

LABOUR POWER AND THE STATE

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The Marxist theory of the state has developed in three main directions: the study of the relation between the bourgeoisie and the state; the study of the functioning of the state; and the study of its role in the valorisation of capital. However, it seems to us that the essential question is that of the *foundation* of the state under capitalism. This foundation must be sought in the wage-relation, whose reproduction is never given *a priori*. Hence the necessity for a study of the relation between the state and labour-power.

INTRODUCTION

The debate on the nature and function of the state under capitalism takes two forms. The first type of debate is concerned mainly with the 'intervention' of the state in the field of the production and circulation of commodities. More precisely, it is a debate about the way in which, once the social conditions for the production of value have been achieved, the state intervenes in the way this value is divided up. This activity affects the division between wages and profits as much as the division of profit between fractions of capital. This activity implies, among other things, the regulation of money.

The second type of debate is about the very nature of the state, and about the links it maintains with the class structure of society; in particular, it is concerned with whether or not the state establishes the central social relation of capitalism, the wage-relation.

We do not deny the importance of the first type of debate. On the contrary, in our view 'economic policy' is more than just a series of measures intended to restore the rate of profit or to ensure the enforcement of the rules of competition. The state is distinct from a collective organisation of capitalists not only in the sense that it alone has the power

to make the collective interests of capitalists prevail in the face of their individual interests, but also in the sense that it alone is able to maintain the existence of a kind of production that rests on private and mobile capitals.

But we must note that the emphasis put on 'economic policy' over several decades has helped to conceal the second type of debate. The latter has only emerged historically in periods of revolutionary crisis. Marx opened it after 1848, then after 1871. Lenin, Rosa Luxembour, Pannekoek, Gramsci started it again before and after 1917. Then it got lost in the fog. Even as the European Communist Parties incessantly repeat that capitalism is entering an unprecedented crisis, the debate over the nature of the state is conjured away. For example, one of Marx's principal conclusions on this question, the idea that one cannot break with capitalism without the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was abandoned almost without open debate (apart from the statements of Etienne Balibar available outside the Party) by the French Communist Party at its XXII Congress.

The contemporary emphasis on the 'economic intervention' of the state therefore contrasts sharply with historical studies analysing the period in which capitalism emerged, the period known as that of 'primitive accumulation'. While Marxist historians concede that in this period the state played a fundamental role in the constitution of the proletariat, that role disappears as soon as one gets beyond this 'stage'. The relation between social classes seems to reproduce itself on its own or, at least, by the action of 'economic' compulsion alone.

A few works, in recent years, have tried to reopen the debate on the nature of the state, and these have immediately put into question the political strategy of the Parties which have aimed to take control of the state.

Among those authors who have contributed most to reopening the debate there seems to be a consensus, beyond their differences, on one essential point about the role of the state:

"The state is an instrument of domination at the service of the dominant class." (1)

But in most of these works this role of the state, as well as the analysis of its violence, whether overt or unobtrusive violence, is treated as self-evident. That is to say that once these obvious points have been explicitly recognised, *this* role of the state is not further considered in the developments that follow.

The obvious thus functions to obscure. Its role is to dismiss that fundamental, open, violence that is the attribute of the state, to refer it elsewhere, to something unsaid, something implicitly recognised by theorists. But this violence is fundamental in the sense that, as we shall see, it is the precondition for the other interventions of the state.

The aim of this article is precisely to *underpin this obviousness theoretically*, which means that one cannot start from the functioning of the state – defined at the level of its 'organization' or its 'interventions' – or even of its 'functions', defined as the search for remedies to 'dysfunctions' external to the state.

One cannot grasp the state as a 'regulator' (or even 'arbiter') between different fractions of capital, or as a (transitory) substitute for private capitalists in the event of a crisis, unless one has already *established the foundation* which permits it to impose political and social norms while at the same time being an integral part of capitalism as a whole. Our aim is not, however, to produce an ontologising analysis, but to study what establishes the state as "a separate entity, beside and outside civil society" according to the formulation of Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* (p.78).

It is the externality of the state in relation to 'civil society' that seems to us to be the fundamental characteristic that distinguishes the state of the capitalist mode of production. It rests on the two central features of capitalism:

- (1) The production and circulation of commodities does not *automatically* reproduce that which is external, and at the same time essential to it: the *existence* of labour-power as a commodity.
- (2) 'Labour-power', the commodity specific to capitalism, in the sense that its existence is the "unique historical condition" for the existence of the capitalist mode of production, cannot be reproduced as a capitalist commodity.

It is because the conditions of reproduction of labour-power are external to the process of production of commodities that state intervention is necessary in order to:

- (1) 'produce' this specific commodity, i.e. to *constrain* the 'bearers' of labour-power to enter into the wage-relation. It therefore amounts to assuring the conditions for the wage-relation. This is carried out in the 'developed' countries today (where precapitalist forms of production have been almost completely destroyed) by the direct undertaking by the state of part of the reproduction of the workers. But this is by no means a necessary condition for the reproduction of the wage-relation: for a century the reproduction of wage-labour in Europe was effected on the basis of the pure and simple destruction of the bearers of labour-power (2), while, up till the present day in colonial and neocolonial countries reproduction on an exclusively 'domestic' basis alternates with the destruction of workers (3).
- (2) assure, in the course of its use, the reproduction of this commodity. The state is at the heart of the 'fragmentation of the collective labourer', of the introduction of contradictions between wage-labourers, although they are 'objectively' reunited by the fact that they contribute to the production of a *single* mass of value.

PART ONE: THE STATE AND THE WAGE-RELATION

A. Externality of the reproduction of labour-power in relation to the process of production of commodities.

Marx's elaboration of the concept of labour-power is the result of many years of research during which he struggled with multiple contradictions.

On the one hand, Marx, who never abandoned certain Hegelian formulations, tried to provide a theoretical foundation for the fact that capital can only realise itself as such socially in the face of not-capital; but, contradictorily, this "not-capital" cannot be labour, since the latter appears, within the production of commodities, only as a moment of capital.

On the other hand, Marx tried to *provide a theoretical foundation* for – and not merely to postulate, as Ricardo did – the existence of profit, without, however, violating the rules of commodity equivalence.

The 'invention' of the concept of labour-power is at first sight the solution to this double problem: on the one hand, labour-power is defined independently of capital, even if Marx recognised that it is no more than a "possibility" (4); on the other hand, thanks to 'labour-power', one can at last name, encapsulate, that commodity "whose use-value possesses the peculiar property of being a source of value, whose actual consumption is therefore itself an objectification of labour, hence a creation of value" (*Capital*, I, p.270), the commodity without which the whole theory of surplus-value would collapse.

But it is "within the sphere of circulation, on the market" that labour-power appears. If it is sold, there must be a seller, and the seller cannot be confused with the commodity he or she sells. Two possibilities are open: either the seller is a person other than the bearer of labour-power, and so sells both 'bearer' and labour-power at the same time: this would be a relationship of slavery; or else the seller is the bearer of labour-power him or herself, free and equal – during the period of the exchange – with his or her co-contractor. Such an exchange corresponds to the general characteristic of commodity exchange: the commodity sold, labour-power, is a 'use-value' (5) for its buyer (thus defined as a capitalist) and a non-use-value for its seller, defined as a wage-labourer (note that it is non-use-value for him or her because they have been expropriated from the means of production, because they cannot reproduce themselves by using this labour-power themselves).

Labour-power clearly exists within circulation; it is bought and sold, *it is a commodity*. But that in itself does not tell us what governs the conditions of this commodity exchange. The definition of the rules of exchange by political economy, as much as in Marx's critique of it, postulates that it deals with a *socially specified exchange*: whether one postulates the rules of exchange as involving the equalisation of the rate of profit, the equality of marginal cost and marginal revenue, or the equality of quantities of abstract labour, the seller on whom these rules are imposed is a *capitalist*, who is 'valorising' a capital.

There are therefore two possibilities: either the seller of labour-power is a capitalist. He or she is conflated, as an individual, with the capital whose temporary disposal he or she sells. We fall into theories based on the idea of 'human capital'. Or else the seller is not a capitalist and the relation entered with the buying capitalist is a *simple commodity relation*. There is no reason to presume that this relation will follow the rules defined on the basis of the case in which the seller is a capitalist.

Two types of relatively distinct problems follow: on the one hand, the problem of the conditions of the exchange between the worker and the

capitalist, and, in particular, that of the determination of the price of labour-power. On the other hand, the problem of the reproduction of the seller of labour-power. The distinct character of the two problems derives from the fact that the worker and the capitalist do not seek the same thing in this exchange; the workers seek to reproduce themselves as socialised individuals, and the wage exchange is the necessary, but not sufficient, condition for this reproduction. The capitalist seeks only to reproduce his ability to dispose of a labour-power concretely specified on the basis of the structure of the collective labourer; to give the worker the means of his or her reproduction is neither sufficient (the worker still has to be introduced into the labour process under conditions imposed by the capitalist, which implies disciplinary practices at the level of the wage-exchange and in the labour-process itself), nor necessary in every case (the capitalist may be able to find on the market workers reproduced outside any wage-relation, and use their labour-power without, to that extent, giving them the means to reproduce themselves).

One source of the incoherence of the neoclassical theory of distribution lies in this confusion between the problem of the determination of the wage-level and that of the reproduction of the labourer; but many ambiguities in the contemporary Marxist perspective have the same basis: indeed, it is often said nowadays that the wage is merely the 'price-form' of the 'value of labour-power', or the expression in money of the latter. From which is derived the idea, to be found in all the Marxist-inspired text-books, that the value of labour-power is determined, "like that of all other commodities", by the quantity of labour socially necessary to produce it. But, over and above the question already raised of the failure to take account of the labour directed at the reproduction of labour-power, two points raise problems:

- (a) Firstly in relation to the determination of the quantity of labour 'socially necessary'. One may try to define this quantity outside the wage-relation, in which case one must establish a list of 'needs'. However, this leads to two possible, but equally paradoxical, solutions:
 - either the wage-exchange conforms with the rule of determination by the 'socially necessary labour-time', and every 'need' is necessarily satisfied;
 - or one tries to show that the needs are not satisfied, and the wage-exchange violates the rules of commodity exchange.
 The other solution is to define this quantity on the basis of the wage-exchange itself. But then one has a simple equality in terms of *exchange-value* and not of *value*: the exchange-value of the commodities bought with the wage is equal to the exchange-value of labour-power. One cannot immediately discover any determination one way or the other from the observation of this rather tautological equality.
- (b) if this determination of a 'socially necessary quantity of labour' creates problems it is because it leads back to another question: that of the legitimacy of the use of the concept of '*value*' itself in relation to labour-power. Certainly Marx adopts this usage time and again, even going so far as to make a direct connection between the conditions of production of consumption goods and the 'value of labour-

power'. However, when Marx defines value, he does so with respect to *commodities* which are *produced*, and which are produced in a *capitalist framework*. (Although Marx poses the problems of the substance and of the measure of value before that of the valorisation of capital, this 'capitalist framework' is, at this level defined by the fact that the products of social labour appear, in a generalised manner, in the form of commodities). The use of the concept of value with respect to labour-power is only legitimate if the commodity 'labour-power' is of the same nature as the commodities on which the definition of the concept of value is based.

To define the value of a commodity, one must first think of concrete labours; as the commodity passes through circulation the exchangers abstract from the concrete characteristics of the labour to retain only one common quality: the time spent. This is a preliminary to the realisation of the value, that is to say to the fact that it may become real in being socially recognised. Nothing in this scheme corresponds to what happens in the case of labour-power: concrete labour (of the housewife, of the teacher, etc. . . .) is not recognised: there is no process of abstraction, and one starts from *already realised* values (those of the commodities bought by the worker) to define the value of labour-power. This leads to the concealment of a very important phenomenon: it is the worker him or herself, and not the labour-power, that is reproduced on the basis of the consumption of commodities *and* of a labour process situated *outside* the process of production of commodities (and one does not know, a priori, whether or not that process is subject to the constraints imposed by the needs of the production of value).

The capitalist form of production is thus characterised by a situation that appears at first sight paradoxical:

- (a) On the one hand, we find the production of commodities bearing a value: that is to say the labour-time necessary for the production of these commodities can *and* must make itself recognised socially through the intermediary of the market. Once the value of these commodities is defined one can show, following Marx, that the process of formation of value implies that it is not just any labour that is recognised in this way: it is above all wage-labour, wage-earners being the counterpart, the reverse of the social relation that is capital (self-valouring value which poses as the subject of production).

But if there are to be wage-labourers, it is necessary for the worker to enter commodity exchange as a free subject. If he or she is to be a free subject, and is to be renewed as such, it is necessary that he or she should have a commodity to sell, and that is the condition for the reproduction of capitalism. At first sight it matters little to the capitalist what process brings an individual, who is not preordained to do so, to present him or herself as a partner in exchange: it is enough that this individual should actually be there, to sell the capitalist what he needs.

What the capitalist needs (the specific commodity that only has use-value for the capitalist) cannot be called 'labour'; in fact, if capital implies the wage-earner, the existence of the wage-earner, in turn,

implies that the direct producer has been dispossessed of the socially recognised means of production. There cannot therefore be any 'labour' before the producer and the means of production come together. Since the capitalist's partner in exchange encounters the capitalist within circulation, prior to production, he or she can only sell the capitalist a '*potentiality*', a labour 'power': it is up to the capitalist to make it a reality.

- (b) On the other hand, alongside the production of value, we find all the social relations that determine that the capitalist actually finds before him the 'bearers of labour-power' that he needs. In contrast to what the viewpoint of the individual capitalist might lead one to suppose, there is nothing spontaneous about this confrontation of the exchangers with one another. Two types of condition have to be satisfied:

—The reproduction of the potential force of production that is the wage-labourer requires a consumption. Since the wage-labourer is dispossessed of the socially recognised means of production, it is necessary that he or she should either be able to find his or her means of consumption outside the framework of this production (family gardens, domestic labour, non-commodity education and health system etc) or should be able to consume some of the commodities produced within the capitalist framework (which assumes that the wage-earner has access to the universal equivalent). There is no process of surplus-value extraction whatever during the labour associated with this consumption (6). Labour within the family unit does not produce value. The consumption carried out by the workers is a consumption of pure use-values, those which are assigned to them by the social norms. This consumption is not a production of new values, nor even conservation of value. It is an unproductive consumption (7). But this unproductive consumption is nevertheless the mark of capital. It is only possible if the worker has previously inserted him or herself into the capitalist production process.

But the bearer of labour-power, once his or her consumption is completed, is still not going to present him or herself spontaneously to the capitalist, in the conditions required by the latter. Certainly, the fact that the capitalists as a whole command the commodity means of consumption is an element of the balance of forces that favours them; but it has never been enough. In fact, wage-labour implies that the wage-worker must be a social subject who is partially autonomous: at the moment of exchange he or she must be free; the capitalists as a whole must ensure that this autonomy is limited in such a way that, despite him or herself, the wage-worker will duly come and re-engage under conditions that they fix (not only conditions of the wage, but also under concrete conditions of labour) and within the framework of the division of labour that they try to impose.

But the capitalists cannot control the reproduction of the bearer of labour-power and of the conditions of wage-exchange from within the field of value. Nor can they ensure from within this field that the potential workers should be adequate to the requirements of the labour process, except at the risk of a disorganisation of production during the whole time that any inadequacy might last (8).

It is these two types of condition that underlie the externality of the reproduction of the labourer in relation to the production of commodities. (In order to simplify we call the bearer of labour-power who actually comes to be inserted in the wage-exchange the 'labourer'; strictly speaking this is somewhat inaccurate: this bearer of the 'potential' to work only really becomes the labourer within the process of production, the potential disappearing, immediately it is recognised, to give way to reality). Outside commodity production we thus find:

—labour processes, in the general sense of the term: domestic labour, teaching labour, health care labour, administrative labour (social security, institutions connected with teaching etc). Social relations are reproduced within these processes. (The term 'social relations' is used here in a general sense, and does not only describe the social relations of production).

— control processes, whether this control is effected through overt violence (police, army), through masked violence (administrative control), or through indirect procedures of imposition of norms (through the family, teaching, health)(cf. Foucault 1976, esp. pp.152f). These control processes are also modes of reproduction of social relations.

—other 'activities' (for want of a better general term), reducible to neither of the above, in which another set of social relations is reproduced: affective, sexual, authority relations; while these relations do not have a homogeneous theoretical status, they are certainly social relations: the individual is not able to choose whether or not to enter them, but in entering them he or she reproduces them (9).

'Labour-power' cannot be produced as a capitalist commodity. Its production and its reproduction cannot be the occasion either for the valorisation of capital or for the production of value (10).

There is thus a real 'externality' of the reproduction of labour-power with respect to the process of production of commodities. This externality is situated at two levels:

—The 'bearers of labour-power' (potential labourers) are not produced within the framework of commodity production.

—Their transition from the condition of 'potential seller' to that of 'real seller' is not determined merely by the production-circulation of commodities.

B The Basis of State Intervention

It is the externality of the production-reproduction of labour-power that is the basis of state intervention. The state intervenes

—*firstly* so as to 'produce' this specific commodity: setting it to work, forcing its insertion into commodity relations.

—*then*, in the conditions of sale; the latter can only take place for a "limited time, or for a given task". This is one of the contradictions of bourgeois nations: the development of capitalist relations of production depends on liberation from serfdom and from individual slavery, and the constitution of an individually free labourer; but collectively, the collective worker appears as a collective slave, not of the capitalists, but of capital. The state is at the heart of this contra-

diction: it must maintain the mass of wage-workers within a set of norms, certain of which are codified by the law, others not (cf. Pashukanis, 1951, for the analysis of the norms. cf. Foucault, 1967, for the analysis of the origins of notions of 'extra-norms'), without at the same time directly regulating their reproduction as individuals.

—*finally*, the state must constantly intervene in the social relation once it is established in order to ensure the historical conditions for its reproduction.

This ensemble is often described by the term economy policy: but this economic policy is not as coherent and autonomous as its description might lead one to believe. It is essentially a case of managing the conjuncture, of a day-to-day response to the modifications in the power relations between capital and the collective labourer (de Brunhoff, 1976 pp.4 ff).

The place assigned to the state in this social relation is dual and contradictory:

- (1) It is on the one hand a matter of *reducing*, or *minimising* the cost of reproducing the social relation, which takes the form of the reproduction of labour-power, as much at the level of each particular capitalist as for the mass of capitalists. In fact, in a society in which all production is commodity production, in which therefore all expenditure is a process of value creation, the reproduction of labour-power is the only true expense for the mass of capitalists. In other words, it is the only expense which is a non-production of value, i.e. the only 'real' expense.
- (2) It is on the other hand a matter of reproducing not labour-power, but the *conditions of existence* of labour-power. The fundamental role of the bourgeois state is above all to "guarantee the existence of the class of wage labourers as the object of exploitation. . . Capital itself. . . is not able to produce these foundations" (Altvater, 1973, p.99).

The dual aspect of the reproduction of labour-power does not always appear clearly, to the extent that what is usually studied is the reproduction of the labourers. In other terms, one takes the wage-relation as given, as already constituted once and for all. However the facts contradict this simplistic view. The existence of the wage-relation demands overt violence every time such violence is thought necessary (11).

Nevertheless this overt and explicit violence, which is unlimited but sporadic, is itself the condition for another continuous violence, latent, day-to-day and limited. But we are dealing with different sorts of violence: the object of the first is to underpin or re-establish a social order which is endangered; the object of the second is to negotiate the rate of exploitation. This difference in nature is often translated at the institutional level into a certain specialisation of different bodies, the sporadic violence of the army being directed (among other things) at the subordination *at all costs* of the working class, to confine it within wage-labour; while the daily violence of the police is situated, alongside other institutions, within the framework of the legal discussion of wages and of conditions of work (12).

From this it follows that, like labour-power, the state is 'external' to the process of production of commodities. But this externality has a different status in each case, except for one point: the externality of the state enables it, like labour-power, to be a 'realiser' of value. On the other

points, the externality of the state is dependent on that of labour-power, to the extent that it is only 'from the outside' that the state can assert, but also guarantee, the 'freedom' that is the reverse of the worker's dependence.

This does not exclude the state from participating directly in the process of production as well: in the construction of 'industrial infrastructures', the control of credit, levying of customs duties, etc. It is indeed the representative of the mass of national capitalists, charged with ensuring that their collective interest prevails in the face of their divergent individual interests. But, as something 'internal' to the process of production, it is not necessarily different from those collective capitalist organisations which, generally, coexist with it or have even preceded it (chamber of commerce, trade associations etc.).

The expression 'State (Monopoly) Capitalism' characterises a 'stage' of capitalism by these interventions of the state in the distribution of profit among capitalists, in the devalorisation of capital, etc. In this sense, it aims to specify both this 'stage' and the nature of the state by something which is neither essential nor specific. However, what is essential — the redirection of the wage-relation and its maintenance) interferes with what appear to be the properly 'economic' tasks of the state, situated within the field of value, because they cannot be carried out except by virtue of an imposition on surplus-value.

This maintenance of the existence of the wage-relation is translated into a whole series of expenditures that we will describe as the costs of existence of capitalist production. These expenditures, far from being the faux-frais of production, are literally essential to it. They are the social cost of capital. Each particular capitalist, as much as the mass of capitalists, aims to limit the extent of this cost, while recognising its social and political importance. *The management of these expenditures is thus external to capitalist logic* at the same time as being the *condition* of its existence.

So it is the state that has to take on the role of sharing out the costs of maintaining the particular social relation, confused with the costs of managing society; the state which is the institution that must manage the interests of the dominant class as the interest of the whole of the society it dominates. But the state has no relevant criteria for calculating any kind of an 'optimum' in the distribution of costs or in the choice of the area in which the means of finance should be levied. It is up to the administration (in the broad sense) to adjudicate the conflicts between the different fractions of the bourgeoisie (the judicial apparatus only intervenes in the details, overall decisions always being taken at the political level), and the changes in the alliances between bourgeois strata are the source of modifications in the circulation of surplus-value.

It is only once the maintenance of the conditions of existence of the wage-relation is assured that one can take into account the management of this relation. It is then time to 'manage' the reproduction of the labourers as a *fraction of capital* (variable capital), or as participants in the collective labourer. This management of the collective labourer is not done primarily through violence. Since the latter is omnipresent, it is a question:

—on the one hand, of making the social order accepted.

—on the other hand, of ensuring that these workers are adequate to capitalist needs.

PART TWO: THE STATE AND THE 'MANAGEMENT' OF THE COLLECTIVE LABOURER

In reproducing the wage-relation, the state recreates not only the primary condition of existence of the bourgeoisie, but also, through its action on the modes of distribution of the mass of wages, on the conditions of reproduction of the wage-workers, it challenges the unity of the 'collective labourer' that is formed in the production of value.

A. *The Collective Labourer* (13)

Most analyses of the collective 'labourer' start from the labour process and, more particularly, from the division of productive labour (cf. in particular Nagels 1974; Berthoud 1974; Gouverneur 1975): the individual worker does not produce a commodity only, while the production of commodities requires not only workers acting directly on the matter transformed, but equally workers at the level of planning, the preparation of tasks, etc. The collective labourer is thus first of all connected with the division of labour, then with machinery to the extent to which it is the latter that separates 'manual labour' and 'intellectual labour' (14) (and the analysis of the collective labourer as a result makes it possible to reorientate the debate on the definition of productive labour, the analysis thus no longer being conducted at the level of the labour process alone, but of the immediate process of production, so that it becomes possible to state the bases of an 'objective solidarity' between technicians, staff, etc. and operatives all defined as productive).

Without denying the interest of such a direction of research, it seems to us that the fact of defining the collective labourer at the level of the immediate process of production alone particularly limits the scope of the concept and does not make it possible to put forward the basis of a theory of education, of wage differentials, of qualifications, etc. But before going further it must be noted at once that the 'collective' character of the labourer who produces a commodity appears as the product of the *specifically capitalist* (immediate) process of production (real subsumption). However the latter is the (contradictory) unity of the labour process and the valorisation process.

The collective labourer (in particular in Nagel's work) is generally only defined at the level of the labour process. However in the capitalist production process, there is not firstly a labour process producing use-values, in which the collective labourer appears (co-operation in the division of labour) and *subsequently* a valorisation of capital on the basis of the product becoming a commodity. In fact the workers who co-operate are already, from the moment the collective character of labour is established, "incorporated into capital" (15). It is as a fraction of a value valorising itself that they participate in the production of the commodity. It is not the case that labourers produce collectively according to technical deter-

minations subsequently followed by the appropriation of the product by the capitalist, because it is basically the (real) subordination to capital *in* the production process and (from capital's point of view) the reduction of the mass of labourers producing a commodity to the status of variable capital, that make possible the existence of the productive force of the collective labourer (a force of which the latter is, moreover, dispossessed).

On this basis one can therefore define an initial structure of the collective labourer at the level of the immediate production process. This structure (and this is the reason for its inadequacy) rests on the double criterion of concrete labour and of valorisation, without introducing the articulation of production and circulation, in which the abstraction of labour is realised; and it is above all the fact of introducing valorisation before circulation which is at the root of this inadequacy. (16). This structure can be called the 'technical' structure to the extent that it does in fact concern the cohesion-division of the concrete labours co-operating in the production of a product. But this product is a commodity; the coherence and division that produce this initial structure have not emerged from just any technical rationality, but from the requirements of valorisation (17). Even at the level of the definition of the individual labours which (cohesive and divided) form the collective labourer (which only exists because it is subordinated to a single capital), this 'technical' structure of the collective labourer can only be defined in its relation to capital. This initial structure of the collective labourer is that of the concrete (cohesive and divided) labours that it brings about (and not that of the *labourers* who form it) and, at the same time, that it defines. The recognition of the use-value of the individual labour power only takes place within this collective labourer, that is to say to the extent of their being adequate to the concrete tasks. The collective labourer produces a determinate use-value (value does not appear at this level). But the characteristics of this use-value, as of the labour process itself, are determined by the requirements of valorisation (18). This explains why, even at this level of the collective labourer, the concrete labours of command and control appear together with a rhythm of labour that is the result of a compromise between the requirements of valorisation and workers' resistance.

The realisation of value, that is to say the social recognition of the quantum of labour incorporated in the commodities, is carried out through exchange. But exchange itself rests on a relation of equivalence, and this relation of equivalence rests on the real abstraction of the labours that co-operate in the production of the commodity (19). The definition of value as a determinate quantity assumes that all the concrete qualities of the labour expended are not taken into account.

The value of a commodity expended is not defined at the level of a single production process (nor one carried out under the domination of a specified fraction of capital).

At the level of the totality of production processes of a given product, a collection of technical norms of production are defined, which are themselves the product of the history of past techniques and of the competition between fractions of capital valorising themselves by means of this determinate production. But these technical norms do not directly determine

the socially necessary labour-time, it is necessary to be able to think of the product as a commodity; and to think of a commodity (and of its value) one must simultaneously think of the totality of commodities.

At the level of the totality of production processes leading to the production of different products that are exchanged for one another, the problem of equivalence appears, which in turn raises that of value. The heterogeneity of the commodities exchanged is at the root of the *social* and *real* procedure of abstraction of labour. It is not at the level of concrete labour that a quantity of abstract undifferentiated labour emerges. However homogeneous production norms may be, concrete labour in weaving cannot but be differentiated from that which takes place in metal-working: the quantity of abstract labour necessarily emerges in circulation and makes the concrete labour disappear (on all these points cf. Tortajada 1974).

Already in the simple forms of value (under the aspect of the relative form), exchange assumes that the values of the commodities exchanged (20 yards of linen and a coat, to take Marx's example) are two fractions of a *social* expenditure of labour, and the exchange is the social procedure through which the quantity of socially necessary abstract labour is recognised. It is not a matter of a producer exchanging a 'good' with a constituted value against another 'good' with the same characteristic, since the abstraction of labour is the product of exchange at the same time as its condition.

If one moves on to the general form of value (with multiple simultaneous relations of equivalence), all the commodities exchanged participate in the definition of the unity of abstract labour at the same time as in that of the quantity incorporated in each good. It follows that what first appears is the "labour-power of society" (20), and individual labour-powers are only realised (only become socially real) in appearing as part of this global labour-power, and thus in negating their own concrete characteristics.

The totality of workers producing *value* under capitalism therefore comprise a single collective labour, that is to say the value of each commodity cannot be thought of as the product of an autonomous group of workers. The value of a commodity can only be thought of as a portion of the value created globally by the totality of workers confronting capital.

In circulation, the abstraction of *labours* therefore creates the undifferentiated character of the *labourers* (21). The sanction which is provided by the determination of the socially necessary labour-time is not the recognition of the collective labourer who appeared at the level of concrete labour; on the contrary, this determination is made on the basis of a global mass of abstract labour-time and of a confrontation between all the commodities seeking to achieve social validation (recognition as values).

The concrete characteristics of the labour process disappear in circulation. The first result of this is "the fetish character of the commodity". The second result is the social negation of the specific use-value of each labour-power (a use-value which is nevertheless the basis of the contractual relation between capitalist and labourer). The third is that the commodity is constituted as capital (self-valorising value) in constituting the collective labourer as not-capital, which makes possible the reproduction of the

process of production, since this itself depends on the labourer being not-capital (22). The commodity is not a 'thing', a 'product', or even an 'exchange-value': it is at the heart of the reproduction of social relations.

The opposition between capital and labour is not the product of a contractual relation (the immediate form of wage-labour) or of the (more or less hierarchical) modalities of the labour process, even though the opposition is expressed in these places. The basis of this opposition is the mechanism that makes *each* labourer the means (object) of the reproduction of the *whole* of capital while excluding him or her from capital.

The production-circulation of value thus creates a unity of the collective labourer which, certainly, is the basis of the 'objective' unity of the proletariat, but which is not a product of the revolutionary practice of the proletariat (23). The 'management' of the collective labourer describes the collection of practices by which *this unity* of the mass of wage-labourers *is broken* at the same time as the labourers are reproduced as a sum of individuals offering the characteristics required by the production process. This 'management' is essentially conducted through the wage, in its contradictory nature:

—from the point of view of the wage-earner, it reproduces the worker as an individual. The process of reproduction of the wage-workers can be individual or collective and, in the latter case, takes place through the state.

—from the point of view of the individual capitalist, the wage is the means of reproducing 'his' collective labourer or, more exactly, the fraction of the collective labourer that enters into a relation with his fraction of capital. The management of the mass of wages is thus, by the diversification of grades and the opposition it introduces between categories of wage-earners, the means of isolating the workers and introducing competition amongst them.

—finally, from the point of view of the collectivity of capitalists, the wage is one of the means of reproducing a working class subordinated to capital.

B. Wages

The action of the state in relation to wages is marked by the need to reconcile the different objectives stated above, while guaranteeing the 'confrontation' of 'dead labour' and 'living labour' (specified according to age, qualification) that this requires.

Moreover, state policies in relation to wages are not homogeneous, they are adapted to the wage form itself and so are inscribed in a typology of wages which it is worth spelling out. (The argument of this section derives from Lautier and Tortajada 1976).

1. Direct wage and indirect wage

This distinction rests on an empirical approach, and is, moreover, confused. In fact by direct wage is meant the price that is appropriate to the labour contract. It is thus the price of the reproduction of the subordination of the individual worker to the capitalist. It expresses the cost to the individual capitalist of setting labour-power to work, but it is not

the price of the commodities brought by the worker for his or her reproduction, since contributions, taxes, etc. are deducted.

The indirect wage is not itself a price. In fact it combines monetary benefits (social security, allowances, etc) and the use of collective facilities (a use which is not matched to price).

If the notion of the direct wage has a certain degree of relevance, that of the indirect wage does not, since it is not defined in the same conceptual field as the former.

2. Private wage and social wage

While the idea of the direct wage expresses the relation of constraint and subordination that characterises the wage, this distinction underpins its aspect of being the means of reproduction of the labourer. The private wage is the price of the quantity of exchange value over which the wage-earner has effective control for his or her 'private' reproduction (essentially within the framework of the family). It is thus exchanged by the wage-earner him or herself for the commodities, the latter being consumed, but also transformed, in a place external to the capitalist production process, but immediately controlled by the wage-earner him or herself.

The 'social' wage is the price of the mass of commodities consumed collectively by the labourers, in places (whether institutionalised or not: school, health service, collective facilities, etc.) equally external to the capitalist production process, in which the socialised reproduction of labour power is effected.

This distinction therefore expresses the situation of the worker in the course of reproduction (as such the 'indirect' forms of the wage such as unemployment benefit, family allowances, etc, are nevertheless 'private' forms of the wage). But it also expresses the modalities of the attempt by capital, as a whole, to 'manage' this reproduction.

3. Individual wage and collective wage

The capitalist does not 'manage' the wages of an isolated individual. For him the wage is an outlay. The individual wage (the amount of money necessarily laid out to set the labour power of an individual to work, under the form of 'direct wage', taxes, contributions, etc.) is only one element of the collective wage, both at the level of quantity and at that of the structure of the collective wage.

As a quantity, the collective wage expresses the constraints imposed on the capitalist by valorisation. In its structure, it expresses the reproduction of the hierarchical structure of the collective labourer, the latter being guided not only by political requirements, but also by the simultaneous need to reproduce its technical structure.

4. Variable capital

Variable capital, for the individual capitalist, is a fraction of the capital advanced, specified in its employment (24).

As a fraction of capital, variable capital (which, when spent, is laid out in the form of the collective wage) is certainly a value (in the process of valorising itself). For the individual capitalist, that is from the point of

view of the formation of value (25), variable capital is value being exchanged against labour-power, just as the commodities consumed by the workers are values being exchanged against the wage. But this does not permit one to postulate that labour-power has a value, because it is not produced under capitalist conditions. To speak of the value (and not of the exchange-value) of labour-power is in fact to abstract from the externality of the reproduction of labour-power and to see in the wage only the price of the commodities consumed, the intermediary in the exchange of one value (capital) against another capital (these commodities) and nothing else (26).

If variable capital is the part of capital that 'varies', it cannot be assimilated to the totality of the outlays agreed to by a particular capitalist to reproduce 'his' labour-power'. A part of the variable capital is used in a 'private' manner by the labourer to reproduce him or herself, another is 'socialised' (whether laid out directly by the capitalist – employers' expenses connected with the payment of wages, etc – or whether it passes through the wage-earner who pays contributions and taxes him or herself). But a part of the socialised reproduction of labour-power is financed on the basis of taxes or contributions not linked to the wage. For the individual capitalist it is not then a matter of variable capital, but of 'faux-frais' (analogous to the faux-frais imposed by the requirements of the reproduction of the universal equivalent: they are necessary to the reproduction of capital as a whole, but not of particular fractions of capital).

Nevertheless, if one considers the capitalists as a whole, these 'faux-frais' are a necessary expense (levied on capital) to set the collective labourer in motion (27). The socialisation of capital implies the socialisation of the wage-relation and also the duplication of the concept of variable capital: for the individual capitalist only the 'collective wage' (direct wages and linked charges) is variable capital; for capital in a given social space (defined for the moment as the socio-political space in which the socialised reproduction of labour-power is effected), variable capital is formed by the totality of the outlays undertaken to set in motion collective labour-power, which is doubly structured (technically and hierarchically). From this point of view, but only from this point of view, variable capital finances both expenses which are at one and the same time expenses for the 'mobilisation of labour-power' and for the reproduction of the labourers (like expenditure on education), and also expenses which only have the former aspect (such as expenditure on the police etc.).

5. Relative surplus-value

The unity of the capitalists in the 'management' of the reproduction of the workers and in that of the mobilising and structuring of their labour-power, is not only expressed in the fact that they have to finance and 'manage' the processes of the socialised reproduction of the workers and of the mobilisation of their labour-power. In fact, the mass of capitalists are unified in the matter of the 'management' of the production of relative surplus-value.

Before analysing the movement of relative surplus-value it is worth making it clear that, while labour-power does not have a value, surplus-value is well defined within the field of values. It is the difference between two homogeneous quantities: on the one hand, the value produced at the social level by the collective labourer; on the other hand, the quantity of value that leaves capitalist circulation, that is realised in becoming non-value, unproductive consumption (29).

Relative surplus-value is not sought for itself; what a capitalist in Department II seeks is to increase his share of surplus-value. He increases the 'productivity' of the labourer, that is the possibility of reducing labour-time below that socially necessary, of producing extra surplus-value, or, more exactly, a surplus profit which appears at the level of the individual capitalist.

But if, as a result of the generalisation of this movement, the global value of consumption goods is reduced, relative surplus-value will not be realised by the capitalist who has achieved the increases in productivity, but by the mass of capitalists who buy labour-power (to the extent, although this is by no means a mechanical phenomenon, that the wage is reduced when the value of consumption goods falls) (30).

What distinguishes relative surplus-value from 'extra surplus-value' or from 'absolute surplus-value', is essentially the *location* of the circulation in which it is realised (31).

The 'management' of the cost of reproduction and mobilisation of labour-power thus implies the united control by all the capitalists of the price of consumption goods, whether the latter are produced in specifically capitalist conditions (industry) or not (agriculture, certain 'services').

What is called 'management of the reproduction of labour-power', with respect to the management of its cost, implies the control of the whole of the production of Department II and implies consideration of the contradictions between the interests of capitalists of this department and the interest of the capitalists as a whole.

C. *Socialised management and state management of the reproduction of labour-power.*

The need for socialised management of labour-power rests on a dual foundation:

1. First on the triple meaning of the wage as a price. For the workers, it is the means of their reproduction as a species (which implies the reproduction of one generation after another). For the individual capitalist, it is the means of mobilising labour-power in relation to the requirements of the structure of 'his' collective labourer. For capitalists as a whole, it is the means of reproducing and mobilising a mass of labourers defined socio-politically and technically. The dislocations between these three meanings impose socialised management, for example: — the education system must respond not to the immediate needs of this or that capitalist, but to the needs of capital as a whole.

The individual capitalist, in fact, will not finance the training of free labourers if he is not assured that the latter will remain 'his' employees (32) while the existence of an education system is a need of capitalists

in general (to develop training appropriate to the process of production, but also a 'general' training, which is the ideological condition for the reproduction of the 'mobilisation' of labour-power and of the insertion of the labourers into social relations). The education system is equally required by the workers who come into conflict with the collective capitalist not over the principle of generalised education (33) but over the content and extent of education.

However the capitalists do not spontaneously demand the reproduction of those 'workers' who no longer have anything to sell: invalids, the retired, etc. It is only political conflict with the workers that establishes the modalities of this reproduction.

—In the case of the unemployed, the objective of the reproduction of the workers comes into direct conflict with that of the reproduction of the 'mobilisation' of labour-power.

While the maintenance of the unemployed depends largely on the mechanisms of family solidarity, individual capitalists enter into direct conflict with the general interest of the capitalists in the determination of the payments made to the unemployed, not only because of such payment itself, but also because of the fact that 'excessive benefits' have implications for the level of wages.

But the reduction of unemployment benefits, which strengthens the position of the individual capitalist, is only possible if the global power relation between capital and labour improves in favour of the former.

—Finally, capital 'manages' the production of relative surplus-value. In this area the labourers are concerned not with exchange-value but with the use-value of the consumption goods acquired by means of the wage.

Once the latter has been negotiated, it becomes a question of controlling prices, and beyond that, the development of productivity in Department II.

The growing part played by the 'socialised' wage in relation to the 'negotiated' wage not only has the effect of increasing the role of the state in wage management, but also of reducing, of transforming, the manner of wage negotiations with workers' organisations. The latter, in this respect, find their importance at the workplace reduced.

2. The state is thus charged with creating a unity out of three aspects of the collective labourer:

—The collective labourer structured in terms of concrete labours, as the latter are defined on the basis of the labour process. It must, despite the contradictions between individual capitalists, ensure that specific labour-powers are effectively sold with the qualifications necessary for the reproduction of the production process.

— The collective labourer structured hierarcho-politically, that is to say divided

—The collective labourer structured hierarcho-politically, that is to say divided according to three demarcations:

*demarcation in terms of wage-level

*demarcation in terms of the hierarchy of authority in the strict sense

*demarcation into "true and false wage-earners" (cf. Magaud 1974),

or, more exactly, between workers covered by collective agreements that guarantee a certain amount of employment and contractual negotiations over security, etc, and the others (cf. Aumeeruddy 1977).

But the true cement of the unity of the collective labourer remains the production of value, which at the same time assigns a place to workers whose function is the realisation of this value, or even the reproduction of the labourers. But any recognition of unity on this basis can only be an immediate recognition both of the unity and of the revolutionary character of the proletariat.

The role of the state appears as a succession of discrete, fragmented, interventions precisely because it cannot explicitly base its practices on what really determines them. The imperative need to divide the working class demands that it 'manage' the latter in fractions, that it negotiate scattered wage 'privileges', as to the duration of labour, the age of retirement and the level of pension, unemployment insurance, forms of training; all in a differentiated way. Certainly, the state is the place in which class conflicts are partially resolved, but this is only possible because these conflicts are expressed in a displaced, indirect way. And this indirectness is particularly expressed in the fact that the proletariat never appears as such at the level of the state, but only appears as an aggregate of fragmented categories. This means that the state, properly speaking, while it manages the fragmentation of the collective labourer, does not directly 'manage' the collective labourer as such.

CONCLUSION

The development of the debate over labour-power is not of purely academic interest. It is linked to problems posed at the level of political practice, including the problem of domestic labour. But this debate is equally linked with the question of the strategy for a break with capitalism. Although it is rarely explicitly posed as such, the question of the abolition of wage-labour remains at the heart of the definition of socialism.

What we have tried to show is that this question is not independent of another, which is equally central in the definition of a political strategy, the question of the state. The state under capitalism cannot be defined except by reference to the wage-relation.

The recent years of crisis have brought back to the fore the fact that 'economic policy' is above all the management by the state of the divisions in and the cost of reproduction of the collective labourer. Certainly this was a bit blurred by the three post-war decades, but that is nothing new: immediately after the armistice of November 1918, the German employers and unions established a system of collective agreements ratified by the state, and it was Roosevelt, in 1935, who got the Wagner Act passed. However, this 'management' itself rests on the status of labour-power under capitalism, forced as it is to reproduce itself outside the process of commodity production yet without being able to do so adequately for the needs of capital.

However, even if the crisis shows that the state is partially unable to take over this management completely, it is more than risky to conclude from this that we are witnessing a 'decomposition', if not a 'withering way' of capital's state that would make it possible to avoid a revolutionary situation; as the pillar of the reproduction of the wage-relation, the state is always in place, and nothing allows us to assume that the violence that it has always shown will disappear of itself.

NOTES

This article is the result of collective work carried out at the university of Grenoble (France) from 1976 to 1978. Previous drafts have been presented at different meetings (Annual Conference of L'A.C.S.E.S., Nice, September, 1976, Annual Conference of the C.S.E., Bradford, July, 1977, The Society of Socialist Economists, University of Sussex, February, 1978). Our thanks to all those who have discussed, criticised and encouraged our work, specially to Pierre Eisler (Grenoble), Simon Clarke, Olivier Le Brun and Sol Picciotto (Editorial Board of *Capital and Class*). Responsibility remains ours. Criticisms and comments are welcome at the following address:

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1. Cf., among others: "the state is the instrument of capital's domination over the class of wage-labourers" (Altvater 1973, p.98). "The different forms of the state apparatuses should not hide its *universality as instrument of the power of the dominant class* . . . (Drugman 1973).
2. The reports on the condition of the working class dating from the middle of the nineteenth century insist on this fact (the life expectancy of workers had fallen to 21 years). The best known in France is the 'Villermé Report' of 1840 (*Tableau de l'Etat Physique et Moral des Ouvriers* . . ., republished by 10/18).
3. cf. on this point, despite some theoretical confusions about the concept of 'labour-power': Comité d'Information Sahel 1975; Meillasoux 1975.
4. This is what Marx develops, although he does not use the word "labour-power", as early as 1857 in the *Grundrisse*, p.267:
 "The use-value which the worker has to offer to the capitalist, and he cannot offer anything else, is not materialised in a product, does not exist apart from him at all, thus exists not really, but only in potentiality, as his capacity. It becomes a reality only when it has been solicited by capital, is set in motion. . ."
 (N.B. Nicolaus's translation has been slightly modified to make it correspond to Dangeville's French translation).
5. The term 'use-value' is used here in the usual sense: something that has a certain usefulness, and not as the criterion for distinguishing between Departments I and II in the framework of the reproduction schemes, as Benetti 1977 suggests.

- 6 Contrary to what is the underpinning of a certain number of feminist publications. For a formalisation see Harrison 1973. For the critique of this position see Lautier 1974, pp.76 et seq.
- 7 Value only becomes socially 'real' in negating itself as value, in leaving the circulation of value, just as capital only becomes capital in the face of its opposite. The realisation of value thus pre-supposes this unproductive consumption, which can only be carried out outside production, either in the consumption of the wage-earners, or in that of the capitalists, or in a destruction organised by the state.
- 8 This 'risk' was nevertheless effectively taken for over a century in France, up to the Astier law (1919); however, during this period, the reproduction of the collective labourer rested to a large extent on the inflow of workers formed within the artisanat.
- 9 We have found it useful to distinguish among the totality of social relations between those that are the result of the process of commodity production and those that are set outside the field of value. It is clear that social relations at school, in the family, etc., do not escape the capitalist mode of production. The distinction is nevertheless necessary so as not to fall into the reduction of social reality to the production of commodities and social relations to the social relations of production alone.
- 10 Lautier and Tortajada 1977, pp.265 et seq. As Marx suggests when he assumes a society in which capital has taken possession of all production: "Therefore only the capitalist is the producer of commodities (the sole commodity excepted being labour-power)." (*TSV*, I, p.158) At the same time the "humanist" attacks on the Marxist theory, that claim that the validity of the theory of surplus-value depends on the production of human beings according to the rules of capitalist rationality are invalidated (Schumpeter 1967, p.650 — "a special objection", said he! Schumpeter 1943, pp.27-8). By contrast, those who extend the rules of capitalist rationality to human beings are in fact certain contemporary neo-classical economists such as Becker 1964, Friedman 1962.
- 11 The litany of massacres perpetrated by the bourgeoisie against 'its' national working class, whether killing hundreds of thousands of people (Indonesia) or in using napalm bombs (Bolivia), to say nothing of Argentina, Chile, etc., may appear exotic. However, without going back to the Paris Commune, it is as well to remember that Nazism as well as fascism cannot be explained by the tendential fall in the rate of profit alone.
- 12 Our aim is not to analyse all the 'functions' of the army and of the police, notably in crisis periods.
- 13 This section derives from an earlier work of B. Lautier 1976, pp.13-19.
- 14 It is worth noting, in most of these analyses, a deformation of the thought of Marx, because his "real subsumption of labour under capital" is reduced to machinery. cf.:
- "With the development of the real subsumption of labour under capital, or the specifically capitalist mode of production, the real lever of the overall labour process is increasingly not the individual*

worker. Instead, *labour-power socially combined* and the various competing labour-processes which together form the entire production machine participate in very different ways in the immediate process of making commodities, or more accurately in this context, creating the product. Some work better with their hands, others with their heads, one as Manager, engineer, technologist, etc. the other as overseer, the third as manual labourer or even drudge" (*Capital I*, pp.1039-40).

- 15 "Being independent of each other, the workers are isolated. They enter into relations with the capitalist, but not with each other. Their co-operation only begins with the labour process, but by then they have ceased to belong to themselves. On entering the labour process they are incorporated into capital. As co-operators, as members of a working organism, they form a particular mode of existence of capital. Hence the productive power developed by the worker socially ("*travailleur collectif*" in French) is the productive power of capital. (*Capital I*, p.451)
- 16 In the same way, introducing valorisation before circulation (whether in studies conducted in terms of 'branches', 'industries' or 'sectors'), makes it impossible to give any theoretical status to the 'quest for the maximum rate of profit', but rather to make it an exogenous datum, a 'psychological disposition of the entrepreneur'.
- 17 Analyses of this question have become more widespread since the start of the 1970s, tending to show the impossibility of analysing concrete labour (and, in particular, the productivity of labour) without reference to the problem of valorisation and to the real domination of capital over labour in the production process. See in particular Gorz et al. 1973, (especially Gorz's article "technique, technicians et luttes de classe", Coriat 1976.
- 18 "The process of production is the *immediate* unity of labour process and valorisation process, just as its immediate result, the commodity, is the *immediate* unity of use-value and exchange-value. But the labour process is only the means whereby the valorisation process is essentially the *production of surplus-value, i.e. the objectification of unpaid labour*" (*Capital I*, p.991)
- 19 "Equality in the full sense between different kinds of labour can be arrived at only if we abstract from their real inequality, if we reduce them to the characteristic they have in common, that of being expenditure of human labour-power, of human labour in the abstract. *And it is only the exchange of products which performs this reduction by confronting products of different labours on an equal basis*" (*Capital I*, p.166)
(N.B. Ben Fowkes' translation of *Capital* has been slightly modified to make it compatible with Joseph Roy's French translation – revised by Marx –.)
- 20 ". . . the labour that forms the substance of value is equal human labour, the expenditure of identical human labour-power. *The total labour-power of society, which is manifested in the values of the world of commodities counts here as one homogeneous mass of*

human labour-power, although composed of innumerable individual units of labour-power. Each of these units is the same as any other, to the extent that it has the character of a socially average unit of labour and acts as such. . . ." (*Capital I*, p.129, our emphasis).

The concept of "abstract labour" has been very little discussed in the Marxist literature. Although Rubin posed in explicitly in 1928 it is only with the work of Napoleoni, Colletti and, more recently, Arthur and Kay that we have seen a renewal of the 'debate'.

- 21 A lack of differentiation of a completely different character from the movement generally analysed on the tendency of 'deskilling', of generalisation of simple labour, which is situated at the level of concrete labour.
- 22 "The *use-value* which confronts capital as posited exchange-value is *labour*. Capital exchanges itself, or exists in this role, only in connection with *not-capital*, the negation of capital, without which it is not capital; the real *not-capital* is labour" (*Grundrisse*, p.274)
- 23 Here we cannot accept the conclusion of the Brighton comrades: "*The revolutionary task of the working class is the reconstruction of the collective worker with the objective of Socialist accumulation*". (Brighton Labour Process Group, 1976, pp.91-2)
- 24 "The means of production on the one hand, labour-power on the other, are merely the different forms of existence which the value of the original capital assumed when it lost its monetary form and was transformed in the various factors of the labour process. (. . .) On the other hand, that part of capital which is turned into labour-power does undergo an alteration of value in the process of production. It both reproduces the equivalent of its own value and produces an excess, a surplus-value, which may itself vary, and be more or less according to circumstances. This part of capital is continually being transformed from a constant into a variable magnitude. I therefore call it the variable part of capital, or more briefly, variable capital." (*Capital I*, p.317)
- 25 cf. Same reference: "The same elements which from the point of view of the labour process, can be distinguished respectively as the objective and subjective factors, as means of production and labour-power, can be distinguished, from the point of view of the valorisation process, as constant and variable capital."
- 26 And it seems to us that Marx does this especially in *Capital I* pp.273ff.
- 27 Not in the sense of the sum of the workers co-operating in the production of *a* commodity but co-operating in the production of *its* value, that is to say participating in the process of production of *all* commodities.
- 28 It seems that Brunhoff calls capital from the point of view of the capitalist the "day-to-day value" of labour-power, and variable capital from the point of view of capital-in-general the "reproduction value". But then, if variable capital really is initially value, labour-power is not and does not have to 'validate' its 'value' socially, as all other commodities have to. Thus "the problem of the relation between the day-to-day value and the reproduction value of labour-power is presented

- anew, not at the level of principles (of the reproduction value being socially validated), but at the level of the arrangement of its financing.”
- 29 For obvious logical reasons, it does not seem to us that it is possible to define surplus-value as “the difference between the use-value of labour-power and its value” (Cartelier 1976, p.261). To be able to establish a difference, the two elements must initially be homogeneous.
- 30 Marx clearly postulates such a ‘mechanistic’ relation:
 “The value of commodities stand in inverse ratio to the productivity of labour. So, too, does the value of labour-power, since it depends on the values of commodities.” (*Capital* I, p.436)
- 31 cf. K. Marx, *Oeuvres* I, p.1679 where M. Rubel quotes the lines, cut from the final edition of *Capital*: “Surplus-value is absolute, because it implies the absolute lengthening of the working day beyond the labour-time necessary to enable the worker to live. Absolute surplus-value is relative, because it implies a development of the productivity of labour which allows the limitation of the necessary labour-time to a part of the working day. But if we consider the movement of surplus-value, this apparent identity disappears”.
- 32 A situation that cannot generally exist in contemporary capitalism.
- 33 It is therefore only at first sight surprising to state that the laws dealing with education under the capitalism of the Third Republic should have been taken up almost word for word certain of the resolutions of the Paris Commune.

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