cannot acquire the properties of a socially recognised universal equivalent, except by being converted into money. That money, however, is in some one else's pocket. In order to entice the money out of that pocket, our friend's commodity must, above all things, be a use-value to the owner of the money. For this, it is necessary that the labour expended upon it, be of a kind that is socially useful, of a kind that constitutes a branch of the social division of labour. But division of labour is a system of production which has grown up spontaneously and continues to grow behind the backs of the producers. The commodity to be exchanged may possibly be the product of some new kind of labour, that pretends to satisfy newly arisen requirements, or even to give rise itself to new requirements. A particular operation, though yesterday, perhaps, forming one out of the many operations conducted by one producer in creating a given commodity, may to-day separate itself from this connexion, may establish itself as an independent branch of labour and send its incomplete product to market as an independent commodity. The circumstances may or may not be ripe for such a separation. To-day the product satisfies a social want. Tomorrow the article may, either altogether or partially, be superseded by some other appropriate product. Moreover,

although our weaver's labour may be a recognised branch of the social division of labour, yet that fact is by no means sufficient to guarantee the utility of his 20 yards of linen. If the community's want of linen, and such a want has a limit like every other want, should already be saturated by the products of rival weavers. our friend's product is superfluous, redundant, and consequently useless. Although people do not look a gift-horse in the mouth, our friend does not frequent the market for the purpose of making presents. But suppose his product turn out a real use-value, and thereby attracts money? The question arises, how much will it attract? No doubt the answer is already anticipated in the price of the article, in the exponent of the magnitude of its value. We leave out of consideration here any accidental miscalculation of value by our friend, a mistake that is soon rectified in the market. 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 moneynome 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, a fact which the owner of the money is only too eager to prove from the prices quoted by our friend's competitors. Unluckily for him, weavers are not few and far between. Lastly, suppose that every piece of linen in the market contains no more labour-time than is socially necessary. In spite of this, all these pieces taken as a whole, may have had superfluous labour-time spent upon them. If the market cannot stomach the whole quantity at the normal price of 2 shillings a yard, this proves that too great a portion of the total labour of the community has been expended in the form of weaving. The effect is the same as if each individual weaver had expended more labour-time upon his particular product than is socially necessary. Here we may say, with the German proverb: caught together, hung together. All the linen in the market counts but as one article of commerce, of which each piece is only an aliquot part. And as a matter of fact, the value also of each single yard is but the materialised form of the same definite and socially fixed quantity of homogeneous human labour. [\[17\]](#)

We see then, commodities are in love with money, but "the course of true love never did run smooth." The quantitative division of labour is brought about in exactly the same spontaneous and accidental manner as its qualitative division. The owners of commodities therefore find out, that the same division of labour that turns them into independent private producers, also frees the social process of production and the relations of the individual producers to each other within that process, from all dependence on the will of those producers, and that the seeming mutual independence of the individuals is supplemented by a system of general and mutual dependence through or by means of the products.

The division of labour converts the product of labour into a commodity, and thereby makes necessary its further conversion into money. At the same time it also makes the accomplishment of this transubstantiation quite accidental. Here, however, we are only concerned with the phenomenon in its integrity, and we therefore assume its progress to be normal. Moreover, if the

conversion take place at all, that is, if the commodity be not absolutely unsaleable, its metamorphosis does take place although the price realised may be abnormally above or below the value.

The seller has his commodity replaced by gold, the buyer has his gold replaced by a commodity. The fact which here stares us in the face is, that a commodity and gold, 20 yards of linen and £2, have changed hands and places, in other words, that they have been exchanged. But for what is the commodity exchanged? For the shape assumed by its own value, for the universal equivalent. And for what is the gold exchanged? For a particular form of its own use-value. Why does gold take the form of money face to face with the linen? Because the linen's price of £2, its denomination in money, has already equated the linen to gold in its character of money. A commodity strips off its original commodity-form on being alienated, *i.e.*, on the instant its use-value actually attracts the gold, that before existed only ideally in its price. The realisation of a commodity's price, or of its ideal value-form, is therefore at the same time the realisation of the ideal use-value of money; the conversion of a commodity into money, is the simultaneous conversion of money into a commodity. The apparently single process is in reality a double one. From the pole of the commodity-owner it is a sale, from the opposite pole of the money-owner, it is a purchase. In other words, a sale is a purchase, C—M is also M—C. [\[18\]](#)

Up to this point we have considered men in only one economic capacity, that of owners of commodities, a capacity in which they appropriate the produce of the labour of others, by alienating that of their own labour. Hence, for one commodity-owner to meet with another who has money, it is necessary, either, that the product of the labour of the latter person, the buyer, should be in itself money, should be gold, the material of which money consists, or that his product should already have changed its skin and have stripped off its original form of a useful object. In order that it may play the part of money, gold must of course enter the market at some point or other. This point is to be found at the source of production of the metal, at which place gold is bartered, as the immediate product of labour, for some other product of equal value. From that moment it always represents the realised price of some commodity. [\[19\]](#) Apart from its exchange for other commodities at the source of its production, gold, in whose-so-ever hands it may be, is the transformed shape of some commodity alienated by its owner; it is the product of a sale or of the first metamorphosis C—M. [\[20\]](#) Gold, as we saw, became ideal money, or a measure of values, in consequence of all commodities measuring their values by it, and thus contrasting it ideally with their natural shape as useful objects, and making it the shape of their value. It became real money, by the general alienation of commodities, by actually changing places with their natural forms as useful objects, and thus becoming in reality the embodiment of their values. When they assume this money-shape, commodities strip off every trace of their natural use-value, and of the particular kind of labour to which they owe their creation, in order to transform themselves into the uniform, socially recognised incarnation of homogeneous

human labour. We cannot tell from the mere look of a piece of money, for what particular commodity it has been exchanged. Under their money-form all commodities look alike. Hence, money may be dirt, although dirt is not money. We will assume that the two gold pieces, in consideration of which our weaver has parted with his linen, are the metamorphosed shape of a quarter of wheat. The sale of the linen, C—M, is at the same time its purchase, M—C. But the sale is the first act of a process that ends with a transaction of an opposite nature, namely, the purchase of a Bible; the purchase of the linen, on the other hand, ends a movement that began with a transaction of an opposite nature, namely, with the sale of the wheat. C—M (linen—money), which is the first phase of C—M'—C (linen—money—Bible), is also M—C (money—linen), the last phase of another movement C—M—C (wheat—money—linen). The first metamorphosis of one commodity, its transformation from a commodity into money, is therefore also invariably the second metamorphosis of some other commodity, the retransformation of the latter from money into a commodity. [\[21\]](#)

M—C, or purchase
The second and concluding metamorphosis of a commodity.

Because money is the metamorphosed shape of all other commodities, the result of their general alienation, for this reason it is alienable itself without restriction or condition. It reads all prices backwards, and thus, so to say, depicts itself in the bodies of all other commodities, which offer to it the material for the realisation of its own use-value. At the same time the prices, wooing glances cast at money by commodities, define the limits of its convertibility, by pointing to its quantity. Since every commodity, on becoming money, disappears as a commodity, it is impossible to tell from the money itself, how it got into the hands of its possessor, or what article has been changed into it. Non olet, from whatever source it may come. Representing on the one hand a sold commodity, it represents on the other a commodity to be bought. [\[22\]](#)

M—C, a purchase, is, at the same time, C—M, a sale; the concluding metamorphosis of one commodity is the first metamorphosis of another. With regard to our weaver, the life of his commodity ends with the Bible, into which he has reconverted his £2. But suppose the seller of the Bible turns the £2 set free by the weaver into brandy M—C, the concluding phase of C—M—C (linen—money—Bible), is also C—M, the first phase of C—M—C (Bible—money—brandy). The producer of a particular commodity has that one article alone to offer; this he sells very often in large quantities, but his many and various wants compel him to split up the price realised, the sum of money set free, into numerous purchases. Hence a sale leads to many purchases of various articles. The concluding metamorphosis of a commodity thus constitutes an aggregation of first metamorphoses of various other commodities.

If we now consider the completed metamorphosis of a commodity, as a whole, it appears in the first place, that it is made up of two opposite and complementary movements, C—M and M—C. These two antithetical transmutations of a commodity are brought about by two

antithetical social acts on the part of the owner, and these acts in their turn stamp the character of the economic parts played by him. As the person who makes a sale, he is a seller; as the person who makes a purchase, he is a buyer. But just as, upon every such transmutation of a commodity, its two forms, commodity-form and money-form, exist simultaneously but at opposite poles, so every seller has a buyer opposed to him, and every buyer a seller. While one particular commodity is going through its two transmutations in succession, from a commodity into money and from money into another commodity, the owner of the commodity changes in succession his part from that of seller to that of buyer. These characters of seller and buyer are therefore not permanent, but attach themselves in turns to the various persons engaged in the circulation of commodities.

The complete metamorphosis of a commodity, in its simplest form, implies four extremes, and three dramatic personae. First, a commodity comes face to face with money; the latter is the form taken by the value of the former, and exists in all its hard reality, in the pocket of the buyer. A commodity-owner is thus brought into contact with a possessor of money. So soon, now, as the commodity has been changed into money, the money becomes its transient equivalent-form, the use-value of which equivalent-form is to be found in the bodies of other commodities. Money, the final term of the first transmutation, is at the same time the starting-point for the second. The person who is a seller in the first transaction thus becomes a buyer in the second, in which a third commodity-owner appears on the scene as a seller. [\[23\]](#)

The two phases, each inverse to the other, that make up the metamorphosis of a commodity constitute together a circular movement, a circuit: commodity-form, stripping off of this form, and return to the commodity-form. No doubt, the commodity appears here under two different aspects. At the starting-point it is not a use-value to its owner; at the finishing point it is. So, too, the money appears in the first phase as a solid crystal of value, a crystal into which the commodity eagerly solidifies, and in the second, dissolves into the mere transient equivalent-form destined to be replaced by a use-value.

The two metamorphoses constituting the circuit are at the same time two inverse partial metamorphoses of two other commodities. One and the same commodity, the linen, opens the series of its own metamorphoses, and completes the metamorphosis of another (the wheat). In the first phase or sale, the linen plays these two parts in its own person. But, then, changed into gold, it completes its own second and final metamorphosis, and helps at the same time to accomplish the first metamorphosis of a third commodity. Hence the circuit made by one commodity in the course of its metamorphoses is inextricably mixed up with the circuits of other commodities. The total of all the different circuits constitutes *the circulation of commodities*.

The circulation of commodities differs from the direct exchange of products (barter), not only in form, but in substance. Only consider the course of events. The weaver has, as a matter of fact, exchanged his linen for a Bible, his own commodity for that of some one else. But this is

true only so far as he himself is concerned. The seller of the Bible, who prefers something to warm his inside, no more thought of exchanging his Bible for linen than our weaver knew that wheat had been exchanged for his linen. B's commodity replaces that of A, but A and B do not mutually exchange those commodities. It may, of course, happen that A and B make simultaneous purchases, the one from the other; but such exceptional transactions are by no means the necessary result of the general conditions of the circulation of commodities. We see here, on the one hand, how the exchange of commodities breaks through all local and personal bounds inseparable from direct barter, and develops the circulation of the products of social labour; and on the other hand, how it develops a whole network of social relations spontaneous in their growth and entirely beyond the control of the actors. It is only because the farmer has sold his wheat that the weaver is enabled to sell his linen, only because the weaver has sold his linen that our Hotspur is enabled to sell his Bible, and only because the latter has sold the water of everlasting life that the distiller is enabled to sell his *eau-de-vie*, and so on.

The process of circulation, therefore, does not, like direct barter of products, become extinguished upon the use-values changing places and hands. The money does not vanish on dropping out of the circuit of the metamorphosis of a given commodity. It is constantly being precipitated into new places in the arena of circulation vacated by other commodities. In the complete metamorphosis of the linen, for example, linen — money — Bible, the linen first falls out of circulation, and money steps into its place. Then the Bible falls out of circulation, and again money takes its place. When one commodity replaces another, the money-commodity always sticks to the hands of some third person. ^[24] Circulation sweats money from every pore.

Nothing can be more childish than the dogma, that because every sale is a purchase, and every purchase a sale, therefore the circulation of commodities necessarily implies an equilibrium of sales and purchases. If this means that the number of actual sales is equal to the number of purchases, it is mere tautology. But its real purport is to prove that every seller brings his buyer to market with him. Nothing of the kind. The sale and the purchase constitute one identical act, an exchange between a commodity-owner and an owner of money, between two persons as opposed to each other as the two poles of a magnet. They form two distinct acts, of polar and opposite characters, when performed by one single person. Hence the identity of sale and purchase implies that the commodity is useless, if, on being thrown into the alchemical retort of circulation, it does not come out again in the shape of money; if, in other words, it cannot be sold by its owner, and therefore be bought by the owner of the money. That identity further implies that the exchange, if it does take place, constitutes a period of rest, an interval, long or short, in the life *of* the commodity. Since the first metamorphosis of a commodity is at once a sale and a purchase, it is also an independent process in itself. The purchaser has the commodity, the seller has the money, *i.e.*, a commodity ready to go into circulation at any time. No one can sell unless some one else purchases. But no one is forthwith bound to purchase, because he has just sold. Circulation bursts through all restrictions as to time, place, and

individuals, imposed by direct barter, and this it effects by splitting up, into the antithesis of a sale and a purchase, the direct identity that in barter does exist between the alienation of one's own and the acquisition of some other man's product. To say that these two independent and antithetical acts have an intrinsic unity, are essentially one, is the same as to say that this intrinsic oneness expresses itself in an external antithesis. If the interval in time between the two complementary phases of the complete metamorphosis of a commodity become too great, if the split between the sale and the purchase become too pronounced, the intimate connexion between them, their oneness, asserts itself by producing — a crisis. The antithesis, use-value and value; the contradictions that private labour is bound to manifest itself as direct social labour, that a particularised concrete kind of labour has to pass for abstract human labour; the contradiction between the personification of objects and the representation of persons by things; all these antitheses and contradictions, which are immanent in commodities, assert themselves, and develop their modes of motion, in the antithetical phases of the metamorphosis of a commodity. These modes therefore imply the possibility, and no more than the possibility, of crises. The conversion of this mere possibility into a reality is the result of a long series of relations, that, from our present standpoint of simple circulation, have as yet no existence. [\[25\]](#)

B. The currency [\[26\]](#) of money

The change of form, C—M—C, by which the circulation of the material products of labour is brought about, requires that a given value in the shape of a commodity shall begin the process, and shall, also in the shape of a commodity, end it. The movement of the commodity is therefore a circuit. On the other hand, the form of this movement precludes a circuit from being made by the money. The result is not the return of the money, but its continued removal further and further away from its starting-point. So long as the seller sticks fast to his money, which is the transformed shape of his commodity, that commodity is still in the first phase of its metamorphosis, and has completed only half its course. But so soon as he completes the process, so soon as he supplements his sale by a purchase, the money again leaves the hands of its possessor. It is true that if the weaver, after buying the Bible, sell more linen, money comes back into his hands. But this return is not owing to the circulation of the first 20 yards of linen; that circulation resulted in the money getting into the hands of the seller of the Bible. The return of money into the hands of the weaver is brought about only by the renewal or repetition of the process of circulation with a fresh commodity, which renewed process ends with the same result as its predecessor did. Hence the movement directly imparted to money by the circulation of commodities takes the form of a constant motion away from its starting-point, of a course from the hands of one commodity-owner into those of another. This course constitutes its currency (*cours de la monnaie*).

The currency of money is the constant and monotonous repetition of the same process. The

commodity is always in the hands of the seller; the money, as a means of purchase, always in the hands of the buyer. And money serves as a means of purchase by realising the price of the commodity. This realisation transfers the commodity from the seller to the buyer and removes the money from the hands of the buyer into those of the seller, where it again goes through the same process with another commodity. That this one-sided character of the money's motion arises out of the two-sided character of the commodity's motion, is a circumstance that is veiled over. The very nature of the circulation of commodities begets the opposite appearance. The first metamorphosis of a commodity is visibly, not only the money's movement, but also that of the commodity itself; in the second metamorphosis, on the contrary, the movement appears to us as the movement of the money alone. In the first phase of its circulation the commodity changes place with the money. Thereupon the commodity, under its aspect of a useful object, falls out of circulation into consumption. [27] In its stead we have its value-shape — the money. It then goes through the second phase of its circulation, not under its own natural shape, but under the shape of money. The continuity of the movement is therefore kept up by the money alone, and the same movement that as regards the commodity consists of two processes of an antithetical character, is, when considered as the movement of the money, always one and the same process, a continued change of places with ever fresh commodities. Hence the result brought about by the circulation of-commodities, namely, the replacing of one commodity by another, takes the appearance of having been effected not by means of the change of form of the commodities but rather by the money acting as a medium of circulation, by an action that circulates commodities, to all appearance motionless in themselves, and transfers them from hands in which they are non-use-values, to hands in which they are use-values; and that in a direction constantly opposed to the direction of the money. The latter is continually withdrawing commodities from circulation and stepping into their places, and in thus way continually moving further and further from its starting-point Hence although the movement of the money is merely the expression of the circulation of commodities, yet the contrary appears to be the actual fact, and the circulation of commodities seems to be the result of the movement of the money. [28]

Again, money functions as a means of circulation only because in it the values of commodities have independent reality. Hence its movement, as the medium of circulation, is, in fact, merely the movement of commodities while changing their forms. This fact must therefore make itself plainly visible in the currency of money. Thus the linen for instance, first of all changes its commodity-form into its moneyform. The second term of its first metamorphosis, C—M, the money form, then becomes the first term of its final metamorphosis, M—C, its re-conversion into the Bible. But each of these two changes of form is accomplished by an exchange between commodity and money, by their *reciprocal displacement*. The same pieces of coin come into the seller's hand as *the alienated form of the commodity* and leave it as *the absolutely alienable form of the commodity*. They are displaced twice. The first metamorphosis of the linen puts these coins into the weaver's pocket, the second draws them out of it. The two inverse changes undergone by the same commodity are reflected in the displacement, twice repeated,

but in opposite directions, of the same pieces of coin.

If, on the contrary, only one phase of the metamorphosis is gone through, if there are only sales or only purchases, then a given piece of money changes its place only once. Its second change of place always expresses the second metamorphosis of the commodity, its re-conversion from money. The frequent repetition of the displacement of the same coins reflects not only the series of metamorphoses that a single commodity has gone through, but also the intertwining of the innumerable metamorphoses in the world of commodities in general. It is a matter of course, that all this is applicable to the simple circulation of commodities alone, the only form that we are now considering.

Every commodity, when it first steps into circulation, and undergoes its first change of form, does so only to fall out of circulation again and to be replaced by other commodities. Money, on the contrary, as the medium of circulation, keeps continually within the sphere of circulation, and moves about in it. The question therefore arises, how much money this sphere constantly absorbs?

In a given country there take place every day at the same time, but in different localities, numerous one-sided metamorphoses of commodities, or, in other words, numerous sales and numerous purchases. The commodities are equated beforehand in imagination, by their prices, to definite quantities of money. And since, in the form of circulation now under consideration, money and commodities always come bodily face to face, one at the positive pole of purchase, the other at the negative pole of sale, it is clear that the amount of the means of circulation required, is determined beforehand by the sum of the prices of all these commodities. As a matter of fact, the money in reality represents the quantity or sum of gold ideally expressed beforehand by the sum of the prices of the commodities. The equality of these two sums is therefore self-evident. We know, however, that, the values of commodities remaining constant, their prices vary with the value of gold (the material of money), rising in proportion as it falls, and falling in proportion as it rises. Now if, in consequence of such a rise or fall in the value of gold, the sum of the prices of commodities fall or rise, the quantity of money in currency must fall or rise to the same extent. The change in the quantity of the circulating medium is, in this case, it is true, caused by the money itself, yet not in virtue of its function as a medium of circulation, but of its function as a measure of value. First, the price of the commodities varies inversely as the value of the money, and then the quantity of the medium of circulation varies directly as the price of the commodities. Exactly the same thing would happen if, for instance, instead of the value of gold falling, gold were replaced by silver as the measure of value, or if, instead of the value of silver rising, gold were to thrust silver out from being the measure of value. In the one case, more silver would be current than gold was before; in the other case, less gold would be current than silver was before. In each case the value of the material of money, i. e., the value of the commodity that serves as the measure of value, would have undergone a change, and therefore so, too, would the prices of commodities which express their values in

money, and so, too, would the quantity of money current whose function it is to realise those prices. We have already seen, that the sphere of circulation has an opening through which gold (or the material of money generally) enters into it as a commodity with a given value. Hence, when money enters on its functions as a measure of value, when it expresses prices, its value is already determined. If now its value fall, this fact is first evidenced by a change in the prices of those commodities that are directly bartered for the precious metals at the sources of their production. The greater part of all other commodities, especially in the imperfectly developed stages of civil society, will continue for a long time to be estimated by the former antiquated and illusory value of the measure of value. Nevertheless, one commodity infects another through their common value-relation, so that their prices, expressed in gold or in silver, gradually settle down into the proportions determined by their comparative values, until finally the values of all commodities are estimated in terms of the new value of the metal that constitutes money. This process is accompanied by the continued increase in the quantity of the precious metals, an increase caused by their streaming in to replace the articles directly bartered for them at their sources of production. In proportion therefore as commodities in general acquire their true prices, in proportion as their values become estimated according to the fallen value of the precious metal, in the same proportion the quantity of that metal necessary for realising those new prices is provided beforehand. A one-sided observation of the results that followed upon the discovery of fresh supplies of gold and silver, led some economists in the 17th, and particularly in the 18th century, to the false conclusion, that the prices of commodities had gone up in consequence of the increased quantity of gold and silver serving as means of circulation. Hence momentarily whenever we estimate the price of a commodity. On this supposition then, the quantity of the medium of circulation is determined by the sum of the prices that have to be realised. If now we further suppose the price of each commodity to be given, the sum of the prices clearly depends on the mass of commodities in circulation. It requires but little racking of brains to comprehend that if one quarter of wheat costs £2, 100 quarters will cost £200, 200 quarters £400, and so on, that consequently the quantity of money that changes place with the wheat, when sold, must increase with the quantity of that wheat.

If the mass of commodities remain constant, the quantity of circulating money varies with the fluctuations in the prices of those commodities. It increases and diminishes because the sum of the prices increases or diminishes in consequence of the change of price. To produce this effect, it is by no means requisite that the prices of all commodities should rise or fall simultaneously. A rise or a fall in the prices of a number of leading articles, is sufficient in the one case to increase, in the other to diminish, the sum of the prices of all commodities, and, therefore, to put more or less money in circulation. Whether the change in the price correspond to an actual change of value in the commodities, or whether it be the result of mere fluctuations in market-prices, the effect on the quantity of the medium of circulation remains the same. Suppose the following articles to be sold or partially metamorphosed simultaneously in different localities: say, one quarter of wheat, 20 yards of linen, one Bible, and 4 gallons of brandy. If the price of each

article be £2, and the sum of the prices to be realised be consequently £8, it follows that £8 in money must go into circulation. If, on the other hand, these same articles are links in the following chain of metamorphoses: 1 quarter of wheat — £2 — 20 yards of linen — £2 — 1 Bible — £2 — 4 gallons of brandy — £2, a chain that is already well known to us, in that case the £2 cause the different commodities to circulate one after the other, and after realising their prices successively, and therefore the sum of those prices, £8, they come to rest at last in the pocket of the distiller. The £2 thus make four moves. This repeated change of place of the same pieces of money corresponds to the double change in form of the commodities, to their motion in opposite directions through two stages of circulation. and to the interlacing of the metamorphoses of different commodities. [29] These antithetic and complementary phases, of which the process of metamorphosis consists, are gone through, not simultaneously, but successively. Time is therefore required for the completion of the series. Hence the velocity of the currency of money is measured by the number of moves made by a given piece of money in a given time. Suppose the circulation of the 4 articles takes a day. The sum of the prices to be realised in the day is £8, the number of moves of the two pieces of money is four, and the quantity of money circulating is £2. Hence, for a given interval of time during the process of circulation, we have the following relation: the quantity of money functioning as the circulating medium is equal to the sum of the prices of the commodities divided by the number of moves made by coins of the same denomination. This law holds generally.

The total circulation of commodities in a given country during a given period is made up on the one hand of numerous isolated and simultaneous partial metamorphoses, sales which are at the same time purchases, in which each coin changes its place only once, or makes only one move; on the other hand, of numerous distinct series of metamorphoses partly running side by side, and partly coalescing with each other, in each of which series each coin makes a number of moves, the number being greater or less according to circumstances. The total number of moves made by all the circulating coins of one denomination being given, we can arrive at the average number of moves made by a single coin of that denomination, or at the average velocity of the currency of money. The quantity of money thrown into the circulation at the beginning of each day is of course determined by the sum of the prices of all the commodities circulating simultaneously side by side. But once in circulation, coins are, so to say, made responsible for one another. If the one increase its velocity, the other either retards its own, or altogether falls out of circulation; for the circulation can absorb only such a quantity of gold as when multiplied by the mean number of moves made by one single coin or element, is equal to the sum of the prices to be realised. Hence if the number of moves made by the separate pieces increase, the total number of those pieces in circulation diminishes. If the number of the moves diminish, the total number of pieces increases. Since the quantity of money capable of being absorbed by the circulation is given for a given mean velocity of currency, all that is necessary in order to abstract a given number of sovereigns from the circulation is to throw the same number of one-pound notes into it, a trick well known to all bankers.

Just as the currency of money, generally considered, is but a reflex of the circulation of commodities, or of the antithetical metamorphoses they undergo, so, too, the velocity of that currency reflects the rapidity with which commodities change their forms, the continued interlacing of one series of metamorphoses with another, the hurried social interchange of matter, the rapid disappearance of commodities from the sphere of circulation, and the equally rapid substitution of fresh ones in their places. Hence, in the velocity of the currency we have the fluent unity of the antithetical and complementary phases, the unity of the conversion of the useful aspect of commodities into their value-aspect, and their re-conversion from the latter aspect to the former, or the unity of the two processes of sale and purchase. On the other hand, the retardation of the currency reflects the separation of these two processes into isolated antithetical phases, reflects the stagnation in the change of form, and therefore, in the social interchange of matter. The circulation itself, of course, gives no clue to the origin of this stagnation; it merely puts in evidence the phenomenon itself. The general public, who, simultaneously with the retardation of the currency, see money appear and disappear less frequently at the periphery of circulation, naturally attribute this retardation to a quantitative deficiency in the circulating medium. [\[30\]](#)

The total quantity of money functioning during a given period as the circulating medium, is determined, on the one hand, by the sum of the prices of the circulating commodities, and on the other hand, by the rapidity with which the antithetical phases of the metamorphoses follow one another. On this rapidity depends what proportion of the sum of the prices can, on the average, be realised by each single coin. But the sum of the prices of the circulating commodities depends on the quantity, as well as on the prices, of the commodities. These three factors, however, state of prices, quantity of circulating commodities, and velocity of money-currency, are all variable. Hence, the sum of the prices to be realised, and consequently the quantity of the circulating medium depending on that sum, will vary with the numerous variations of these three factors in combination. Of these variations we shall consider those alone that have been the most important in the history of prices.

While prices remain constant, the quantity of the circulating medium may increase owing to the number of circulating commodities increasing, or to the velocity of currency decreasing, or to a combination of the two. On the other hand the quantity of the circulating medium may decrease with a decreasing number of commodities, or with an increasing rapidity of their circulation.

With a general rise in the prices of commodities, the quantity of the circulating medium will remain constant, provided the number of commodities in circulation decrease proportionally to the increase in their prices, or provided the velocity of currency increase at the same rate as prices rise, the number of commodities in circulation remaining constant. The quantity of the circulating medium may decrease, owing to the number of commodities decreasing more rapidly;

or to the velocity of currency rise.

With a general fall in the prices of commodities, the quantity of the circulating medium will remain constant, provided the number of commodities increase proportionally to their fall in price, or provided the velocity of currency decrease in the same proportion. The quantity of the circulating medium will increase, provided the number of commodities increase quicker, or the rapidity of circulation decrease quicker, than the prices fall.

The variations of the different factors may mutually compensate each other, so that notwithstanding their continued instability, the sum of the prices to be realised and the quantity of money in circulation remain constant; consequently, we find, especially if we take long periods into consideration, that the deviations from the average level, of the quantity of money current in any country, are much smaller than we should at first sight expect, apart of course from excessive perturbations periodically arising from industrial and commercial crises, or less frequently, from fluctuations in the value of money.

The law, that the quantity of the circulating medium is determined by the sum of the prices of the commodities circulating, and the average increasing more rapidly, than prices velocity of currency [\[31\]](#) may also be stated as follows: given the sum of the values of commodities, and the average rapidity of their metamorphoses, the quantity of precious metal current as money depends on the value of that precious metal. The erroneous opinion that it is, on the contrary, prices that are determined by the quantity of the circulating medium, and that the latter depends on the quantity of the precious metals in a country; [\[32\]](#) this opinion was based by those who first held it, on the absurd hypothesis that commodities are without a price, and money without a value, when they first enter into circulation, and that, once in the circulation, an aliquot part of the medley of commodities is exchanged for an aliquot part of the heap of precious metals. [\[33\]](#)

C. Coin and symbols of value

That money takes the shape of coin, springs from its function as the circulating medium. The weight of gold represented in imagination by the prices or money-names of commodities, must confront those commodities, within the circulation, in the shape of coins or pieces of gold of a given denomination. Coining, like the establishment of a standard of prices, is the business of the State. The different national uniforms worn at home by gold and silver as coins, and doffed again in the market of the world, indicate the separation between the internal or national spheres of the circulation of commodities, and their universal sphere.

The only difference, therefore, between coin and bullion, is one of shape, and gold can at any time pass from one form to the other. [\[34\]](#) But no sooner does coin leave the mint, than it immediately finds itself on the high-road to the melting pot. During their currency, coins wear

away, some more, others less. Name and substance, nominal weight and real weight, begin their process of separation. Coins of the same denomination become different in value, because they are different in weight. The weight of gold fixed upon as the standard of prices, deviates from the weight that serves as the circulating medium, and the latter thereby ceases any longer to be a real equivalent of the commodities whose prices it realises. The history of coinage during the middle ages and down into the 18th century, records the ever renewed confusion arising from this cause. The natural tendency of circulation to convert coins into a mere semblance of what they profess to be, into a symbol of the weight of metal they are officially supposed to contain, is recognised by modern legislation, which fixes the loss of weight sufficient to demonetise a gold coin, or to make it no longer legal tender.

The fact that the currency of coins itself effects a separation between their nominal and their real weight, creating a distinction between them as mere pieces of metal on the one hand, and as coins with a definite function on the other — this fact implies the latent possibility of replacing metallic coins by tokens of some other material, by symbols serving the same purposes as coins. The practical difficulties in the way of coining extremely minute quantities of gold or silver, and the circumstance that at first the less precious metal is used as a measure of value instead of the more precious, copper instead of silver, silver instead of gold, and that the less precious circulates as money until dethroned by the more precious — all these facts explain the parts historically played by silver and copper tokens as substitutes for gold coins. Silver and copper tokens take the place of gold in those regions of the circulation where coins pass from hand to hand most rapidly, and are subject to the maximum amount of wear and tear. This occurs where sales and purchases on a very small scale are continually happening. In order to prevent these satellites from establishing themselves permanently in the place of gold, positive enactments determine the extent to which they must be compulsorily received as payment instead of gold. The particular tracks pursued by the different species of coin in currency, run naturally into each other. The tokens keep company with gold, to pay fractional parts of the smallest gold coin; gold is, on the one hand, constantly pouring into retail circulation, and on the other hand is constantly being thrown out again by being changed into tokens. [\[35\]](#)

The weight of metal in the silver and copper tokens is arbitrarily fixed by law. When in currency, they wear away even more rapidly than gold coins. Hence their functions are totally independent of their weight, and consequently of all value. The function of gold as coin becomes completely independent of the metallic value of that gold. Therefore things that are relatively without value, such as paper notes, can serve as coins in its place. This purely symbolic character is to a certain extent masked in metal tokens. In paper money it stands out plainly. In fact, ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.

We allude here only to inconvertible paper money issued by the State and having compulsory circulation. It has its immediate origin in the metallic currency. Money based upon credit implies

on the other hand conditions, which, from our standpoint of the simple circulation of commodities, are as yet totally unknown to us. But we may affirm this much, that just as true paper money takes its rise in the function of money as the circulating medium, so money based upon credit takes root spontaneously in the function of money as the means of payment. [\[36\]](#)

The State puts in circulation bits of paper on which their various denominations, say £1, £5, &c., are printed. In so far as they actually take the place of gold to the same amount, their movement is subject to the laws that regulate the currency of money itself. A law peculiar to the circulation of paper money can spring up only from the proportion in which that paper money represents gold. Such a law exists; stated simply, it is as follows: the issue of paper money must not exceed in amount the gold (or silver as the case may be) which would actually circulate if not replaced by symbols. Now the quantity of gold which the circulation can absorb, constantly-fluctuates about a given level. Still, the mass of the circulating medium in a given country never sinks below a certain minimum easily ascertained by actual experience. The fact that this minimum mass continually undergoes changes in its constituent parts, or that the pieces of gold of which it consists are being constantly replaced by fresh ones, causes of course no change either in its amount or in the continuity of its circulation. It can therefore be replaced by paper symbols. If, on the other hand, all the conduits of circulation were to-day filled with paper money to the full extent of their capacity for absorbing money, they might to-morrow be overflowing in consequence of a fluctuation in the circulation of commodities. There would no longer be any standard. If the paper money exceed its proper limit, which is the amount in gold coins of the like denomination that can actually be current, it would, apart from the danger of falling into general disrepute, represent only that quantity of gold, which, in accordance with the laws of the circulation of commodities, is required, and is alone capable of being represented by paper. If the quantity of paper money issued be double what it ought to be, then, as a matter of fact, £1 would be the money-name not of 1/4 of an ounce, but of 1/8 of an ounce of gold. The effect would be the same as if an alteration had taken place in the function of gold as a standard of prices. Those values that were previously expressed by the price of £1 would now be expressed by the price of £2.

Paper money is a token representing gold or money. The relation between it and the values of commodities is this, that the latter are ideally expressed in the same quantities of gold that are symbolically represented by the paper. Only in so far as paper money represents gold, which like all other commodities has value, is it a symbol of value. [\[37\]](#)

Finally, some one may ask why gold is capable of being replaced by tokens that have no value? But, as we have already seen, it is capable of being so replaced only in so far as it functions exclusively as coin, or as the circulating medium, and as nothing else. Now, money has other functions besides this one, and the isolated function of serving as the mere circulating medium is not necessarily the only one attached to gold coin, although this is the case with those

abraded coins that continue to circulate. Each piece of money is a mere coin, or means of circulation, only so long as it actually circulates. But this is just the case with that minimum mass of gold, which is capable of being replaced by paper money. That mass remains constantly within the sphere of circulation, continually functions as a circulating medium, and exists exclusively for that purpose. Its movement therefore represents nothing but the continued alternation of the inverse phases of the metamorphosis C—M—C, phases in which commodities confront their value-forms, only to disappear again immediately. The independent existence of the exchange-value of a commodity is here a transient apparition, by means of which the commodity is immediately replaced by another commodity. Hence, in this process which continually makes money pass from hand to hand, the mere symbolical existence of money suffices. Its functional existence absorbs, so to say, its material existence. Being a transient and objective reflex of the prices of commodities, it serves only as a symbol of itself, and is therefore capable of being replaced by a token. ^[38] One thing is, however, requisite; this token must have an objective social validity of its own, and this the paper symbol acquires by its forced currency. This compulsory action of the State can take effect only within that inner sphere of circulation which is coterminous with the territories of the community, but it is also only within that sphere that money completely responds to its function of being the circulating medium, or becomes coin.

SECTION 3

MONEY

The commodity that functions as a measure of value, and, either in its own person or by a representative, as the medium of circulation, is money. Gold (or silver) is therefore money. It functions as money, on the one hand, when it has to be present in its own golden person. It is then the money-commodity, neither merely ideal, as in its function of a measure of value, nor capable of being represented, as in its function of circulating medium. On the other hand, it also functions as money, when by virtue of its function, whether that function be performed in person or by representative, it congeals into the sole form of value, the only adequate form of existence of exchange-value, in opposition to use-value, represented by all other commodities.

A. Hoarding

The continual movement in circuits of the two antithetical metamorphoses of commodities, or the never ceasing alternation of sale and purchase, is reflected in the restless currency of money, or in the function that money performs of a *perpetuum mobile* of circulation. But so soon as the series of metamorphoses is interrupted, so soon as sales are not supplemented by subsequent purchases, money ceases to be mobilised; it is transformed, as Boisguillebert says, from “meuble” into “immeuble,” from movable into immovable, from coin into money.

With the very earliest development of the circulation of commodities, there is also developed the necessity, and the passionate desire, to hold fast the product of the first metamorphosis. This product is the transformed shape of the commodity, or its gold-chrysalis. [39] Commodities are thus sold not for the purpose of buying others, but in order to replace their commodity-form by their money-form. From being the mere means of effecting the circulation of commodities, this change of form becomes the end and aim. The changed form of the commodity is thus prevented from functioning as its unconditionally alienable form, or as its merely transient money-form. The money becomes petrified into a hoard, and the seller becomes a hoarder of money.

In the early stages of the circulation of commodities, it is the surplus use-values alone that are converted into money. Gold and silver thus become of themselves social expressions for superfluity or wealth. This naive form of hoarding becomes perpetuated in those communities in which the traditional mode of production is carried on for the supply of a fixed and limited circle of home wants. It is thus with the people of Asia, and particularly of the East Indies. Vanderlint, who fancies that the prices of commodities in a country are determined by the quantity of gold and silver to be found in it, asks himself why Indian commodities are so cheap. Answer: Because the Hindus bury their money. From 1602 to 1734, he remarks, they buried 150 millions of pounds sterling of silver, which originally came from America to Europe. [40] In the 10 years from 1856 to 1866, England exported to India and China £120,000,000 in silver, which had been received in exchange for Australian gold. Most of the silver exported to China makes its way to India.

As the production of commodities further develops, every producer of commodities is compelled. to make sure of the nexus rerum or the social pledge. [41] His wants are constantly making themselves felt, and necessitate the continual purchase of other people’s commodities, while the production and sale of his own goods require time, and depend upon circumstances. In order then to be able to buy without selling, he must have sold previously without buying. This operation, conducted on a general scale, appears to imply a contradiction. But the precious metals at the sources of their production are directly exchanged for other commodities. And here we have sales (by the owners of commodities) without purchases (by the owners of gold or silver). [42] And subsequent sales, by other producers, unfollowed by purchases, merely bring about the distribution of the newly produced precious metals among all the owners of commodities. In this way, all along the line of exchange, hoards of gold and silver of varied

extent are accumulated. With the possibility of holding and storing up exchange-value in the shape of a particular commodity, arises also the greed for gold. Along with the extension of circulation, increases the power of money, that absolutely social form of wealth ever ready for use. “Gold is a wonderful thing! Whoever possesses it is lord of all he wants. By means of gold one can even get souls into Paradise.” (Columbus in his letter from Jamaica, 1503.) Since gold does not disclose what has been transformed into it, everything, commodity or not, is convertible into gold. Everything becomes saleable and buyable. The circulation becomes the great social retort into which everything is thrown, to come out again as a gold-crystal. Not even are the bones of saints, and still less are more delicate *res sacrosanctae*, *extra commercium hominum* able to withstand this alchemy. ^[43] Just as every qualitative difference between commodities is extinguished in money, so money, on its side, like the radical leveller that it is, does away with all distinctions. ^[43a] But money itself is a commodity, an external object, capable of becoming the private property of any individual. Thus social power becomes the private power of private persons. The ancients therefore denounced money as subversive of the economic and moral order of things. ^[43b] Modern society, which, soon after its birth, pulled Plutus by the hair of his head from the bowels of the earth, ^[44] greets gold as its Holy Grail, as the glittering incarnation of the very principle of its own life.

A commodity, in its capacity of a use-value, satisfies a particular want, and is a particular element of material wealth. But the value of a commodity measures the degree of its attraction for all other elements of material wealth, and therefore measures the social wealth of its owner. To a barbarian owner of commodities, and even to a West-European peasant, value is the same as value-form, and therefore. to him the increase in his hoard of gold and silver is an increase in value. It is true that the value of money varies, at one time in consequence of a variation in its own value, at another, in consequence of a change in the values of commodities. But this, on the one hand, does not prevent 200 ounces of gold from still containing more value than 100 ounces, nor, on the other hand, does it hinder the actual metallic form of this article from continuing to be the universal equivalent form of all other commodities, and the immediate social incarnation of all human labour. The desire after hoarding is in its very nature unsatiable. In its qualitative aspect, or formally considered, money has no bounds to its efficacy, *i.e.*, it is the universal representative of material wealth, because it is directly convertible into any other commodity. But, at the same time, every actual sum of money is limited in amount, and, therefore, as a means of purchasing, has only a limited efficacy. This antagonism between the quantitative limits of money and its qualitative boundlessness, continually acts as a spur to the hoarder in his Sisyphus-like labour of accumulating. It is with him as it is with a conqueror who sees in every new country annexed, only a new boundary.

In order that gold may be held as money, and made to form a hoard, it must be prevented from circulating, or from transforming itself into a means of enjoyment. The hoarder, therefore, makes a sacrifice of the lusts of the flesh to his gold fetish. He acts in earnest up to the Gospel of

abstention. On the other hand, he can withdraw from circulation no more than what he has thrown into it in the shape of commodities. The more he produces, the more he is able to sell. Hard work, saving, and avarice are, therefore, his three cardinal virtues, and to sell much and buy little the sum of his political economy. [\[45\]](#)

By the side of the gross form of a hoard, we find also its aesthetic form in the possession of gold and silver articles. This grows with the wealth of civil society. “Soyons riches ou paraissons riches” (Diderot).

In this way there is created, on the one hand, a constantly extending market for gold and silver, unconnected with their functions as money, and, on the other hand, a latent source of supply, to which recourse is had principally in times of crisis and social disturbance.

Hoarding serves various purposes in the economy of the metallic circulation. Its first function arises out of the conditions to which the currency of gold and silver coins is subject. We have seen how, along with the continual fluctuations in the extent and rapidity of the circulation of commodities and in their prices, the quantity of money current unceasingly ebbs and flows. This mass must, therefore, be capable of expansion and contraction. At one time money must be attracted in order to act as circulating coin, at another, circulating coin must be repelled in order to act again as more or less stagnant money. In order that the mass of money, actually current, may constantly saturate the absorbing power of the circulation, it is necessary that the quantity of gold and silver in a country be greater than the quantity required to function as coin. This condition is fulfilled by money taking the form of hoards. These reserves serve as conduits for the supply or withdrawal of money to or from the circulation, which in this way never overflows its banks. [\[46\]](#)

B. Means of Payment

In the simple form of the circulation of commodities hitherto considered, we found a given value always presented to us in a double shape, as a commodity at one pole, as money at the opposite pole. The owners of commodities came therefore into contact as the respective representatives of what were already equivalents. But with the development of circulation, conditions arise under which the alienation of commodities becomes separated, by an interval of time, from the realisation of their prices. It will be sufficient to indicate the most simple of these conditions. One sort of article requires a longer, another a shorter time for its production. Again, the production of different commodities depends on different seasons of the year. One sort of commodity may be born on its own market place, another has to make a long journey to market. Commodity-owner No. 1, may therefore be ready to sell, before No. 2 is ready to buy. When the same transactions are continually repeated between the same persons, the conditions of sale are regulated in accordance with the conditions of production. On the other hand, the use of a given

commodity, of a house, for instance, is sold (in common parlance, let) for a definite period. Here, it is only at the end of the term that the buyer has actually received the use-value of the commodity. He therefore buys it before he pays for it. The vendor sells an existing commodity, the purchaser buys as the mere representative of money, or rather of future money. The vendor becomes a creditor, the purchaser becomes a debtor. Since the metamorphosis of commodities, or the development of their value-form, appears here under a new aspect, money also acquires a fresh function; it becomes the means of payment.

The character of creditor, or of debtor, results here from the simple circulation. The change in the form of that circulation stamps buyer and seller with this new die. At first, therefore, these new parts are just as transient and alternating as those of seller and buyer, and are in turns played by the same actors. But the opposition is not nearly so pleasant, and is far more capable of crystallisation. ^[47] The same characters can, however, be assumed independently of the circulation of commodities. The class-struggles of the ancient world took the form chiefly of a contest between debtors and creditors, which in Rome ended in the ruin of the plebeian debtors. They were displaced by slaves. In the middle ages the contest ended with the ruin of the feudal debtors, who lost their political power together with the economic basis on which it was established. Nevertheless, the money relation of debtor and creditor that existed at these two periods reflected only the deeper-lying antagonism between the general economic conditions of existence of the classes in question.

Let us return to the circulation of commodities. The appearance of the two equivalents, commodities and money, at the two poles of the process of sale, has ceased to be simultaneous. The money functions now, first as a measure of value in the determination of the price of the commodity sold; the price fixed by the contract measures the obligation of the debtor, or the sum of money that he has to pay at a fixed date. Secondly, it serves as an ideal means of purchase. Although existing only in the promise of the buyer to pay, it causes the commodity to change hands. It is not before the day fixed for payment that the means of payment actually steps into circulation, leaves the hand of the buyer for that of the seller. The circulating medium was transformed into a hoard, because the process stopped short after the first phase, because the converted shape of the commodity, viz., the money, was withdrawn from circulation. The means of payment enters the circulation, but only after the commodity has left it. The money is no longer the means that brings about the process. It only brings it to a close, by stepping in as the absolute form of existence of exchange-value, or as the universal commodity. The seller turned his commodity into money, in order thereby to satisfy some want, the hoarder did the same in order to keep his commodity in its money-shape, and the debtor in order to be able to pay; if he do not pay, his goods will be sold by the sheriff. The value-form of commodities, money, is therefore now the end and aim of a sale, and that owing to a social necessity springing out of the process of circulation itself.

The buyer converts money back into commodities before he has turned commodities into money: in other words, he achieves the second metamorphosis of commodities before the first. The seller's commodity circulates, and realises its price, but only in the shape of a legal claim upon money. It is converted into a use-value before it has been converted into money. The completion of its first metamorphosis follows only at a later period. [\[48\]](#)

The obligations falling due within a given period, represent the sum of the prices of the commodities, the sale of which gave rise to those obligations. The quantity of gold necessary to realise this sum, depends, in the first instance, on the rapidity of currency of the means of payment. That quantity is conditioned by two circumstances: first the relations between debtors and creditors form a sort of chain, in such a way that A, when he receives money from his debtor B, straightway hands it over to C his creditor, and so on; the second circumstance is the length of the intervals between the different due-days of the obligations. The continuous chain of payments, or retarded first metamorphoses, is essentially different from that interlacing of the series of metamorphoses which we considered on a former page. By the currency of the circulating medium, the connexion between buyers and sellers, is not merely expressed. This connexion is originated by, and exists in, the circulation alone. Contrariwise, the movement of the means of payment expresses a social relation that was in existence long before.

The fact that a number of sales take place simultaneously, and side by side, limits the extent to which coin can be replaced by the rapidity of currency. On the other hand, this fact is a new lever in economising the means of payment. In proportion as payments are concentrated at one spot, special institutions and methods are developed for their liquidation. Such in the middle ages were the *virements* at Lyons. The debts due to A from B, to B from C, to C from A, and so on, have only to be confronted with each other, in order to annul each other to a certain extent like positive and negative quantities. There thus remains only a single balance to pay. The greater the amount of the payments concentrated, the less is this balance relatively to that amount, and the less is the mass of the means of payment in circulation.

The function of money as the means of payment implies a contradiction without a terminus medius. In so far as the payments balance one another, money functions only ideally as money of account, as a measure of value. In so far as actual payments have to be made, money does not serve as a circulating medium, as a mere transient agent in the interchange of products, but as the individual incarnation of social labour, as the independent form of existence of exchange-value, as the universal commodity. This contradiction comes to a head in those phases of industrial and commercial crises which are known as monetary crises. [\[49\]](#) Such a crisis occurs only where the ever-lengthening chain of payments, and an artificial system of settling them, has been fully developed. Whenever there is a general and extensive disturbance of this mechanism, no matter what its cause, money becomes suddenly and immediately transformed, from its merely ideal shape of money of account, into hard cash. Profane commodities can no longer

replace it. The use-value of commodities becomes valueless, and their value vanishes in the presence of its own independent form. On the eve of the crisis, the bourgeois, with the self-sufficiency that springs from intoxicating prosperity, declares money to be a vain imagination. Commodities alone are money. But now the cry is everywhere: money alone is a commodity! As the hart pants after fresh water, so pants his soul after money, the only wealth. [50] In a crisis, the antithesis between commodities and their value-form, money, becomes heightened into an absolute contradiction. Hence, in such events, the form under which money appears is of no importance. The money famine continues, whether payments have to be made in gold or in credit money such as bank-notes. [51]

If we now consider the sum total of the money current during a given period, we shall find that, given the rapidity of currency of the circulating medium and of the means of payment, it is equal to the sum of the prices to be realised, plus the sum of the payments falling due, minus the payments that balance each other, minus finally the number of circuits in which the same piece of coin serves in turn as means of circulation and of payment. Hence, even when prices, rapidity of currency, and the extent of the economy in payments, are given, the quantity of money current and the mass of commodities circulating during a given period, such as a day, no longer correspond. Money that represents commodities long withdrawn from circulation, continues to be current. Commodities circulate, whose equivalent in money will not appear on the scene till some future day. Moreover, the debts contracted each day, and the payments falling due on the same day, are quite incommensurable quantities. [52]

Credit-money springs directly out of the function of money as a means of payment. Certificates of the debts owing for the purchased commodities circulate for the purpose of transferring those debts to others. On the other hand, to the same extent as the system of credit is extended, so is the function of money as a means of payment. In that character it takes various forms peculiar to itself under which it makes itself at home in the sphere of great commercial transactions. Gold and silver coin, on the other hand, are mostly relegated to the sphere of retail trade. [53]

When the production of commodities has sufficiently extended itself, money begins to serve as the means of payment beyond the sphere of the circulation of commodities. It becomes the commodity that is the universal subject-matter of all contracts. [54] Rents, taxes, and such like payments are transformed from payments in kind into money payments. To what extent this transformation depends upon the general conditions of production, is shown, to take one example, by the fact that the Roman Empire twice failed in its attempt to levy all contributions in money. The unspeakable misery of the French agricultural population under Louis XIV., a misery so eloquently denounced by Boisguillebert, Marshal Vauban, and others, was due not only to the weight of the taxes, but also to the conversion of taxes in kind into money taxes. [55] 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. It is one of the secrets of the conservation of the Ottoman Empire. If the foreign trade, forced upon Japan by Europeans, should lead to the substitution of money rents for rents in kind, it will be all up with the exemplary agriculture of that country. The narrow economic conditions under which that agriculture is carried on, will be swept away.

In every country, certain days of the year become by habit recognised settling days for various large and recurrent payments. These dates depend, apart from other revolutions in the wheel of reproduction, on conditions closely connected with the seasons. They also regulate the dates for payments that have no direct connexion with the circulation of commodities such as taxes, rents, and so on. The quantity of money requisite to make the payments, falling due on those dates all over the country, causes periodical, though merely superficial, perturbations in the economy of the medium of payment. [\[56\]](#)

From the law of the rapidity of currency of the means of payment, it follows that the quantity of the means of payment required for all periodical payments, whatever their source, is in inverse [\[57\]](#) proportion to the length of their periods. [\[58\]](#)

The development of money into a medium of payment makes it necessary to accumulate money against the dates fixed for the payment of the sums owing. While hoarding, as a distinct mode of acquiring riches, vanishes with the progress of civil society, the formation of reserves of the means of payment grows with that progress.

C. Universal Money

When money leaves the home sphere of circulation, it strips off the local garbs which it there assumes, of a standard of prices, of coin, of tokens, and of a symbol of value, and returns to its original form of bullion. In the trade between the markets of the world, the value of commodities is expressed so as to be universally recognised. Hence their independent value-form also, in these cases, confronts them under the shape of universal money. It is only in the markets of the world that money acquires to the full extent the character of the commodity whose bodily form is also the immediate social incarnation of human labour in the abstract. Its real mode of existence in this sphere adequately corresponds to its ideal concept.

Within the sphere of home circulation, there can be but one commodity which, by serving as a measure of value, becomes money. In the markets of the world a double measure of value holds sway, gold and silver. [\[59\]](#)

Money of the world serves as the universal medium of payment, as the universal means of

purchasing, and as the universally recognised embodiment of all wealth. Its function as a means of payment in the settling of international balances is its chief one. Hence the watchword of the mercantilists, balance of trade. [60] Gold and silver serve as international means of purchasing chiefly and necessarily in those periods when the customary equilibrium in the interchange of products between different nations is suddenly disturbed. And lastly, it serves as the universally recognised embodiment of social wealth, whenever the question is not of buying or paying, but of transferring wealth from one country to another, and whenever this transference in the form of commodities is rendered impossible, either by special conjunctures in the markets or by the purpose itself that is intended. [61]

Just as every country needs a reserve of money for its home circulation so, too, it requires one for external circulation in the markets of the world. The functions of hoards, therefore, arise in part out of the function of money, as the medium of the home circulation and home payments, and in part out of its function of money of the world. [62] For this latter function, the genuine money-commodity, actual gold and silver, is necessary. On that account, Sir James Steuart, in order to distinguish them from their purely local substitutes, calls gold and silver “money of the world.”

The current of the stream of gold and silver is a double one. On the one hand, it spreads itself from its sources over all the markets of the world, in order to become absorbed, to various extents, into the different national spheres of circulation, to fill the conduits of currency, to replace abraded gold and silver coins, to supply the material of articles of luxury, and to petrify into hoards. [63] This first current is started by the countries that exchange their labour, realised in commodities, for the labour embodied in the precious metals by gold and silver-producing countries. On the other hand, there is a continual flowing backwards and forwards of gold and silver between the different national spheres of circulation, a current whose motion depends on the ceaseless fluctuations in the course of exchange. [64]

Countries in which the bourgeois form of production is developed to a certain extent, limit the hoards concentrated in the strong rooms of the banks to the minimum required for the proper performance of their peculiar functions. [65] Whenever these hoards are strikingly above their average level, it is, with some exceptions, an indication of stagnation in the circulation of commodities, of an interruption in the even flow of their metamorphoses. [66]

Footnotes

1. The question — Why does not money directly represent labour-time, so that a piece of paper may represent, for instance, x hours' labour, is at bottom the same as the question

why, given the production of commodities, must products take the form of commodities? This is evident, since their taking the form of commodities implies their differentiation into commodities and money. Or, why cannot private labour — labour for the account of private individuals — be treated as its opposite, immediate social labour? I have elsewhere examined thoroughly the Utopian idea of “labour-money” in a society founded on the production of commodities (l. c., p. 61, seq.). On this point I will only say further, that Owen’s “labour-money,” for instance, is no more “money” than a ticket for the theatre. Owen pre-supposes directly associated labour, a form of production that is entirely in consistent with the production of commodities. The certificate of labour is merely evidence of the part taken by the individual in the common labour, and of his right to a certain portion of the common produce destined for consumption. But it never enters into Owen’s head to pre-suppose the production of commodities, and at the same time, by juggling with money, to try to evade the necessary conditions of that production.

2. Savages and half-civilised races use the tongue differently. Captain Parry says of the inhabitants on the west coast of Baffin’s Bay: “In this case (he refers to barter) they licked it (the thing represented to them) twice to their tongues, after which they seemed to consider the bargain satisfactorily concluded.” In the same way, the Eastern Esquimaux licked the articles they received in exchange. If the tongue is thus used in the North as the organ of appropriation, no wonder that, in the South, the stomach serves as the organ of accumulated property, and that a Kaffir estimates the wealth of a man by the size of his belly. That the Kaffirs know what they are about is shown by the following: at the same time that the official British Health Report of 1864 disclosed the deficiency of fat-forming food among a large part of the working-class, a certain Dr. Harvey (not, however, the celebrated discoverer of the circulation of the blood), made a good thing by advertising recipes for reducing the superfluous fat of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy.

3. See Karl Marx: “Zur Kritik, &c.” “Theorien von der Masseinheit des Gelda,” p. 53, seq.

4. “Wherever gold and silver have by law been made to perform the function of money or of a measure of value side by side, it has always been tried, but in vain, to treat them as one and the same material. To assume that there is an invariable ratio between the quantities of gold and silver in which a given quantity of labour-time is incorporated, is to assume in fact, that gold and silver are of one and the same material, and that a given mass of the less valuable metal, silver, is a constant fraction of a given mass of gold. From the reign of Edward III. to the time of George II., The history of money in England consists of one long series of perturbations caused by the clashing of the legally fixed ratio between The values of gold and silver, with the fluctuations in their real values. At one time gold was too high, at another, silver. The metal that for the time being was estimated below its value, was withdrawn from circulation, mated and exported. The ratio between the two metals was then again altered by law, but the new nominal ratio soon came into conflict again with the real one. In our own times, the slight and transient fall in the value of gold compared with silver, which was a consequence of The Indo-Chinese demand for silver, produced on a far more extended scale in France the same phenomena, export of silver, and its expulsion from circulation by gold. During the years 1855, 1856 and 1857, the excess in France of gold-imports over gold-exports amounted to £41,580,000, while the excess of silver-exports over silver-imports was £14,704,000. In fact, in those countries in which both metals are legally measures of value, and therefore both legal tender so that everyone has the option of

paying in either metal, the metal that rises in value is at a premium, and, like every other commodity, measures its price in the over-estimated metal which alone serves in reality as the standard of value. The result of all experience and history with regard to this equation is simply that, where two commodities perform by law the functions of a measure of value, in practice one alone maintains that position.” (Karl Marx, *l.c.*, pp. 52, 53.)

5. The peculiar circumstance, that while the ounce of gold serves in England as the unit of the standard of money, the pound sterling does not form an aliquot part of it, has been explained as follows: “Our coinage was originally adapted to the employment of silver only, hence, an ounce of silver can always be divided into a certain adequate number of pieces of coin, but as gold was introduced at a later period into a coinage adapted only to silver, an ounce of gold cannot be coined into an aliquot number of pieces.” Maclaren, “A Sketch of the History of the Currency.” London, 1858, p. 16.

6. With English writers the confusion between measure of value and standard of price (standard of value! is indescribable. Their functions, as well as their names, are constantly interchanged.

7. Moreover, it has not general historical validity.

8. It is thus that the pound sterling in English denotes less than one-third of its original weight; the pound Scot, before the union, only 1-36th; the French livre, 1-74th; the Spanish maravedi, less than 1-1,000th; and the Portuguese rei a still smaller fraction.

9. “Le monete le quali oggi sono ideal, sono le più antiche d’ogni nazione, e tutte furono un tempo real, e perche erano reali con esse si contava” [“The coins which today are ideal are the oldest coins of every nation, and all of them were once real, and precisely because they were real they were used for calculation”] (Galiani: *Della moneta*, *l.c.*, p. 153.)

10. David Urquhart remarks in his “Familiar Words” on the monstrosity (!) that now-a-days a pound (sterling), which is the unit of the English standard of money, is equal to about a quarter of an ounce of gold. “This is falsifying a measure, not establishing a standard.” He sees in this “false denomination” of the weight of gold, as in everything else. the falsifying hand of civilisation.

11. When Anacharsis was asked for what purposes the Greeks used money, he replied, “For reckoning.” (Athen. Deipn. 1. iv. 49 v. 2. ed. Schweighauser, 1802.)

12. “Owing to the fact that money, when serving as the standard of price, appears under the same reckoning names as do the prices of commodities, and that therefore the sum of £3 17s. 10 1/2d. may signify on the one hand an ounce weight of gold, and on the other, the value of a ton of iron, this reckoning name of money has been called its mint-price. Hence there sprang up the extraordinary notion, that the value of gold is estimated in its own material, and that, in contradistinction to all other commodities, its price is fixed by the State. It was erroneously thought that the giving of reckoning names to definite weights of gold, is the same thing as fixing the value of those weights.” (Karl Marx, *l.c.*, p. 52.)

13. See “Theorien von der Masseinheit des Geldes” in “Zur Kritik der Polit. Oekon. &c.,” p. 53, seq. The fantastic notions about raising or lowering the mint-price of money by

transferring to greater or smaller weights of gold or silver, the names already legally appropriated to fixed weights of those metals; such notions, at least in those cases in which they aim, not at clumsy financial operations against creditors, both public and private but at economic quack remedies, have been so exhaustively treated by Wm. Petty in his “Quantulumcunque concerning money: To the Lord Marquis of Halifax, 1682,” that even his immediate followers, Sir Dudley North and John Locke, not to mention later ones, could only dilute him. “If the wealth of a nation” he remarks, “could be decupled by a proclamation, it were strange that such proclamations have not long since been made by our Governors.” (l.c., p. 36.)

14. “Ou bien, il faut consentir à dire qu’une valeur d’un million en argent vaut plus qu’une valeur égale en marchandises.” [“Or indeed it must be admitted that a million in money is worth more than an equal value in commodities”] (Le Trosne, l.c., p. 919), which amounts to saying “qu’une valeur vaut plus qu’une valeur égale.” [“that one value is worth more than another value which is equal to it.”]

15. Jerome had to wrestle hard, not only in his youth with the bodily flesh, as is shown by his fight in the desert with the handsome women of his imagination, but also in his old age with the spiritual flesh. “I thought,” he says, “I was in the spirit before the Judge of the Universe.” “Who art thou?” asked a voice. “I am a Christian.” “Thou liest,” thundered back the great Judge, “thou art nought but a Ciceronian.”

16. “ec se tou ... puros t’antameeibesqai panta, jhsin d’Hracleitos, cai pur apantwn, woper crusou crhmata cai crhmatwn crusos.” [“As Heraclitus says, all things are exchanged for fire and fire for all things, as wares are exchanged for gold and gold for wares.”] (F. Lassalle: “Die Philosophie Herakleitos des Dunkeln.” Berlin, 1858, Vol. I, p. 222.) Lassalle in his note on this passage, p. 224, n. 3., erroneously makes gold a mere symbol of value.

17. *Note by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in the Russian edition.* — In his letter of November 28, 1878, to N. F. Danielson (Nikolai-on) Marx proposed that this sentence be corrected to read as follows: “And, as a matter of fact, the value of each single yard is but the materialised form of a part of the social labour expended on the whole number of yards.” An analogous correction was made in a copy of the second German edition of the first volume of “Capital” belonging to Marx; however, not in his handwriting.

18. “Toute vente est achat.” [“Every sale is a purchase.”] (Dr. Quesnay: “Dialogues sur le Commerce et les Travaux des Artisans.” Physiocrates ed. Daire I. Partie, Paris, 1846, p. 170), or as Quesnay in his “Maximes générales” puts it, “Vendre est acheter.” [“To sell is to buy.”]

19. “Le prix d’une marchandise ne pouvant être payé que par le prix d’une autre marchandise” (Mercier de la Rivière: “L’Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques.” [“The price of one commodity can only be paid by the price of another commodity”] Physiocrates, ed. Daire II. Partie, p. 554.)

20. “Pour avoir cet argent, il faut avoir vendu,” [“In order to have this money, one must have made a sale,”] l.c., p. 543.

21. As before remarked, the actual producer of gold or silver forms an exception. He

exchanges his product directly for another commodity, without having first sold it.

22. “Si l’argent représente, dans nos mains, les choses que nous pouvons désirer d’acheter, il y représente aussi les choses que nous avons vendues pour cet argent.” [“If money represents, in our hands, the things we can wish to buy, it also represents the things we have sold to obtain that money”] (Mercier de la Rivière, l.c., p. 586.)

23. “Il y a donc ... quatre termes et trois contractants, dont l’un intervient deux fois” [“There are therefore ... four terms and three contracting parties, one of whom intervenes twice”] (Le Trosne, l.c., p. 909.)

24. Self-evident as this may be, it is nevertheless for the most part unobserved by political economists, and especially by the “Free-trader Vulgaris.”

25. See my observations on James Mill in “Zur Kritik, &c.,” pp. 74-76. With regard to this subject, we may notice two methods characteristic of apologetic economy. The first is the identification of the circulation of commodities with the direct barter of products, by simple abstraction from their points of difference; the second is, the attempt to explain away the contradictions of capitalist production, by reducing the relations between the persons engaged in that mode of production, to the simple relations arising out of the circulation of commodities. The production and circulation of commodities are however, phenomena that occur to a greater or less extent in modes of production the most diverse. If we are acquainted with nothing but the abstract categories of circulation, which are common to all these modes of production, we cannot possibly know anything of the specific points of difference of those modes, nor pronounce any judgment upon them. In no science is such a big fuss made with commonplace truisms as in Political Economy. For instance, J. B. Say sets himself up as a judge of crises, because, forsooth, he knows that a commodity is a product.

26. *Translator’s note.* — This word is here used in its original signification of the course or track pursued by money as it changes from hand to hand, a course which essentially differs from circulation.

27. Even when the commodity is sold over and over again, a phenomenon that at present has no existence for us, it falls, when definitely sold for the last time, out of the sphere of circulation into that of consumption, where it serves either as means of subsistence or means of production.

28. “Il (l’argent) n’a d’autre mouvement que celui qui lui est imprimé par les productions.” [“It” (money) “has no other motion than that imparted to it by the products”] (Le Trosne, l.c., p. 885.)

29. “Ce sont les productions qui le (l’argent) mettent en mouvement et le font circuler ... La célérité de son mouvement (c. de l’argent) supplée à sa quantité. Lorsqu’il en est besoin il ne fait que glisser d’une main dans l’autre sans s’arrêter un instant.” [“It is products which set it” (money) “in motion and make it circulate ... The velocity of its” (money’s) “motion supplements its quantity. When necessary, it does nothing but slide from hand to hand, without stopping for a moment”] (Le Trosne, l.c.. pp. 915, 916.)

30. “Money being ... the common measure of buying and selling, everybody who hath anything to sell, and cannot procure chapmen for it, is presently apt to think, that want of money in the kingdom, or country, is the cause why his goods do not go off; and so, want of money is the common cry; which is a great mistake... What do these people want, who cry out for money? ... The farmer complains ... he thinks that were more money in the country; he should have a price for his goods. Then it seems money is not his want, but a price for his corn and cattel, which he would sell, but cannot... Why cannot he get a price? ... (1) Either there is too much corn and cattel in the country, so that most who come to market have need of selling, as he hash, and few of buying; or (2) There wants the usual vent abroad by transportation..., or (3) The consumption fails, as when men, by reason of poverty, do not spend so much in their houses as formerly they did; wherefore it is not the increase of specific money, which would at all advance the farmer’s goods, but the removal of any of these three causes, which do truly keep down the market... The merchant and shopkeeper want money in the same manner, that is, they want a vent for the goods they deal in, by reason that the markets fail” ... [A nation] “never thrives better, than when riches are tost from hand to hand.” (Sir Dudley North: “Discourses upon Trade,” Lond. 1691, pp. 11-15, passim.) Herrenschwand’s fanciful notions amount merely to this, that the antagonism, which has its origin in the nature of commodities, and is reproduced in their circulation, can be removed by increasing the circulating medium. But if, on the one hand, it is a popular delusion to ascribe stagnation in production and circulation to insufficiency of the circulating medium, it by no means follows, on the other hand, that an actual paucity of the medium in consequence, *e.g.*, of bungling legislative interference with the regulation of currency, may not give rise to such stagnation.

31. “There is a certain measure and proportion of money requisite to drive the trade of a nation, more or less than which would prejudice the same. Just as there is a certain proportion of farthings necessary in a small retail trade, to change silver money, and to even such reckonings as cannot be adjusted with the smallest silver pieces.... Now, as the proportion of the number of farthings requisite in commerce is to be taken from the number of people, the frequency of their exchanges: as also, and principally, from the value of the smallest silver pieces of money; so in like manner, the proportion of money [gold and silver specie] requisite in our trade, is to be likewise taken from the frequency of commutations, and from the bigness of the payments.” (William Petty, “A Treatise of Taxes and Contributions.” Lond. 1667, p. 17.) The Theory of Hume was defended against the attacks of J. Steuart and others, by A. Young, in his “Political Arithmetic,” Lond; 1774, in which work there is a special chapter entitled “Prices depend on quantity of money, at p. 112, sqq. I have stated in “Zur Kritik, &c.,” p. 149: “He (Adam Smith) passes over without remark the question as to the quantity of coin in circulation, and treats money quite wrongly as a mere commodity.” This statement applies only in so far as Adam Smith, *ex officio*, treats of money. Now and then, however, as in his criticism of the earlier systems of Political Economy, he takes the right view. “The quantity of coin in every country is regulated by the value of the commodities which are to be circulated by It.... The value of the goods annually bought and sold in any country requires a certain quantity of money to circulate and distribute them to their proper consumers, and can give employment to no more. The channel of circulation necessarily draws to itself a sum sufficient to fill it, and never admits any more.” (“Wealth of Nations.” Bk. IV., ch. 1.) In like manner, *ex officio*, he opens his work with an apotheosis on the division of labour. Afterwards, in the last book which treats of the sources of public revenue, he occasionally repeats the denunciations of the division of

labour made by his teacher, A. Ferguson.

32. “The prices of things will certainly rise in every nation, as the gold and silver increase amongst the people, and consequently, where the gold and silver decrease in any nation, the prices of all things must fall proportionately to such decrease of money.” (Jacob Vanderlint: “Money Answers all Things.” Lond. 1734, p. 5.) A careful comparison of this book with Hume’s “Essays,” proves to my mind without doubt that Hume was acquainted with and made use of Vanderlint’s work, which is certainly an important one. The opinion that prices are determined by the quantity of the circulating medium, was also held by Barbon and other much earlier writers. “No inconvenience,” says Vanderlint, “can arise by an unrestrained trade, but very great advantage; since, if the cash of the nation be decreased by it, which prohibitions are designed to prevent, those nations that get the cash will certainly find everything advance in price, as the cash increases amongst them. And ... our manufactures, and everything else, will soon become so moderate as to turn the balance of trade in our favour, and thereby fetch the money back again.” (l.c.. pp. 43, 44.)

33. That the price of each single kind of commodity forms a part of the sum of the prices of all the commodities in circulation, is a self-evident proposition. But how use-values which are incommensurable with regard to each other, are to be exchanged, en masse for the total sum of gold and silver in a country, is quite incomprehensible. If we start from the notion that all commodities together form one single commodity, of which each is but an aliquot part, we get the following beautiful result: The total commodity = x cwt. of gold; commodity A = an aliquot part of the total commodity = the same aliquot part of x cwt. of gold. This is stated in all seriousness by Montesquieu: “Si l’on compare la masse de l’or et de l’argent qui est dans le monde avec la somme des marchandises qui s’y vend il est certain que chaque denrée ou marchandise, en particulier, pourra être comparée à une certaine portion de la masse entière. Supposons qu’il n’y ait qu’une seule denrée ou marchandise dans le monde, ou qu’il n’y ait qu’une seule qui s’achète, et qu’elle se divise comme l’argent: Cette partie de cette marchandise répondra à une partie de la masse de l’argent; la moitié du total de l’une à la moitié du total de l’autre, &c.... L’établissement du prix des choses dépend toujours fondamentalement de la raison du total des choses au total des signes.” [“If one compares the amount of gold and silver in the world with the sum of the commodities available, it is certain that each product or commodity, taken in isolation, could be compared with a certain portion of the total amount of money. Let us suppose that there is only one product, or commodity, in the world, or only one that can be purchased, and that it can be divided in the same way as money: a certain part of this commodity would then correspond to a part of the total amount of money; half the total of the one would correspond to half the total of the other & ... the determination of the prices of things always depends, fundamentally, on the relation between the total amount of things and the total amount of their monetary symbols”] (Montesquieu, l.c. t. III, pp. 12, 13.) As to the further development of this theory by Ricardo and his disciples, James Mill, Lord Overstone, and others, see “Zur Kritik, &c.,” pp. 140-146, and p. 150, sqq. John Stuart Mill, with his usual eclectic logic, understands how to hold at the same time the view of his father, James Mill, and the opposite view. On a comparison of the text of his compendium, “Principles of Pol. Econ.,” with his preface to the first edition, in which preface he announces himself as the Adam Smith of his day — we do not know whether to admire more the simplicity of the man, or that of the public, who took him, in good faith, for the Adam Smith he announced himself to be, although he bears about as much resemblance to

Adam Smith as say General Williams, of Kars, to the Duke of Wellington. The original researches of Mr. J. S. Mill which are neither extensive nor profound, in the domain of Political Economy, will be found mustered in rank and file in his little work, "Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy," which appeared in 1844. Locke asserts point blank the connexion between the absence of value in gold and silver, and the determination of their values by quantity alone. "Mankind having consented to put an imaginary value upon gold and silver ... the intrinsic value, regarded in these metals, is nothing but the quantity." ("Some Considerations," &c., 1691, Works Ed. 1777, Vol. II., p. 15.)

34. It lies of course, entirely beyond my purpose to take into consideration such details as the seigniorage on minting. I will, however, cite for the benefit of the romantic sycophant, Adam Muller, who admires the "generous liberality" with which the English Government coins gratuitously, the following opinion of Sir Dudley North: "Silver and gold, like other commodities, have their ebblings and flowings. Upon the arrival of quantities from Spain ... it is carried into the Tower, and coined. Not long after there will come a demand for bullion to be exported again. If there is none, but all happens to be in coin, what then? Melt it down again; there's no loss in it, for the coining costs the owner nothing. Thus the nation has been abused, and made to pay for the twisting of straw for asses to eat. If the merchant were made to pay the price of the coinage, he would not have sent his silver to the Tower without consideration, and coined money would always keep a value above uncoined silver." (North, l.c., p. 18.) North was himself one of the foremost merchants in the reign of Charles II.

35. "If silver never exceed what is wanted for the smaller payments it cannot be collected in sufficient quantities for the larger payments ... the use of gold in the main payments necessarily implies also *Its* use in the retail trade: those who have gold coin offering them for small purchases, and receiving with the commodity purchased a balance of silver in return; by which means the surplus of silver that would otherwise encumber the retail dealer, is drawn off and dispersed into general circulation. But if there is as much silver as will transact the small payments independent of gold, the retail trader must then receive silver for small purchases; and it must of necessity accumulate in his hands." (David Buchanan; "Inquiry into the Taxation and Commercial Policy of Great Britain." Edinburgh, 1844, pp. 248, 249.)

36. The mandarin Wan-mao-in, the Chinese Chancellor of the Exchequer, took it into his head one day to lay before the Son of Heaven a proposal that secretly aimed at converting the *assignats* of the empire into convertible bank-notes. The assignats Committee, in its report of April, 1854, gives him a severe snubbing. Whether he also received the traditional drubbing with bamboos is not stated. The concluding part of the report is as follows: — "The Committee has carefully examined his proposal and finds that it is entirely in favour of the merchants, and that no advantage will result to the crown." ("Arbeiten der Kaiserlich Russischen Gesandtschaft zu Peking über China." Aus dem Russischen von Dr. K. Abel und F. A. Mecklenburg. Erster Band. Berlin, 1858, p. 47 sq.) In his evidence before the Committee of the House of Lords on the Bank Acts, a governor of the Bank of England says, with regard to the abrasion of gold coins during currency: "Every year a fresh class of sovereigns becomes too light. The class which one year passes with full weight, loses enough by wear and tear to draw the scales next year against it." (House of Lords' Committee, 1848, n. 429.)

37. The following passage from Fullarton shows the want of clearness on the part of even the best writers on money, in their comprehension of its various functions: “That, as far as concerns our domestic exchanges, all the monetary functions which are usually performed by gold and silver coins, may be performed as effectually by a circulation of inconvertible notes paying no value but that factitious and conventional value they derive from the law is a fact which admits, I conceive, of no denial. Value of this description may be made to answer all the purposes of intrinsic value, and supersede even the necessity for a standard, provided only the quantity of issues be kept under due limitation.” (Fullerton: “Regulation of Currencies,” London, 1845, p. 21.) Because the commodity that serves as money is capable of being replaced in circulation by mere symbols of value, therefore its functions as a measure of value and a standard of prices are declared to be superfluous!

38. From the fact that gold and silver, so far as they are coins, or exclusively serve as the medium of circulation, become mere tokens of themselves, Nicholas Barbon deduces the right of Governments “to raise money,” that is, to give to the weight of silver that is called a shilling the name of a greater weight, such as a crown; and so to pay creditors shillings, instead of crowns. “Money does wear and grow lighter by often telling over... It is the denomination and currency of the money that men regard in bargaining, and not the quantity of silver... ’Tis the public authority upon the metal that makes it money.” (N. Barbon, l.c., pp. 29, 30, 25.)

39. “Une richesse en argent n’est que ... richesse en productions, converties en argent.” [“Monetary wealth is nothing but ... wealth in products, transformed into money”] (Mercier de la Rivière, l.c.) “Une valeur en productions n’a fait que changer de forme.” [“A value in the form of products, which has merely changed its form.”] (Id., p. 486.)

40. “’Tis by this practice’ they keep all their goods and manufactures at such low rates.” (Vanderlint, l.c., pp. 95, 96.)

41. “Money ... is a pledge.” (John Bellers: “Essays about the Poor, Manufactures, Trade, Plantations, and Immorality,” Lond., 1699, p. 13.)

42. A purchase, in a “categorical” sense, implies that gold and silver are already the converted form of commodities, or the product of a sale.

43. Henry III., most Christian king of France, robbed cloisters of their relics, and turned them into money. It is well known what part the despoiling of the Delphic Temple, by the Phocians, played in the history of Greece. Temples with the ancients served as the dwellings of the gods of commodities. They were “sacred banks.” With the Phoenicians, a trading people par excellence, money was the transmuted shape of everything. It was, therefore, quite in order that the virgins, who, at the feast of the Goddess of Love, gave themselves up to strangers, should offer to the goddess the piece of money they received.

43a.

“Gold, yellow, glittering, precious gold!

Thus much of this, will make black white, foul, fair;

Wrong, right; base, noble; old, young; coward, valiant.

... What this, you gods? Why, this
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides;
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads;
This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions; bless the accurs'd;
Make the hoar leprosy ador'd; place thieves,
And give them title, knee and approbation;
With senators on the bench, this is it;
That makes the wappen'd widow wed again:
... Come damned earth,
Though common whore of mankind."

(Shakespeare: Timon of Athens.)

43b. (Sophocles, Antigone.)

44. "The desire of avarice to draw Pluto himself out of the bowels of the earth." (The Deipnosophistst, VI, 23, Athenaeus)

45. "Accrescere quanto più si può il numero de' venditori d'ogni merce, diminuire quanto più si puo il numero dei compratori, quest) sono i cardini sui quali si raggirano tutte le operazioni di economia politica." ["These are the pivots around which all the measures of political economy turn: the maximum possible increase in the number of sellers of each commodity, and the maximum possible decrease in the number of buyers"] (Verri, l.c., p. 52.)

46. "There is required for carrying on the trade of the nation a determinate sum of specifick money which varies, and is sometimes more, sometimes less, as the circumstances we are in require.... This ebbing and flowing of money supplies and accommodates itself, without any aid of Politicians.... The buckets work alternately; when money is scarce, bullion is coined; when bullion is scarce, money is melted." (Sir D. North, l.c., Postscript, p. 3.) John Stuart Mill, who for a long time was an official of the East India Company, confirms the fact that in India silver ornaments still continue to perform directly the functions of a hoard. The silver ornaments are brought out and coined when there is a high rate of interest, and go back again when the rate of interest falls. (1. S. Mill's Evidence "Reports on Bank Acts," 1857, 2084.) According to a Parliamentary document of 1864 on the gold and silver import and export of India, the import of gold and silver in 1863 exceeded the export by £19,367,764. During the 8 years immediately preceding 1864, the excess of imports over exports of the precious metals amounted to £109,652,917. During this century far more than £200,000,000 has been coined in India.

47. The following shows the debtor and creditor relations existing between English traders at the beginning of the 18th century. "Such a spirit of crudity reigns here in England among the men of trade, that is not to be met with in any other society of men, nor in any other kingdom of the world." ("An Essay on Credit and the Bankrupt Act," Lond.,

48. It will be seen from the following quotation from my book which appeared in 1859, why I take no notice in the text of an opposite form: “Contrariwise, in the process in M—C, the money can be alienated as a real means of purchase, and in that way, the price of the commodity can be realised before the use-value of the money is realised and the commodity actually delivered. This occurs constantly under the every-day form of prepayments. And it is under this form, that the English government purchases opium from the ryots of India.... In these cases, however, the money always acts as a means of purchase.... Of course capital also is advanced in the shape of money.... This point of view, however, does not fall within the horizon of simple circulation.” (“Zur Kritik, &c.,” pp. 119, 120.)

49. The monetary crisis referred to in the text, being a phase of every crisis, must be clearly distinguished from that particular form of crisis, which also is called a monetary crisis, but which may be produced by itself as an independent phenomenon in such a way as to react only indirectly on industry and commerce. The pivot of these crises is to be found in moneyed capital, and their sphere of direct action is therefore the sphere of that capital, viz., banking, the stock exchange, and finance.

50. “The sudden reversion from a system of credit to a system of hard cash heaps theoretical fright on top of the practical panic; and the dealers by whose agency circulation is affected, shudder before the impenetrable mystery in which their own economic relations are involved” (Karl Marx, l.c., p. 126.) “The poor stand still, because the rich have no money to employ them, though they have the same land and hands to provide victuals and clothes, as ever they had; ...which is the true riches of a nation, and not the money.” John Bellers, *Proposals for Raising a College of Industry*, London, 1696, p3.

51. The following shows how such times are exploited by the “amis du commerce.” “On one occasion (1839) an old grasping banker (in the city) in his private room raised the lid of the desk he sat over, and displayed to a friend rolls of bank-notes, saying with intense glee there were £600,000 of them, they were held to make money tight, and would all be let out after three o’clock on the same day.” (“The Theory of Exchanges. The Bank Charter Act of 1844.” Lond. 1864, p. 81). The *Observer*, a semi-official government organ, contained the following paragraph on 24th April, 1864: “Some very curious rumours are current of the means which have been resorted to in order to create a scarcity of banknotes.... Questionable as it would seem, to suppose that any trick of the kind would be adopted, the report has been so universal that it really deserves mention.”

52. “The amount of purchases or contracts entered upon during the course of any given day, will not affect the quantity of money afloat on that particular day, but, in the vast majority of cases, will resolve themselves into multifarious drafts upon the quantity of money which may be afloat at subsequent dates more or less distant.... The bills granted or credits opened, to-day, need have no resemblance whatever, either in quantity, amount or duration, to those granted or entered upon to-morrow or next day, nay, many of today’s bills, and credits, when due, fall in with a mass of liabilities whose origins traverse a range of antecedent dates altogether indefinite, bills at 12, 6, 3 months or 1 often aggregating together to swell the common liabilities of one particular day....” (“The Currency Theory Reviewed; in a Letter to the Scottish People.” By a Banker in England. Edinburgh, 1845, pp. 29, 30 passim.)

53. As an example of how little ready money is required in true commercial operations, I give below a statement by one of the largest London houses of its yearly receipts and payments. Its transactions during the year 1856, extending to many millions of pounds sterling, are here reduced to the scale of one million.

Receipts.		Payments.	
<hr/>		<hr/>	
Bankers' and Merchants' Bills payable after date,	L533,596	Bills payable after date	L302,674
Cheques on Bankers, &c. payable on demand	357,715	Cheques on London Bankers	663,672
Country Notes	9,627		
Bank of England Notes	68,554	Bank of England Notes	22,743
Gold	28,089	Gold	9,427
Silver and Copper	1,486	Silver and Copper	1,484
Post Office Orders	933		
<hr/>		<hr/>	
Total	L1,000,000	Total	L1,000,000

"Report from the Select Committee on the Bank Acts, July, 1858," p. lxxi.

54. "The course of trade being thus turned, from exchanging of goods for goods, or delivering and taking, to selling and paying, all the bargains ... are now stated upon the foot of a Price in money." ("An Essay upon Publick Credit." 3rd Ed. Lond., 1710, p. 8.)

55. "L'argent ... est devenu le bourreau de toutes choses." Finance is the "alambic, qui a fait évaporer une quantité effroyable de biens et de denrées pour faire ce fatal précis." "L'argent déclare la guerre à tout le genre humain." ["Money ... has become the executioner of all things." Finance is the "alembic that evaporates a frightful quantity of goods and commodities in order to obtain this fatal extract." "Money [...] declares war [...] on the whole human race"] (Boisguillebert: "Dissertation sur la nature des richesses, de l'argent et des tributs." Edit. Daire. Economistes financiers. Paris, 1843, t. i., pp. 413, 419, 417.)

56. "On Whitsuntide, 1824," says Mr. Craig before the Commons' Committee of 1826, "there was such an immense demand for notes upon the banks of Edinburgh, that by 11 o'clock they had not a note left in their custody. They sent round to all the different banks to borrow, but could not get them, and many of the transactions were adjusted by slips of paper only; yet by three o'clock the whole of the notes were returned into the banks from which they had issued! It was a mere transfer from hand to hand. "Although the average effective circulation of bank-notes in Scotland is less than three millions sterling, yet on certain pay days in the year, every single note in the possession of the bankers, amounting in the whole to about £7,000,000, is called into activity. On these occasions the notes have a single and specific function to perform, and so soon as they have performed it, they How back into the various banks from which they issued. (See John Fullarton, "Regulation of Currencies." Lond. 1845, p. 86, note.) In explanation it should be stated, that in Scotland, at the date of Fullarton's work, notes and not cheques were used to withdraw deposits.

57. Note by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in the Russian edition: Apparently a slip of the pen. When writing *faverse* the author evidently meant *direct*.

58. To the question, “If there were occasion to raise 40 millions p. a., whether the same 6 millions (gold) ... would suffice for such revolutions and circulations thereof, as trade requires,” Petty replies in his usual masterly manner, “I answer yes: for the expense being 40 millions, if the revolutions were in such short circles, viz., weekly, as happens among poor artisans and labourers, who receive and pay every Saturday, then 40/52 parts of 1 million of money would answer these ends, but if the circles be quarterly, according to our custom of paying rent, and gathering taxes, then 10 millions were requisite. Wherefore, supposing payments in general to be of a mixed circle between one week and 13, then add 10 millions to 40/52, the half of which will be 5 1/2, so as if we have 5 1/2 millions we have enough.” (William Petty: “Political Anatomy of Ireland.” 1672, Edit.: Lond. 1691, pp. 13, 14.)

59. Hence the absurdity of every law prescribing that the banks of a country shall form reserves of that precious metal alone which circulates at home. The “pleasant difficulties” thus self-created by the Bank of England, are well known. On the subject of the great epochs in the history of the changes in the relative value of gold and silver, see Karl Marx, l.c., p. 136 sq. Sir Robert Peel, by his Bank Act of 1844, sought to tide over the difficulty, by allowing the Bank of England to issue notes against silver bullion, on condition that the reserve of silver should never exceed more than one-fourth of the reserve of gold. The value of silver being for that purpose estimated at its price in the London market.

Added in the 4th German edition. — We find ourselves once more in a period of serious change in the relative values of gold and silver. About 25 years ago the ratio expressing the relative value of gold and silver was 15-1/2:1; now it is approximately 22:1, and silver is still constantly falling as against gold. This is essentially the result of a revolution in the mode of production of both metals. Formerly gold was obtained almost exclusively by washing it out from gold-bearing alluvial deposits, products of the weathering of auriferous rocks. Now this method has become inadequate and has been forced into the background by the processing of the quartz lodes themselves, a way of extraction which formerly was only of secondary importance, although well known to the ancients (Diodorus, III, 12-14) (Diodor’s v. Sicilien “Historische Bibliothek,” book III, 12-14. Stuttgart 1828, pp. 258-261). Moreover, not only were new huge silver deposits discovered in North America, in the Western part of the Rocky Mountains, but these and the Mexican silver mines were really opened up by the laying of railways, which made possible the shipment of modern machinery and fuel and in consequence the mining of silver on a very large scale at a low cost. However there is a great difference in the way the two metals occur in the quartz lodes. The gold is mostly native, but disseminated throughout the quartz in minute quantities. The whole mass of the vein must therefore be crushed and the gold either washed out or extracted by means of mercury. Often 1,000,000 grammes of quartz barely yield 1-3 and very seldom 30-60 grammes of gold. Silver is seldom found native, however it occurs in special quartz that is separated from the lode with comparative ease and contains mostly 40-90% silver; or it is contained, in smaller quantities, in copper, lead and other ores which in themselves are worthwhile working. From this alone it is apparent that the labour expended on the production of gold is rather in creasing while that expended on silver production has decidedly decreased, which quite naturally explains the drop in the value of the latter. This fall in value would express itself in a still greater fall in price if the price of silver were not pegged even to-day by artificial means. But America’s rich silver deposits have so far barely been tapped, and thus the prospects are that the value of this metal will keep on dropping

for rather a long time to come. A still greater contributing factor here is the relative decrease in the requirement of silver for articles of general use and for luxuries, that is its replacement by plated goods, aluminium, etc. One may thus gauge the utopianism of the bimetallist idea that compulsory international quotation will raise silver again to the old value ratio of 1:15-1/2. It is more likely that silver will forfeit its money function more and more in the markets of the world. — *F. E.*]

60. The opponents, themselves, of the mercantile system, a system which considered the settlement of surplus trade balances in gold and silver as the aim of international trade, entirely misconceived the functions of money of the world. I have shown by the example of Ricardo in what way their false conception of the laws that regulate the quantity of the circulating medium, is reflected in their equally false conception of the international movement of the precious metals (l.c., pp. 150 sq.). His erroneous dogma: “An unfavourable balance of trade never arises but from a redundant currency.... The exportation of the coin is caused by its cheapness, and is not the effect, but the cause of an unfavourable balance,” already occurs in Barbon: “The Balance of Trade, if there be one, is not the cause of sending away the money out of a nation; but that proceeds from the difference of the value of bullion in every country.” (N. Barbon; l.c., pp. 59, 60.) MacCulloch in “The Literature of Political Economy, a classified catalogue, Lond. 1845,” praises Barbon for this anticipation, but prudently passes over the naive forms, in which Barbon clothes the absurd supposition on which the “currency principle” is based. The absence of real criticism and even of honesty, in that catalogue culminates in the sections devoted to the history of the theory of money; the reason is that MacCulloch in this part of the work is flattering Lord Overstone whom he calls “facile princeps argentanorum.”

61. For instance, in subsidies, money loans for carrying on wars or for enabling banks to resume cash payments, &c., it is the money-form, and no other, of value that may be wanted.

62. “I would desire, indeed, no more convincing evidence of the competency of the machinery of the hoards in specie-paying countries to perform every necessary office of international adjustment, without any sensible aid from the general circulation, than the facility with which France, when but just recovering from the shock of a destructive foreign invasion, completed within the space of 27 months the payment of her forced contribution of nearly 20 millions to the allied powers, and a considerable proportion of the sum in specie, without any perceptible contraction or derangement of her domestic currency, or even any alarming fluctuation of her exchanges.” (Fullerton, l.c., p. 141.) [*Added in the 4th German edition.* — We have a still more striking example in the facility with which the same France was able in 1871-73 to pay off within 30 months a forced contribution more than ten times as great, a considerable part of it likewise in specie. — *F. E.*]

63. “L’argent se partage entre les nations relativement au besoin qu’elles en ont ... étant toujours attiré par les productions.” [“Money is shared among the nations in accordance with their need for it ... as it is always attracted by the products”] (Le Trosne, l.c., p. 916.) “The mines which are continually giving gold and silver, do give sufficient to supply such a needful balance to every nation.” (J. Vanderlint, l.c., p. 40.)

64. “Exchanges rise and fall every week, and at some particular times in the year run high

against a nation, and at other times run as high on the contrary.” (N. Barbon, l.c., p. 39)

65. These various functions are liable to come into dangerous conflict with one another whenever gold and silver have also to serve as a fund for the conversion of bank-notes.

66. “What money is more than of absolute necessity for a Home Trade, is dead stock ... and brings no profit to that country it’s kept in, but as it is transported in trade, as well as imported.” (John Bellers, “Essays,” p. 13.) “What if we have too much coin? We may melt down the heaviest and turn it into the splendour of plate, vessels or utensils of gold or silver, or send it out as a commodity, where the same is wanted or desired; or let it out at interest, where interest is high.” (W. Petty: “Quantulumcunque,” p. 39.) “Money is but the fat of the Body Politick, whereof too much cloth as often hinder its agility, as too little makes it sick ... as fat lubricates the motion of the muscles, feeds in want of victuals, fills up the uneven cavities, and beautifies the body; so cloth money in the state quicken its action, feeds from abroad in time of dearth at home, evens accounts ... and beautifies the whole; altho more especially the particular persons that have it in plenty.” (W. Petty, “Political Anatomy of Ireland,” p. 14.)

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The Value-Form

Appendix to the 1st German edition of *Capital*, Volume 1, 1867

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Introduction by the Translators, Mike Roth and W. Suchting

The first edition of the first volume of *Capital* contains an appendix (*Anhang*) entitled *The Value-Form (Die Wertform)*. This was dropped in the second edition, most of the material being worked into the rewritten version of Chapter 1. ^[1]

The origins and nature of this appendix are elucidated in the Marx-Engels correspondence. During June 1867, Engels was reading the page proofs of the first volume of *Capital*. On 16 June 1867 he wrote to Marx saying, amongst other things:

“The second sheet especially bears rather strong marks of your carbuncles, but that cannot be altered now and I do not think you should do anything more about it in an addendum, for, after all, the philistine is not accustomed to this sort of abstract thought and certainly will not cudgel his brains for the sake of the form of value.” (*Marx and Engels Collected Works*, 1987, vol. 42, p.381) ^[a]

He later goes on:

“In these more abstract developments you have committed the great mistake of not making the sequence of thought clear by a larger number of small sections and separate headings. You ought to have dealt with this part in the manner of Hegel’s Encyclopaedia, with short paragraphs, every dialectical transition marked by a special heading and so far as possible all excurses and mere illustrations printed in a special type. The thing would have looked rather like a schoolbook, but it would have been made much more comprehensible to a very large class of readers. For the people, even the learned section, are no longer at all accustomed to this kind of thinking and one must facilitate it for them in every possible way.” (*Marx and Engels Collected Works*, 1987, vol. 42, p.382)

On 22 June, Marx replied to Engels. He began by expressing the hope that “the bourgeoisie will remember my carbuncles all the rest of their lives,” and continues later in the letter as follows:

“As to the development of the *value-form* I have and have *not* followed your advice, in order to behave dialectically in this respect as well; i.e. I have: 1. written an *appendix* in which I present *the same thing* as simply and pedagogically as possible, and 2. followed your advice and divided each step in the development into §§, etc. with *separate headings*. In the preface I then tell the ‘*non-dialectical*’ reader that he should skip pages *x-y* and read the appendix instead. Here not merely philistines are concerned but youth eager for knowledge, etc. Besides, the matter is too decisive for the whole book. (*Marx and Engels Collected Works*, 1987, vol. 42, p.385)

This appendix contains an extraordinarily clear and succinct exposition of Marx’s concept of value. Indeed there is no better introduction to the much more involved exposition in the first chapter of volume I of *Capital* as we now have it. Marx says in the Preface to the first edition of *Capital* (1867): “Beginnings are always difficult in all sciences. The understanding of the first chapter ... will therefore present the greatest difficulty. (*Marx and Engels Collected Works*, 1996, vol. 35, p.7). Especially in the English literature there is still a strong tendency to skip these initial ‘subtleties’. As opposed to this, in the years after the student movement, young Marxists in West Germany have tried to acquire a new understanding of the whole of Marx’s analyses, taking the value-form seriously. As there has been no language barrier, study of the additional versions of the fundamental part of the analysis as contained in such work as the *Grundrisse*, the *Results of the Immediate Process of Production*, the first edition of *Capital*, and the *Notes on Adolph Wagner*, all until recently closed to readers with no knowledge of German, was an important part of this work. This has been combined with reading secondary literature like I. I. Rubin’s work, recently translated into English as *Essays in Marx’s Theory of Value*, V. S. Vygodskii’s book on the history of Marx’s economic work, translated as *The Story of a Great Discovery: How Karl Marx Wrote ‘Capital’*, and most important of all Roman Rosdolsky’s *The Making of Marx’s ‘Capital’*, which has only just now appeared in English translation. The result of this recent renaissance of Marx-studies in Germany, involving a greater number of people than ever before, is a rapidly increasing volume of literature on central topics of the analysis of capitalist society, much of which is not yet available in English. This includes work which emphasises the analysis of the value-form, listed in the bibliography below.

The following translation of Marx’s *Value-Form* appendix to volume I of *Capital* was made in 1976. After its completion and submission for publication there appeared the first English published version of it in a volume entitled *Value: Studies by Karl Marx*, edited by Albert Dragstedt ^[b]. An examination of this published version however showed that it was neither a very readable nor an adequate rendering of Marx’s text. (It may suffice to point out that twenty-six lines of Marx’s text, most of them quite crucial, are omitted without notice ^[2]). So we have considered it appropriate to present the following translation to the public.

The Value-Form

by Karl Marx

The analysis of the *commodity* has shown that it is something *twofold*, use-value *and* value.

Hence in order for a thing to possess *commodity-form*, it must possess a *twofold form*, the form of a use-value and the form of value. The *form of use-value* is the form of the commodity's *body* itself, iron, linen, etc., its tangible, sensible form of existence. This is the *natural form* (*Naturalform*) of the commodity. As opposed to this the *value-form* (*Wertform*) of the commodity is its *social form*.

Now how is the *value* of a commodity *expressed*? Thus how does it acquire a *form of appearance of its own*? Through the *relation of different commodities*. In order correctly to analyse the *form* contained in such a relation we must proceed from the *simplest*, most undeveloped shape (*Gestalt*). The simplest relation of the commodity is obviously *its relation to a single other commodity*, no matter *which one*. Hence *the relation of two commodities furnishes the simplest value-expression for a commodity*.

I. Simple Value-form

20 yards of linen = 1 coat

or

20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat

The secret of the *entire value-form* (*aller Wertform*) must be hidden in this *simple value-form*. Hence its analysis offers the real difficulty.

§1. The two poles of the expression of value (*Wertausdruck*): relative value-form and equivalent form

In the simple expression of value the two types of commodities, linen and coat, obviously play *two different roles*. The linen is the commodity *which expresses its value in the body of a commodity different from it*, the coat. On the other hand, the commodity-type coat serves *as the material in which value is expressed*. The one commodity plays an active, the other a passive role. Now we say of *the commodity which expresses its value in another commodity*: its value is represented as *relative value*, or is in the *relative value-form*. As opposed to this, we say of the other commodity, here the coat, which *serves as the material of the expression of value*: it functions *as equivalent* to the first commodity or is *in the equivalent form*.

Without analysing the matter more deeply, the following points are clear from the start:

(a) *The inseparability of the two forms.*

Relative value-form and equivalent form are moments of the *same expression of value*, which belong to one another and are reciprocally conditioning and inseparable.

(b) The polarity of the two forms.

On the one hand, these two forms are *mutually excluding or opposed extremes*, i.e. *poles*, of the same expression of value. They are always *distributed* amongst *different* commodities, which the expression of value relates to one another. For example, I cannot express the value of linen in linen. ‘*20 yards of linen = 20 yards of linen*’ is not an expression of value but simply expresses a definite quantity of the object of use, linen. The *value* of linen can thus only be expressed in *another commodity (in andrer Ware)*, i.e. only *relatively*. The *relative value-form* of linen thus presupposes that that *some other commodity* confronts it *in the equivalent form*. On the other hand, *this other commodity*, here the coat, which figures as *the equivalent of the linen* is thus *in equivalent form*, and can *not* be *at the same time in the relative value-form*. *This commodity does not express its value*. It furnishes only *the material for the expression of value in another commodity*.

Certainly the expression: ‘*20 yards of linen = 1 coat*’ or ‘*20 yards of linen are worth one coat*’ also includes the converse: ‘*1 coat = 20 yards of linen*’ or ‘*1 coat is worth 20 yards of linen*’. But in doing this I must *reverse* the equation, in order to *express* the value of the coat *relatively*, and once I do this the linen becomes the *equivalent* instead of the coat. The *same* commodity therefore *cannot make its appearance in the same expression of value at the same time in both forms*. Rather, these exclude one another in a *polar* manner.

Let us consider exchange between linen-producer A and coat-producer B. Before they come to terms,

A says: *20 yards of linen are worth 2 coats (20 yards of linen = 2 coats)*,

But B responds: *1 coat is worth 22 yards of linen (1 coat = 22 yards of linen)*.

Finally, after they have haggled for a long time they agree:

A says: *20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat*,
and B says: *1 coat is worth 20 yards of linen*.

Here *both*, linen and coat, are *at the same time* in relative value-form and in equivalent form. But, *nota bene*, for *two different persons* and in *two different expressions of value*, which simply occur (ins Leben treten) *at the same time*. For A *his linen* is in relative value-form – because for him the initiative proceeds *from his commodity* – and *the commodity of the other person*, the coat, is in equivalent form. *Conversely* from the standpoint of B. Thus

one and the same commodity never possess, even in this case, the two forms at the same time in the same expression of value.

(c) Relative value and equivalent are only forms of values.

Relative value and equivalent are both only *forms* of commodity-value. Now whether a commodity is in one form or in the polar opposite depends exclusively on *its position in the expression of value*. This comes out strikingly in the *simple value-form* which we are here considering to begin with. *As regards the content*, the two expressions:

1. *20 yards of linen = 1 coat or 20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat,*
2. *1 coat = 20 yards of linen or 1 coat is worth 20 yards of linen*

are *not* at all *different*. *As regards the form*, they are not only *different* but *opposed*. In expression 1 the value of the linen is *expressed relatively*. Hence it is *in the relative value-form* whilst at the same time the value of the coat is expressed as *equivalent*. Hence it is in the *equivalent form*. Now if I turn the expression 1 round I obtain expression 2. The commodities *change positions* and right away the coat is in the *relative value-form*, the linen in *equivalent form*. Because they have changed *their respective positions in the same expression of value*, they have *changed value-form* (*die Wertform gewechselt*).

§2. The relative value-form

(a) Relation of equality.

Since it is the linen *which is to express its value*, the initiative proceeds from it. It *enters into a relation* with the coat, i.e. *with some other commodity different* from itself. This relation is a *relation of equalisation* (*Gleichsetzung*). The *basis* of the expression ‘*20 yards of linen = 1 coat*’ is in fact: *linen = coat*, which expressed in words simply means: ‘*the commodity-type “coat” is of the same nature (ist gleicher Natur), the same substance as the “linen,” a type of commodity different from it*’. We overlook that for the most part, because attention is absorbed by the *quantitative relation*, i.e. by the *definite proportion*, in which the one type of commodity is equated to the other. We forget that the *magnitudes of different things* are only *quantitatively comparable after their reduction to the same unit*. Only as *expressions of the same unit* are magnitudes *with the same denominator* (*gleichnamige*) and hence *commensurable*. In the above expression the linen thus *relates* to the coat as *something of its own kind*, or the coat is *related to the linen as a thing of the same substance, as the same in essence* (*Wesensgleiches*). The one is therefore *quantitatively equated* to the other.

(b) Value-relation.

The coat is only *the same* as the linen to the extent that both are *values*. Thus that the linen is *related* to the coat as to *something of its own kind* or that the coat as *a thing of the same substance is equated* to linen, expresses the fact that the *coat counts in this relation as value*. It is *equated* to the linen insofar as the latter is *value* as well. The *relation of equality* is thus a *value-relation*, but the value-relation is above all the *expression of the value* or the *existence as value of the commodity which expresses its value*. As *use-value*, or body of the commodity (*Warenkörper*), the linen is *distinguished from* the coat. But *its existence as value comes to light, is expressed* in a *relation*, in which *another commodity-type*, the coat, is *equated* to it or counts as the same *in essence*.

(c) Qualitative content (Gehalt) of the relative value-form, contained in the value-relation.

The coat is *value* only to the extent that it is *the expression, in the form of a thing, of the human labour-power expended in its production* and thus insofar as it is a *jelly of abstract human labour – abstract labour*, because *abstraction* is made from the definite useful concrete character of the labour contained in it, *human labour*, because the labour counts here only as *expenditure of human labour-power as such*. Thus the linen cannot *relate (sich verhalten)* to the coat as *a thing having value*, or cannot be *related (bezogen werden)* to the coat as *value*, without relating (*bezogen werden*) to it as a body whose *sole substance consists in human labour*. But as *value* this linen is a *jelly of this same human labour*. Within this relation the coat as a thing (*Körper*) thus *represents the substances of value which it has in common* with linen, i.e. *human labour*. Within this relation the coat thus counts *only as shape of value (Gestalt von Wert)*, hence also as the *form of the value (Wertgestalt)* of the linen, as *the sensible form of appearance of the value of the linen*. Thus by means of the *value-relation* the *value* of the commodity is *expressed in the use-value of another commodity*, i.e. in the *body* of another commodity *different from itself*.

(d) Quantitative definiteness (Bestimmtheit) of the relative value-form contained in the value-relation.

The *20 yards of linen* are, however, not only *value as such*, i.e. a *jelly of human labour*, but *value of a definite magnitude*, i.e. *a definite quantity of human labour is objectified in them*. In the value relation of the linen to the coat the commodity-type coat is hence not only *quantitatively equated* to the linen as *bodily form of value (Wertkörper)* as such, i.e. as embodiment of human labour, but a *definite quantity of this bodily form of value*, 1 coat,

not *1 dozen*, etc, insofar as in *1 coat* there is hidden precisely as much value-substance of human labour as in *20 yards of linen*.

(e) *The relative value-form as a whole (Das Ganze der relativen Wertform).*

Thus through the *relative value-expression* the *value* of the commodity acquires, first, a *form different from its own use-value*. The use-form of this commodity is, e.g. *linen*. But it possesses its *value-form* in its *relation of equality with the coat*. Through this relation of equality the body of another commodity, sensibly different from it, becomes the mirror of its own existence as value (*Wertsein*), of its own character as value (*Wertgestalt*). In this way it gains an *independent and separate value-form, different from its natural form*. But second, as a *value of definite magnitude*, it is *quantitatively measured* by the quantitatively definite relation or *the proportion* in which it is *equated* to the body of the other commodity.

§3. The equivalent form

(a) *The form of immediate exchangeability.*

As *values* all commodities are *expressions of the same unit*, of human labour, *which count equally and are replaceable or substitutable for one another*. Hence a commodity is only *exchangeable* with another commodity insofar as it possesses a *form* in which it *appears as value*. A body of the commodity is *immediately exchangeable* with another commodity insofar as its *immediate form* i.e. its own *bodily or natural form, represents (vorstellt) value* with regard to another commodity or *counts as value-form (Wertgestalt)*. This property is possessed by the coat in the *value-relation* of the linen to the coat. The *value* of the linen would otherwise *not be expressible in the thing which is the coat*. Therefore that a commodity has *equivalent form* at all, means just this. Through its place in the value-expression *its own natural form counts as the value-form for another commodity* or it possesses the *form of immediate exchangeability with another commodity*. Therefore it does not need to *take on (annehmen) a form different from its immediate natural form* in order to *appear as value* for another commodity, *to count as value* and *to act on it as value (auf sie als Wert zu wirken)*.

(b) *Quantitative definiteness is not contained in the equivalent form.*

That a thing which has *the form of a coat* is *immediately exchangeable* with linen, or a thing which has the *form of gold* is *immediately exchangeable* with all other commodities – *this equivalent form of a thing* contains absolutely *no quantitative definiteness*. The

opposed erroneous view springs from the following causes:

First, the commodity 'coat', for example, which serves as material for the expression of value of linen is, within such an expression, also *always quantitatively definite*, like '1 coat' and 'not 12 coats', etc. But why? Because the '20 yards of linen' are expressed in their relative value expression of value not only as *value as such*, but at the same time *are measured as a definite quantity of value*. But that 1 coat and not 12 coats contains as much labour as 20 yards of linen and hence is equated with 20 yards of linen has absolutely nothing to do with this *characteristic property* of the commodity-type coat of being *immediately exchangeable* with the commodity-type linen.

Second, if '20 yards of linen' as value of a definite magnitude are expressed in '1 coat', then *conversely* the *magnitude of value of '1 coat'* is also expressed in '20 yards of linen', and thus similarly *quantitatively measured*, but only indirectly, through *reversal of the expression*, not insofar as the coat plays the role of the *equivalent* but rather insofar as it represents its own value *relatively* in the linen.

Third, we can also express the formula '20 yards of linen = 1 coat' or '20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat' in the following way:

'20 yards of linen and 1 coat *are equivalents*, or *both are values of equal magnitude*'.

Here we do not express *the value* of either of the two commodities *in the use-value of the other*. *Neither* of the two commodities is hence set up *in equivalent-form*. *Equivalent* means here only *something equal in magnitude*, both things having been silently reduced in our heads to the abstraction *value*.

(c) The peculiarities (Eigentümlichkeiten) of the equivalent form

a) First peculiarity of the equivalent form: use-value becomes the form of appearance of its opposite, of value.

The *natural form* of the commodity becomes the *value-form*. But, *nota bene*, this *quid pro quo* occurs for a commodity B (coat or wheat or iron, etc.) *only within the value-relation* to it, into which any *other* commodity A (linen, etc) enters, and *only within this relation*. In itself, considered in isolation, the coat, e.g., is only a useful thing, a use-value, just like the linen, and hence its coat-form is only the form of use-value (ist nur Form von Gebrauchswert) or *natural form* of a definite type of commodity. But since no commodity *can relate to itself as equivalent* and therefore *also cannot make its own natural hide an expression of its own value*, it must *relate itself to another commodity as equivalent* or make the natural hide of the body of *another commodity its own value-form*.

This may be illustrated by the example of a *measure*, which is predicable of the bodies of commodities as bodies (*den Warenkörpern als Warenkörpern zukommt*) i.e. as *use-values*. A *sugar-loaf, qua body (weil Körper)*, is *heavy* and hence has *weight*, but one cannot tell the weight of a sugar-loaf by looking or feeling (man kann keinen Zuckerhut seine Schwere ansehen oder anfühlen). Now we take different *pieces of iron* whose weight has been previously determined. The *bodily form* of the iron considered in itself is just as little the *form of appearance of weight* as that of the sugar-loaf. However in order to *express* the sugar-loaf as heaviness or weight, we put it *into a weight-relation* with iron. In this relation the iron counts as a *body*, which *represents nothing but heaviness or weight*. Hence quantities of iron serve as the measure of the weight of sugar and *represent*, with regard to the body of sugar, *merely the form of heaviness (blosse Schweregestalt), form of appearance of heaviness*. Iron plays this role only within the relation in which the sugar, or some other body whose weight is to be found, enters. Were both things *not heavy* they could not enter *into this relation* and hence *the one could not serve as the expression of the weight of the other*. If we throw both on the scale pan, we see in fact that they are, *as weight, the same* and hence *in a definite proportion* also of the *same weight*. Just as here the *body of the iron* represents, with regard to the sugar-loaf, *simply heaviness*, so in our expression of value *the body of the coat* represents, with regard to the linen, *simply value*.

b) Second peculiarity of the equivalent form: concrete labour becomes the form of appearance of its opposite, abstract human labour

The coat counts in the expression of the value of the linen *as the value-body*, hence its *bodily or natural form* as *value-form*, i.e. therefore as *embodiment of undifferentiated human labour*, human labour as such (schlechthin). But the labour by which the useful thing which is the coat is made and by which it acquires a definite form, is not *abstract human labour*, human labour as such, but a *definite useful, concrete type of labour* – the labour of tailoring. The simple relative value-form requires (erheischt) that the value of a commodity, linen, for example, is expressed only *in one single other type of commodity*. Which the other type of commodity is, is however, for the simple value-form, completely irrelevant. Instead of the commodity-type ‘coat’ the *value* of the linen could have been expressed in *wheat*, or instead of wheat, in *iron*, etc. But whether in coat, wheat or iron, in every case the *equivalent* of linen counts *as the body of value* with regard to the linen, hence *as embodiment of human labour as such*. And in every case *the definite bodily form of the equivalent*, whether coat or wheat or iron, remains embodiment *not of abstract human labour*, but of a *definite concrete useful type of labour*, be it the labour of tailoring or of farming or of mining. The *definite concrete useful labour*, which produces the *body* of the commodity which is the *equivalent* must therefore, *in the expression of value, always necessarily count as a definite form of realisation or form of appearance, i.e. of abstract human labour*. The coat, for example, can only *count* as the *body of value*, hence as *embodiment of human*

labour as such, in so far as the labour of tailoring counts as a definite form, in which human labour-power is expended or in which abstract human labour is realised.

Within the value-relation and the value expression included in it, the abstractly general counts not as a property of the concrete, sensibly real; but on the contrary the sensibly-concrete counts as the mere form of appearance or definite form of realisation of the abstractly general. The *labour of tailoring*, which, for example, hides in the equivalent 'coat', does not possess, within the value-expression of the linen, the *general property* of also being human labour. On the contrary. *Being human labour* counts as its *essence (Wesen)*, being the labour of tailoring counts only as the *form of appearance (Erscheinungsform)* or *definite form of realisation of this its essence*. This *quid pro quo* is unavoidable because the labour represented in the product of labour only goes to create value insofar as it is undifferentiated human labour, so that the labour objectified in the value of the product is in no way distinguished from the labour objectified in the value of a different product.

This *inversion (Verkehrung)* by which the sensibly-concrete counts only as the form of appearance of the abstractly general and not, on the contrary, the abstractly general as property of the concrete, characterises the expression of value. At the same time, it makes understanding it difficult. If I say: Roman Law and German Law are both laws, that is obvious. But if I say: Law (Das Recht), this abstraction (Abstraktum) realises itself in Roman Law and in German Law, in these concrete laws, the interconnection becoming mystical.

g) Third peculiarity of the equivalent form: private labour becomes the form of its opposite, labour in immediately social form

Products of labour would not become commodities, were they not products of separate private labours carried on independently of one another. The *social interconnection* of these private labours exists materially, insofar as they are members of a naturally evolved social division of labour and hence, through their products, satisfy wants of different kinds, in the totality (*Gesamtheit*) of which the similarly naturally evolved system of social wants (*naturwüchsiges System der gesellschaftlichen Bedürfnisse*) consists. This material social interconnection of private labours carried on independently of one another is however only mediated and hence is realised only through the exchange of their products. The product of private labour hence only has social form insofar as it has value-form and hence the form of exchangeability with other products of labour. It has immediately social form insofar as its own bodily or natural form is at the same time the form of its exchangeability with other commodities or counts as value-form for another commodity (*anderer Ware*). However, as we have seen, this only takes place for a product of labour when, through the value relation of other commodities to it, it is in equivalent-form or, with respect to other commodities, plays the role of equivalent.

The *equivalent* has *immediately social form* insofar as it has the form of *immediate exchangeability* with *another commodity*, and it has this form of immediate exchangeability insofar as it *counts* for another commodity as the *body of value*, hence *as equal (als Gleiches)*. Therefore the definite useful labour contained in it also counts *as labour in immediately social form*, i.e. as labour which possesses the form of equality with the labour contained in *another commodity*. A definite, concrete labour like the *labour of tailoring* can only possess the *form of equality* with the labour of a *different type* contained in a commodity of a different kind, for example the linen, insofar as its *definite form counts as the expression of something* which really constitutes *the equality* of labours of different sorts or *what is equal in those labours*. But they are only *equal* insofar as they are *human labour as such*, abstract human labour, i.e. *expenditure of human labour-power*. Thus, as has already been shown, because the *definite concrete labour contained in the equivalent counts as the definite form of realisation* or *form of appearance of abstract human labour*, it possesses the *form of equality* with *other labour*, and hence, *although it is private labour*, like all other labour which produces commodities, it is nevertheless *labour in immediately social form*. Precisely because of this it is represented in a product that is *immediately exchangeable* with the other commodities.

The last two peculiarities of the *equivalent-form* set out in §§ b and g become still more comprehensible when we recur to the great theorist (Forscher) who for the first time analysed the *value-form*, like so many forms of thought, forms of society and forms of nature, and for the most part more happily than his modern successors, I mean *Aristotle*.

Aristotle clearly formulates first of all the fact that the *money-form* of the commodity is only *the further developed shape (Gestalt) of the simple value-form*, i.e. of the expression of value of a commodity in any *other commodity*, for he says:

‘5 beds = 1 house’ (clinai pente anti oiciaς)

‘does not differ’ from

‘5 beds = such and such an amount of money’ (clinai pente anti ... oson ai pente clinai)

He sees further that the *value-relation*, in which this *expression of value* hides, determines, for its part, the fact that the house is *qualitatively equated* with the bed and that these sensibly different things would not be able to be related to one another as *commensurable magnitudes without such essential equality* ‘Exchange’, he says, ‘cannot take place *without equality*, and equality *cannot occur without commensurability*.’ (out isothς mh oushς summetriacς).

But at this he pulls up short and ceases the further analysis of the value-form, ‘But it is *in truth impossible* (th men oun alhqeia adunaton) that things of such different sorts should be commensurable’, i.e. *qualitatively equal*. This equalisation can only be something which is alien

to the true nature of things, and therefore only a ‘makeshift for practical purposes’. [c]

Aristotle thus tells us himself just where his further analysis suffers shipwreck, namely, on the lack of the *concept of value*. What is *that which is equal*, i.e. the common substance, which the house *represents* for the bed in the expression of the value of the bed? Such a thing ‘*cannot in truth exist*’, says Aristotle. Why? With respect to the bed the house *represents something which is equal* (*stellt ein Gleiches vor*) insofar as it represents what in both, the bed and the house, is really *equal*. And that is – *human labour*.

But the fact that in the form of commodity-values all labours are expressed as *equal human labour* and hence *as counting equally* (*als gleichgeseltend*) could not be *read out of* the value-form of commodities by Aristotle, because *Greek society* rested on *slave labour* and hence had *the inequality of people and their labours as a natural basis*. The secret of the expression of value, *the equality of all labours* and the fact that *all labours count equally* because and insofar as they are *human labour as such* can only be deciphered when *the concept of human equality* already possesses the fixity of a popular prejudice. But that is only possible in a society in which *the commodity-form* is the general form of the product of labour and thus also the relation of people to one another *as possessors of commodities* is the ruling social relation. The genius of Aristotle shines precisely in the fact that he *discovers in the expression of value* of commodities a *relation of equality*. Only the historical limit of the society in which he lived prevents him from finding out what, ‘in truth’, this *relation of equality* consists in.

d) Fourth peculiarity of the equivalent form: the fetishism of the commodity-form is more striking in the equivalent form than in the relative value-form

The fact that the products of labour – such useful things as coat, linen, wheat, iron, etc. – are *values, definite magnitudes of value* and in general *commodities*, are properties which naturally pertain to them only *in our practical interrelations* (*in unsrem Verkehr*) and not by nature like, for example, the property of being heavy or being warming or nourishing. But *within our practical interrelations*, these things relate to one another *as commodities*. They are values, they are *measurable as magnitudes of value*, and their common *property of being values* puts them into a *value-relation* to one another. Now the fact that, for example, ‘*20 yards of linen = 1 coat*’ or ‘*20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat*’ only expresses the fact that:

1. the *different types* of labour necessary for the production of these things *count equally* (*gleichgelten*) *as human labour*;
2. the fact that the *quantity* of labour expended in their production is *measured* according to definite social laws;
3. that tailors and weavers enter into a definite *social relation of production*.

It is a *definite social relation of the producers* in which they *equate (gleichsetzen)* their different types of labour *as human labour*. It is not less a *definite social relation of producers*, in which they *measure* the magnitude of their labours *by the duration of expenditure of human labour-power*. But *within our practical interrelations these social characters* of their own labours *appear* to them *as social properties pertaining to them by nature*, as *objective determinations (gegenständliche Bestimmungen) of the products of labour themselves*, the equality of human labours as a *value-property* of the products of labour, the *measure* of the labour by the socially necessary labour-time as *the magnitude of value* of the products of labour, and finally the social relations of the producers through their labours appear as a *value-relation or social relation of these things*, the products of labour. Precisely because of this the products of labour *appear* to them as *commodities*, sensible-supersensible (*sinnlich übersinnliche*) or *social things*. Thus the impression on the optic nerve brought about by the light (*Lichteindruck auf den Sehnerv*) from something is represented, not as a subjective stimulation of the optic nerve itself, but as the *objective form* of a thing outside the eye. But in the case of seeing, light from a thing, from the external object, is in fact thrown upon another thing, the eye. It is a physical relation between physical things. As opposed to that the *commodity-form* and the *value-relation* of products of labour have absolutely nothing to do with their physical nature and the relations between things which springs from this. It is only the *definite social relation of people (der Menschen)* itself which here takes on for them the phantasmagoric form of a *relation of things*. Hence in order to find an analogy for this we must take flight into the cloudy region of the *religious world*. Here *the products of the human head appear as independent figures (Gestalten)* endowed with a life of their own and standing in a relation to one another and to people. So it is in the *world of commodities* with the *products of the human hand*. This I call the *fetishism* which clings to the products of labour as soon as they are produced *as commodities* and which is therefore inseparable from *commodity-production*.

Now this fetish-character emerges more strikingly in the *equivalent-form* than in the *relative value-form*. The *relative value-form* of a commodity is *mediated*, namely by *its relation to another commodity*. Through this value-form the *value* of the commodity is *expressed* as something *completely distinct* from its own sensible existence. At the same time it is inherent in this that *existence as value (Wertsein)* is a *relation* which is *alien* to the thing itself and hence that its *value-relation* to another thing can only be the *form of appearance* of a *social relation* hidden behind it. Conversely with the *equivalent-form*. It consists precisely in the fact that the *bodily or natural form* of a commodity *counts immediately as the social form*, as the *value-form* for another commodity. Therefore, *within our practical interrelations, to possess the equivalent-form* appears as *the social natural property (gesellschaftliche Natureigenschaft)* of a thing, as a property pertaining to it *by nature*, so that hence it appears to be *immediately exchangeable* with other things just as it exists for the senses (*so wie es sinnlich da ist*). But because *within the value-expression of commodity A* the

equivalent-form pertains by nature to the *commodity B* it seems also to belong to the latter by nature *outside of this relation*. Hence, for example, the riddle (*das Rätselhafte*) of *gold*, that seems to possess, by nature, apart from its other natural properties, its colour, its specific weight, its non-oxydisability in air, etc., also the equivalent-form, or the social quality of being *immediately exchangeable* with all other commodities.

§ 4. As soon as value appears independently it has the form of exchange-value

The expression of value has two poles, *relative value-form* and *equivalent-form*. To start with, what concerns the commodity functioning as *equivalent* is that it counts for another commodity as the *shape of value (Wertgestalt)*, a body *in immediately exchangeable form – exchange-value*. But the commodity whose value is expressed *relatively*, possesses the form of *exchange-value* in that:

1. its *existence as value* is revealed by the *exchangeability* of the body of another commodity with it;
2. its *magnitude of value* is expressed through the *proportion* in which the other commodity is exchangeable with it.

The *exchange-value* is hence *the independent form of appearance of commodity-value*.

§5. The simple value-form of the commodity is the simple form of appearance of the opposites, use-value and exchange-value contained within it

In the *relation of value* of the linen to the coat the natural form (Naturalform) of the linen counts only *as the shape (als Gestalt) of use-value*, the natural form of the coat only *as value-form (Wertform) or shape (Gestalt) of exchange-value*. The *inner opposition* between use-value and value (*Gebrauchswert und Wert*) contained in a commodity is thus *represented* by an *external opposition*, i.e. *the relation of two commodities*, of which the one counts immediately only as use-value, the other immediately only as exchange-value, or in which the two opposing determinations, use-value and exchange-value, are distributed *in a polar manner* among the commodities.

If I say: *As a commodity* the linen is use-value and exchange-value, this is my judgement about the *nature* of the commodity gained by analysis. As opposed to this, in the expression ‘*20 yards of linen = 1 coat*’ or ‘*20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat*’ the linen itself says that it

1. is a *use-value* (linen);
2. is an *exchange-value* distinct from that (something equal to the coat); and
3. is the *unity of these two differences*, and thus is a *commodity*.

§6. The simple value-form of the commodity is the simple commodity-form of the product of labour

The product of labour in its natural form brings with it into the world the *form of a use-value*. Therefore it requires further only the *value-form* in order for it to possess the *commodity-form*, i.e. for it to *appear as a unity of the opposites use-value and exchange-value*. The development of the value-form is hence identical with the development of the commodity-form.

§7. Relation between the commodity-form and the money-form

If we replace:

20 yards of linen = 1 coat
or
20 yards of linen are worth 1 coat

by the form:

20 yards of linen = 2 Pounds Sterling
or
20 yards of linen are worth 2 Pounds Sterling

then it becomes obvious at first glance that the *money-form* in nothing but the *further development of the simple value-form of the commodity*, and therefore of the *simple commodity-form of the labour-product*. Because the money-form is only the *developed commodity-form* it obviously springs from the *simple commodity-form*. Hence as soon as the latter is understood it only remains to consider *the series of metamorphoses* through which the simple commodity form ‘*20 yards of linen = 1 coat*’ must run in order to take on the shape (Gestalt annehmen) ‘*20 yards of linen = 2 Pounds Sterling*’.

§8. Simple relative value-form and singular equivalent-form

The expression of value in the coat gives the linen a *value-form* by virtue of which it is *distinguished simply as value* from itself *as use-value*. This form also puts it only *in relation* to the coat, i.e. to some *single* type of commodity different from itself. But *as value* it is *the same* as all other commodities. Its *value-form* must hence also be a form which puts it into a relation of *qualitative equality* and *quantitative proportionality* to all other commodities – *to the simple relative value-form* of a commodity corresponds the *singular equivalent-form of another commodity*. Or the commodity, in which value is expressed, functions here only *as singular equivalent*. Thus the coat in the relative expression of value of linen possesses only the

equivalent-form or the *form of immediate exchangeability* with relation to this *single* type of commodity, linen.

§9. Transition from the simple value-form to the expanded value-form

The simple value-form requires (bedingt) the value of one commodity to be expressed in *only one commodity* of *another* sort, though it does not matter which. It is therefore just as much a *simple relative expression of value* of the linen whether its value is expressed in iron or in wheat, etc., or when it is expressed in the commodity-type coat. Thus according to whether it enters into a *value-relation* with this or that type of commodity there arises *different simple relative expressions of value* of the linen. There exists the *possibility* that it has (Der *Möglichkeit* nach hat) *just as many different simple expressions of value* as there are different sorts of commodities. In fact, therefore, its *complete relative expression of value* consists not in an *isolated* simple relative expression of value but *in the sum* of its simple relative expressions of value. Thus we obtain:

II. Total or Expanded Value-form

‘20 yards of linen = 1 coat or = 10 pounds of tea or = 40 pounds of coffee or = 1 quarter of wheat or = 2 ounces of gold or = ½ ton of iron or = etc.’

§1. Endlessness of the series

This *series of simple relative expressions of value* is in its nature constantly extendible or never concludes. For there constantly occur new types of commodities and each new type of commodity forms the material of a new expression of value.

§2. The expanded relative value-form

The value of a commodity, for example linen, is now represented in all other elements of the world of commodities. The body of each other commodity becomes the mirror of the value of the linen. Thus only now does this value itself *appear* truly as a *jelly of undifferentiated human labour*. For the labour which constitutes the *value* of the linen is now *expressly* represented as labour which *counts equally* with *any other human labour* whatever natural form at all it possesses and hence whether it is objectified in coat or wheat or iron or gold, etc. Hence by virtue of its *value-form* the linen now stands also *in a social relation* no longer to only *a single* other type of commodity, but to the *world of commodities*. As a commodity it is a citizen of this world. At the same time there is inherent in the endless series of its expressions the

fact that the *value* of commodities is irrelevant with regard to each *particular form of use-value* in which it *appears*.

§3. The particular equivalent form

Each commodity – coat, tea, wheat, iron, etc. – counts in the expression of value of linen as *equivalent* and hence as a *body of value*. The *definite natural form* of each of these commodities is now a *particular equivalent form* beside many others. Similarly the *manifold definite, concrete, useful types of labour* contained in the different bodies of commodities now count as similarly many *particular forms of realisation or appearance of human labour as such*.

§4. Deficiencies of the expanded or total value-form

First, the *relative* expression of value of linen is *incomplete (unfertig)* because the series which represents it never concludes. Second, it consists of a motley mosaic of different (*verschiedenartige*) expressions of value. Finally, if as must happen, the *relative value of each commodity* is expressed in this expanded form, the relative value-form of each commodity is an endless series of expressions of value, *different* from the relative value-form of each other commodity. The deficiencies of the *expanded relative value-form* are reflected in the *equivalent-form* corresponding to it. Since the natural form of each single type of commodity is here a *particular equivalent-form* beside innumerable other *particular equivalent-forms* there exist *only limited equivalent-forms* of which each *excludes* the other. Similarly the *definite, concrete, useful type of labour* contained in each particular commodity-equivalent is only a *particular* and thus not *exhaustive form of appearance of human labour*. The latter certainly possesses its complete or total form of appearance in the *complete range (Gesamtumkreis)* of those *particular forms of appearance*. But thus it possesses no *unified form of appearance*.

§5. Transition from the total value-form to the general value-form

The *total or expanded relative value-form* consists however only in a *sum* of simple relative expressions of value or *equations of the first form*, like:

$$\begin{aligned}20 \text{ yards of linen} &= 1 \text{ coat} \\20 \text{ yards of linen} &= 10 \text{ pounds of tea, etc.}\end{aligned}$$

But each of these equations contains, conversely, also the identical equation:

$$1 \text{ coat} = 20 \text{ yards of linen}$$

10 pounds of tea = 20 yards of linen, etc.

In fact, if the possessor of the linen exchanges his commodity with many other commodities and *hence expresses the value of his commodity* in a series of other commodities, then necessarily the many other possessors of commodities must also exchange their commodities with linen and hence express *the values* of their different commodities *in the same third commodity*, the linen. Therefore, if we reverse the series '20 yards of linen = 1 coat' or '10 pounds of tea' or '= etc.', i.e. if we express the converse relation which is already contained 'in itself' (*an sich*), implicitly in the series, we obtain:

III. General Value-form

1 coat =)
10 pounds of tea =)
40 pounds of coffee =)
1 quarter of wheat =) 20 yards of linen
2 ounces of gold =)
½ ton of iron =)
x commodity A =)
etc., commodity =)

§1. The changed shape (*Gestalt*) of the relative value-form

The relative value-form now possesses a completely changed shape. All commodities express their value:

1. *simply*, namely *in the body of one other single commodity*,
2. *in a unified manner*, i.e. *in the same other body of a commodity*.

Their value-form is simple and common, i.e. *general*. The linen now counts for the bodies of all the different sorts of commodities as their common and general shape of value. The value-form of a commodity, i.e. the expression of its value in linen, now *distinguishes* the commodity not only *as value from its own existence (Dasein) as a useful object, i.e. from its own natural form*, but at the same time *relates it as value to all other commodities, to all commodities as equal to it (als ihresgleichen)*. Hence in this value-form it possesses *general social form*.

Only through this *general* character does the *value-form* correspond to the *concept of value* (entspricht dem *Wertbegriff*). The value-form had to be a form in which commodities *appear* for one another as a *mere jelly of undifferentiated, homogenous human labour*, i.e. as *expressions in the form of things of the same labour-substance*. This is now attained. For

they are all *material expressions (Materiatur) of the same labour*, of the labour contained in the linen or *as the same material expression of labour*, namely as linen. Thus they are *qualitatively equated*.

At the same time they are *quantitatively compared or represented as definite magnitudes of value for one another (für einander dargestellt)*, i.e.:

$$\begin{aligned} 10 \text{ pounds of tea} &= 20 \text{ yards of linen} \\ &\text{and} \\ 40 \text{ pounds of coffee} &= 20 \text{ yards of linen} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore

$$10 \text{ pounds of tea} = 40 \text{ pounds of coffee.}$$

Or in 1 pound of coffee there hides only a quarter as much of the substance of value, labour, as in 1 pound of tea.

§2. The changed shape of the equivalent-form

The *particular equivalent-form* is now developed further to the *general equivalent-form*; or the commodity in equivalent-form is now *general equivalent*. By counting *as the form of value* of all other commodities the *natural form* of the body of the commodity linen is *the form of its property of counting equally (Gleichgültigkeit) or immediate exchangeability with all elements of the world of commodities*. Its *natural form* is therefore at the same time its *general social form*.

For all other commodities, although they are products of the most different sorts of labour, the linen counts *as the form of appearance of the labours contained in them*, hence *as the embodiment of homogenous undifferentiated human labour*. Weaving – this particular *concrete type of labour* – counts now by virtue of the value-relation of the world of commodities to linen *as the general and immediately exhaustive form of realisation of abstract human labour*, i.e. of the expenditure of human labour-power as such.

For precisely this reason the *private labour* contained in linen also counts *as labour* which is *immediately in general social form* or in the *form of equality* with all other labours. If a commodity thus possesses the *general equivalent-form* or functions *as general equivalent*, its *natural or bodily form* counts *as the visible incarnation, the general social chrysalis of all human labour*.

§3. Corresponding development (Gleichmässiges Entwicklungsverhältnis) between

relative value-form and equivalent-form

To the degree of development of the relative value-form there corresponds the degree of development of the equivalent-form. But – and this is to be noted carefully – *the development of the equivalent-form is only the expression and result of the development of the relative value-form. The initiative proceeds from the latter.*

The *simple relative value-form* expresses the value of a commodity only *in a single other type of commodity, no matter in which.* The commodity thus only acquires *value-form* in *distinction from its own use-value form or natural form.* Its equivalent also acquires only the *singular equivalent-form.* The *expanded relative value-form* expresses the value of a commodity in all other commodities. Hence the latter acquire the form of many *particular equivalents* or *particular equivalent-form.* Finally, *the world of commodities* gives itself a unified, general, relative value-form, by *excluding* from itself one *single type of commodity* in which *all* other commodities express their value in *common.* Thereby the *excluded* commodity becomes *general equivalent* or the equivalent-form becomes the *general equivalent-form.*

§4. Development of the polarity of relative value-form and equivalent-form

The *polar opposition* or the inseparable interconnection (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) and at the same time constant exclusion of relative value-form and equivalent-form implies:

1. that a commodity cannot be in one form without another commodity being in the *opposite form*; and
2. that as soon as a commodity is in the one form it cannot at the same time, within the same expression of value, be in the other form.

Now this *polar opposition* of the two moments (*Momente*) of the expression of value *develops* and *hardens* (*entwickelt und verhärtet sich*) *in the same measure* as the value-form as such is developed or built up (*ausgebildet*).

In *form I* the two forms already exclude one another, but *only formally* (formell). According to whether the same equation is read forwards or backwards, each of the two commodities in the extreme positions (Warenextreme) like linen and coat, are similarly now in the relative value-form, now in the equivalent. At this point it still takes some effort to hold fast to the polar opposition.

In *form II* only *one type of commodity at a time* can *totally expand its relative value*, i.e. it itself possesses *expanded relative value-form* only because and insofar as *all other commodities are in the equivalent-form* with regard to it.

Finally, in *form III* the *world of commodities* possesses *general social relative value-form* only because and insofar as all the commodities belonging to it *are excluded* from the *equivalent-form* or *the form of immediate exchangeability*. Conversely, the commodity which is *in the general equivalent form* or figures as *general equivalent* is *excluded* from the *unified* and hence *general relative value-form of the world of commodities*. If the linen – i.e. any commodity in general equivalent-form – were also to participate at the same time in the *general relative value-form*, then it would have had to have been *related to itself* as *equivalent*. We then obtain:

$$20 \text{ yards of linen} = 20 \text{ yards of linen}$$

a tautology in which neither value nor magnitude of value is expressed. In order *to express the relative value of the general equivalent*, we must reverse *form III*. It does not possess any relative value-form in common with other commodities; rather, *its value* expresses itself *relatively in the endless series of the bodies of all other commodities*. Thus the *expanded relative value-form* or *form II* now appears as *the specific relative value-form* of the commodity which plays the role of the *general equivalent*.

§5. Transition from the general value-form to the money-form

The *general equivalent-form* is a *form of value* as such. It can therefore pertain to *any commodity*, but always only by exclusion from all other commodities.

However the *mere distinction in form* between form II and form III already points to something *peculiar*, which does not distinguish forms I and II. This is that in the *expanded value-form* (form II) *one commodity excludes all the others* in order to express its own value in them. This *exclusion* can be a *purely subjective process*, for example a process traced out by the possessor of linen (z.B ein Prozess des Leinwandbesitzers) who assesses the value of his own commodity in many other commodities. As opposed to this a commodity is in general equivalent-form (form III) only because and insofar as it itself *is excluded as equivalent by all other commodities*. The *exclusion* is here an *objective (objektiver) process* independent of the excluded commodity. Hence in the historical development of the value-form the general equivalent-form may pertain now to this now to that commodity in turn. But a commodity never functions *in fact (wirklich)* as general equivalent except insofar as its exclusion and hence its equivalent-form is a result of an *objective social process*.

The *general value-form* is the developed value-form and hence the *developed commodity-form*. The materially quite different products of labour cannot possess the *finished commodity-form*, and hence also cannot function in the process of exchange *as a commodity*, without being represented *as expressions in the form of things (dingliche Ausdrücke) of the*

same equal human labour. That means that in order to acquire the finished commodity-form they must acquire the *unified general relative value-form*. But they can only acquire this unified relative value-form by *excluding* from its own series a *definite* type of commodity as *general equivalent*. And it is only from the moment when *this exclusion* is definitely *limited* to a *specific* type of commodity that the *unified relative value-form* has won *objective stability* and *general social validity*.

Now the *specific* type of commodity with whose *natural form the equivalent form coalesces* (*verwächst*) *socially* becomes the *money-commodity* or functions *as money*. It *specific social function* and hence its *social monopoly* becomes the playing of the role of general equivalent *within the world of commodities*. A definite commodity, *gold*, has historically conquered this privileged place amongst the commodities which figure in *form II as particular equivalents* of linen and in *form III* express commonly (*gemeinsam ausdrücken*) their *relative value* in linen. Hence, if we put in form III the commodity gold in the place of the commodity linen, we obtain:

IV. The Money-form

20 yards of linen =)
 1 coat =)
 10 pounds of tea =)
 40 pounds of coffee =)
 1 quarter of wheat =) 2 ounces of gold
 ½ ton of iron =)
 x commodity A =)
 etc., commodity =)

§1. Difference between the transition from the general value-form to the money-form and the earlier developmental transitions

Essential changes occur at the transition from form I to form II and from form II to form III. As opposed to this, form IV is distinguished from form III by nothing except the fact that now gold instead of linen possesses the general equivalent-form. Gold remains in form IV what linen was in form III – *general equivalent*. The progress consists only in the fact that the *form of immediate general exchangeability* or the *general equivalent-form* has now, by virtue of social custom, *definitely coalesced* with the *specific natural form* of the body of the commodity *gold*. *Gold* confronts the other commodities as *money* only because it already confronted them before as a *commodity*. Like all other commodities it also functions as *equivalent*, either as *singular* equivalent in isolated acts of exchange, or as *particular*

equivalent beside *other* commodity-equivalents. Little by little it functioned in narrower or wider circles as *general equivalent*. Once it has conquered the monopoly of this position in the *expression of value of the world of commodities* it becomes the *money-commodity* (wird es *Geldware*), and from the moment *when it has already become the money-commodity*, form IV distinguishes itself from form III, or the *general form of value* is transformed into the *money-form*.

§2. Transformation (*Verwandlung*) of the general relative value-form into the price-form

The *simple relative expression of value of a commodity*, e.g. linen, in the commodity which is already functioning as *the money-commodity*, for example gold, is the *price-form*. The price-form of linen is hence:

20 yards of linen = 2 ounces of gold
or, when *2 Pounds Sterling* is the *currency name* for 2 ounces of gold,
20 yards of linen = 2 Pounds Sterling

§3. The simple commodity-form is the secret of the money-form

We see that the money-form proper offers in itself no difficulty at all. Once we have seen through the *general equivalent-form* it does not require the least brain-fag to understand that this equivalent-form *fastens on to (festhaftet)* a specific type of commodity like gold, and still less insofar as the general equivalent-form in its very nature requires *the social exclusion of a definite commodity by all other commodities*. It is now only a matter of this exclusion winning an *objectively (objektiv) social consistency* and *general validity*, and hence does not concern different commodities *in turn* nor possesses a *merely local reach (Tragweite)* in only particular areas of the world of commodities. The difficulty in the concept of the money-form is limited to comprehending the *general equivalent-form* as such, form III. However, form III in turn (*rückbezüglich*) resolves itself into form II, and the *constitutive element* of form II is form I:

20 yards of linen = 1 coat
or
x commodity A = y commodity B.

Now if we know what use-value and exchange-value are, then we find out that this form I is the simplest, most undeveloped manner of representing any product of labour, like linen for example, *as a commodity*, i.e. *as a unity of the opposites use-value and exchange-value*. At the same time we easily find the *series of metamorphoses* which the *simplest commodity-form*

20 yards of linen = 1 coat
must run through in order to win its finished shape

20 yards of linen = 2 Pounds Sterling

i.e. *the money-form*.

Notes

1. There is an English translation of the first edition version of chapter 1, by Axel Davidson (Marx 1972).
2. The appendix is on pages 764-84 of the first edition of *Das Kapital* (Marx, 1867). This was reprinted in Marx and Engels (1955) pp.262-88, which is the text we have used for this translation. ^[d] The Dragstedt translation omits lines from pp.262, 264, 274 and 279ff of Marx's text. Cf. Albert Dragstedt's version, pp.49, 51, 57, 63.

Notes for MIA edition

- a. Translations in the English-language *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (London, Lawrence and Wishart) differ slightly from the versions translated by Roth and Suchting.
- b. Axel Davidson was a pseudonym for Albert Dragstedt. The appendix was published in the United States as Karl Marx, 1973, *The Forms of Value: The First English Translation of the Appendix of the Value-Form*, Volume I, First Edition of *Capital*, translated by Axel Davidson, *Bulletin Marxist Classics* V., New York: Labor Publications.
- c. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk V, Ch.5 (Loeb edition, London 1926) pp.287-9.
- d. The first edition of *Capital* in German is also published in MEGA 1983 II.5 pp.626-649.

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