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Marx's explanation of value, socially form-determined abstract human labour and the commodity in the first subsection of the first chapter of Capital Vol. I. A part of this explanation is supplemented and changed, i.e. rewritten, in a scientifically rational way¹

(This article is an excerpt from the treatise:

Dieter Wolf, "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 sub-section of Capital Volume I. Online accessible: Texts in English)

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I. Marx's Explanation of Value and of Socially Form-Determined Abstract Human Labour

I.1 The path from the ahistorically valid "common third" of the various use-values to the ahistorically valid property of use-values to be a product of labour and to the ahistorically valid property of concretely useful labour to be abstract human labour.

In terms of the explanation of economic social forms, the scientific representation in Capital begins 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, is directed, like the entire scientific representation in Capital, according to the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete, which avoids becoming entangled in an erroneous circle in the explanation of economic social forms.

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The last of the abstractions necessary for the descent from the concrete to the abstract for the explanation of value, which was explained in detail in the above treatise, consists of the abstraction from the exchange relation of commodities or from the value of commodities. With this abstraction, one encounters the exchange relation of use-values or the exchange relation of commodities from the aspect that these are use-values and are initially socially related to each other as such. The difficult task that Marx now has to overcome is to explain the commodity by explaining value and the socially form-determined equal human labour, both of which are not yet present due to the avoidance of a defective circle.

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 transform themselves into the respective social form, e.g. into value, then it must not be forgotten that value is the historically social determination of the form of a property which, considered in itself, is a-historically valid.² 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.

If one comes across the "common third" or the same, 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 of the various 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 processing double-character of labour and value formation process, i.e. of the further developed form of the double character of the simple commodity explained on the level of abstraction of the simple commodity circulation as the abstract sphere of capital.

In what follows, we are concerned in particular with the path Marx took in explaining value and the socially form-determined equal human labour. 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 labour and to the property of concretely useful labour to be abstract human labour. The second stage, which begins with the last seven-line paragraph on page 52, leads to the "residuum of the products of labour", i.e. for Marx to value, which is described metaphorically as a „Gallerte“ (Gelatin-like

² See in detail: Section II. ff.

substance) as a "ghostly objectivity" of a correspondingly to it homogeneous indiscriminate ghostly abstract labour ". The path finally ends with the characterisation of an abstract human labour as the "communal substance" of value, which, like the "Gallerte" ("jelly"), is supposed to be a ghostly objectivity consisting of a "crystal".

Marx, after starting from the exchange relation of use values in a scientifically correct way, nevertheless speaks of the exchange relation of commodities, i.e. of commodities that are only concerned with their use values, with whose exchange relation it still has to be explained what a commodity is in the first place. *This is scientifically correct, if one takes into account that he first considers the exchange relation of commodities only from the point of view that 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 are exchanged for use-values of another kind,³ a relation that constantly changes with time and place. Exchange value therefore appears to be something accidental and purely relative, an exchange value (valeur intrinsèque) intrinsic to the commodity, thus a *contradictio in adjecto*.⁴ Let us look at the matter more closely." ⁵

Marx gives out the exchange relation of use-values as exchange-value, whereby one cannot know more than that the quantity of one use-value is equated with the quantity of another use-value, the second quantity of the use-value being the exchange-value of the first. It is necessary to reflect on the fact that Marx intends to explain value and socially form-determined equal human labour without presupposing them as already explained, i.e. without applying to their explanation what could already be known about them. He does not presuppose value and socially form-determined labour as already explained economic social forms when he begins to explain them with the analysis of the exchange relation of use values.

What exchange value is in contrast to value is only learned in the third subsection in the analysis of the exchange relationship of commodities, 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",⁶ 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

³ "Value consists in the relation of exchange which 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.

⁴ Value consists in the relation of exchange which 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.

⁵ "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 fetch."

⁶ MEW 23. P. 71.

value. "If we remember, however, that commodities possess value-representation only in so far as they are expressions of the same social unity, human labour, that their value-representation is therefore purely social, it also goes without saying that it can appear only in the social relation of commodity to commodity."⁷

This statement could give the false impression that value is only something purely social because it is the objectification of socially form-determined human labour. Both the latter and value, whose difference and connection are at stake in their explanation, are each something purely social.

In the first sub-section, which deals with the explanation of value and not with the explanation of exchange value, the problem already posed above must first be solved as to how it is possible that use values that are completely different from each other are actually equated in their exchange relation, which consists of a social relation of equality. Marx calls the still to be discovered equality of the different use values, as the "common third", the "immanent exchange value (valeur intrinsèque)". For the way in which Marx explains value and socially form-determined human labour, it is important to note the following about this sameness. The sameness of use-values or the "common third" is indeed a precondition for value. But it is not yet value, let alone the exchange value to be explained with it. It is reserved for the representatives of the NML⁸ to assume that this equal or "common third" owes its existence to money, of which they do not seem to know in what way it is a manifestation of value.⁹

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

First of all, it can be stated that the abstraction is basically a paraphrase of the equation, which, in contrast to the 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 equal of the different use values. It can only equate the use values in the respect in which they have actually been equal to each other since time immemorial, namely as labour products, i.e. in their property of being a labour product.

⁷ MEW 23. P. 62.

⁸ "New Marx Reading"

⁹ http://www.dieterwolf.net/pdf/Geldware_Dieter_Wolf_Gesellschaftliche_Praxis.pdf

The fact that this abstraction, as misplaced as it is superfluous, made by the scientist Marx, is capable of misleading the reader and has fatal consequences for Marx's explanation of value, will be dealt with later.¹⁰

"To sum up, it is scientifically necessary to interpret the equation, which, unlike all kinds of abstraction, really exists in the exchange relation of use-values, in the sense of a "determinatio est negatio" freed from all metaphysical presuppositions."¹¹ For the equation in the exchange relation of use-values, what is meant by this dictum "Omnis determinatio est negatio" is true: every determination is a negation. In the exchange relation as a relation of equality, what matters is that there is an equal (property of being a labour product) (determinatio) and not that there is an unequal (use value) (negatio). The equation is one-sidedly linearly oriented towards the objectively real existing equal.

Neither the abstraction made by Marx himself and on behalf of the reader nor the non-existent "real abstraction" brought into play by Sohn Rethel are compatible with Marx's previously scientifically correct equation of the different use values in the relation of exchange. With abstraction, therefore, one should always bear in mind that it is a description of equation in the very specific sense in which there is in fact an equation existing independently of the relation of exchange.¹²

Having demonstrated the same of the various utility values as their property of being a product of labour, Marx deduces from this property the property of concretely useful labour, which consists of the same human labour par excellence. Thus it is clear what constitutes the "common third" of the various utility values and the concretely useful works. Within the relation of exchange of use values, Marx encountered these ahistorically valid properties, which are the conditions for their equivalence. Up to the differentiation of the "equal" or the "common third" into the two ahistorically valid characteristics, Marx followed a scientifically correct path, which is basically characterized by the avoidance of an erroneous circle. It is incomprehensible and astonishing that, after this scientific achievement,¹³ he ignores the fact that these

¹⁰ It is assumed by interpreters of capital, for example, that the abstraction that is supposed to lead to value takes place in people's heads, or that, in contrast, there is a real abstraction. (H. Reichelt, M. Heinrich). The one is as wrong as the other.

¹¹ 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 Relationship of Use Values or Commodities. ("On the Beginning of Science in Marx's "Capital", on the Dialectic of Value Forms, on the Relationship of Materialist to Idealist Dialectics, on Adorno's Theory of Knowledge, etc.) Available online at: www.dieterwolf.net

¹² What is meant by the dictum "Omnis determinatio est negatio" is true for the equation: every provision is a negation. In the relation of exchange as an equal relation it is important that there is an equal (property of being a product of labor) (determinatio) and not that there is an inequality (use value) (negatio).

¹³ Marx had not yet achieved this feat in the 1867 edition.

characteristics are not yet economically social forms, i. e. not yet value and not yet socially form-determined abstract human labour.

In Sections II. et seq. , on the other hand, recourse to the exchange relationship of use-values makes up for what Marx had omitted and explicitly explains why the ahistorically valid same or common thing becomes a historically specific social form.

I.2 Remarks on Marx's flight into an inadequate explanation of value and socially form-determined human labour, in which he is dependent on the use of metaphors

The justification for the ahistorically valid properties becoming value or socially form-determined abstract human labour is not given by Marx. Instead of a necessary justification, he continues, perhaps metaphorically descriptive: "Let us now consider the residuum of the products of labour. There is nothing left of them but the same ghostly representationality, a mere galler of indiscriminate human labour, i.e. the expenditure of human labour-power without regard to the form of its expenditure. These things only represent the fact that human labour power is spent in their production, that human labour is accumulated. As crystals of this substance common to them, they are values - commodity values." ¹⁴

The "residuum" or what remains of the "common third" is, as Marx explicitly stated, the property of the various use values of being a labour product, which is of course invisible, sensually imperceptible. Marx metaphorically circumscribes the "residuum" with "ghostly representationality" and a "mere galler". However, he turns away from the property of the use-value of being a product of labour ¹⁵ and, hidden in the metaphorical paraphrases, gives it an artificially generated, real, non-existent independence as a product of labour 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 have been extinguished."¹⁶ Accordingly, for the property of abstract human labour it is sufficient to state that it is "indiscriminate, human labour", i.e. the "expenditure of human labour-power without regard to the form of its expenditure."¹⁷

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

The property of the labour product, after the "ghostly representationality", is replaced by the metaphor „galler“, which Marx associates with the property of abstract human

¹⁴ MEW 23, p. 52 Mega II/10, p. 40 (Italics- D.W.)

¹⁵ ...with fatal consequences for the interpretation of "capital".

¹⁶ MEW 23, S, 52 Mega II/10, p. 40.

¹⁷ Ibid.

labour, so that he can say that the property of being a labour product is about the "gallert of indiscriminate human labour". He does not explain the important fact that what matters is that these "things" i.e. the use-values "only represent (that) human labour-power is expended (...) in their production", let alone why this fact is about the properties acquiring a social meaning that is not inherently theirs through the exchange relation of use-values. Instead, continuing his metaphorical game of hide-and-seek, he speaks of human labour being "heaped up in them."¹⁸ By the metaphorical "heaping up" of abstract human labour, Marx refers to the "ghostly representationality", to the „gallert“ and to the "crystal" invoked in the next sentence. Analogous to what he has already said about the „gallert“, he states about the "crystal": "As crystals of this substance (the property of abstract human labour) common to them, they are values - commodity values."¹⁹

This „gallert“ and this "crystal" are as little historically socially specific as the ahistorically valid properties of use values and concretely useful labour are of being a labour product and human labour respectively.

Suffice it to understand that what is at stake here is also the general property of human labour, which Marx calls "indiscriminate human labour", or the "expenditure of human labour-power without regard to the form of its expenditure". Consequently, it is not a question of someone being in the process of setting all the agents of human labour power in motion in order to transform nature in productive behaviour towards it for the purpose of producing a concretely useful thing. In the sense of the "general property of human labour", only the facticity that human labour power is spent is meant. Marx expressed this facticity in the sense of the general property with the words: "These things only represent that in their production human labour power is spent, human labour is accumulated."²⁰ Because the property of use-values to be labour-products becomes the historically socially specific form of use-values, these "only represent that in their production human labour-power is expended". Why Marx's sentence, specified in this way, is of fundamental importance for the understanding of socially form-determined abstract human labour, apart from the metaphorical paraphrase "heaped up" directed towards the „gallert“, will be discussed in detail in section II. ff.²¹

¹⁸ MEW 23, p. 52, Mega II/10, p. 40. (Italics- D.W.)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ MEW 23, p. 52, MEGA II/6, p. 72.

²¹ See also: D. Wolf, „Misinterpretations of Marx's account in Capital and how Marx could have avoided them. On the interpretation of fundamental facts in the first chapters of Marx's Capital.“ "Also, the deceptive evidence of metaphors would have to be distrusted" 10.10. 2012 (Date last modified: (25.07.2018) Accessible online: www.dieterwolf.net Section Article". "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, taking into account the relation of materialist to idealist dialectics. Accessible online: www.dieterwolf.net Article section

From the necessary connection between the two aforementioned properties, Marx makes the so self-evidently appearing speech of value as objectified equal human labour or Value as an objectification (“Wertgegenständlichkeit”). At the level of knowledge reached before the last paragraph on page 52, the talk of the objectivity of value assumes that the property of "equal indiscriminate human labour" is "objectified" in the property of use values to be a product of labour. This ahistorically valid socially unspecific property of concretely useful labour, of being equal human labour, is supposed to be value solely through its mysterious objectification, which then, in addition, just as little as the ahistorically valid property can be something specifically historical-social.

Instead of giving the necessary rational explanation for the transformation of the ahistorically valid properties into historically socially specific forms, Marx takes refuge in an inadequate scientifically not acceptable 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 labour only count as something specifically social in the sense that they possess the properties of being a product of labour par excellence, or human labour par excellence. However, it is necessary to explain why these general properties are the historically socially specific social form of use-value or of the wealth existing in use-values and the historically socially specific social form of concretely useful labour.

Marx falls behind the inference from the property of being labour product to the property of being abstract human labour, i.e. behind the way of mediating the two properties given with the inference. By this is meant: Marx should first have explained why the general properties of being labour product and equal human labour are transformed respectively into value and socially form-determined equal human labour. For then the following applies: just as it is necessary to conclude from the property of use-values to be a labour-product to concretely useful labour and thereby to come across its property to be equal human labour, so it is necessary to come across equal human labour as the historically societally specific form of concretely useful labour through the conclusion from value as the socially form-determined labour-product per se. In this way, value and socially form-determined human labour par excellence belong together with inner necessity, which can be paraphrased with "value objectivity" or confidently with the fact that form-determined equal human labour is the "common substance" of value.²²

Marx unfortunately believes he must metaphorically describe value in terms of the "ghostly representationality" or „gallert“ of equal indiscriminate human labour, rather than rationally explaining it in prosaic language. It must be questioned why he has failed to use what is available to him before digressing into the realm of metaphors to explain why the properties of being labour product par excellence and equal indiscriminate human labour are transformed into value and into the historically socially specific form

²² "As such crystals of this social substance common to them - they are werthe." (MEGA2 II.6. P. 4.)

of concretely useful labour. It is not equal human labour, hitherto known only as the ahistorically valid general property of concretely useful labour, but only equal human labour explained as the historically socially specific form of concretely useful labour, that can be meant when Marx states that it is the "communal", i.e. specifically "social substance of values".²³ ^

I. 3 On the role played by equation and "abstractions" in the analysis of the exchange relation of use values.

Explanation of the causes of Marx's irrational explanation of value and socially form-determined labour, which relies on metaphors, in the last paragraph of page 52, (MEW 23).

In Marx's principally scientifically correct foundation of the rational explanation of value in the "first stage"²⁴

of the first subsection, there is nevertheless a circumstance that prevented him from drawing the correct consequences resulting from this foundation. These facts are the abstractions made by Marx himself, which one could believe were only intended to illustrate or make comprehensible the equation of the different use values given by the exchange relation.

The exchange relation of use values that Marx analyses consists as a social relation of equality of the equation of the different use values. The equation and the existing sameness are the ahistorically valid condition for explaining why the general properties of use values and concretely useful labour 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 labour 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. Explaining what the equation and the ahistorically valid "common third" or equal are in detail is the task that is solved in the text passages on page 52 that are designated as the first stage.

If a mental reproduction of the equation is undertaken in the analysis of the exchange relationship of use values, then it is essential with which "means of thought" or with which operations undertaken in thought an attempt is made to do justice to it. These operations refer to abstraction: "Abstraction also refers to an operation of thought that "subtracts" general properties from concrete objects of reality (such as this tree here, that tree there, etc.) and forms general concepts from them (such as the genus tree)."²⁵

First, Marx gets involved with what objectively takes place in the exchange relation of use values with regard to equation: This includes the discovery, which prevents a

²³ Marx describes this metaphorically as follows: "As crystals of this substance common to them, they are values - commodity values".

²⁴ MEW 23, page 50 ("Use-value is realised only in use ...") to the last paragraph on page 52.

²⁵ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstraktion>

"contradictio in adjecto", that there is in fact a "common third" to the various use-values, which in its socially unspecific ahistorical validity must not, as is commonly the case, be confused with the value that has yet to be explained.²⁶

With regard to 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 pint 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 centilitre of iron. Both are therefore equal to a third thing, which in itself is neither the one nor the other. Each of the two, in so far as it has exchange value²⁷, must therefore be reducible to this third."²⁸ Marx then moves from equation to abstraction: "On the other hand, it is precisely the abstraction from their use values that evidently characterises the exchange relation of commodities.²⁹ Within it, a use-value is just as valid as any other, if it is only present in the proper proportion."³⁰

If Marx's talk of the "abstraction from use values" that apparently characterises the exchange relation of use values is understood as meaning that this abstraction 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. What is at stake, in fact, is what it is about the equation, which is without any doubt real in the exchange relation, in contrast to all existing and invented abstractions. There is no abstraction, not even the freely invented "real abstraction",³¹ that would be able to create the same ("common third party") as the condition sine qua non for equation.

If this equal or this common third were not already present outside the exchange relation, then no equation could take place within the exchange relation either. The common third, the same, is composed, as has already been shown, of the respective

²⁶ See in detail in the excursus on Stephan Krüger.

²⁷ In speaking of 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, namely as a "quantitative relation of use values".

²⁸ MEW 23, p. 51.

²⁹ It should be pointed out that it is scientifically completely wrong to speak here, as is commonly done, of the exchange relationship of commodities of which one cannot yet know what they are at all. They must be explained by something in which they themselves do not yet appear, because only then can one avoid becoming entangled in an erroneous circle when explaining them. One is therefore first dealing with the exchange relation of use values, which is an exchange relation of commodities in the respect in which these are use values. Even though 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 for explaining value and socially form-determined labour.

³⁰ MEW 23, p. 51.

³¹ This was brought into play as the producer of the value of son Rethel and taken over by the NML.

general properties of the use-values and of the concretely useful labour, of being a product of labour and equal human labour respectively.

The various 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 products of labour or possess the general property of being a product of labour, 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 characterised by the "abstraction from use-values", then this is a paraphrase of an 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 towards the already existing equal. That every use-value is a labour-product is established and proven independently of a relation of use-values to each other. Use-value comes into being when people, by means of labour, produce something 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 kind of work.³²

With the abstraction carried out by the scientific observer in thought, one also encounters the same thing, 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 grasped on the basis of the equation cannot be grasped by the abstractions. Serious misunderstandings arise as a result, which 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 is important to avoid 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 in

³² Breathing in air is not a process consisting of labour, 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 a matter of explaining a human society, capitalist society is characterised by the fact that in order to consume use values, their exchange must first take place. When "Berlin air" is sold in cans, the labour expended consists of producing the cans.

more detail in the following, i.e. in the next section V, that is essential or indispensable for the explanation of value and socially form-determined abstract human labour.

The equating of the various use values that actually exists in the exchange relationship 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 confines himself to the abstractions he himself has carried out, which, measured against the equation actually existing in the exchange relation, have only an illustrative character serving to clarify. Marx illustrates the same thing with the abstractions he has made, 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 thing of the different use-values.

That which automatically arises with 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 - , then 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."³³

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 disappears the useful character of the labours represented in them, there disappears therefore also the various concrete forms of these labours, they no longer differ, but are all together reduced to equal human labour, abstract human labour." ³⁴

Marx replaces the exchange relation with his abstractions, insofar as he replaces with them the equating of the various use-values that occurs in the exchange relation, without explicitly addressing how his subjective abstractions of the concretely useful properties of 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

³³ MEW 23, P. 52.

³⁴ Ibid.

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 evading the 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 equating and the exchange relation, as if he does not need to know what happens to 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"³⁵ 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 explain value and socially form-determined abstract human labour in a scientifically correct way without getting caught up in a flawed circle. It would not have been necessary to enter the terrain of inadequate not acceptable 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

³⁵ 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.

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 and abstract human labour respectively. Marx, however, continues to move on the level of abstractions and thus continues to make them independent 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 before us a use-value that is a labour-product, but, 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 products 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 a product of labour, unless one generates it in a way that is not possible in reality, by separating, as Marx did, the property of use-values of being a product of labour from use-values and substantiating them into independently existing entities to which one gives the name "products of labour". 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 inadequate unacceptable explanation of value and historically socially form-determined labour.

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 no-man's land that does not exist in real terms and for which there is no 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, in the fact that factors involved in a social relation acquire a social meaning that is different from themselves. This can be seen, for example, in language, where 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 of being a labour product is, as has already been emphasised, by no means a "ghostly representationality" 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, par excellence) into entities that become independent, which exist only in his imagination that 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 inadequate, faulty 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, which Marx, on the basis of his failed inadequate explanation of value in the second stage, retrospectively makes 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.*" ³⁶ Obviously,

³⁶ MEW 23, p. 53.

his memory really did leave him here, because 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."*³⁷

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 propositions clearly demonstrate that Marx has destroyed the continuity of the account begun with the first stage by failing to explain why the general properties are transformed by the historically socially specific exchange relation into the historically socially specific value and into the equal human labour determined in form in a historically socially specific way.

The fact that Marx, in the first stage, established the basis for the important difference that exists between what is ahistorically valid and what is historically socially specific does not generally exist for the interpreters of Capital. First, the fact that use-value is a labour product is described by saying that it is a labour product par excellence. Then one forgets that it is a property of use-values. Without knowing that it is something irrational, one acts as if the product of labour par excellence existed in strangely way just as independently and autonomously as the use-value as a product of concretely useful labour. Accordingly, if 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 receives the representational contours of use-value by being passed off as "jelly", as "crystal", as "ghostly representationality".

There is only one reasonable way to speak of the products of labour, and that is the way in which Marx concludes in the first phase that "only one property of the products of labour remains" as the "common third", as the same among the various use-values.³⁸ If one forgets this, as is unfortunately the case for Marx himself, and subsequently fails to take it into account, as is scientifically required, then one unawares takes the aforementioned mystically irrational independence of this general property. One turns the general attribute of a thing or subject into the thing or subject itself. It is like in the fairy tale by Adalbert Chamisso,³⁹ 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 labour, which can be rationally explained by the equation of use-

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ Adelbert von Chamisso (* 30 January 1781 as Louis Charles Adélaïde de Chamissot de Boncourt at Boncourt Castle near Ante,[1] Châlons-en-Champagne, France; † 21 August 1838 in Berlin) was a German naturalist and poet of French origin.

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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II. 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.

II.1 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." ⁴⁰ 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 value, the commodity, the value-forms and money on the basis of the exchange relation of use-values.

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

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." ⁴¹

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. ⁴²

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 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

⁴¹ MEW 23. p. 62.

⁴² 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

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.

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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.

II.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

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

⁴³ The "sensible is mostly prosaic." Theodor Fontane in Effie Briest. Chapter 29.

"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." ⁴⁴

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.*" ⁴⁵ 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)" ⁴⁶

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 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.

⁴⁴ MEW 23. p. 55.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

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."⁴⁷ "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 laws⁴⁸ cannot be abolished at all. What can change in historically different states is only the form in which those laws assert themselves."⁴⁹ 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.

II.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).⁵⁰ 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 available to its consumers is what constitutes its sociality determined by the realisation of exchange relations.

⁴⁷ MEW23, p. 85f., MEGA II/10, p. 71

⁴⁸ Social laws applicable to all communities.

⁴⁹ Letter to Kugelmann in Hanover London, 1I. July 1868 MEW 32, p. 552ff.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p 553.

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." ⁵¹ 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) ⁵² 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".

II.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 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

⁵¹ MEGA² II.6, p. 40 ("Additions and modifications.")

⁵² Letter to Kugelmann in Hanover London, 11. July 1868 MEW 32, p. 553ff.

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."⁵³ 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.⁵⁴

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

⁵³ 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">.

⁵⁴ MEW 23, p. 99f.

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.

II.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.

II.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.⁵⁵ In

⁵⁵ "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 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.

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 use values and 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.*

II.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."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ MEW 23, p. 52.