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Cover: "Father and Son, Shanghai early morning" taken by Laurie Nisonoff, August 1981

# THE ONE-SIDEDNESS OF CAPITAL

by Michael A. Lebowitz

**ABSTRACT:** Contrary to Rosdolsky (and most analysts), Marx's proposed book on wage-labor was not incorporated into *Capital*. As a result, *Capital* does not develop an adequate totality, an organic whole, in which all presuppositions are results. The production of wage-labor, upon which the reproduction of capital depends, stands outside capital as a presupposition but not a result. With the logical development of the side of wage-labor, an adequate totality (capitalism as a whole) may be constructed which is characterized by "the worker's own need for development" as well as by capital's need for valorization—*i.e.*, by two-sided class struggle.

Implications of the one-sidedness of *Capital* itself are explored—including the inadequacies which have produced proposals to abandon the concept of labor-power as a commodity.

## I. Wage-Labor: The Missing Book<sup>(a)</sup>

Dialectical logic demands that a thing be understood in its *connections* and not by itself. How, then, are we to understand *Capital*? In his original outline, Marx projected a study encompassing six books: capital, landed property, wage-labor, the state, international trade and the world market.<sup>1</sup> How, then, are we to understand *Capital*?

One *might* propose that the original outline was transcended, that its core was to be in the first three books—and, that the subject matter intended for the volumes on landed property and wage-labor was ultimately incorporated in *Capital*. This is the position of students such as Rosdolsky—for whom, then, the question of missing books and, thus, the incompleteness and inadequacy of *Capital* is a matter of little concern:

However, the basic themes of the books on landed property and wage-labor were incorporated in the manuscripts of Volumes I and III of the final work, which took shape between 1864 and 1866. In this way the six books which were originally planned were reduced to one—the *Book on Capital*.<sup>2</sup>

(a) The core of this article appeared in a paper, "Capital as Finite," presented to the Conference on Marx, sponsored by the Department of Philosophy, University of Victoria, B.C. in October 1980.

Certainly, we have Marx's own testimony on the incorporation of themes from "landed property" into *Capital*.<sup>3</sup> But, no such evidence is apparently available when it comes to the projected volume on wage-labor; it is through a process of inference that Rosdolsky, for example, concludes that "all the themes of the earlier book on wage-labor come into the scope of Volume I" of *Capital*.<sup>4</sup> Yet, how strong is the basis for this critical conclusion?

Rosdolsky's basic argument is that the discussion of the wage and its forms, which was not part of the original plan for the book on capital but which constitutes Part VI of Volume I of *Capital*, was the "main part" of the proposed book on wage-labor; sometime not before 1864, he suggests, Marx made the decision to bring this material into *Capital* and to abandon his original outline.<sup>5</sup> However, it is not at all clear that the material which appeared in *Capital*—if it indeed was intended originally for the book on wage-labor—constituted "all the themes" or even "the basic themes" of the projected book on wage-labor. Indeed, Rosdolsky proceeded to contradict his own argument subsequently when considering Marx's assumption in *Capital* that the standard of necessities for workers was to be treated as constant; no, he argued, this did not mean that the "average quantity of necessary means of subsistence" could not grow:

Marx would have first dealt with this case in his intended "special theory of wage-labor" if he had ever reached the point of carrying out this part of his plan.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly, here is a critical flaw in the argument that the basic themes of the book on wage-labor were incorporated in *Capital*. Marx's extended discussions of the manner in which capital generates new needs for workers, the examination of changes in the standard of necessity for workers—all these were deferred *explicitly* by Marx until the book on wage-labor in order to avoid "confounding everything." As late as 1864-5, in his notebooks for the "original chapter six" of *Capital* (a

work apparently not available to Rosdolsky), Marx noted:

Man is distinguished from all other animals by the limitless and flexible nature of his needs ... The level of necessities of life whose total value constitutes the value of labor-power can itself rise or fall. The analysis of these variations, however, belongs not here but in the theory of wages.<sup>8</sup>

None of this, of course, was ever incorporated in *Capital*—the standard of necessity there is assumed as given, given for a “given country, at a given period.” Here, then, is one theme—perhaps even a basic theme—which did *not* come into the scope of *Capital*.

Now, this silence is important to recognize in itself; it reveals that *Capital* cannot be the source for a discussion of Marx’s view of the course of real wages over time. Contrary to Joan Robinson’s interpretation, Marx did not make the “argument that real wages tend to be constant;” it was an *assumption* to be removed in the book on wage-labor which remained unwritten.<sup>9</sup> But, there is an even more fundamental question posed—how much *else* did not get incorporated into *Capital*? In short, *what was to be included in the volume on wage-labor*? If there were essential themes intended for *Wage-Labor*, then to what extent must *Capital* by itself be judged to be incomplete and inadequate? Given the recent argument in this journal by Bowles and Gintis which proposes to rectify the inadequacy of *Capital* by jettisoning, among other things, the concept of labor-power as a commodity and labor as the use-value of labor-power, it is critical to explore the extent to which the site of the problem is the “missing book.”<sup>10</sup>

Of course, the very question of a missing book would not in itself be sufficient for us to conclude that *Capital* was inadequate. We would have to grasp “exactly which themes were to come under the scope of the *Book on Wage-Labor*.” But, we can not follow Rosdolsky in relying chiefly on a comparison of the *Grundrisse* with *Capital*.<sup>11</sup> Such a reconstruction would be nothing more than an eclectic compilation of extrinsic quotations; it would amount to a confession of inability to understand and *apply* Marx’s method of dialectical logic. We need to know more about what *necessarily* would be in the volume on wage-labor; similarly, we need a standard by which to identify inadequacy. For both purposes, it is necessary to turn to *Capital* itself and to consider it logically.

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(b) Discussion of the dialectics of capital draws upon my “Marx’s Methodological Project” [Lebowitz 1980]. It is certainly not the only dialectical reading of *Capital*, and readers of this journal are likely to be familiar with that of Harry Cleaver [Cleaver 1979]. Another, unfortunately neglected treatment—and one which was a stimulus in directing me to Hegel and Lenin’s appreciation of Hegel—is Raya Dunayevskaya’s *Marxism and Freedom* [Dunayevskaya 1964]. Where my argument differs from these and others is that the discussion of *Capital* here is intended to demonstrate its inadequacy.

## II. Capital as Inadequate<sup>(b)</sup>

For *Capital*, the book, to be adequate, it must establish capital, the relation, as adequate. Capital must be established as a totality, an organic whole, in which all presuppositions are shown to be results, in which “everything posited is thus also a presupposition, this is the case with every organic system.”<sup>12</sup> Through a process of deduction, the logical interconnection of all parts of the whole must be demonstrated, thereby permitting no elements to appear as external, extrinsic, independent, indifferent, exogenous to the system—but, rather, as “distinctions within a unity.” In this manner, the intrinsic tendencies, the immanent laws, of the totality can be ascertained; and, this establishment of the inner, the essence, must precede the investigation and elaboration of the necessary forms of existence of the totality, the “multiplicity of its outward forms,” and also the manner in which the inner tendencies are manifested and executed on the surface.

Now, this is not an assertion of the requirements of science—because that issue is not my concern here; it is merely an account of what Marx did in *Capital*. Marx’s purpose was precisely to present capital as a whole, capital as a totality, in which the “intrinsic connection existing between economic categories or the obscure structure of the bourgeois economic system” would be revealed, and the means of developing that totality was a process of dialectical reasoning to ensure that “intermediate links” were not left out.<sup>13</sup>

While we cannot here trace in detail all the steps involved in the construction of the totality in *Capital*, it is sufficient to review the key moments in the process. Beginning with the commodity, the elementary form of wealth in capitalist society, Marx proceeded to analyze this particular concrete, a product of labor which was sold, and discovered that it contained a distinction—that it was, on the one hand, a use-value and, on the other, a value. Reasoning further, he concluded that the very concept of the commodity contained latent within it the concept of money—that the commodity was in and for itself only in exchange, only by passing into money, the independent expression of value. For the commodity as such to exist, it required that value take an independent form, and this is “achieved by the differentiation of commodities into commodities and money.”<sup>14</sup> The distinction between use-value and value, inherent in the commodity, thus was expressed externally by the opposition between commodity and money.<sup>15</sup>

As independent value, money (the Other of Commodity) is also use-value, the power to represent and realize the value of all commodities, to be exchanged for all commodities; it is this which permits it to act as mediator for commodities (C-M-C). Yet, latent in money is that it can be an end in itself, that money as wealth can be a

goal—for which the commodity is mediator and vanishing moment. Money for itself (M-C-M'), however, is merely value; in the movement of money as wealth, value is common and present in all forms—“both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself.”<sup>16</sup> It is value-for-itself which moves through the forms of money and commodity in this process, which is the subject of this process. For self-expanding value, self-valorizing value, value-for-itself, commodity and money are mediators, vanishing moments, mere forms in a specific unity which is capital. Money, thus, is for itself only by passing into capital, self-expanding value; it differentiates itself into money which is spent and money which is advanced, into money as money and money as capital.

Considering capital, Marx concluded that it *too* contained a distinction. Encountered initially as a unity of commodity and money, as capital in the sphere of circulation, capital was shown to require (in order to exist as self-expanding value) a process which lay beyond circulation itself—a process of production; capital, thus, differentiates into capital in circulation and capital in production. Capital must leave the sphere of circulation and enter into that of production; and, it is in this latter sphere that we see capital, as self-valorizing value, generate the production of surplus value and secure the production of commodities containing surplus value. However, this surplus value in the commodity-form is only latent; to be made real, capital must return to the sphere of circulation and the commodity must be exchanged for money. Capital must always return to circulation, the point of departure. Capital in production is a mediator for capital in circulation. Yet, in turn, capital in circulation is a mediator for capital in production; capital can only grow by passing through circulation. The two processes are opposites, are mutually exclusive, are necessary to each other—and, indeed, are a specific unity, capital as a whole.<sup>17</sup> Capital as a whole, capital as totality, takes the forms of capital in circulation and capital in production—just as it takes those of commodity and money. (The steps in the construction of this totality may be seen in Figure I.)

Capital as a whole, thus, is the totality which Marx constructs in *Capital*; it is this unity of production and circulation whose moments are clearly set out in the titles of the three volumes of *Capital*. As this totality, capital must move through a continuing circuit, which can be expressed in several ways. Seen as the circuit of money-capital, we begin with money-capital (M) purchasing as commodities (C) both means of production (Mp) and labor-power (Lp); there is an intervening process of production (P) after which commodities containing surplus value are produced (C') which must be sold (C'-M') in order to return to the money-capital form:

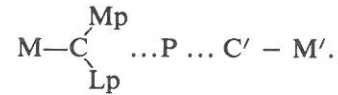
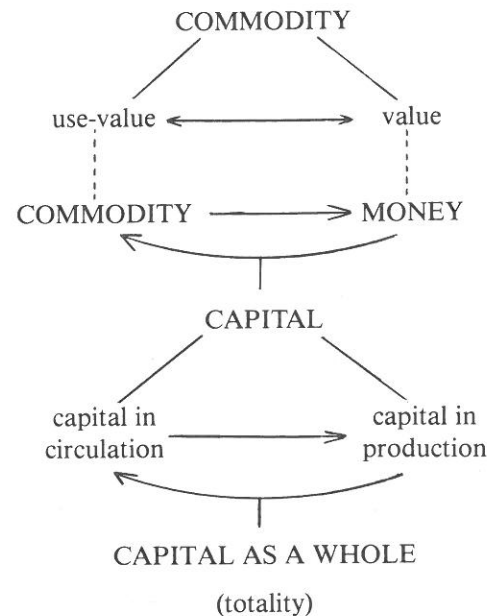


FIGURE I:

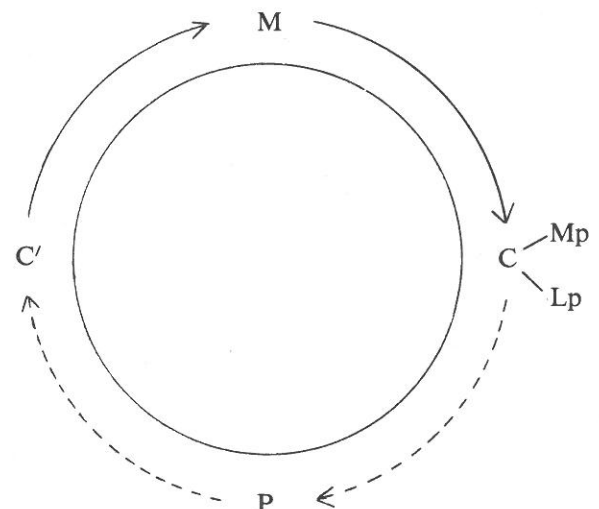
THE CONSTRUCTION OF CAPITAL AS A TOTALITY



Alternatively, the circuit may be viewed as one of productive capital (beginning and ending with P) or as one of commodity-capital (beginning and ending with C'). However, all particular forms of the circuit were inadequate and one-sided: the circuit of capital had to be understood as all forms simultaneously and was best conceived as a “circle” (as depicted in Figure II).

FIGURE II:

THE CIRCUIT OF CAPITAL AS A WHOLE





Considering, then, the circuit of capital as a whole, Marx observed that “all premises of the process appear as its result, as a premise produced by it itself. Every element appears as a point of departure, of transit and of return.”<sup>18</sup> In short, all presuppositions, all preconditions, all premises are themselves results within the circuit of capital—that is precisely the nature of capital understood as a totality, capital as process of reproduction:

In a constantly revolving circle every point is simultaneously a point of departure and a point of return.... The reproduction of capital in each one of its forms and stages is just as continuous as the metamorphosis of these forms and the successive passage through the three stages.<sup>19</sup>

In short, reproduction (understood as the reproduction both of material products and of relations of production) is the central concept of the organic whole, of capital as totality. The reproduction models with which Marx ends Volume II of *Capital* in which the two departments of production (means of production and articles of consumption) are shown to produce the requirements for reproduction, the presuppositions, are precisely a view of capital as whole, of capital as a unity of production and circulation. Similarly, the very concept of simple reproduction is that of the organic whole. As Marx noted in the opening lines of Chapter 23 in Volume I, the chapter on “Simple Reproduction:”

Whatever the social form of the production process, it has to be continuous, it must periodically repeat the same phases. A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and in the constant flux of its incessant renewal, every social process of production is at the same time a process of reproduction.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, capital understood as a totality, an interconnected whole, produces and reproduces material products and social relations—which are themselves presuppositions and premises of production. “These relations are on the one hand prerequisites, on the other hand results and creations of the capitalist process of production; they are produced and reproduced by it.”<sup>21</sup> In short, we have in capital as a whole a closed social input-output system in which nothing is exogenous. And, now, having established capital as a whole, Marx proceeds to “locate and describe the concrete forms which grow out of the *movements of capital as a whole*:” it is now possible to “approach step by step the form which they assume on the surface of society.”<sup>22</sup>

Yet, there is an obvious question (perhaps not so obvious unless the logical structure of *Capital* is clear): do we *really* have an adequate totality in capital as a whole? Is it really an organic whole in which all presuppositions are results, in which all points of departure are points of return? Or, *does capital as a whole itself contain a distinction*, one which will not permit us to stop here (or,

rather, one which permits us to pause only for a moment)?

The answer to this obvious question is also obvious. Yes, there is an element which is not part of capital, which is not produced and reproduced by capital, which is a point of departure but not one of return in the circuit of capital, a presupposition which is not also a result of capital itself. And, it is one which is necessary for the reproduction of capital, which is required for the very existence of capital itself. The point is made clearly in Marx’s chapter on Simple Reproduction:

The maintenance and reproduction of the working class remains a necessary condition for the reproduction of capital. But the capitalist may safely leave this to the worker’s drives for self-preservation and propagation.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, this point—that capital depends on something outside it, the production of the worker—is too important to rest solely on the extrinsic evidence of a single quotation (although there are others). If capital as a whole is not an adequate totality, then this should be clear from a closer examination of its reproduction, from an examination of its reproduction model and of the circuit of capital.

Consider first the model of simple reproduction in Volume II of *Capital*. Here we are presented with two departments of production: Department I (Means of Production) and Department II (Articles of Consumption). There are two inputs into production in each department—means of production and labor-power (and, thus, two component sources of value—constant capital and living labor— $C + (V + S)$ ); and, there are two outputs—means of production (Mp) and articles of consumption (Ac). One output, means of production, is also an input; it is both a result and a presupposition of production. The other output, articles of consumption, however, is not here an input; and, the other input, labor-power, is not here an output. The model, in fact, is not closed in itself: there are three variables (Mp, Ac, Lp) and only two processes of production.

If we consider the condition for simple reproduction, for equilibrium, which may be derived from this model, *i.e.*, that  $C_2 = V_1 + S_1$ , we may note that this condition does not meet the requirements for reproduction *if we specify that reproduction must entail the reproduction of a given number of required workers*. All that this condition specifies is that the number of workers in each department (or, alternatively, the quantity of new labor in each) must be *in a particular ratio*; in other words, it is consistent with different levels of total employment—with full employment equilibrium, below full employment equilibrium, etc.<sup>24</sup> In short, there is a “degree of freedom” which results precisely from the fact that the model is not closed, from the fact that a closed system requires a “third” department.

The same point may be demonstrated more graphically in relation to the circuit of capital as depicted in the form of a circle. First, we must recognize that the circuit as illustrated in Figure II is inadequate because it does not distinguish the two different types of commodities produced under capitalist relations—means of production and articles of consumption; this distinction, necessary for reproduction, must be introduced into the circuit if it is to represent truly the process of reproduction. Now, we see that the circuit includes both an exchange of money for means of production (M-Mp) and an exchange of means of production for money (Mp-M)—which are the same act viewed from different sides; means of production are clearly both a presupposition and a result within the circuit of capital.

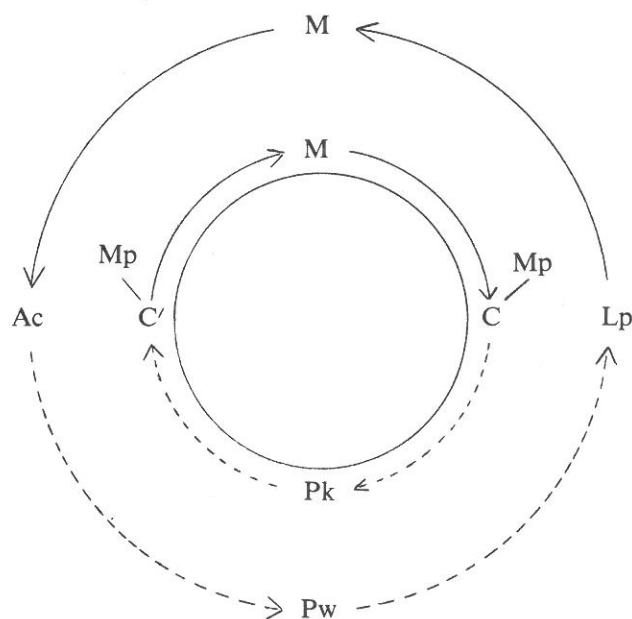
However, this point merely underlines the asymmetry (which has been hidden) between labor-power and articles of consumption: there is an exchange of money for labor-power (M-Lp) and an exchange of articles of consumption for money (Ac-M); labor-power is only a presupposition, and articles of consumption are only a result within the circuit of capital. Clearly, to have all presuppositions results and all results presuppositions, an additional relationship must be identified—that between articles of consumption and labor-power.

The first step in closing this system must be to recognize explicitly the metamorphosis within circulation which occurs as labor-power is exchanged for money which is in turn exchanged for articles of consumption (Lp-M-Ac); both parts of this metamorphosis have already been implied by the movements of capital within its circuit—M-Lp, Ac-M. Yet, this step is still inadequate because labor-power remains here a presupposition but not a result. We have here the consumption of labor-power but not its production and the production of articles of consumption but not their consumption. In short, the system can only be complete by positing another process of production, a *second moment of production* (Pw), distinct from the process of production of capital—one in which labor-power is produced in the course of consuming articles of consumption. *The circuit of capital implies a second circuit, the circuit of wage-labor (which is depicted in Figure III).*

The necessary existence of this second moment of production, the production of the worker (Pw), simply clarifies Marx's comment in the *Grundrisse* regarding the division of the entire circuit of capital into four moments: "each of the two great moments of the production process and the circulation process appears again in a duality." Two of these four moments were the moments of circulation (M-C, C'-M'), and a third was the capitalist production process. These three moments will be recognized as the moments within capital as a whole, within the circuit of capital. But, what was the fourth moment—the *other* process of production?

Marx's comment was that this moment was to be seen as separate; it involved the exchange of variable capital for living labor capacity and here population was the "main thing." And, where was this second moment of production to be analysed? "Moment IV belongs in the section on wages, etc."<sup>25</sup>

**FIGURE III:**  
THE CIRCUIT OF CAPITAL AND WAGE-LABOR



Capital as a whole, as a totality, does not accordingly include within it that which is a "necessary condition for the reproduction of capital"—the maintenance and reproduction of the working class. "The continuous existence of the working class is necessary for the capitalist class, and so is therefore the consumption of the laborer made possible by M-C." But, this individual consumption of the laborer does not fall within the circuit of capital; only the productive consumption, the process of production of capital, does.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, capital as a whole is *not* the adequate totality in which all presuppositions, all premises, are shown to be results. Upon examination, it is shown not to exist on its own without a necessary relation to an Other; it turns out to contain a distinction—it must posit the wage-laborer outside it in order to exist as such. It is necessary, then, to consider wage-labor insofar as it exists *outside* capital. As Marx commented at an early point about political economy, a political economy which considered the worker only as a working animal and not "when he is not working, as a human being"—"Let us now rise above the level of political economy."<sup>27</sup> Similarly, it is time to rise above the level of the political economy of capital, which constitutes only a moment within an adequate totality.

### III. Situating Wage-Labor

Capital as a whole, it develops, is not a stopping point but differentiates into capital, on the one hand, and wage-labor, on the other. We have considered initially the side of capital, and now we must examine that of wage-labor.

Thus far, we have seen wage-labor insofar as it is a moment within capital, as it exists for capital. In *Capital*, the book, we are first introduced to wage-labor in itself as the worker separated from means of production, who stands opposite capital as not-capital, who is the possessor of a use-value for capital—the only use-value for capital as such, labor-power. Labor-power confronts money as use-value, just as money confronts labor-power as value in the sphere of circulation; capital, value-for-itself, posits here an independent use-value outside it.

With the completion of the process of exchange (the buying and selling of labor-power), we enter into the process of capitalist production where the use-value which capital has purchased is consumed, where the exercise of labor-power (labor) is brought within capital. Here we see the wage-laborer compelled to work subordinated to the will of capital in order to achieve the goal of capital, valorisation (self-expansion). And, finally, we see the wage-laborer once again in the sphere of circulation (C'-M') as capital seeks to realize the surplus value contained in the commodities which have been produced.

Thus, wage-labor is present in every moment of capital. It exists for capital as a necessary means for the growth of capital; it is the mediator for capital (K-WL-K). Value-for-itself posits an independent use-value in order to be for self. Yet, *within the circuit of capital, there is already a distinction which points beyond it*. Capital does not only confront the wage-laborer who is the possessor of a use-value; it also necessarily faces the wage-laborer as the possessor of value in the sphere of circulation (C'-M'). Capital is not only value in relation to wage-labor; it is also, in its commodity-form, use-value for wage-labor.

Wage-labor thus approaches capital in its commodity-form as value in relation to use-value (M-Ac). Capital indeed *must* be a use-value in order to be realized as value. The question then becomes—what is a use-value for wage-labor in this sphere of circulation? And, this question cannot be answered by reference solely to the sphere of circulation any more than the similar question posed with respect to capital. For capital to be a use-value for wage-labor, it must be so in the sphere of production by being consumed as such. It is necessary to go beyond the sphere of circulation of wage-labor and enter into the sphere of production of wage-labor.

Considered *abstractly*, a necessary starting point, the process of production of the worker necessarily appears as a natural process of production; considered as a whole, however, it may be seen as a process of reproduc-

tion of a specific relation—that of wage-labor. Firstly, this process of production is immediately a process of consumption:

It is clear that in taking in food, for example, which is a form of consumption, the human being produces his own body. But this is also true of every kind of consumption which in one way or another produces human beings in some particular aspect.<sup>28</sup>

The process of production of the worker, in short, is a process of consuming use-values; and, these use-values are not limited to those associated with physiological subsistence, but include any which produce the worker in “some particular aspect.”

Secondly, the result of this process of production is the worker himself. “Now, as regards the worker’s consumption, this reproduces one thing—namely himself, as living labor capacity.”<sup>29</sup> We have here the “reconversion” of means of subsistence into “fresh labor-power;” in short, “the product of individual consumption is the consumer himself.”<sup>30</sup>

Finally, the process of production of the worker is a *labor process*. There are two aspects in this designation. First of all, this process is an activity—that is to say, the process of consuming use-values in order to produce the worker is not passive but active. Time spent in this activity cannot be contrasted to time spent in the direct labor process of capital as non-producing time, as free time compared to direct labor time:

It goes without saying, by the way, that direct labor time itself cannot remain in the abstract antithesis to free time in which it appears from the perspective of bourgeois economy.<sup>31</sup>

On the contrary, what occurs during “free time” is a process of production, a process in which the nature and capability of the worker is altered. It is “time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labor as itself the greatest productive power.”<sup>32</sup> This second process of production, which political economy does not see, is precisely the process of producing the worker:

From the standpoint of the direct production process [of capital] it can be regarded as the production of *fixed capital*, this fixed capital being man himself.<sup>33</sup>

In the course of this activity, thus, the human being is altered. He acts upon that which is external to him and “simultaneously changes his own nature.”<sup>34</sup> “Free time—which is both idle time and time for higher activity—has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject.”<sup>35</sup> In this activity, accordingly, which is simultaneously an exercise and a cultivating of labor-power, the worker produces himself as a specific type of labor-power.<sup>36</sup> Every act of consumption of a use-value produces him in a particular



aspect; every process of activity alters him as the subject who enters into all activities. As Marx noted in the *Theories of Surplus Value*:

Man himself is the basis of his material production, as of any other production that he carries on. All circumstances, therefore, which affect man, the *subject* of production, more or less modify all his functions and activities, and therefore too his functions and activities as the creator of material wealth, of commodities.<sup>37</sup>

The process of production of the worker, considered as a labor process, may be represented as follows:

$$U \dots Pw \dots Lp,$$

$$Lp$$

where labor-power (Lp) is both an input and an output and use-values (U) are means of production which are consumed in this process of production. We may note that these use-values, which significantly are not also outputs of this process, include both those produced directly as commodities and also others which may not be produced under capitalist relations.<sup>(c)</sup>

The second aspect of the production of the worker considered as a labor process is that the activity involved in this process is "purposeful activity." In other words, there is a pre-conceived goal, a goal which exists *ideally*, before the process itself; and, this particular labor process is a process of realizing this goal by the subordination of the will of the worker to that purpose.<sup>38</sup> And, what is this goal which exists latently before the process of production of the worker? It is the worker's conception of self—as determined within society. It is this which "creates the ideal, internally impelling cause for production"; it is this which "*ideally posits* the object of production as an internal image, as a need, as drive and as purpose."<sup>39</sup> The preconceived goal of production here is "the worker's own need for development."<sup>40</sup> This goal, determined within society—since the *category*, "Man", has no needs—is a presupposition of this process of production.<sup>(d) 41</sup>

Thus, just as the process of production of capital has as its goal the valorization of capital, the process of production of the worker has that of "the worker's own need for development." On the one hand, we have capital for itself, value for itself; on the other hand, we have labor-power for itself, use-value for itself. In the process of production of the worker, "Man makes his life activity

itself the object of his will and of his consciousness....(H)is own life is an object for him."<sup>42</sup> The worker here "belongs to himself."<sup>43</sup>

The process of production of the worker, considered as labor process, is accordingly a labor process of the "simple" type in which human beings employ means of production in order to realize their own preconceived goal, in which they dominate the conditions and results of their labor, in which their labor is not distinct from selves but is indeed activity for self, activity in "his own interest."<sup>44</sup>

But, what are the requirements of this particular labor process? First, the necessary means of production must be accessible to the worker; he must be able to secure the use-values required in order to realize his goal. These are use-values not in themselves but only use-values insofar as they correspond to the goal of production; this is what generates "needs" for particular use-values—they are use-values which conform to the requirements of socially developed human beings. Those needs, which are part of the very nature of the worker, constitute the category of "actual social needs"; rather than being restricted to physiological requirements, they can for example encompass:

the worker's participation in the higher, even cultural satisfactions, the agitation for his own interests, newspaper subscriptions, attending lectures, educating his children, developing his taste, etc.<sup>45</sup>

Yet another requirement of this particular labor process is labor-power itself. Since the labor process is a process of activity, there must be the *capacity* to carry out this activity; both the energy (the "strength, health and freshness")—since there is only a certain quantity of "vital force" to expend—and the particular quality and capability (which is itself a product of previous activity) must be available.<sup>46</sup> Similarly (but distinct from capacity itself), there must be *time* for this labor process: "Time is the room of human development."<sup>47</sup> As Marx noted in his chapter on the work-day:

The worker needs time in which to satisfy his intellectual and social requirements, and the extent and number of these requirements is conditioned by the general level of civilization.<sup>48</sup>

In short, in this process of production in which the goal is the development of the worker, the worker needs time ("free time") for his full development:

(c) Despite the formal similarity to representations by Bowles and Gintis or Cleaver [Bowles and Gintis 1981:10-11; Cleaver 1977: 96-99], it must be stressed that a *different* process is considered here—the *self-production of the subject*. Thus, there is no attempt at this point to represent household labor (which is properly situated once we have considered the production of wage-labor as such.) There is here, of

course, an implicit criticism of the view that household labor produces labor power.

(d) To mitigate charges of "abstract humanism" (and other, more serious offenses), it may be noted that a later stage of argument would include within the goals of male wage-laborers the reproduction of patriarchy.



Time for education, for intellectual development, for the fulfillment of social functions, for social intercourse, for the free play of the vital forces of his body and his mind.<sup>49</sup>

What, then, are the prospects that the worker will be able to realize his goals? Consider this process of production of the worker—not only what is produced but also what is *not* produced. The process has as its result the worker, as living labor capacity; it is its *only* product. The use-values, necessary as presuppositions, are not produced, are not results—thus, this cannot be a system of reproduction. Indeed, they *cannot* be produced within this process—because wage-labor *by definition* is separated from the means of production necessary to produce them; given this separation, labor-power “cannot be used either directly for the production of use-values for its owner or for the production of commodities, by the sale of which he could live.”<sup>50</sup> And, not only does the worker not produce the use-values he requires—he necessarily annihilates them in the process of production, which is a process of consumption, a process which “simply reproduces the needy individual.”<sup>51</sup> In short, this particular labor process is not at all a natural process of production but is the production of a particular social relation, the production of wage-labor:

(It) reproduces the individual himself in a specific mode of being, not only in his immediate quality of being alive, and in specific social relations. So that the ultimate appropriation by individuals taking place in the consumption process reproduces them in the original relations in which they move within the production process and towards each other;...<sup>52</sup>

Thus, in order to produce for self, the wage-laborer must secure use-values from outside his own process of production. Under the prevailing circumstances, he must take the only potential commodity he has, living labor capacity, and must re-enter the sphere of circulation; he must find the buyer for whom it is a use-value—capital. To be for self, the wage-laborer must be a being for another.

We have here the worker as wage-laborer for self—as one who approaches capital as a means, a means whose end is the worker for self. *Capital faces not a wage-laborer for capital but a wage-laborer for self.* In short, we first consider the relation of capital and wage-labor as one of K-WL-K, where wage-labor is a mediator for capital, where the end is capital. Yet we now see that there is *also* WL-K-WL, where capital is a mediator for the wage-laborer, where the wage-laborer is the end in

itself, where labor for capital is a mere means and not an end at all. *Capital here is a moment in the reproduction of wage-labor.* Yet, for capital to be a mediator for wage-labor, wage-labor must be a mediator for capital.

In this very sphere of circulation, where the worker offers up his labor-power as a commodity, where he stands opposite capital merely as the possessor of use-value, “the worker is thereby posited as a person who is something for himself apart from his labor, and who alienates his life-expression only as a means towards his own life.”<sup>53</sup> Yet, it is not merely that the worker posits his living labor capacity as separate from self in circulation; it is that this separation necessarily becomes so, is realized as such, as capital consumes labor-power in the process of production of capital. Here the worker expends himself in accordance with the goal of capital and under the direction and control of capital; here there is an “inverted” labor process in which “it is not the worker who employs the conditions of his work, but rather the reverse, the conditions of work employ the worker.”<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the worker must engage in activity which is not for self. “The worker, instead of working for himself, works for, and consequently under, the capitalist.”<sup>55</sup> It is a process in which the worker resists “the domination of capital”, where “capital is constantly compelled to wrestle with the insubordination of the workers.”<sup>56</sup> Similarly, workers struggle to “set limits to the tyrannical usurpations of capital”—they struggle over the length and intensity of the work-day in order to retain living labor capacity for themselves, they struggle over the length of the work-day in order to have time for themselves.<sup>57</sup> Thus we see that *underlying* the discussion of the struggle over the workday in *Capital* is what has *not* been established in *Capital*—the wage-laborer as being-for-self; these struggles are themselves latent in the process of production of the wage-laborer.<sup>(e)</sup>

Finally, this process of production of capital, a process of “sacrifice”—which “correctly expresses the *subjective relation of the wage worker to his own activity*,” is an activity which itself produces the wage-laborer as a particular socially developed human being, as one with the “need to possess”.<sup>58</sup> Thus, capitalist production, which produces both the alien commodity and the alienated worker, constantly generates new needs for workers.<sup>59</sup> (The goals of wage-labor, initially considered as presupposition of its own labor process, are seen here as themselves results.) Further, these needs cannot be fully realized—because capitalist production is limited by capital’s goal of valorization “rather than the relation of production to social requirements, i.e. to the requirements of socially developed human beings;” there are “capitalist limitations” on the satisfaction of needs.<sup>60</sup> Thus, there is a gap between the “actual social needs” of the wage-laborer and those which he is customarily able to realize (his “necessary needs”):

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(e) Dunayevskaya emphasizes the struggle over the work-day as a new element in the plan for *Capital* resulting from the real movement of workers. I would agree that this is an element from the book on wage-labor which did find its way into *Capital*—but it does so without any logical development for the side of wage-labor comparable to that presented for the side of capital. [Dunayevskaya 1964: 88-91]

The limits within which the need for commodities in the market, the demand, differs quantitatively from the *actual social* need, naturally vary considerably for different commodities; what I mean is the difference between the demanded quantity of commodities and the quantity which would have been in demand at other money-prices or other money or living conditions of the buyers.<sup>61</sup>

And, this inability to realize all his actual social needs, to secure the requisite use-values to realize his goal, produces dissatisfaction... "so long as the need of man is not satisfied, he is in *conflict* with his needs, hence with himself."<sup>62</sup> Inherent in the wage-laborer as being-for-self, thus, is the struggle for higher wages.

Class struggle—from the side of the wage-laborer—is what emerges from consideration of wage-labor. We have not merely capital for itself but also wage-labor for itself; there are thus *two* "oughts"—not merely capital's need for valorization but also "the worker's own need for development." This two-sided struggle, in which each attempts to reduce the other to dependence, is present in, for example, the struggle over the work-day—where "between equal rights, force decides;" and, it is similarly present in the struggle over wages:

The fixation of its actual degree (that of profit) is only settled by the continuous struggle between capital and labor, the capitalist constantly tending to reduce wages to their physical minimum and to extend the working day to its physical maximum, while the working man constantly presses in the opposite direction. The matter resolves itself into a question of the respective powers of the combatants.<sup>63</sup>

Between two "oughts", force decides.

Our consideration of wage-labor began as an investigation of that which stood outside capital; it remains now to complete the development of its unity with capital. Consider the process of production of capital and that of wage-labor. Firstly, these processes are *opposites*. In the first, labor-power is consumed by capital, exists for capital; in the second, labor-power is consumed by the worker and exists for the worker. In the first, the means of production possess and dominate the worker; in the second they are possessed and dominated by the worker. The distinction thus is one of the worker for capital vs. the worker for self.

Further, these processes *exclude* each other. The worker cannot be for capital and self simultaneously. The more time the worker exists for capital, the less time there is for

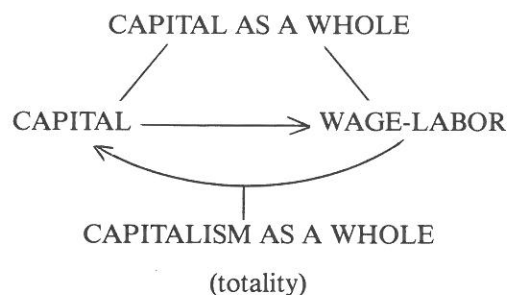
self. Similarly, the greater the intensity of work for capital, the more energy consumed by capital, the less which is available for self. Thus, labor for capital is distinct from labor for self; it is labor alienated from self. The worker is only for self when he is not a worker for capital.

Finally, these processes, which are opposites and exclude each other, are also *necessary to each other*. If the worker does not produce for capital, he does not produce for self; if he does not produce for self, he is not available for capital. If capital does not go through its circuit, the worker cannot go through his; if the worker does not go through his circuit, capital can not proceed through its. The reproduction of capital requires the reproduction of wage-labor as such; the reproduction of wage-labor as such requires the reproduction of capital. The two processes of production presuppose each other. They are thus a unity.

We have here now a totality in which all presuppositions are results and all results are presuppositions—the unity of capital and wage-labor, capitalism as a whole; it is a unity of opposites whose very nature is class struggle. (This further development is illustrated in Figure IV.)

FIGURE IV:

CAPITALISM AS A WHOLE AS TOTALITY



IV. The One-sidedness of Capital<sup>(f)</sup>

*Capital* is one-sided—but not because it excludes wage-labor as such. Obviously, wage-labor in itself could not be absent from *Capital*—because we could not even talk about the development of capital without it. Without the barrier which is wage-labor, why would capital shift from absolute surplus-value to relative surplus-value, from formal to real subsumption of labor; why would capital introduce machinery, increase the technical composition of capital, develop its own specific mode of production? Wage-labor is there as the barrier which capital transcends. But, it is not present as the ought which has capital as *its* barrier; it is not there as wage-labor *for itself*.

(f) While he appropriately emphasizes the necessity to focus on two-sided class struggle, Cleaver errs in viewing the problem as one of incorrect readings of *Capital* rather than as a problem of one-sidedness in *Capital* itself. The two-sidedness is only *latent* in *Capital* (just as capital is only latent in the commodity—and requires the full development of the totality to be grasped adequately. Cleaver, in short, ignores the intermediate links in reading the two-sidedness directly into *Capital* [Cleaver 1979].

Thus, even where the struggles of workers are noted (as in the matter of the work-day), the logical presupposition from the side of wage-labor, wage-labor for itself, is absent. It is only with the development of the side of wage-labor, the side absent from *Capital*, that we have an adequate basis for considering the struggle of workers to realize their own goals. We have now “the inner totality,” capitalism as a whole, which contains not only the goals of capital but also those of wage-labor—which imply the non-realization of capital’s goals, which press in the opposite direction.<sup>64</sup>

Certainly, we can no longer assume “necessary needs,” the level of needs customarily satisfied, constant—that assumption in *Capital* which was to be removed in the book on wage-labor. Not when we explicitly recognize the existence of the ought of wage-labor, when we see that against the thrust and tendency of capital “the working man constantly presses in the opposite direction”; not when we posit workers struggling to reduce the gap between their existing standard and their actual social needs—just as they press in the direction of lowering the work-day.

Rather, the level of necessary needs is itself revealed to be a product, a result—the result of class struggle. That is the historical and moral element in the value of labor-power. Indeed, Volume I of *Capital*, with its introduction of the concept of necessary needs as an unexplained presupposition, requires the consideration of wage-labor-for-itself and the development of the totality, capitalism as a whole, in order to show necessary needs as a result. By itself, *Capital* cannot explain logically the level of necessary needs.

Indeed, by itself, *Capital* presents only capital’s tendencies and not those of wage-labor, only capital’s thrust to increase the rate of surplus-value and not wage-labor’s thrust to reduce it. The tendencies of the totality itself, however, can only be considered when it has been completed. That is one aspect of the one-sidedness of *Capital*. But, there is another. We cannot even affirm that *Capital* has presented the one side of the totality, capital with its tendencies, adequately.

It is only within the completed totality that we have capital which faces workers who are struggling for their own goals, who are more than mere technical inputs to be stretched to emit more labor or to be produced more cheaply. In capitalism as a whole, capital does not merely seek the realization of its own goal, valorization; it also must seek to suspend the realization of the goals of wage-labor. It attempts to defeat workers, to negate its negation in order to posit itself.

In short, without the explicit recognition of the goals of workers and their struggles to realize them, how can we understand those actions of capital which are undertaken to divide wage-labor against itself, to defeat wage-

labor? Those actions have as their presupposition the existence of workers’ goals, wage-labor for itself.

Without the proper understanding of capitalism as a totality, our view of the actions of capital is one-sided, too. It is not simply that we fail to understand the place of wage-labor; it is that we do not understand capital *in relation to wage-labor*. There is an incomplete understanding of capital. *Only when we have the completed totality can we properly grasp the distinctions within the unity*. What we are presented with in *Capital* is merely a *moment of capital* in the development of the whole.

Within the totality which is capitalism as a whole, we recognize explicitly that capital not only strives to increase the work-day and to increase productivity but also strives to weaken the position of workers. Alterations in the mode of production (co-operation, manufacture, machinery, etc.) may have as their *immediate* purpose the defeat of workers in their attempt to realize their own goals. Thus, hiring immigrant workers from different ethnic groups with different languages is *more* than cooperation—it may even lower productivity; and, establishing a hierarchy of workers in manufacture may have its origin in the attempt to reduce the solidarity of wage-labor. Similarly, when capital considers the introduction of machinery in place of direct living labor, its consideration (properly understood) cannot be limited to calculation of the relative quantities of labor in machinery vs. labor-power (as described in *Capital*, I)—but also turns on the need “to tread underfoot the growing demands of the workers.”<sup>65</sup>

Since it is valorization (and not efficiency as such) which is the goal of capital, a given innovation will be introduced if it sufficiently suspends the ability of workers to realize their goals, if it divides and separates them—even if it is less efficient (in the narrow technical sense). Thus, in capitalism as a whole, the adequate totality, we see the *innate tendency* of capital not only to increase productivity, to develop productive forces, but also to produce divisions among workers.<sup>66</sup> Recognition of this as an inner tendency of capital—flowing from its goal of valorization within the totality—is critical; it means that, understood as a system of reproduction, divisions among workers are products and results—rather than incidental historical presuppositions.

This entire side of capital, which flows logically from consideration of capital as a distinction within the totality, has been lost because of the failure to complete that totality. It is—and must be recognized as such—an inadequacy of *Capital*, the result of its one-sidedness. Bowles and Gintis, however, locate the source of this very inadequacy of *Capital* in the labor theory of value and in the concept of labor-power as commodity (and labor as use-value of labor-power). Arguing correctly that a central focus must be on precisely the set of practices by which capital suc-



ceeds in *extracting* surplus-value, they propose that emphasis on the labor theory of value is “economism”:

It reduces the site of capitalist production to a restricted—indeed impoverished—subset of the variety of practices which jointly determine the dynamics of accumulation.<sup>67</sup>

Who could deny the diagnosis as economism? What else are we to say about an account of the development of technology, productivity, changes in the labor process, deskilling of workers, etc., without situating these in the context of the struggle of capital to suspend the realization of the goals of workers? Where these developments occur against the backdrop of the working class *in itself* but not *for itself*? The clear tendency is to think in terms of the autonomous development of productive forces; it is to view technological development as “neutral”—a plausible inference when one does not consider capitalism as a whole. In short, in capital as presented incompletely in *Capital*, we do not see those changes in the labor process, etc., as precisely the result of class struggle—shaped and structured by the very nature of class struggle (which is at the centre in a consideration of capitalism as a whole as a totality). In this sense, it is accurate to describe such a view as “economistic.”

Of course, the same point must be made on the side of wage-labor. To look merely at wage-labor-for-itself and its struggles to achieve its immediate goals (e.g., wages, time, control over the labor process, etc.) is not to situate it adequately within the totality—as wage-labor in relation to capital. The necessary struggle of workers to dissolve differences among themselves (to constitute themselves as One) and to divide capital against itself—i.e., the struggle of wage-labor to *defeat* capital, to negate its negation in order to posit itself—would be obscured. And, this, too, is economism. In short, once we posit capitalism as a whole as the adequate totality, a totality whose essence is class struggle, we recognize it as a one-sided, economist view not to explore those goals and practices of both capital and wage-labor which emerge out of their interaction.

Thus, on the diagnosis—the inadequacy of *Capital* in explaining real phenomena, in presenting the “real movement,” it is possible to agree with Bowles and Gintis. And, perhaps, that is the most important point to stress—despite the obvious differences in the paths

traversed. Nevertheless, the formal similarity of results cannot disguise the eclectic surgery that Bowles and Gintis have performed on the body which they wish to save. Surely, is not the suggestion that labor-power is not a commodity merely a metaphor to underline Marx’s failure to rise above political economy and to consider the worker “when he is not working, as a human being?” And, is it the representation of labor as the use-value of labor-power which deprives the labor theory of value of insight into the extraction of labor from labor-power—or, is it the failure to articulate the concept of wage-labor for itself, the failure to recognise “the worker’s own need for development”?<sup>68</sup> In short, should not Occam’s razor apply here?

The strength of Marx’s method of dialectical reasoning was that—in contrast to an eclecticism which begins from forms of existence, neglects the development of intermediate links and cannot establish necessity—it generates an understanding of the necessary interconnection of the whole. The argument presented here is that it was precisely the failure to develop the side of wage-labor—which is latent within *Capital*—which has produced a faulty understanding of the whole (and of the place of *Capital* within it.) *Capital* must be understood in its connection—in its connection to the book on Wage—Labor, which was to complete “the inner totality,” in its connection to the book on the State in which there was to be “the concentration of the whole,” and in connection to the book on the World Market:

the world market, the conclusion, in which production is posited as a totality together with all its moments, but within which, at the same time, all contradictions come into play. The world market then, again, forms the presupposition of the whole as well as its substratum.<sup>69</sup>

The mistake has been to let one book stand for six—a failure which says much about the understanding of Marx’s method. The immediate question is, however, whether it is possible to understand capitalism as a whole without the exploration of the “basic themes” which were to be in the missing book on Wage-Labor.

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## NOTES

1. Marx to Engels, April 2, 1858 in [Marx and Engels 1965:104]  
2. [Rosdolsky 1977:11] Note that Mandel follows Rosdolsky’s lead on this in his introduction to Volume I of *Capital*. [Marx 1977:28-9,944]  
3. Marx to Engels, August 2, 1862 in [Marx and Engels 1965:128-9]

4. [Rosdolsky 1977:22,57]  
5. *Ibid.*, 17,61  
6. *Ibid.*, 286n  
7. [Lebowitz 1977-8]  
8. [Marx:1977:1068-9]



9. [Lebowitz 1977-8:442-7]
10. [Bowles and Gintis 1981]
11. [Rosdolsky:1977:5]
12. [Marx:1973:278]
13. [Marx 1968:164-5]
14. [Marx 1977:181]
15. *Ibid.*, 199
16. *Ibid.*, 225
17. [Lebowitz 1976]
18. [Marx 1957:100]
19. [*Ibid.*, 101]
20. [Marx 1977:711]
21. Marx 1959:798]
22. *Ibid.*, 25
23. [Marx 1977:718]
24.  $C_2 = V_1 + S_1$ . Then,  $V_2(C_2/V_2) = V_1(1 + S_1/V_1)$  and  $V_2/V_1 = (1 + S_1/V_1)/(C_2/V_2)$ . The ratio of workers in Department II relative to those in Department I,  $N_2/N_1$ , must bear the same relation; but, nothing requires that  $N_1 + N_2 = N_T$ , where  $N_T$  represents the total number of workers.
25. [Marx 1973:520-1]
26. [Marx 1957:74-5]
27. [Marx 1975a:241]
28. [Marx 1973:90-1]
29. *Ibid.*, 676
30. [Marx 1977:718,290]
31. [Marx 1973:712]
32. *Ibid.*, 711
33. *Ibid.*, 711-2
34. [Marx 1977:283]. Note also that "the producers change, too, in that they bring out new qualities in themselves, develop themselves in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new language [Marx 1973:494]."
35. *Ibid.*, 712
36. *Ibid.*, 712
37. [Marx n.d.:280]
38. [Marx 1977:284]
39. [Marx 1973:91-2]
40. [Marx 1977:772]
41. [Marx 1975b:189]
42. [Marx 1975a:276]
43. [Marx 1977:717]
44. *Ibid.*, 718
45. [Marx 1973:287]
46. [Marx 1977:341, 343]
47. [Marx 1962:439]
48. [Marx 1977:341]
49. *Ibid.*, 375
50. [Marx 1957:29]
51. [Marx 1977:719]
52. [Marx 1973:717n]
53. *Ibid.*, 289
54. [Marx 1977:548]
55. *Ibid.*, 448
56. *Ibid.*, 449,489-90
57. [Marx 1962:439]
58. [Marx 1973:614]
59. [Lebowitz 1977-8]
60. [Marx 1959:253,854]
61. *Ibid.*, 185
62. [Marx 1975b:191]
63. [Marx 1977:344; Marx 1962:443]
64. [Marx 1973:264]
65. [Marx 1977:562-3]
66. We can agree entirely with Bowles and Gintis in their comment that "it is essential to stratify the workforce in order to minimize worker solidarity;" although, in the grand dialectical and essentialist manner, we would say—"it is part of the *essence* of capital to do so." [Bowles and Gintis 1981:15]
67. *Ibid.*, 1
68. *Ibid.*, 17
69. [Marx 1973:264,227-8]

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