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The circulation of capital and its explanation by means of the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete. The simple non capitalistically determined circulation of commodities as the „abstract sphere of capital“. Supplementation and fundamental modification of Marx's explanation of value, socially form-determined abstract human labour and the commodity especially in the first subsection of Capital Volume I.

On the occasion of a critique of the way in which B. Lietz and W. Schwarz, in the journal "Marxistische Erneuerung" (Marxist Renewal), make their fundamentally justified critique of M. Heinrich and the "Neue Marx Lektüre" (New Marx Reading))

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¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 1st volume of the Science of Logic, 1812, revised 1831. Werke. Vol. 5, Frankfurt a. M. 1979, pp. 63,79.

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I. Preliminary note

The interpretation of Capital presented here is connected with a critique of an article written by B. Lietz and W. Schwarz. For readers who cannot know what the article of the two authors is about, the critical discussion of their positions, which are brought up here in a comprehensible way, can serve the better understanding of the following explanations of value, of socially form-determined abstract human labour etc. A serious deficiency of Marx's explanation of value and socially form-determined abstract human labor is revealed, which Marx himself created all the necessary conditions to remedy.

The following paper is an excerpt from the paper: Dieter Wolf, "Supplementation and fundamental modification of Marx's explanation of value, socially form-determined abstract human labour and the commodity on the basis of a critical discussion of the article by Barbara Lietz and Winfried Schwarz on "Wert, Austausch und Neue Marx-Lektüre in the journal Marxistische Erneuerung, 32nd volume, issue 125, 33rd volume, issue 126.2

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This text has been translated from German into English with the help of "Deepl". If any reader would like to make suggestions for changes to the text, they should not hesitate to contact me.

II. The circulation of capital and its explanation by means of the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete. The simple non-capitalistically determined circulation of commodities as the "abstract sphere of capital".

II.1 Remarks on the circuits of capital: M-C-M' and M - C - P- C` - M'

Marx, while writing the Grundrisse, i.e. in the course of the alternating research processes and attempts at representation under the influence of Hegel,² came to the insight that capital consists of its circuit, which has the two transit phases consisting of commodity circulation and production. This means at the same time that the circulation of capital is the movement structure of the capitalist total reproduction process.

Significantly, Marx, on the basis of the insight resulting from this, discarded his attempt to begin the exposition with capitalist production. Whatever the details of these insights are, it shall only matter here that Marx first has to explain what the circulation of capital

² Dieter Wolf, Why was Hegel's "Logic" able to "render great service" to Marx? Online: www.dieterwolf.net Menu: Articles.

is without further specifications as a structure of movement of each individual capital and of the social total capital.

In the fourth chapter of *Capital*, Marx explains the "transformation of money into capital", which is characterized by the dialectical contradiction between use value and value in the third determination of money. Its resolving movement, which consists of the circulation of capital $M-C-P-C'-M'$, is visible in the simple circulation of commodities in a shortened form as $M-C-M'$. Thus, in a first but at the same time fundamental way, it is clear what capital is in contrast to the simple circulation of commodities $C-M-C$ and to the economic-social forms determining it, which consist of value, the commodity, money and the three money functions. Only as phases in the circulation of capital $M - C - P - C' - M'$ is the commodity circulation a capitalist commodity circulation and production a capitalist production.

The social total reproduction process is structured by the circuit of capital consisting of the solution movement of the dialectical contradiction between use value and value. The individual capitals consist of their respective circuits and by means of their competitive entanglement the circuit of the social total capital arises and reproduces itself. Since in this way the circuit of capital is the structure of movement dominating the capitalist process of reproduction, it is shown once again that the dialectical contradiction between use-value and value is the spring of the dialectic of the economic social reality explained in the "Critique of Political Economy".³

With the knowledge that Marx acquired with the explanation of the "transformation of money into capital" of the circulation of capital, he presents, after the simple circulation of commodities, the production process as a capitalistically determined production process, in which the dialectical contradiction between use value and value consists of the dialectical contradiction between the utilization of value and the concretely useful use value producing labor process. The movements of solution of this dialectical contradiction consist of the constant increase of labor productivity overcoming the barriers of the labor process through the progressive technological-social reorganization

³ Marx expresses this meaning of the dialectical contradiction abstractly and summarizingly by calling the "Hegelian contradiction" the "spring source of all dialectics" analogously to the speech of the "double character of labor" as the "spring point of the critique of political economy". MEW 23, P. 623, FN. 41. on this, see Dieter Wolf, Hegel und Marx. Zur Bewegungsstruktur des absoluten Geistes und des Kapitals. Accessed online: <https://dieterwolf.net/wordpress/> Rubric: "Books" Ders. turning Hegel's idealist dialectic "upside down" or "inside out." Transforming Philosophy into Science . Ibid, rubric articles. Ders. the "forms of movement" of "absolute spirit" as solution movements of the dialectical contradiction between "nature" and "spirit" and the "forms of movement" of capital as solution movements of the dialectical contradiction between use-value and value. Idealist dialectics - materialist dialectics. On the beginning of science in *Capital*, on the dialectic of value forms, on the relation of materialist to idealist dialectic, on Adorno's epistemology. Ibid. Category: Articles.

of the labor process. These movements of solution of the dialectical contradiction between the restless exploitation of value and the labor process limiting it take the forms of the "simple cooperation", the "manufactory" and the "great more and more digitalized machinery", which are explained in the logically systematic representation progressing according to the ascent from the abstract to the concrete.

For the self-mediation of capital, or capital as an "automatic subject," Marx initially still limits himself to the circuit as it appears in the sphere of circulation, so that the phase of the production process is not yet included in the representation, as it is later. This abbreviated circuit is sufficient to make clear what it is about capital as a self-organizing "automatic subject". "The independent forms, the money-forms, which the value of commodities assumes in simple circulation, mediate only the exchange of commodities and disappear in the final result of the movement. In circulation $M - C - M'$ on the other hand, both commodity and money function only as different modes of existence of value itself, money its general mode of existence, commodity its particular mode of existence, only disguised, so to speak. It constantly passes from one form into the other without losing itself in this movement, and thus transforms itself into an automatic subject. If one fixes the particular manifestations which the valorizing value alternately assumes in the cycle of its life, one obtains the explanations: Capital is money, capital is commodity. In fact, however, value here becomes the subject of a process in which, under the constant change of the forms of money and commodity, it changes its size itself, repels itself as surplus value from itself as original value, valorizes itself.

For the movement in which he adds surplus value is his own movement, his utilization, that is, self-utilization. He has received the occult quality to set value, because he is value. It throws live young or at least lays golden eggs."⁴ Regarding the last sentence, it must be noted that when the mystery of plus-making is solved with the production and commodity circulation determined capitalistically in each case as a phase in the cycle of capital, there is no longer an occult quality for the scientific observer.

In this cycle, which consists of the valorizing value, production and commodity circulation are two mutually dependent phases existing in simultaneous succession and coexistence. The complete formal expression of the cycle is therefore $M - C - P - C - \dot{C}$. It is, together with the other circuits $C - P - C' - M' - C'$ and $P - C' - M' - \dot{P}' - C' - P'$, the object of representation from the second volume of Capital on.

II.2 In the circulation of capital, value exists simultaneously after and side by side in capitalist production and in capitalist commodity circulation.

Already with the circulation of capital explained in the transformation of money into capital, it can be shown in a fundamental and general way that the justification Lietz and

⁴ MEW 23, p. 169, MEGA II/5, S. 109

Schwarz give for their view going in the right direction is wrong and must be replaced by a justification based on the circulation of capital. For the circulation of capital it is self-evident that "value and the magnitude of value of commodities are formed in production" and "not only in exchange,"⁵ because in it the capitalist circulation of commodities and capitalist production exist simultaneously after and alongside each other and are mutually for each other a precondition and result. "However, it is correct (...) to concede to the second determination of socially necessary labor a co-determining influence on value, or, commonly speaking: to concede to solvent demand not only an influence on commodity prices, but also on the magnitude of value."⁶ Apart from the second "value-determining" influence, which is unknown to them, Lietz and Schwarz, with the first production-side determination of the value magnitude, represent a view that cannot be disputed in principle.

But they claim quite wrongly that value is already present, coming from capitalist production, in the exchange relation of use values belonging to simple commodity circulation, which Marx analyzes in the first subsection of the first chapter of *Capital*. In a blatant way, they establish between capitalist production and simple commodity circulation a mystically irrational connection determined by their temporal succession. They make the serious mistake of not respecting that value and socially form-determined abstract human labor must first be explained on the level of abstraction of simple commodity circulation before it can be explained what is involved in their emergence and existence of value in capitalist commodity circulation and capitalist production. They treat the exchange relation of use values analyzed by Marx, by which the two economic social forms are explained, as if it were about the exchange relation of the products arising from capitalist production in capitalist commodity circulation.

Just as capitalist production is characterized by the double character of being the processing unity of labor and value formation process, its products are characterized by the double character, common to all commodities, of being use value and value. By means of money, their real value is ideally expressed in price, so that they pass through the circulation phase $W'-G'$ as price-determined commodities. In the circulation of capital it is shown that value is created in production and that the sphere of circulation participates in this creation by means of solvent demand. Even if both coexist simultaneously, it is true that in the circulation of commodities value exists because it was previously created in production. While there is one kind of commodity that exists in commodity circulation, other commodities of the same kind are created simultaneously in production.

Whatever it is about value-determining capitalist production and value co-determining capitalist commodity circulation, what matters, especially in the argument with Lietz and

⁵ Lietz, Schwarz, Part I, p. 112.

⁶ Stephan Krüger, Wert, Wertgröße und Wertgesetz. Ergänzend-modifizierende Anmerkungen zum Beitrag von Barbara Lietz und Winfried Schwarz Z 125/126", Z. 127, p.126f.

Schwarz, is that, contrary to their view, there is only a temporal succession between the two, insofar as they are stages of passage in the circulation of capital.

II.3 To what extent the structure of movement of the total social reproduction process determined by the circulation of capital has a non-linear structure, system theoretically speaking.

The movement structure of the total social reproduction process determined by the circulation of capital possesses a nonlinear structure, system theoretically speaking. Thus, in *Capital*, Marx is dependent on a method with which he must overcome the difficulty of explaining a dynamic, nonlinear economic-social system with the linear representation.

A linear representation proceeding from sentence to sentence, from chapter to chapter, from section to section, from volume to volume, must take into account the nonlinear process of social reproduction, the subject areas of which exist simultaneously after and alongside one another, are mutually prerequisite and result for one another. The method with which the problem of the linear representation of a nonlinear, complex dynamic system is to be solved is described by Marx under the title of the "method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete"⁷ in the introduction to the *Grundrisse*.

III. Sequence of stages of scientific abstractions. The simple non-capitalistically determined commodity circulation as the "abstract sphere of capital".

III.1 Abstraction from the circulation of capital by its decomposition into its two phases consisting of the capitalist production process and the capitalist commodity circulation.

In order to explain the circulation of capital, it is necessary to abstract from it for the purpose of avoiding the defective circle. What measure must be taken to ensure the success of the abstraction? The circle is characterized by the simultaneous succession and juxtaposition, of its two stages of passage or its two phases, which is based on their temporal succession. One abstracts consequently from the cycle or one brings it to the disappearance, if one cancels the temporal succession of its two phases, so that only its two phases remain as such. The measure, which is necessary for the abstraction, consists

⁷ *Grundrisse*, MEGA² II/1.1, p. 36 (*Grundrisse*, Berlin 1953, p. 22, MEW 42, p. 35). See in more detail: Dieter Wolf: *Kritische Theorie und Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*. In: Dieter Wolf, *Zur Konfusion des Wertbegriffs. Beiträge zur "Kapital" - Diskussion*, Teil A, insbesondere Unterabschnitt 6, Hamburg 2004 (*Wissenschaftliche Mitteilungen*, Heft 3), Derselbe: *Zur Methode des Aufsteigens vom Abstrakten zum Konkreten*, (From: Dieter Wolf, *Zur Methode in Marx' Kapital unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ihres logisch-systematischen Charakters*. On the "Method Controversy" between Wolfgang Fritz Haug and Michael Heinrich.). Both papers can be accessed at www.dieterwolf.net under the headings: books and articles, respectively.

therefore in decomposing the cycle into its two phases, which lose thereby their status of being phases. What, then, remains of them must be considered more closely.

As far as capitalist production is concerned, this leads to reducing it to concretely useful labor or the labor process, in which any economically social determination of form is extinguished. Instead of the capitalist production process as the processing unity of labor and value formation process, one has before one only an abstractly general labor process consisting of concretely useful labor and producing concretely useful use values. If the process of production is not regarded as a phase in the circulation of capital, i.e., as Marx says, there is no "incorporation of labor into capital," so that capital does not become the process of production, then the process of production is "material process of production in general."⁸ "Its determination of form is completely extinguished."⁹ ¹⁰ With a socially unspecific "production process in general", which is not considered as a phase in the circulation of capital explained with the "transformation of money into capital", no beginning of science can be made, as Marx originally intended in the Grundrisse, whose object is the explanation of the circulation of commodities as a prerequisite for the explanation of the capitalist production process.

If one now considers the capitalistically determined circulation of commodities after the decomposition of the circulation of capital, then, after the loss of its phase character, the non-capitalistically determined circulation of commodities remains. In this, the economically social forms contained by the utilization of the capitalist surplus value have disappeared, while the simple non-capitalist forms contained in them - value, commodity, money, etc. - remain.

It is shown here how important it is for the understanding of capitalist production to encounter, according to the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete, through the abstraction from the circulation of capital, the simple circulation of commodities not yet determined capitalistically. Its explanation makes it necessary, with the analysis of the exchange relation of use values before the capital circulation of capital, before the capitalist production process before money, before the commodity, before the socially form-determined equal human labor, to first explain the likewise not yet existing value.¹¹ Hereby one follows the already mentioned insight of Marx: "In

⁸ Grundrisse, MEGA² II/1.1, p. 36 (Grundrisse, Berlin 1953, p. 22, MEW 42, p. 225).

⁹ MEW 23, p. 189

¹⁰ But if "the incorporation of labor into capital" takes place, and explicit is taken into account that the production process is a phase in the cycle of capital, i.e., an integral part of the utilization of value, then it looks at first, i.e., at first sight also, as if the production process were reduced to the "material process of production in general" in which any "determination of form is completely extinguished." However, it will be shown that "even within the production process itself this extinction of the determination of form is only appearance" ; for the production process as capitalist is always the process of utilization of capital. The use-value of the commodity labor-power shows itself in the consumption process of labor-power, which is "at the same time the production process of commodity and of surplus-value." (MEW 23, P. 189.)

¹¹ It is common to speak, like Marx, of capital beginning, apart from use value, with the analysis of the commodity. This is only correct if one understands by it that the commodity is explained,

order to develop the concept of capital, it is necessary to start not from labor, but from value, namely from the exchange value already developed in the movement of circulation." ¹²

Marx therefore begins the representation of the capitalist total reproduction process with the simple commodity circulation determined by value, commodity and money, which is made the object of representation in the first three chapters of *Capital*. At the end of the latter, after the explanation of value, commodity and money, one encounters the third determination of money, which contains the dialectical contradiction between use-value and value, the solution movement of which leads out of the simple commodity circulation into the circulation of capital G-W-P-W'-G', from which abstraction has been made at first. Because of all that belongs to the simple commodity circulation under the aspect of the abstraction from the circuit of capital and the return to it, it is called the abstract sphere of capital by Marx - also in allusion to the abstraction made.

III.2 Explanation of the simple non-capitalistically determined circulation of goods. Step sequence of abstractions descending from the concrete to the abstract. "With what must the beginning of science be made?" ¹³

After Marx has arrived at the simple commodity circulation as the "abstract sphere of capital" with the abstraction from capital or from its circulation, the application of the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete is far from being over. The circulation of capital can, of course, be explained from the simple circulation of commodities only if this circulation itself has first been explained.

For this purpose it is necessary to abstract from money and thus also from all its functions, so that one comes across simpler relations of exchange included in the circulation of commodities, in which money is not yet present, but from which it can be explained. This simpler exchange relation is first the exchange relation W-W of simple, not yet price-determined commodities. As little as one has previously known about money and the price of commodities, so little does one know about the commodity. One knows of money and the commodity at least that they are something social. Since it is a matter of explaining this social, one is thus forced to abstract from what the social of the

which is of course identical with explaining the value and the form-determined abstract human labor. As for the explanation of the latter, it begins with the ahistorically valid inference from the property of use-values to be a product of labor to the property of concretely useful labor to be equal human labor. Once value has been explained, there is the specifically historically-socially determined inference from value to equal human labor, which must also first have been explained as the specifically historically-socially form of concretely useful labor. See on this: especially sections IV, V and VI.

¹² MEW 42, p. 183f. (*Grundrisse*.)

¹³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 1st volume of the *Science of Logic*, 1812, revised 1831. Werke. Vol. 5, Frankfurt a. M. 1979, pp. 63,79.

commodity might be. When one does this, one inevitably encounters the use-values, which belong to the commodities in each case, but are not the specifically historical-social thing to be explained, with which they must first be explained. Thus, with the last scientific abstraction one encounters the exchange relation of use-values (UW1- UW2). With the exchange relation of use-values, therefore, must be explained what is the specifically historical-social ("purely social")¹⁴ different from them, through which it is transformed into an exchange relation of commodities.

The exchange relation of use values is the simplest abstract economic social relation of the simple commodity circulation and of the capitalist total reproduction process. The method doubly determined by the "descent from the concrete to the abstract" and the "ascent from the abstract to the concrete" is thus the method practiced by Marx in *Capital*, with which he takes into account the criterion of every science that understands itself as rational, namely to avoid getting entangled in an erroneous circle, in a *circulus vitiosus*, in everything that has to be explained.¹⁵

Neither the value nor the form-determined abstract human labor are already present, as Lietz and Schwarz wrongly assume, in the exchange relation of use values with which Marx begins the explanation of the simple commodity circulation. Both economically social forms and the commodity determined by them must be explained starting from this exchange relation of use values and not, as Lietz and Schwarz erroneously do, with an artificially generated imitation of capitalist production.¹⁶

What is actually present in the exchange relation of use values, in contrast to the value and the socially form-determined abstract human labor, are the ahistorically valid socially unspecific properties of the use values and the concretely useful labor to be a labor product and equal human labor, respectively.¹⁷ Just as one can only understand money in contrast to the "monetary theory of value" if one has previously explained value starting from the exchange relation of use-values, so one can only understand capital or the circulation of capital if one has previously explained the simple circulation

¹⁴ MEW 23, p. 62.

¹⁵ "A circular argument, circular proof, logical circle, circular reasoning, or hysteron- proteron (from ancient Greek ὕστερον πρότερον *hýsteron próteron*, literally roughly "the later [is] the earlier"), is a proof error in which the premises already contain the thing to be proved. Thus, it is claimed to prove a statement by deduction, using the statement itself as a presupposition. It is also called a *circulus vitiosus* (from Latin *circulus vitiosus*, literally faulty circle) or vicious circle[1]." Brockhaus, Weltbildverlag; 2005, Wikipedia.

¹⁶ This failed substitution of capitalist production was briefly discussed in the introduction. It is treated in the necessary detail below in section VII.1.2: "Lietz's and Schwarz's justifications of the explanation of socially form-determined equal human labor before and independently of exchange with the complex of "mutually independently operated private labors".

¹⁷ On page 52, MEW 23, it has turned out for the ahistorically valid common third (equal) of the different use values and concretely useful works that it consists of the ahistorically valid general property of being a labor product respectively equal human labor.

of commodities, which is not yet capitalistically determined, as the "abstract sphere of capital".¹⁸

Since it is about the purely social of the commodity, which is different from the use value, it is now necessary for the capitalist total reproduction process with its abstract most general economic-social relation to explain value as its most abstract most general economic-social form. Hereby, referring to Marx's *Capital*, after consistently following the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete, Hegel's question is finally answered: "With what must the beginning of science be made?"¹⁹

With the exchange relation of use-values, in the first subsection of the first chapter of *Capital*, the beginning of science is made, because with it, without getting entangled in a faulty circle, is begun to understand value, form-determined abstract human labor, the commodity, money, the circulation of capital, etc. - In short, to explain the capitalist process of reproduction as a whole.

Capital or its circulation can only be explained on the basis of the simple commodity circulation determined by value, commodity and money. Money determines or "dominates" the circulation of commodities, because all actions occurring in it are carried out in the exercise of its functions as measure of values, means of exchange, means of payment, and so on.²⁰ The circulation of capital, in which commodity

¹⁸ In the monetary theory of value, it is falsely assumed that money is the "common third" in the exchange relationship of use values (MEW 23, p. 50ff.), which is responsible for the equation of commodities as values. The "common third" or the equal of the different use-values and concretely useful labour, which is really at stake, consists first of all of the property of use-values to be a product of labour and of the property of concretely useful labour to be equal human labour. So there is really something equal in the exchange relation of the various use-values as a social "relation of equality" that has nothing to do with money and nothing yet to do with value and socially form-determined abstract human labour. There is an equation because the same has really existed since there have been people who shape their lives in relation to each other and to nature. If it has been explained with the exchange relation that this same thing receives the social meaning of value or of socially form-determined abstract human labour, then there is an equation as values, which also still has nothing to do with money. Only as the manifestation of value and of socially form-determined equal human labour does money, as a means of exchange, constantly realise an equation of use values. This occurs in the respect in which the ahistorically valid equal (the property of use-values to be a product of labour) has received the historically social form of value independently of money in the social relation of equality and exchange. This is the object of Marx's analysis in the first subsection of the first chapter of *Capital*, starting from the simplest exchange relation of two use-values contained in commodity circulation. (See in particular sections IV. and V. and VI. in this treatise). There is the same beyond the exchange relation, value and money. There is the exchange of products and exchange relations of simple commodities without the prior (simultaneous) and subsequent existence of money. In C-M-C money is equated with something that is already equal without it and can and must be explained without it.

¹⁹ 1st volume of the *Science of Logic*, 1812, revised 1831.

²⁰ Ansgar Knolle-Grothusen: *The Connection between Money Functions and Money Forms in "Capital"*. In: Ansgar Knolle-Grothusen, Stephan Krüger, Dieter Wolf. "Money commodity, money and currency. Foundations for the solution of the problem of the money commodity."

circulation, as one of its two phases, is a capitalist one, is made the subject of representation only in the second volume of *Capital*. Therefore, apart from its fundamental importance for the course of the logically systematic representation and for the understanding of the capitalist production process, it plays no role for the explanation of the simple circulation of commodities or for the explanation of value, the commodity, money and the three money functions.

Marx abstracts from the "circulation of capital" and explains the simple circulation of commodities, which is not yet capitalistically determined, by explaining the following social forms, which are not yet specifically capitalistically determined: value, the socially form-determined equal human labor, the commodity, the forms of value, money and the three money functions - measure of values, means of circulation, means of payment and treasure ("money as money"). Thus, it is not yet about what value is in capitalist production as valorizing value. All that can initially be said about value and its manifestations is determined by what it is in the exchange actions W-G-W explained in the third chapter, in the "exchange process" explained in the second chapter, and in the exchange relations of use-values and commodities analyzed in the first chapter and abstracted from the exchange process.

IV. The "Derivation of Value" undertaken by Lietz and Schwarz with the first subsection of the "2nd Edition of 'Capital' of 1872" as a voyage of discovery to value

The tendency of people to consider small things important has produced many great things.

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

IV.1 Marx's explanation of value versus Lietz's and Schwarz's voyage of discovery to value

IV.1.1 Remarks on Marx's explanation of value

With respect to the explanation of the economic social forms, the scientific representation in *Capital* takes its beginning with the analysis of the most abstract general economic social relation, which consists of the exchange relation of use values. This beginning of scientific representation, as the beginning of the explanation of value, must, like the entire scientific representation in *Capital*, be guided by the method of

ascending from the abstract to the concrete, by which entanglement in a faulty circle is prevented. With the last of the abstractions already made above for the explanation of value from the exchange relation of commodities or from the value of commodities, one encounters the exchange relation of use values. The difficult task, not only unrecognized by Lietz and Schwarz, which Marx now has to accomplish, consists in explaining the commodity by explaining the value and the socially form-determined equal human labor, both of which are not yet present due to the avoidance of a defective circle.

Lietz and Schwarz do not even get involved in the answer already given above to the question with which the beginning of science has to be made in order to understand the capitalist production process, but interpret the first subsection, which for them erroneously is already about the analysis of the exchange relation of commodities and not correctly of use values.

Lietz and Schwarz have already explained the socially form-determined abstract human labor and the value determined by it fundamentally before and independently of Marx's analysis of the exchange relation of use values in the way indicated in the introduction with capitalist production. Consequently, it goes without saying that nothing fundamental remains to be explained for the exchange relations of use values to be analyzed. In this sobering state of affairs, Lietz and Schwarz are concerned with the guiding principle of their interpretation of capital. They insist on explaining the socially form-determined abstract human labor and the value determined by it "by no means without exchange".²¹

That value is already present in the circulation of commodities and accordingly also in the exchange relation of commodities belonging to it, goes without saying. When Marx begins to analyze the exchange relation of use-values, then one does not yet know what a commodity is and thus what an exchange relation of commodities is. If, in order to explain the commodity, one abstracts from it, then only the exchange relation of use-values remains. What, beyond that, the exchange relation of commodities is, must be explicitly explained. The value, which is yet to be declared and which determines the commodity, must not exist beforehand either as such or as already declared, for the sake of avoiding an erroneous circle.

The indisputable fact that value and socially form-determined human labor arise and exist in capitalist production, Lietz and Schwarz wrongly give as a reason that the two economically social forms must therefore also be explained on the basis of capitalist production and not on the basis of the simple circulation of commodities. When Lietz and Schwarz claim that value is "already present in the exchange relation of two or more commodities when Marx mentally identifies it in them,"²² then this means for them that

²¹ "Whoever speaks, as we do, of the value of the products of labor, i.e., of the commodity, before exchange, by no means recognizes this social form to the products independently of exchange." (Lietz and Schwarz, Part II, p. 136.)

²² Lietz and Schwarz, Part I, p. 115. Italics- D.W.

value is already present as value explained with production before and in the exchange relation of commodities that Marx analyzes in the first subsection.

This conception of the explanation of value and socially form-determined human labour advocated by Lietz and Schwarz is as false as it is to assume in principle that there would be a temporal succession, a processual temporal connection between the simple circulation of commodities depicted in the first three chapters of *Capital* and capitalist production.

In the analysis of the exchange relationship of use values, it is not the value that has yet to be explained that is first "mentally identified", but the ahistorically equal, for which it turns out that it consists of the ahistorically valid properties of the use values and the concretely useful labour, of being a labour product par excellence or equal human labour. It is explained how value originally "comes into being", in that the ahistorically valid properties in each case additionally receive the social meaning of a historically socially specific form through the exchange relation. If one says that the general properties are transformed into the respective social form, e.g. into value, then one must not forget that value is the historically social determination of the form of a property, which, considered in itself, is ahistorically valid.²³ This must be borne in mind when speaking of the transformation of general properties into the respective specifically socially general form, and the impression must be avoided that this is a mystical transubstantiation.

The actually already existing ahistorically valid properties that form the "common third" are, as will be discussed in detail below, already passed off by Lietz and Schwarz as value or as already declared form-determined equal human labour. Therefore, they can succinctly express their counterposition to Marx's analysis of the exchange relation of use values as follows: "Value is already present in the exchange relation of two or more commodities when Marx mentally identifies it in them and concludes from the equation of commodities to abstract human labour as the substance of value."²⁴ "Not only in the immediate process of production is the form value already assumed, but also in the preceding theoretical analysis of the commodity."²⁵

Lietz and Schwarz clearly express here that for them value is already present before and within the exchange relation of use values analysed by Marx. What then remains to be done is merely to "identify" or "discover" value and, as will be shown, to describe it in a

²³ See in detail: Section V. ff.

²⁴ "Parallels between Heinrich's explanation of value and abstract labour from the equation of mere labour products and Marx's derivation of value and abstract human labour from the exchange relation of use values are unmistakable. The difference is that Marx discovers the commodity value hidden in exchange value through mental abstraction, whereas in Heinrich a "real abstraction" (*Wissenschaft vom Wert*, 209) first generates value. 97; MEW 23, 80). In neither case is the theoretical analysis of the value-form (third UA) affected." (Lietz and Schwarz, Part I, p. 115. (Italics - D.W.)

²⁵ Lietz and Schwarz, Part I, p. 115. (Italics - D.W.)

complementary way with the help of the already explained socially form-determined human labour.

For Lietz and Schwarz, value is not "generated" or "formed" in commodity circulation or in exchange relations, because they are only oriented towards how value is "generated" or "formed" in production in their opinion. They cannot imagine what it means, in contrast, that value is "produced" or "formed" in a special way in exchange or in exchange relations. If one encounters the "common third" or equal, then it is not yet a question of value, which must already have been explained in order to be able to "discover" it. If one explains how the "common third" or the same (equal) of the different use values is transformed into a historically socially specific form, then one arrives at the value that has "emerged" in this sense through explaining. This is completely different from the way in which value arises, is produced, formed or "produced" in capitalist production. The historically socially specific form of production consists of the processual double-character of the process of labour and the process of the formation of value, i.e. of the more developed form of the double-character of the simple commodity explained on the level of abstraction of the simple circulation of commodities.

Consequently, for Lietz and Schwarz, in the exchange relation of commodity values, which for them is erroneously already an exchange relation of commodities, there is only an inference from an already existing and declared value to abstract human labour, which has already been declared by them, however inadequately, before value as the "social substance" underlying and determining it. Marx, however, does not initially conclude from the equation of commodities, i.e. from the value of commodities, to the same human labour as the "substance of value". Rather, he first and fundamentally concludes from the ahistorically valid property of use values to be a labour product to the ahistorically valid property of concretely useful labour to be equal human labour. Because of the avoidance of a faulty circle, this distinction between the ahistorically valid properties and their transformation into the historically socially specific form is just as important as the fact that there are ahistorically valid social relations between the concretely useful labours, insofar as these are the same human labours. In these ahistorically valid social relations of different human societies, there are still no economic social forms different from use-values and concretely useful labour. "In every social form of labour, the labours of the different individuals are also related to each other as human, but here (in bourgeois society - D. W.) this relationship is itself considered the specifically social form of labour.'²⁶ " ²⁷ ²⁸

²⁶ Das Kapital, 1st edition, MEGA II/5, op.cit., p. 41.

²⁷ D. Wolf, The Dialectical Contradiction in Capital, p. 79 .

²⁸ D.Wolf, " The "forms of movement" of the "absolute spirit" as movements of solution of the dialectical contradiction between "nature" and "spirit" and the "forms of movement" of capital as movements of solution of the dialectical contradiction between use-value and value.... A contribution to the interpretation of Marx's Capital. Section A. 2.4.2 and A.3.3

M. Heinrich must have taken note of this passage by reading the book on "dialectical contradiction": But since it does not correspond to or contradict his understanding of exchange relations, he tried to get rid of it by dismissing it with the argument that it was a slip of Marx's, an inadvertently expressed idea that he would have discarded immediately. In the belief that this must be so, he unfortunately did not notice that in the second edition of *Capital* of 1872, the text passage of 1867 is repeated in a transformed form: "In the form of tailoring, as in the form of weaving, human labour power is expended. Both, therefore, possess the general property of human labour and may, therefore, in certain cases, e.g. in the production of value, be considered only from this point of view."^{29 30}

Lietz and Schwarz casually make the following remark on this problem: "For Wolf, abstract human labour also exists in non-capitalist communities, but in capitalist ones it becomes the general form of labour (ibid.) This transhistorical concept is rejected by the NML." Like Lietz and Schwarz, to speak only of a general form of labour is completely inadequate in view of the fact that it should say: the ahistorically valid property of concretely useful labour of being "abstract human labour" becomes the historically socially specific form of concretely useful labour in "capitalist polities". First, taking this correction into account, Lietz and Schwarz rightly make the actually existing difference that exists between the ahistorically valid and the historically socially specific. But then they talk about a transhistorical concept that would be rejected by the NML.³¹ But this only makes sense if one does not understand by it the already ahistorically valid equal human labour, but the historically socially form-determined equal human labour. For then the NML would quite rightly reject something that does not exist in any pre-capitalist polity outside of a commodity circulation that may be playing alongside. The fact that Lietz and Schwarz do not notice these inconsistencies is due to the fact that they themselves, despite formal references to a difference, nevertheless consistently mix up what is ahistorically valid with what is historically socially specific in their explanations of value and socially form-determined human labour.

Following their comment on the "transhistorical concept" that is "rejected by the NML", Lietz and Schwarz note just as casually: "Wolf does not seriously confront his concept of exchange with other views. This is another reason why we focus on Heinrich."³² The only thing that is correct about this assertion, which is completely made up out of thin air, is that with it Lietz and Schwarz have once again found a reason for avoiding an argument with my writings, in which everything they get wrong in their interpretation of

²⁹ MEW 23, p. 72f. MEGA II/10, P. 59

³⁰ The text passage is continued by Marx as follows: "All this is not mysterious. But in the value-expression of the commodity the thing is twisted. For example, in order to express that weaving does not constitute the canvas value in its concrete form as weaving, but in its general quality as human labour, tailoring, the concrete labour that produces the canvas equivalent, is set against it as the tangible realisation form of abstract human labour." (Ibid.)

³¹ Lietz and Schwarz, Part I, page 112.

³² Lietz and Schwarz, Part I, page 137.

Marx's explanation of value and form-determined equal human labour has already been refuted. In this paper, my "concept of exchange" is "confronted" as clearly as it is "seriously" with a "different conception", namely that which Lietz and Schwarz hold of exchange or exchange relations.

Lietz and Schwarz do not even get involved in the answer already given above to the question of what the beginning of science must be made with in order to understand or explain the capitalist production process. Rather, without considering such a beginning and its methodological significance, they go into the exchange relation of use values analysed by Marx in the first subsection. For them, this is erroneously already an exchange relation of commodities, in which an abstract human labour, previously declared in form with capitalist production, and the value determined by it are present "from the outset".

IV.1.2 Marx's explanation of value versus Lietz' and Schwarz' explanation of value with the socially form-determined equal human labor

Lietz and Schwarz once say that value already exists before the "exchange relation of commodities", and at another they say that value can be explained by the fact that Marx, in the second edition, includes "the same human labour, abstract human labour, in the concept of value takes it in and prefers it in the first UA." Basically, when Lietz and Schwarz explain the socially form-determined equal human work outside of the exchange relationship, at the same time they also explain the value, which for Lietz from the outset can be nothing other than their "objectification" or its "expression".

In what follows, we are concerned in particular with the path Marx took in explaining value and the socially form-determined equal human labor. The first stage of this path leads on page 52, MEW 23, from the "common third" of the various use-values to the property of use-values to be a product of labor and to the property of concretely useful labor to be abstractly human labor. The second stage, beginning with the last seven-line paragraph on page 52, leads to the "residuum of the products of labor," i.e., for Marx, to value, which is described figuratively-metaphorically as "ghostly representationality," as "jelly," and as "crystal." The path finally ends with the characterization of an abstract human labor as the "common substance" of the value consisting of the "crystal".

Marx, after he scientifically correctly starts from the exchange relation of use values, nevertheless speaks of the exchange relation of commodities, i.e. of commodities where it is only about their use values, with whose exchange relation it still has to be explained what a commodity is at all. Scientifically, this is correct if one points out that he first considers the exchange relation of commodities only from the aspect under which they are use values.

That it is about the exchange relation as a relation of equality of use values and about the solution of the problem of their equality is expressed in the following text passage introducing the exchange relation. "The exchange value appears at first as the

quantitative relation, the proportion, in which use values of one kind exchange themselves against use values of another kind,³³ a relation which changes constantly with time and place. The exchange value therefore seems to be something accidental and purely relative, an exchange value (*valeur intrinsèque*) intrinsic to the commodity, thus a *contradictio in adjecto*.³⁴ Let us consider the matter more closely."³⁵

Marx gives the exchange relation of use-values as exchange-value, where one cannot know more than that a quantity of one use-value is equated with the quantity of another use-value, where the second quantity of use-value is the exchange-value of the first. Lietz and Schwarz write in this regard, "In the first subsection (UA) of the first chapter in the 2nd edition of *Capital*, Marx assumes exchange value as a quantitative exchange relation between "things" with different useful use properties."³⁶ They hereby confirm that Marx starts the first subsection with the exchange relation of use values or of "things with different useful use properties", which is not yet the exchange relation of commodities yet to be explained.³⁷

This, however, does not cause Lietz and Schwarz to reflect on the fact that Marx intends to explain value and socially form-determined equal human labor without presupposing them as already explained, i.e., without applying to their explanation what might already be known about them.

Lietz and Schwarz do not think about the fact that scientific exposition has to be about avoiding a faulty circle, let alone recognize that Marx, in stark contrast to their procedure, does the following. He does not presuppose value and socially form-determined labor as already explained economically social forms when he begins to explain them by analyzing the exchange relation of use values.

What exchange value is in contrast to value, one learns only in the third subsection in the analysis of the exchange relation of goods, which have been explained in the first subsection. One then knows from them what they are as use value and value respectively. This involves explaining in the first subsection what value is in contrast to use-value as something "purely social,"³⁸ so that Marx can say at the beginning of the explanation of the forms of value or exchange-values as just as many manifestations of value: "If we remember, however, that commodities possess value-representation only insofar as they are expressions of the same social unity, human labor, that their value-

³³ "Value consists in the relation of exchange that exists between one thing and another, between the quantity of one product and that of another." (Le Trosne, "De l'Intérêt Social," [in] "Physiocrates," éd. Daire, Paris 1846, p. 889.) Italics- D.W.

³⁴ "Nothing can have an intrinsic exchange value" (N. Barbon, l.c.p. 6), or as Butler says: "The value of a thing is just as much as it will bring in."

³⁵ MEW 23, p. 50 ff.

³⁶ Lietz ,Schwarz, p.114.

³⁷ "What does this equation say? That a common thing of the same size exists in two different things (...)". (MEW 23, P. 51.)

³⁸ MEW23, p. 71.

representation is therefore purely social, it also goes without saying that it can appear only in the social relation of commodity to commodity."³⁹

This statement could give the false impression that value is something purely social only because it is the objectification of socially form-determined human labor. Both the latter and value, whose difference and connection are at stake in their explanation, are each something purely social. For Lietz and Schwarz, given the primacy of socially form-determined human labor that they propagate, it is the latter that is responsible for value and thus for its social character.

In the first subsection, which deals with the explanation of value and not with the explanation of exchange value, the problem already posed above must first be solved, how it is possible that use values completely different from each other are actually equated in their exchange relation consisting of a social equality relation. The still to be discovered equality of the different use-values, as the "common third" to them, Marx first calls the "immanent exchange-value (valeur intrinsèque)". For the way in which Marx explains value and socially form-determined human labor, it is important with regard to the critical demarcation from Lietz's and Schwarz's conception to state the following about this same. The sameness of use-values, or the "common third" to them, is indeed a precondition for value. But it is not yet the value, let alone the exchange value to be explained with it. It is reserved to the representatives of the NML to assume that this equal or "common third" owes its existence to money, of which they do not seem to know in which way it is a manifestation of value.

In the exchange relation, the different use-values and the concretely useful labor producing them are equated in the respect in which they are actually equal independently of the exchange relation, namely in their property of being respectively a labor product and equal human labor. The same or "common third" is thus something that exists ahistorically valid independently of the exchange relation of use-values and commodities, i.e., that exists independently of value, of socially form-determined human labor, of money, of capital everywhere where people, for the sake of the reproduction of their lives, produce use-values for each other and for nature. If one has come across their "common third" within the exchange relation, then the fear that the equation of the different use values is a "contradictio in adjecto" is eliminated.

Lietz and Schwarz write on this: "As mutually substitutable use-values, these must be reducible to a common third. Their equation involves the complete abstraction from their use-values, so that only 'one property, that of labor-products' (I/6, 72; MEW 23, 52) remains."⁴⁰ The fact that Lietz and Schwarz have here come across an ahistorically valid property of use-values that further defines the "common third" does not prompt

³⁹ MEW 23, p. 62.

⁴⁰ Lietz und Schwarz, p.114.

them to ask what this property has to do with historically socially specific value. Similarly as for Marx, they do not pose the problem whether value could be about the fact that this ahistorically valid general property becomes the historically socially specific form of the wealth existing in the use values through the historically socially specific exchange relation of the use values.

First, it can be noted that Lietz and Schwarz rightly make a distinction between equation and "abstraction" and, without being aware of the significance of this distinction, implicitly point out that abstraction is basically a paraphrase of equation, which, unlike abstraction, really exists in real terms in the exchange relation. The exchange relation, as a social "relation of equality," cannot create the "common third" or the same of the different use-values. It can only equate the use-values in the respect in which they have actually been equal among themselves since time immemorial, namely as labor products, i.e., in their property of being a labor product. The fact that the abstraction made by the scientist Marx, which is as misplaced as it is superfluous, is capable of misleading the reader and has fatal consequences for Marx's explanation of value, will be dealt with later.⁴¹

"To sum up, it is scientifically necessary to interpret the equation, which really exists in the exchange relation of use values in contrast to all kinds of abstraction, in the sense of a "determinatio est negatio" freed from all metaphysical presuppositions."⁴² For the equation in the exchange relation of use-values is true what is meant by this dictum "Omnis determinatio est negatio": every determination is a negation. In the exchange relation as a relation of equality it depends on the fact that there is an equal (property of being labor product) (determinatio) and not on the fact that there is an unequal (use value) (negatio). The equation is one-sided linearly oriented to the objectively real existing same.

Neither the abstraction made by Marx himself and vicariously for the reader nor a non-existent "real abstraction" brought into play by Sohn Rethel are compatible with the equating of the different use values in the exchange relation, which Marx had previously explained in a scientifically correct way. Thus, with abstraction, one should always keep in mind that it is a paraphrase of equating in the very particular respect in which there actually exists an equal independent of the exchange relation.⁴³

⁴¹ It is assumed by interpreters of capital, for example, that the abstraction that is supposed to lead to value is going on in people's heads, or that there is a real abstraction in contrast to it. (H. Reichelt, M. Heinrich). The one is as wrong as the other.

⁴² Dieter Wolf, Die "Bewegungsformen" des "absoluten Geistes" als Lösungsbewegungen des dialektischen Widerspruchs zwischen "Natur" und "Geist" und die "Bewegungsformen" des Kapitals als Lösungsbewegungen des dialektischen Widerspruchs zwischen Gebrauchswert und Wert. Idealist Dialectics - Materialist Dialectics. A contribution to the interpretation of Marx's Capital: A.2.2.2 Excursus: Scientific abstraction and real equation in the exchange relation of use values or commodities. ("On the Beginning of Science in Marx's "Capital", on the Dialectic of Value Forms, on the Relation of Materialist to Idealist Dialectics, on Adorno's Theory of Knowledge, etc.)

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⁴³ MEW23, p. 71.

After Marx has proved the sameness of the different use-values as their property of being a product of labor, he concludes from this property to the property of concretely useful labor consisting of the same human labor par excellence. Thus it is certain what the "common third" of the various use-values and of the concretely useful labors consists of. Marx came upon these ahistorically valid properties within the exchange relation of use-values, which are the conditions for their equation.

Marx has followed a scientifically correct path up to the differentiation of the "equal" or the "common third" into the two ahistorically valid properties, which is basically characterized by the avoidance of an erroneous circle. It is incomprehensible and surprising that after this accomplished scientific achievement⁴⁴ he disregards that these properties are not yet economically social forms, i.e. not yet value and not yet socially form-determined abstract human labor.

In the sections V. ff., on the other hand, with the recourse to the exchange relation of use values, what Marx omitted is made up for and explicitly explained why the ahistorically valid same or common in each case becomes the historically socially specific form.

The justification for the ahistorically valid properties becoming value or socially form-determined abstract human labor is not given by Marx. Instead of a necessary justification, he continues, ledly metaphorically descriptive: "Let us now consider the residuum of the products of labor. Nothing has remained of them but the same ghostly representationality, a mere jelly of indiscriminate human labor, i.e., of the expenditure of human labor-power without regard to the form of its expenditure. These things represent only that in their production human labor power is spent, human labor is accumulated. As crystals of this substance common to them, they are values - commodity values."⁴⁵

The "residuum" or what remains of the "common third" is, as Marx explicitly stated, the property of the various use values to be a labor product, which is of course invisible, sensually imperceptible. Marx metaphorically paraphrases the "residuum" as "ghostly representationality" and a "mere jelly." But he turns away from the property of the use-value to be a product of labor⁴⁶ and gives it, hidden in the metaphorical paraphrases, a mystical independence as a product of labor par excellence, while for the simple property of use-values it is sufficient to state that it is "no longer a table or a house or a yarn or any other useful thing" and that the "sensuous qualities are extinguished."⁴⁷ Accordingly, for the property of abstract human labor it is sufficient to state that it is "indiscriminate, human labor," i.e., the "expenditure of human labor-power without regard to the form of its expenditure."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Marx had not yet achieved this performance in the 1867 edition.

⁴⁵ MEW 23, p. 52 Mega II/10, p. 40 (Italics D.W.).

⁴⁶ ...with fatal consequences for the interpretation of *capital*.

⁴⁷ MEW 23, p. 52 Mega II/10, p. 40.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Marx neglects his own scientific criteria following procedure, with which he, for the sake of avoiding an erroneous circle, first encounters the labor product par excellence and abstract human labor, which are merely ahistorical properties of use values and concretely useful labor, respectively.

The property of the labor product is replaced after the "ghostly representationality" by the metaphor "jelly", which Marx connects with the property of abstract human labor, so that he can say that the property of being a labor product is about the "jelly of indiscriminate human labor". He does not explain the important fact that what matters is that these "things," i.e., use-values, "represent(s) only that in their production human labor-power is expended (...)," much less why this fact is about the properties acquiring, through the exchange relation of use-values, a social significance that is not inherently theirs. Instead, continuing his metaphorical game of hide-and-seek, he speaks of human labor being "heaped up in them."⁴⁹ By "piling up" abstract human labor, which is to be understood metaphorically, Marx refers to "ghostly representationality," to "jelly," and to the "crystal" invoked in the next sentence. Analogous to what he has already said about the "jelly," he states about the "crystal": "As crystals of this substance (the property of abstract human labor) common to them, they are values - commodity values."⁵⁰ This "jelly" and this "crystal" are as little historically socially specific as the ahistorically valid properties of use-values and concretely useful labor are of being a labor product and human labor, respectively.

It is enough to understand that it is also about the general characteristic of human labor, which Marx calls "indiscriminate human labor", or "expenditure of human labor power without regard to the form of its expenditure". Consequently, it is not a question of someone being in the process of setting in motion all the agents of human labor power in order to transform nature in productive behavior toward it for the purpose of producing a concretely useful thing. Entirely in the sense of the "general property of human labor" is meant only the facticity that human labor power is spent. Marx expressed this facticity in terms of the general property in the words: "These things only still represent that in their production human labor-power is expended, human labor is accumulated."⁵¹ Because the property of use-values to be labor-products becomes the historically socially specific form of use-values, these "only represent that in their production human labor-power is expended." Why Marx's sentence, thus specified, is of fundamental importance for the understanding of socially form-determined abstract human labor, apart from the paraphrase "piled up" metaphorically directed at the "jelly," will be discussed in detail in section V. ff.⁵²

⁴⁹ MEW 23, p. 52, Mega II/10, p. 40. (Italics D.W.).

⁵⁰ MEW 23, p. 52, Mega II/10, p. 40.

⁵¹ MEW 23, p. 52, MEGA II/6, p. 72.

⁵² See also: D. Wolf, Fehlintepretationen vorschubende Mängel in Marx' Darstellung im Kapital und wie Marx sie hätten vermeiden hätte. On the interpretation of fundamental facts in the first chapters of Marx's Capital "Also, the deceptive evidence of metaphors would have to be

From the necessary connection between the two mentioned properties, Marx makes the so self-evident appearing speech of value as objectified equal human labor or of value as value objecthood. At the reached state of knowledge before the last paragraph on page 52, the speech of value objecthood assumes that the property of "equal indiscriminate human labor" is "objectified" in the property of use values to be a labor product. Value is supposed to be the mysterious objectification of ahistorically valid equal human labour. Neither value nor equal human labour thereby acquire a specifically historical-social character. Instead of giving the necessary rational explanation for the transformation of ahistorically valid properties into historically socially specific forms, Marx takes refuge in an inadequate explanation of value and socially form-determined human labour, in which he is dependent on the use of metaphors.

It is correct to say that use-value and concretely useful labor count as something specifically social only in the respect in which they possess the properties of being a labor product par excellence, respectively human labor par excellence. But it is necessary to explain why these general properties are the historically socially specific social form of use-value, i.e. of the wealth existing in use-values, respectively the historically socially specific social form of concretely useful labor.

Marx falls behind the inference from the property of being labor product to the property of being abstract human labor, i.e. behind the way of mediation of the two properties given with the inference. By this is meant: Marx should have explained first why the general properties of being labor product and equal human labor are transformed respectively into value and socially form-determined equal human labor. Then it is true: As necessarily as one concludes from the property of use values to be a labor product to concretely useful labor and thereby encounters its property to be equal human labor, so necessarily one encounters through the conclusion from value as the socially form-determined labor product per se to equal human labor as the historically societally specific form of concretely useful labor.

Value and socially form-determined human labor par excellence belong together in this way with inner necessity, which one can paraphrase with the value objectivity or also with the fact that the form-determined equal human labor is the "common substance" of value.⁵³

Marx, unfortunately, believes he must metaphorically describe value in terms of the "ghostly representationality" or "jelly" of equal indiscriminate human labor, rather than

distrusted" 10.10. 2012 (Date last modified: (25.07.2018) Accessible online: www.dieterwolf.net Section Article Ders.: The "Forms of Movement" of the "Absolute Spirit" as Solution Movements of the Dialectical Contradiction between "Nature" and "Spirit" and the "Forms of Movement" of Capital as Solution Movements of the Dialectical Contradiction between Use Value and Value. On the scientific character of Marx's Capital, considering the relation of materialist to idealist dialectics. Accessible online: www.dieterwolf.net Section Article.

⁵³ "As such crystals of this social substance common to them - they are values" (MEGA2 II.6. P. 4.)

rationaly explaining it in prosaic language. It must be questioned why he has failed, with what is available to him before digressing into the realm of metaphors, to be able to explain why the properties of being labor product par excellence and equal indiscriminate human labor are transformed into value and into the historically socially specific form of concretely useful labor. Not the same human labor, hitherto known only as the ahistorically valid general property of concretely useful labor, but only the same human labor explained as the historically socially specific form of concretely useful labor can be meant when Marx states that it is the "communal," i.e., specifically "social substance of values."⁵⁴

IV. 2 On the role played by equation and "abstractions" in the analysis of the exchange relation of use values.

There is, nevertheless, a fact in Marx's principally scientifically correct grounding of the rational explanation of value in the "first stage"⁵⁵ of the first subsection which prevented him from drawing the correct consequences resulting from this grounding. These facts are the abstractions made by Marx himself, of which one could believe that he only wants to illustrate or make comprehensible the equation of the different use values given by the exchange relation.

The exchange relation of use-values, which Marx analyzes, consists as a social relation of equality of the equation of use-values which are different from each other. The equation and the existing sameness are the ahistorically valid condition for explaining why the general properties of use values and concretely useful labor that constitute the sameness are transformed into historical economically socially specific forms. It will be explained in detail in the next section that value and socially form-determined abstract human labor must be explained in terms of what the exchange relation is more than a social relation of equality determined by the equation of the various use-values. To explain what the equation and the ahistorically valid "common third" or equal are in detail is the task that is solved in the text passages designated as the first stage.

If in the analysis of the exchange relation of use values a mental reproduction of the equation is carried out, then it depends essentially on which "means of thinking" or with which operations carried out in thoughts it is attempted to do justice to it. With these operations abstraction is meant: "Abstraction also means an operation of thinking, which

⁵⁴ Marx metaphorically paraphrases this as follows: "As crystals of this substance common to them, they are values - commodity values."

⁵⁵ MEW 23, page 50 ("Use-value is realized only in use ...") to the last paragraph on page 52.

"subtracts" general properties from concrete objects of reality (e.g. this tree here, that tree there, etc.) and forms general concepts from them (e.g. the genus tree).⁵⁶

First, Marx gets involved in what objectively takes place in the exchange relation of use values with regard to equation: This includes the discovery, preventing a "contradictio in adjecto," that there is indeed a "common third" to the various use-values, which in its socially unspecific ahistorical validity must not be confused, as is commonly the case, with the value that has yet to be explained.⁵⁷ Regarding this "common third", which is essential for the objectively given equation, Marx states among other things: "Let us further take two commodities, e.g. wheat and iron. Whatever their exchange ratio, it can always be represented in an equation in which a given quantum of wheat is equated with some quantum of iron, e.g. 1 quart of wheat = a quart of iron. What does this equation say? That a common thing of the same size exists in two different things, in 1 quart of wheat and also in a quart of iron. Both are therefore equal to a third thing, which in and of itself is neither the one nor the other. Each of the two, so far as it has exchange value⁵⁸, must therefore be reducible to this third."⁵⁹ Marx then passes from equation to abstraction: "On the other hand, it is precisely the abstraction from their use values that evidently characterizes the exchange relation of commodities.⁶⁰ Within it, a use-value is just as valid as any other, if it is only present in due proportion."⁶¹

If one understands Marx's talk of the "abstraction from use values" apparently characterizing the exchange relation of use values as meaning that this abstraction

⁵⁶ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstraktion> Abstraction thus denotes an operation of thinking, which "separates" (emphasizes patterns) general properties from the ideas of concrete objects of reality (such as the perception of this tree here, that tree there, etc.) and forms from them, for example, general concepts (ideas plus linguistic designation) (such as: the genus tree). Abstraction thus denotes an operation of thinking, which "separates" (emphasizes patterns) general properties from the ideas of concrete objects of reality (such as the perception of this tree here, that tree there, etc.) and forms from them, for example, general concepts (ideas plus linguistic designation) (such as: the genus tree).

⁵⁷ See in detail in the excursus on Stephan Krüger.

⁵⁸ With the speech of the exchange value one does not leave the level of the exchange relation of use values. Exchange value is and remains in the first subsection no more than what it appears as, namely as a "quantitative relation of use values".

⁵⁹ MEW 23, p. 51.

⁶⁰ It should be pointed out that it is scientifically completely wrong to speak here, as is commonly done, of the exchange relation of goods of which one cannot yet know what they are at all. They must be explained by something in which they themselves do not yet occur, because only then one avoids getting entangled in an erroneous circle when explaining them. One therefore has to deal first with the exchange relation of use-values, which is an exchange relation of commodities in the respect in which these are use-values. Even if Marx himself speaks of commodities, the "first stage" that ends before the last paragraph on page 52 (MEW 23) proves that it is the exchange relation of use-values with which Marx creates the scientifically correct precondition to explain value and socially form-determined labor.

⁶¹ MEW 23, p. 51 f.

actually takes place in the exchange relation, then this is fundamentally wrong when measured against what actually takes place in the exchange relation of use values. It is namely about what it is about the equation, which without any doubt is real in the exchange relation in contrast to any existing and invented abstractions. There is no abstraction, not even the freely invented "real abstraction",⁶² which would be able to create the same ("common third") as the condition sine qua non for the equation. If this equal or this common third would not already exist outside of the exchange relation, then also within the exchange relation no equation could take place. The common third, equal, is composed, as has already been shown, of the respective general properties of the use-values and of the concretely useful labor, of being a labor product and equal human labor, respectively.

The different use values are equated in the exchange relation in the respect in which they are already equal among themselves even without the exchange relation. In order to establish that since "human thought" the use-values are labor-products or possess the general property of being a labor-product, there is no need for an exchange relation of use-values or commodities, especially since it is only a mystically irrational speculation to assume that this exchange relation would be able to create the "common third" or the same of the different use-values ab ovo.

If the exchange relation is characterized by the "abstraction from the use-values", then this is a paraphrase of illustrative character made by the scientific observer of what is objectively determined independently of this abstraction by the linear one-sided or one-sided equation oriented to the already existing equal. That every use-value is a product of labor is established and proved independently of a relation of use-values to each other. The use-value arises in that people produce something by means of labor that possesses properties that satisfy their needs. People only arrive at the use-value, can only consume it, if people first carry out an activity, make a transformation of nature etc., i.e. perform some work.⁶³

With the abstraction carried out by the scientific observer in thought, one also encounters the same (the equal), which is the condition for the equation that takes place in the exchange relationship in real and objective terms. This also means, however, that there is a redundancy here that has already been described: Namely, if one adheres to the equation and analyses what it really is, one encounters the same thing that conditions it, which one has also encountered by means of abstraction. Instead of clarifying what the equation is in detail, Marx unexpectedly sidesteps the abstractions. This leads, as will be shown, to the fact that essential peculiarities of the exchange relation that are to be

⁶² This was brought into play as the producer of the value of son Rethel and taken over by the NML.

⁶³ Breathing in air is not a process consisting of labor, but it is also not a specifically human process, but a vital process for all non-human living beings. Apart from the fact that it is about the explanation of a human society, the capitalist society is characterized by the fact that, in order to be able to consume use-values, first their exchange must take place. If "Berlin air" is sold in cans, then the labor expended consists of the production of the cans.

grasped on the basis of the equation cannot be grasped by the abstractions. This leads to serious misunderstandings that have fatal consequences for the explanation of value and the socially form-determined abstract human labour.

It is extremely important that the abstractions are meaningful and not carried out arbitrarily. In the following, however, it should be avoided that they become independent of the equation to be explained in another more appropriate way, that they take its place, as it were. This leads to the fact that the events in the exchange relationship of use values that are to be explained on the basis of the equation are no longer perceived. It is this event, which has been lost from view and will be examined more closely in the following, i.e. in the next section V., that is essential or indispensable for the explanation of value and abstract human labour determined by social form.

The actually existing equating of the different use values in the exchange relation must be understood independently of any abstraction in the sense of the already explained "omnis determinatio est negatio" as a linear process directed towards the actually existing equal. In the exchange relation, which is a social relation of equality, there is an equating of the different use-values only in the one respect in which they are already equal among themselves as labour products par excellence or in their property of being a labour product.

Marx has encountered the common third, the same, before he restricts himself to the abstractions he himself has made, which, measured against the equation actually existing in the exchange relation, have only an illustrative character serving to clarify. With the abstractions he has made, Marx illustrates the same thing, after he has explained, without recourse to these abstractions, what it is about the actually existing equation with regard to the actually existing "common third", equal of the different use values.

What automatically results from what is meant by "negatio" in the dictum "omnis determinatio est negatio" can be clarified with the abstractions made by Marx. The most important of these is: "If we now disregard the use-value of commodity bodies - negatio - , only one property remains to them, that of labour products" - equation as "determinatio", i.e. as a certain process oriented towards the already existing same - . "However, the labour product is also already transformed in our hands. If we abstract from its use-value, we also abstract from the physical components and forms that make it a use-value. It is no longer a table or a house or a yarn or any other useful thing. All its sensuous qualities are extinguished."⁶⁴

As a consequence of these abstractions, the logical conclusion arises from the sameness, which consists in the common property of use-values of being a product of labour, to the sameness of concretely useful labours, which consists in their common property of being equal human labour. "With the useful character of the products of labour, the useful character of the labour represented in them disappears, so the various

⁶⁴ MEW 23, p. 52.

concrete forms of this labour also disappear, they no longer differ, but are all together reduced to equal human labour, abstract human labour."⁶⁵

Marx replaces the exchange relation with his abstractions, insofar as he replaces with them the equating of the different use values that occurs in the exchange relation, without explicitly addressing how his subjective abstractions of the concretely useful properties of the use values are related to the objective actually existing equating. Marx should have made it clear in what way the abstractions he also carried out vicariously for the readers are an aid to the description of the equating he encountered in the analysis of the exchange relation of the various use-values. Without explicitly referring to it, he describes with his abstractions that the various use-values and various concretely useful labours are equated in their exchange relation in the respect in which they are actually the same regardless of the exchange relation and all abstractions.

But everything that is important in the explanation of value and socially form-determined abstract human labour goes decisively beyond what Marx is able to grasp with the help of the abstractions of equating and the exchange relation. Sticking one-sidedly to his abstractions, he does not come to stringently comprehend the way in which the exchange relation, starting from the equating of the various use values, causes the ahistorically valid general properties consisting of the same to be transformed into value or into socially form-determined abstract human labour. By avoiding abstractions, Marx has distanced himself from the equating and the exchange relation, i.e. he has lost sight of the two facts that are absolutely necessary for the explanation of value and socially form-determined labour.

Marx suddenly behaves as if he does not need the equation and the exchange relation, as if he does not need to know what happens with the equating in the exchange relation, as if he does not need to know what the exchange relation does in the respect in which it is more than equating. The historically socially specific exchange relation has the effect that the general ahistorically valid properties of being the product of labour or equal human labour, which form the "common third", are "transformed"⁶⁶ into value and socially form-determined abstract human labour.

The products of labour are rationally explicable real existing objects only because they are use-values, i.e. different things or objects that possess different concretely useful properties that satisfy different needs of people. It is these use-values that possess the property common to them of being a product of labour. This is and remains correct, even if Marx no longer continues the consideration of the objectively proceeding equation that he had begun, but unnecessarily and misleadingly replaces it with his subjective abstractions. Perhaps this is also the reason why he is not aware that up to the last paragraph on page 52 (MEW 23) he has created the precondition for being able to

⁶⁵ MEW 23, p. 52.

⁶⁶ Value and socially form-determined abstract human labour thus do not cease to be at the same time general properties of use values or concretely useful labour.

explain value and socially form-determined abstract human labour in a scientifically correct way without getting caught up in a flawed circle. It would thus not have been necessary to enter the terrain of inadmissible, untenable speculations in the last paragraph of page 52 (MEW 23).

However one arrives at the general properties, whether by means of the illustrative abstractions or by analysing the equation in the sense of "omnis determinatio est negatio", what is decisive is that Marx no longer takes the general properties seriously as the ahistorically valid "common third" or equal. He does not bother to explain why these general properties of use values and concretely useful labour receive the historically socially specific character of value and socially form-determined abstract human labour through the exchange relation.

Instead, in the last seven lines of page 52, Marx speaks of the "residuum of the products of labour", although he had not previously spoken of the products of labour, but only of the properties of use values and concretely useful labour to be a product of labour or abstract human labour. Marx, however, continues to move on the level of abstractions and thus continues their independence against the exchange relation and against that which takes place in it on the basis of equating. This means nothing other than that the analysis of what objectively takes place in the exchange relation and is brought about by it is transformed, due to the drifting away to the abstractions undertaken by Marx, into a conceptualisation undertaken by him that becomes independent. We do not have a use-value before us that is a labour product, but rather, as a result of the concept formation conjured up by the abstractions, the concept of labour product that becomes independent against the use-value.

In his talk of the "residuum of labour products", Marx does not consider that the property of use values to be labour product is already an indissoluble residuum, namely the residuum of the ahistorically valid same or "common third". There is no residuum of the property of being labour product, unless one generates it in an irrational way by separating, as Marx does, the property of use-values of being labour product from use-values and substantiating them into independently existing entities to which one gives the name "labour products". Marx begins his false explanation of value with the words: "Let us now consider the residuum of the products of labour". These products of labour invoked by Marx are unfortunately no longer the use-values which possess the property of being a product of labour. Marx rather substantiates this property into an entity that exists independently from the labour product par excellence, which owes itself as a mental construct to a misguided conceptualisation, the conclusion of which is inevitably crowned with a "ghostly representationality" of a "jelly", a "crystal". With these metaphors, the representationality of the use value is to be preserved in the substantialised labour product par excellence.

It is a hardly noticeable, easily overlooked step on Marx's path to explaining value when he concludes from the property of use values to the "labour product" and derives a noun from a property in the sense of a concept formation. In truth, however, it is a huge

step because it is a step into an explanation of value and historically socially shaped labour that is no longer rationally comprehensible. In the exchange relation, one labour product is not equated with the other labour product, but one use-value is equated with the other use-value in the respect in which each is a labour product or possesses the property of being a labour product. Here there is no "ghostly representationality", no "jelly": there is no need for a metaphorical paraphrase through which one is led into a mystically irrational no-man's land due to the lack of a scientific prosaic basis. It is not the labour product, which, without being the general property of use values, does not exist at all as a labour product par excellence, that is transformed into value by the exchange relation, but it is the property of use values to be a labour product that is transformed into the historically socially specific value by the historically socially specific exchange relation.

There is nothing mysterious, nothing mystically irrational about the fact that factors involved in a social relationship acquire a social meaning that is different from themselves. This can be seen, for example, in language, in which sounds or combinations of sounds uttered by people relating to each other have become "carriers" of social-spiritual meanings.

The indissoluble residuum of the "common third" or "equal" that consists of the property of use-values to be a product of labour is, as has already been emphasised, by no means a "ghostly concreteness" or "jelly". Consequently, Marx has produced this "ghostly representationality" ab ovo in the way described, through the substantialisation of the properties themselves that he has undertaken, which is typical of scholasticism, by transforming them as the "products of labour" (schlechthin) into entities that become independent, which exist only in his imagination, which goes into metaphors, but nowhere else in the world.

Without recourse to the general properties and without the effect exerted on them by the exchange relation, Marx is only able to give a mystically irrational explanation of value, which makes it necessary to pass it off metaphorically as an ahistorically valid "ghostly representationality", as a "jelly" and as a "crystal". With these metaphors, Marx tries in vain to distinguish value as the product of labour par excellence from use-value and at the same time to preserve the representational nature of use-value.

In order to give a rational, scientifically correct explanation of value and the socially form-determined equal human labour, one is referred to the text passages of the previous stage. At the end of the latter, the task arises of explaining, with the historically socially specific exchange relation of use-values, why the ahistorically valid properties are transformed in each case into historically socially specific form-determinations.

In the second stage, i.e. in the last paragraph on page 52 (MEW 23), Marx tries in vain to explain value and socially form-determined equal human labour in a rational scientific way. This is unfortunately the case because he completely omits the knowledge acquired in the first stage of the analysis of the exchange relation of use values, simply "sweeping it under the carpet".

There could be no better proof of this than the following statement Marx made on the basis of his failed spiritualist explanation of value in the second stage, retrospectively about the "common third" that he encountered in the first stage. "In the exchange relation of commodities themselves, their exchange value appeared to us as something quite independent of their use values. If we now really abstract from the use-value of the products of labour, we obtain their value as it has just been determined."⁶⁷ Obviously in reality this abstraction was completely different: "If we now disregard the use-value of the commodity bodies, only one property remains to them, that of labour products."⁶⁸ This general property of use-values, together with the general property of concretely useful labour to be abstractly equal to human labour, forms the "common third". The two juxtaposed, contradictory sentences clearly demonstrate that Marx leaves the path correctly begun with the first stage. *He fails to explain why the general properties are transformed by the historically socially specific exchange relation into the historically socially specific value and into the historically socially specific form-determined equal human labour.*

The fact that in the first stage Marx created the basis for the important difference between what is ahistorically valid and what is historically socially specific does not exist for many interpreters of capital. First, the fact that use-value is a product of labour is described by saying that it is a product of labour per se. Then one forgets that it is a property of use-values. Without realising it, one acts as if the product of labour as such existed in a strange, non-real way as independently as the use-value as the product of concretely useful labour. If, accordingly, one wants to ascribe the corresponding product character to the labour product par excellence, then abstract human labour is needed as the counterpart to concretely useful labour. Analogous to concretely useful labour, which is objectified in a use value, abstract human labour is supposed to accomplish the feat of objectifying itself in an ominous ghostly labour product par excellence. This is given the representational contours of use-value by making it a "jelly", a "crystal", a "ghostly representationality".

There is only one rational way in which to speak of the products of labour, and this consists of the way in which Marx concludes in the first stage that "*only one property, that of products of labour*" remains as the "common third", as the same of the various use-values.⁶⁹ If one forgets this and subsequently no longer takes it into account, then one suddenly makes this general attribute independent. One turns the general attribute of a thing or a subject into the thing or subject itself. It is like in the fairy tale by Adalbert Chamisso, in which Peter Schlemihl separates the shadow of his body from it in order to sell it to the devil. The ahistorically valid property of use-values to be a product of

⁶⁷ MEW 23, p. 53.

⁶⁸ MEW 23, p. 53.

⁶⁹ MEW 23, p. 52. When one commonly speaks of the labour product, one thinks of the use-values that are labour products, but also of the commodities possessing a use-value. This is not mysterious, not mystically irrational.

labour, which can be rationally explained by the equation of use-values taking place in exchange, is transformed into an equally ahistorically valid conceptual construct called "labour product", which is separated from use-values and taken for Marx's "jelly", which, is falsely passed off as "value".



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V. New explanation of value and socially form-determined equal human labour with social recognition, without mixing the two economically social forms with the ahistorically valid conditions of their existence, and without the aid of poetic metaphors.

V.I Preliminary remark

Looking back to the analysis of the exchange relation of use-values, Marx states: "The common thing that is represented in the exchange relation or exchange-value of the commodity is therefore its value." ⁷⁰ This common thing, which Marx here passes off as value, is the "common third", for which, up to the last paragraph on page 52 (MEW 23), it has at first only emerged that it is composed of the labour product and abstract human labour as the properties of use-values and concretely useful labour. Although they are not yet value or socially form-determined human labour per se, they are the necessary condition for its existence. Whoever passes off the "common third" as value right at the beginning of the presentation disregards the course of the logically systematic presentation on which Marx himself, avoiding an erroneous circle, first began to explain

⁷⁰ MEW 23, S. 53 Mega II/10, p. 40, Italics. Kursiv- D.W

value, the commodity, the value-forms and money on the basis of the exchange relation of use-values.

It goes without saying that Marx abstracts in this presentation, which continues on page 53 (MEW 23), from the manifestations of value to be explained later in the third subsection as "value form or exchange value". However, one should not understand that he does not explicitly refer to the exchange relation of use-values in order to use it to explain value, human labour determined by social form and the commodity determined by both.

Marx "reminds" in the third subsection "that commodities possess value-representation only insofar as they are expressions of the same social unity, human labour; that their value-representation is thus purely social, it also goes without saying that it can appear only in the social relation of commodity to commodity."⁷¹

It is true that value must appear as something "purely social" in a social relation consisting of the exchange relation of commodities already explained as units of use-value and value. This involves explaining why it is fundamentally part of the essence or nature of every social thing to have to appear - i.e. also of a social thing that has nothing to do with the exchange relation.⁷²

With what Gebauchswerten has produced up to the last paragraph of page 52, the necessity arises to ask the following questions: Why does the ahistorically valid general property of use-values of being a product of labour become value, i.e., the socially general form of the wealth existing in use-values? Why does the ahistorically valid general property of the various concretely useful labours of being equal human labour become the socially general form of the concretely useful labours?

Before making use, as Marx did, of thoroughly well-chosen metaphors consisting of figurative comparisons, these questions must be answered rationally in prosaic language with the exchange relation of use values.

In the following, it is a matter of making clear the significance of the process of social recognition for the explanation of value and the socially form-determined equal human labour through the exchange relation of use values. The fact that value is the historically socially specific form of the wealth existing in use values means that this wealth is socially recognised in the form of value (later money). That socially form-determined abstract human labour is the historically socially specific form of concretely useful labour means that this is socially recognised in the form of abstract human labour.

It is thus a matter of the social recognition of use values and the concretely useful labour that produces them, brought about by the exchange of use values. In order to clarify what this recognition is all about, we should refer to the role of money, which is

⁷¹ MEW 23. p. 62.

⁷² See Dieter Wolf, Dialektik der einfachen Wertform - Die einfache Wertform als Lösungsbewegung des Dialektischen Widerspruchs zwischen dem Gebrauchswert und dem Wert der Ware: Der dialektische Widerspruch zwischen dem Gebrauchswert und dem Wert der Ware und seine Lösungsbewegung... Online zugänglich; www.dieterwolf.net

familiar to everyone. With the purchase of a commodity whose price ideally anticipates money, its use value and the concretely useful labour of which it is the product are socially recognised. The money that the seller of the commodity holds in his hands is the socially general form in which the social recognition of the use value and the concretely useful labour that produces it exists in a tangible way.

Before making use, as Marx did, of thoroughly well-chosen metaphors consisting of figurative comparisons, these questions must be answered rationally in prosaic language⁷³ with the exchange relation of use values.

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It is thus a matter of the social recognition of use values and the concretely useful labour that produces them, brought about by the exchange of use values. In order to clarify what this recognition is all about, we should refer to the role of money, which is familiar to everyone. With the purchase of a commodity whose price ideally anticipates money, its use value and the concretely useful labour of which it is the product are socially recognised. The money that the seller of the commodity holds in his hands is the socially general form in which the social recognition of the use value and the concretely useful labour that produces it exists in a tangible way.

The assumption of a "subsequent exchange" in which there is supposed to be no "social 'recognition' of private labour as value" is absurd for the sole reason that there is no subsequent exchange without a temporal succession of capitalist production and simple non-capitalist commodity circulation. Rather, there is initially only a simple commodity circulation, with which, abstracting from the capitalist production process with its determining exchange relations of use values and commodities, it is explained what value, socially form-determined human labour, the commodity and money are. Of all the "places" where Marx is concerned with the "social 'recognition' of private labour as value", the first is the exchange relation of use values belonging to simple commodity circulation, which Marx analyses in the first subsection of the first chapter.

V.2 Different Steps on the Way to Explaining the Social Form of the Social Wealth Existing in Use Values and the Concretely Useful Labour Producing it with Recognition

⁷³ The "sensible is mostly prosaic." Theodor Fontane in Effie Briest. Chapter 29.

V.2.1 Social recognition of use values and concretely useful labour in precapitalist useful labour in pre-capitalist communities

"A thing can be use-value without being value. This is the case when its usefulness to man is not mediated by labour. Thus air, virgin soil, natural meadows, wild-growing wood, etc. A thing can be useful and the product of human labour without being a commodity. He who satisfies his own need by his product creates use-value, but not commodity. In order to produce commodities, he must not only produce use-value, but use-value for others, social use-value. {...} Finally, no thing can be value without being an object of use. If it is useless, the labour contained in it is also useless, does not count as labour, and therefore forms no value." ⁷⁴

In the curly brackets is the following addition by Friedrich Engels: "And not only for others par excellence. The medieval peasant produced the grain of interest for the feudal lord, the grain of tithe for the priest. But neither the grain of interest nor the tithe became a commodity because it was produced for others. *In order to become a commodity, the product must be transferred by exchange to another, to whom it serves as a use-value.*" ⁷⁵ As justification for his addition, Engels states: "I insert the bracketed phrase because its omission very often gave rise to the misunderstanding that every product which is consumed by someone other than the producer is considered by Marx to be a commodity. - F.E. Note on the 4th edition)". ⁷⁶

For the problem to be discussed here, Engel's reasoning can be varied as follows: "I am inserting the bracketed element because its omission very often gives rise to the misunderstanding that the ahistorically valid socially unspecific qualities of being a labour product or equal human labour

The ahistorically valid socially unspecific qualities of being a labour product or equal human labour are already the historically socially specific value or the historically socially specific form-determined equal human labour.

When a use-value is consumed, by someone whose need it satisfies, then they recognise that the use-value has been produced for them by someone else and is subsequently available to them. Thus, use-value is a social use-value because it is recognised by the people for whom it was produced by someone by coming into their hands through exchange and being consumed by them.

The consumption of the use value is preceded, ahistorically speaking, by the social processes that fundamentally shape and structure a community. They are about the distribution of the total social labour to the concretely useful work and its socialisation on the basis of the respective different relations of domination and servitude. For a large

⁷⁴ MEW 23. p. 55.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

part of the feudalist polity, the *proportional distribution of total labour to concretely useful work* is regulated by serfdom. It is a foregone conclusion that a part of the use-values produced by the peasants must be handed over to the feudal lords and the church. The socialisation of concretely useful labour in every polity is a matter of the concretely useful labour acquiring a historically specific social form, depending on the prevailing economic-social conditions, in which it is recognised by the members of the polity as socially general. "Finally, as soon as people work for each other in some way, their work also acquires a social form."⁷⁷ "Every child knows," Marx writes to Ludwig Kugelmann, "that the masses of products corresponding to different masses of need require different and quantitatively determined masses of total social labour. That this necessity of the distribution of social labour in certain proportions cannot at all be abolished by the certain form of social labour, but can only change its mode of appearance, is self-evident. Natural laws⁷⁸ cannot be abolished at all. What can change in historically different states is only the form in which those laws assert themselves."⁷⁹ If "this proportional distribution of labour" asserts itself "in a state of society" consisting of a non-capitalist polity, then "the context of social labour", which is about the socialisation of concretely useful labour, is a priori structured and organised in such a way that the specifically socially general form of concretely useful labour consists of itself or of its "natural form". In order to be *socially recognised*, they do not have to take on a form that is different from themselves, i.e. they do not have to take on the *historically socially specific form* of value, money, and so on.

V.2.2 Proportional Distribution of Total Labour and the Socialisation of Concretely Useful Labour in the Capitalist Commonwealth

What is presented here with regard to the capitalist polity only serves to draw attention to the fundamental difference between the non-capitalist and the capitalist polity from the perspective of society as a whole.

On the proportional distribution of total labour and the socialisation of concretely useful labour in the capitalist polity, Marx writes: "And the form in which this proportional distribution of labour asserts itself in a state of society in which the coherence of social labour asserts itself as the private exchange of the individual products of labour is precisely the exchange value of these products" (Wert).⁸⁰ At the same time, the specifically socially general form of concretely useful labour consists of its property of being abstract human labour. The way in which use-value is made

⁷⁷ MEW23, p. 85f., MEGA II/10, p. 71

⁷⁸ Social laws applicable to all communities.

⁷⁹ Letter to Kugelmann in Hanover London, 1I. July 1868 MEW 32, p. 552ff.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p 553.

available to its consumers is what constitutes its sociality determined by the realisation of exchange relations.

In the capitalist polity there is a social division of labour "of independently operated private labour. The complex of these *private labours* forms the social total labour." ⁸¹ The social context, which decides on distribution and socialisation, is *subsequently established* through the exchange of products.

Of course, the social context determined by this post-sustainability also includes production, insofar as its social character is determined by forms of value that are more developed than the simple circulation of commodities. This post-substantiality of recognition is the counterpart to the social recognition that is determined from the outset by the special social context of a non-capitalist polity.

In the capitalist process of total reproduction, exchange relations mediate the proportional distribution of total labour time among concretely useful labours. It is the relations of exchange which, at the same time as the generally prevailing circulation of commodities, determine the socialisation of use-values and concretely useful labour, from which their respective socially general form consists.

As was explained above, in the non-capitalist polity, concretely useful labour is socially recognised from the outset through a specially structured social context. In the generally prevailing commodity circulation of a capitalist polity, the use values are each socially recognised as value and the concretely useful labours are each socially recognised as equal human labour through exchange and the exchange relations belonging to it. This paraphrases the passage from Marx quoted above, which says: "And the form in which this proportional distribution of labour asserts itself in a state of society in which the connection of social labour asserts itself as the private exchange of the individual products of labour is precisely the exchange value of these products." (Value) ⁸² In the circulation of capital, which determines and structures capitalist total reproduction, the commodities present in capitalist commodity circulation constantly emerge from the capitalist production process as a processing unity of labour and value formation process. Consequently, only in the circulation of capital are there daily acts of exchange following production, but not yet in the simple circulation of commodities, which is initially presented in the first three chapters of Capital as the "abstract sphere of capital".

V.2.3 The recognition of people as owners of commodities and money - legal relations

There is a social recognition that is conditioned by the exchange relationship of use values or commodities, but at the same time takes place outside of it between people as

⁸¹ MEGA² II.6, p. 40 ("Additions and modifications.")

⁸² Letter to Kugelmann in Hanover London, 11. July 1868 MEW 32, p. 553ff.

owners of use values or commodities. In the course of exchange, they mutually recognise each other as human beings who are at the same time owners of use values or commodities. This relationship between people, which is conditioned by the exchange relationship and in which they are forced to recognise each other as reciprocals, is a legal relationship that, according to the level of abstraction of the first two chapters, is as abstractly general as the exchange relationship of use values or commodities. Because of his lack of knowledge of economic social forms, Hegel establishes a connection between legal relations and economic social relations, mixing them together. He dissolves what he perceives of the economic-social relations and economic-social forms into spiritual relations and spiritual forms, so that exchange as the practiced handover of commodities is only the sensually perceptible outside of the spiritual movements in which people mutually recognise themselves as self-consciousnesses. For Hegel, the spiritual movement of people recognising each other, which is caused by the exchange relations, are the legal relations for which the absolute spirit created the exchange of use values or commodities on one of its stages of development in order to force people to recognise themselves as consciousnesses in order to develop further into self-consciousnesses.

Already in the counterpart to the beginning of the first chapter with the exchange relationship of use-values, Marx deals with the connection between economic social relationships and legal relationships at the beginning of the second chapter when describing the initial situation of the exchange process: "Commodities cannot go to market themselves and cannot exchange themselves. We must therefore look around for their guardians, the owners of commodities. Commodities are things and therefore unresisting to man. If they are not willing, he can use force, in other words, take them."⁸³ In order to relate these things to each other as commodities, the keepers of commodities must relate to each other as persons whose will resides in those things, so that one only with the will of the other, thus each only by means of an act of will common to both, appropriates the foreign commodity by alienating his own. They must therefore recognise each other as private owners. This legal relationship, whose form is the contract, whether legally developed or not, is a relationship of will, in which the economic relationship is reflected. The content of this legal or volitional relationship is given by the economic relationship itself. The persons exist here only for each other as representatives of commodities and therefore as owners of commodities. In the course of development we will find that the economic character masks of the persons are only the personifications of the economic relations as whose bearers they confront each other."⁸⁴

⁸³ In the 12th century, so called by its piety, very delicate things often appear among these goods. A French poet of the time, for example, lists among the goods found in the market of Landit, in addition to clothing, shoes, leather, farming implements, skins, etc., "femmes folles de leur corps" <"women with fiery bodies">.

⁸⁴ MEW 23, p. 99f.

When Marx, in the second chapter of *Capital*, says of the "commodity owners" that they must "mutually recognise each other as private owners", it must be asked why what is at stake in this recognition is given by "the economic relation itself". This concerns the recognition of private labour in the specifically social form of equal human labour and of use-values in the social form of value, to be explained below.

V.2.4 Social recognition of use values and concretely useful labour by means of money

Without knowing what money is as a historically specific economic social form, which Marx explains in the first two chapters of *Capital*, money plays its different roles in commodity circulation for people "visible before everyone's eyes". When money is used to buy the price-determined commodities, it is obvious that social recognition is involved in two ways. On the one hand, when buying and selling commodities, people mutually recognise each other as owners of commodities and money. On the other hand, the use values of the commodities or the social wealth existing in them and the concretely useful work producing them are socially recognised in the form of money. If money is explained, then at the same time it is explained what this recognition in the exchange relations of use values or commodities is about in detail.

For the social recognition of use-values in the exchange mediated by money, one sees that it depends on practical behaviour, i.e. on the active realisation of the exchange relations, which consists of the practiced handover of the use-values. With the consumption of the use-value that satisfies one's needs, the social recognition that takes place in the exchange by means of money is completed.

Money is particularly suited to being the social form with which social recognition is guaranteed, because it possesses the form of immediate exchangeability. Since it is exchangeable, as it goes and stands, for any commodity, it is the economically social form in which all use-values existing in the world of commodities are socially recognised.

Money is the most developed economic social form on the level of abstraction of simple commodity circulation as the "abstract sphere of capital". But in order to explain it without getting entangled in a flawed circle, one must abstract from money itself, so that one encounters simpler relations of exchange in which it is not itself present, but very much the conditions for being able to explain it.

This "descent from the concrete to the abstract" takes place within the overall process of social reproduction and finally within the simple circulation of commodities, so that until the last abstraction there is never an abstraction from the exchange relation of commodities or use-values. The exchange relation that is encountered through the last abstraction from commodities is the exchange relation of use-values, from which value, the commodity and money must be explained. The relations of exchange, whose

realisation in the circulation of commodities is mediated through money, are nothing other than the developed concrete form of the abstract undeveloped simple relation of exchange of use-values. Therefore, it can be anticipated in abstract general terms that the exchange relation of use-values is, in the simplest abstract general way, about the social recognition of use-value and concretely useful labour, which is what money is about in the more concrete way already explained. With the money that "rings in the till" when buying a price-determined commodity in the supermarket or ends up online in some account, the use value of this commodity and the concretely useful labour that produces it are socially recognised.

In the case of the economically social forms which, in different ways, represent the capitalist process of total reproduction, the cycle of social total capital, the cycle of the intertwining individual capitals, it is a question of socially recognising the wealth existing in the use values and the concretely useful labour producing this wealth. The most abstract, simplest economic-social form for which this is true is value, which has yet to be explained, of which money, capital, etc. are each differently developed manifestations. The analysis of the exchange relationship of use values is about the explanation of this value. It is about the explanation of the most abstract, simplest economic social form in which use-value and the concretely useful labour that produces it are socially recognised. With this prognosis, which can be understood from the point of view of money, the first step has already been taken in the explanation of value as something purely social, without abruptly passing off the ahistorically valid "common third" as value, or as socially form-determined equal human labour, and without making exclusive use of a metaphor that merely serves illustrative purposes.

V.2.5 Value as the social form in which use values are socially recognised in their exchange relation

The exchange process presented in the second chapter of *Capital* and the analysis of the exchange relation of use-values in the first chapter are on the same level of abstraction in terms of the different "emergence" of value in the course of its explanation. What is the initial situation in the exchange process, in which value and the commodity are abstracted, is the beginning of science in the first subsection with the exchange relation of use values, in which likewise neither value nor commodities are already present.⁸⁵ In

⁸⁵ "If we look more closely, every owner of commodities regards every foreign commodity as the special equivalent of his commodity, and his commodity therefore as the general equivalent of all other commodities. But since all owners of commodities do the same, no commodity is a general equivalent, and the commodities therefore possess no general relative form of value, in which they equate themselves as values and compare themselves as magnitudes of value. They are therefore not opposed to each other at all as commodities, but only as products or use-values." (MEW 23,p. 101. Italics- D.W.)

The avoidance of an erroneous circle and the analysis practically carried out by Marx starting from the "quantitative relation of use-values" prove that the talk of commodities at the beginning of the

the exchange process, beginning with the exchange relation of two use-values, the exchange relations of all use-values are realised. With both chapters taken together, value, socially form-determined human labour, the commodity and the general equivalent or money, which is not qualitatively different from it, are explained, which dominates the simple circulation of commodities by exercising its various functions in it.

If no effort is made to avoid a faulty circle, and no consideration is given to the lack of temporal succession of capitalist production and simple commodity circulation, one is forced to hold the following false view; value and the socially form-determined human labour that determines it, coming from production, with which they have already been fundamentally explained, are already present before Marx would begin to explain them with the exchange relation of use-values belonging to simple commodity circulation.

For the exchange relation of use-values, which is fundamentally a relation of equality, the problem must first be solved that the use-values, although different from one another, are nevertheless equated. That the equating of the different use-values is not a mystically irrational process follows from the trivial indisputable fact that there is a "*common third*" or *equal* to the use-values, which consists of their general property of being a product of labour.

Just as equating is the condition for exchanging and this is the *condition for social recognition*, equating in this roundabout way is a necessary condition for *social recognition*. It is therefore crucial to realise what the *exchange relation* as a relation of equality *is at the same time more than a relation of equality*. *It is necessary to explain what is common to the relation of equality and the relation of exchange with regard to practical exchange and in what both differ.*

As has already been emphasised, Marx "abstracted" the exchange relations analysed in the first chapter from the exchange process taking place in practice, in order to then analyse them on their own, as they are given to the scientist. The exchange relations are thus analysed in the first chapter with regard to the exchange that takes place in practice, which is a "change of hands and places" of use values. The practiced handover of commodity and money is the social process in commodity circulation, in which the use values and the concretely useful labour that produces them *are not only equated, but also socially recognised*. By buying the commodity with money, its use-value passes into the hands of the one who consumes it. Equating is still the condition for exchanging. If it is a question of the difference between exchanging and equating, *then it can only be a question of what exchanging as a practiced handover of commodities or use values is more than equating, whereby this "more" is at the same time about the social recognition of use values and concretely useful labour*. Equating does not necessarily mean the exchange relationship or the exchange in which the " the practiced handover of

analysis of the exchange relation of use-values in the first chapter must be specified as follows: It is a question of an exchange relation of commodities, which is initially analysed solely from the point of view in which commodities are use-values.

use values of commodities takes place. The exchange relation of use values receives its meaning through the realisation implied in it, but still pending, in the exchange process carried out in practice, in which social recognition is not only begun, but always also carried out and ended.

The equating of the different use-values and concretely useful labour acquires the character of a social action through the exchange implicitly given with the exchange relation. The same consisting of the respective general properties is and remains the necessary condition for the exchange implicitly given with the exchange relation as the real practiced handover of the use-values. The same *is* thus not simply the same consisting of the properties, but, by *functioning in the exchange as its condition, it additionally acquires the meaning of being the exchangeable or the social recognition* of the various use-values and concretely useful labors. The exchange relation, abstracted from the exchange process and inseparably linked to it, goes beyond mere equating *through the exchange of hands and jobs consisting of a social action.*

The exchange relationship "distilled" or "abstracted" from the exchange process and inseparably linked to it goes beyond the mere equation through the practical handing over of use values and commodities *consisting of a social action.*

As a condition for exchange being a practical handover of use values, the common consisting of the two general properties simultaneously acquires the social meaning, different from itself, of the exchangeable that is identical with social recognition. Or formulated differently: The general property of use-values of being the product of labour, which in exchange as the practiced handover of use-values is regarded as the exchangeable of use-values, is the social form of the social wealth consisting of use-values – is the value: The general property of use-values of being the product of labour, *which in exchange as the practiced handover of use-values is regarded as the exchangeable of use-values, is the social form of the social wealth consisting of use-values – is the value.* The general property of concretely useful labour to be equal human labour, *which in exchange as the practiced handover of use-values is regarded as the exchangeable of concretely useful labour, is the social form of concretely useful labour – is the socially form-determined equal abstract human labour.*

V.2.5.1 Remarks on Heinrich's important distinction between "common" and "communal" ("collective, shared, joint")

With regard to the important distinction between the common and the communal, to which Heinrich draws attention, as noted above, there are the following correspondences, for the description of which it is accepted to fall back on remarks already made above.

The common corresponds to what has been stated so far about the same as the ahistorically valid "common third" that Marx encounters in the exchange relation of use

values. It consists of the ahistorically valid properties of use-values and concretely useful labour to be a product of labour and equal human labour, respectively.

For this same in the meaning of the common, the "common third", the following applies: according to its character of being a relation of equality, the exchange relation of use values is about the mere equating of use values in the respect in which the same or the common is already present as something ahistorically valid.

The same applies to the meaning of the communal:

With regard to exchange as the exchange of hands and jobs, the exchange relationship is a social action that explicitly involves use values and thus has the character of the communal. The same in the meaning of the exchangeable is consequently at the same time the communal, through which the use values and the concretely useful work are socially recognised. The property of being a product of labour, which has become a communal property in terms of exchange or the exchange of hands and jobs, is the historically social form of the wealth existing in use values, designated as value. The property of being abstract human labour, which has become a communal property with regard to exchange or the exchange of hands and jobs, is the historically social form of concretely useful labour.

Heinrich's reference to the communal as distinct from the common is confirmed by Marx when he writes, without having explicitly gone into it, in accordance with his explanation of value, which is fundamentally criticised in this treatise and relies on metaphors: "As crystals of this substance common to them, they are values - commodity values."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ MEW 23, p. 52.