Part Three Production of Absolute Surplus-Value

Chapter 7: The Labour Process and the Valorization Process

1. The Labour Process (work as human activity and work under capitalism/ for the capitalist)

The labour process needs to be considered independently of any specific social formation. Labour is

a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement, he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature (p.283).

Thus, we cannot transform external nature (the world) without transforming ourselves, and at the same time, we cannot transform ourselves without transforming external nature (the world). This process is not an exclusively human characteristic. A spider and a bee conduct operations in a same manner. However, there is always purpose in human productive activity. Thus, man is conscious of purpose which ‘determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it’ (284).

A purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work. Thus ‘the less he is attracted by the nature of the work and the way in which it has to be accomplished, and the less, therefore, he enjoys it as the free play of his own physical and mental powers, the closer his attention is forced to be’ (p.284).

Here, according to Harvey (2006), Marx says that ‘human beings can all to easily fall prisoner to their own products and projects, to say nothing of their false mental conceptions of the world’ (p.115). Marx also

says directly that human beings can transform the world in radical ways, according to their imagination and with an idea of a purpose, and be conscious about what they are doing. And in so doing, they have the power to transform themselves. We must therefore think about our purposes, become conscious of how and when we intervene in the world, transforming ourselves. We can and must seize hold of that dialectical possibility creatively (p.115).

The simple elements of the labour process are (1) purposeful activity, that is work itself, (2) the object on which that work is performed (the land, water, all raw material when it has already undergone some alternation by means of labour), (3) the instruments of that work (a thing, a complex of things which the worker interposes between himself and the object of his labour and which serves as a conductor, directing his activity onto that object, the earth itself is an instrument of labour) (p.284-5). Man can be defined as “a tool-making animal”.

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‘Instruments of labour not only supply a standard of the degree of development which human labour has attained, but they also indicate the social relations within which men work’ (p.286). For instance, if social relations change, technology must change, and then, social relations must change again. Marx implies a dialectic relation between technologies and social relations?

In the labour process, man’s activity effects an alteration in the object of labour which was intended from the outset. The process is extinguished in the product. The product of the process is a use-value, a piece of natural material adapted to human needs by means of a change in its form. Labour has bound up in its objects: labour has been objectified, the object has been worked on. Workers appear in the form of unrest, whereas the product in the form of being, as a fixed, immobile characteristic (p.287).

Therefore, the whole process consists of product, which is plain that both the instruments and the objects of labour are means of production and that the labour itself is productive labour (p.287). Furthermore, whenever products enter as means of production into new labour processes, they lose their character as products and start functioning only as objective factors contributing to living labour (p.289).

Products themselves are the products of past labour. In a successful product, the role played by past labour in mediating its useful properties has been distinguished. For instance, a machine which is not active in the labour process is useless. Sometimes product gets destroyed by the power of natural processes. Iron rusts, woods rots. Therefore, living labour must seize on these things, awaken them from the dead, change them from merely possible into real and effective use-values.

On the other hand,

the finished products are not only results of the labour process, but also conditions of its existence, their induction into the process, their contact with living labour, is the sole means by which they can be made to retain their character of use-values, and be realized (p.289-90)

This implies that labour uses up its material elements, its objects and its instruments, thus labour consume them. Therefore, labour is a process of consumption (productive consumption). In this process, labour consumes products in order to create products, or consumes one set of products by turning them into means of production for another set (p.290).

In sum, the labour process is purposeful activity aimed at the production of use-values. It is an appropriation of what exists in nature for the requirements of man. Labour process consists of 1) work (one kind of activity of human); 2) raw materials; and 3) tools (instruments of work).
Under capitalism, first, workers work under the control of capital, not for themselves. Capitalist selects the means of production and the kind of labour-power, and proceeds to consume the commodity, the labour-power he has bought. He causes the worker to consume the means of production by his labour. Therefore, the general character of the labour process is not changed by the fact that the worker works for the capitalist instead for himself (p.291). Second, the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the worker. From the capitalist’s point of view, the labour process is nothing more than the consumption of the commodity purchased (labour-power), but he can consume this labour-power only by adding the means of production to it. The product of this process belongs to the capitalist. (The worker’s activity of work no longer free but is capitalist.)

2. The Valorization Process

Capitalist has two objectives: 1) he wants to produce a use-value which has exchange-value, which is destined to be sold as a commodity, and 2) he wants to produce a commodity greater in value than the sum of the values of the commodities used to produce it, namely surplus-value (p.293).

The value of labour power, and the value which that labour-power valorizes in the labour process, are two entirely different magnitudes. ...What was really decisive for the capitalist was the specific use-value which this commodity possesses of being a source not only for value, but of more value than it has itself. This is the specific service the capitalist expects form labour-power, and in this transaction he acts in accordance with the eternal laws of commodity-exchange (p.300-1).

The seller of labour-power realizes its exchange-value, and alienates its use-value. He cannot take the one without giving the other. The owner of the money paid the value of a day’s labour-power, then he has the use of it for a day, thus a day’s labour belongs to him. The daily sustenance of labour-power costs only half a day’s labour, whereas the very same labour-power can remain effective, can work,, during a whole day, and consequently the value which its use during one day creates is double what the capitalist pays for that use (p.301).

Compare the process of creating value with the process of valorization.

the latter is nothing but the continuation of the former beyond a definite point. If the process is not carried beyond the point where the value paid by the capitalist for the labour-power is replaced by an exact equivalent, it is simply a process of creating value; but if it is continued beyond that point, it becomes a process of valorization (p.302).

This is how money has been transformed into capital. Labour can be considered as producing utilities and also as creating value (p.304). The production process (the unity of the labour process and the process of creating values) is the process of production of commodities. This is the capitalist process of production, or the capitalist form of the production of commodities (p.304).
Chapter 8: Constant Capital and Variable Capital

Two properties of labour
1) The worker preserves the value of the already consumed means of production by entering into contact with means of production, infusing them with life so that they become factors of the labour process.
2) He also transfers them to the product as portions of its value (creation of values) by virtue of the particular useful character of that labour and by virtue of its specific productive form. (p.308-9)

The more value the worker adds by fresh labour, the more value he transfers and preserves (p.310). The means of production can never add more value to the product than they themselves possess independently of the process in which they assist (p.314). Thus, only labour can create more value to the product. The activity of labour-power not only produces its own value, but produces value over and above this. This surplus-value is the difference between the value of the product and the value of the elements consumed in the formation of the product, in other words the means of production and the labour-power (p.317)

Therefore capital consists of the different elements of capital in its own valorization process.

Capital consists of two parts:
1) **Constant Capital** which turns into means of production (raw material, the auxiliary material and the instruments of labour) does not undergo any quantitative alteration of value in the process of production.
2) **Variable capital** which is turned into labour-power and undergoes an alteration of value in the process of production. This reproduces the equivalent of its own value and produces an excess, a surplus-value, which may itself vary, and be more or less according to circumstances. This capital continually be transformed from a constant into a variable magnitude. (p.317)

Chapter 9: The rate of Surplus Value

**Surplus value** = excess of value of product beyond value of inputs = s
Value of inputs = constant capital (c) + variable capital (v) = c + v
**Total value of product** = C' = (c+v)+s
C' - C = s

**Constant capital** = fixed capital (machinery, plant) + raw materials

**New value created** = v + s
= reproduction of value of labour power + a surplus
= necessary labour time + surplus labour time
= necessary labour + surplus labour
Rate of surplus value, rate of exploitation and rate of profit

\[ \frac{s}{v} = \text{rate of surplus value} = \text{rate of exploitation} \]

(The higher the ratio \( \frac{s}{v} \) the higher the percentage of the workers’ day is being appropriated by the capitalist and the smaller the part the workers are working for themselves.)

\[ \frac{s}{(c+v)} = \text{rate of profit} \]