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A Manifesto of Emancipation:

Marx's "Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party" after One hundred and twenty-five years

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Marx's "Marginal Notes" of 1875 or what he called in a letter (to Bracke, May 5, 1875), a "long scrap of paper," was a purely occasional text which its author felt compelled to compose, in order to underline what he thought to be the serious shortcomings in a workers' programme. However, the document could perhaps be considered kind of a second "Communist Manifesto," authored by Marx alone this time of course. Both of them concern party organisation — the Communist League and the German Workers' Party. The second document was enriched by Marx's great theoretical breakthroughs as well as by his involvement in the new forms of working class struggles as manifested above all in the work of the First International and the Paris Commune, posterior to the "Communist Manifesto." Given the necessarily limited scope of this second document, compared with the first, its focus is also relatively circumscribed, being confined to the critique of the *specific points* in the Programme that Marx found unacceptable. Nevertheless, in spite of the narrowness of scope and the resulting selective character of the themes involved, this document contains, drawing on the author's whole life's work, a condensed discussion of the most essential elements of the capitalist mode of production, its revolutionary transformation into its opposite and a rough portrayal, in a few bold strokes, of what Marx had called in *Capital* the "union of free individuals" destined to succeed the existing social order.

In this paper we propose to concentrate mostly on the economic aspects of this document. As in the *Gothakritik* labour is the central theme around which Marx's arguments revolve, we start with Marx's critique of the conception of labour as it appears in the Programme. Next we pass on to Marx's very brief discussion of the Lassallean notion of wage labour which of course is the essence of the capitalist mode of production. Then we propose to treat Marx's portrayal of the future society centered basically on the problem of allocation-distribution of the society's total product. We conclude by stressing the immensely emancipatory character of the document. As we go along we will seek to dispel a number of misunderstandings — even among Marx's professed followers — concerning Marx's categories of labour, value and state, all appearing in the "Critique."

Labour and Division of Labour

The *Gothakritik* starts with the Programme's assertion that labour is the source of all wealth and all culture. Marx underlines *à contrario* that labour is not the source of all material wealth and that nature also is a source. This idea of wealth as the conjoint product of human labour and nature is a continuing idea of the Marxian "Critique of Political Economy" from its very inception. In his Parisian manuscripts of 1844 Marx refers to nature as the "*non-organic life*" of the human and the human as "a part of nature." "The labourer can create nothing without nature, without the *sensuous (sinnliche) external world*" (1966a: 77,80, emphasis in text) ... One and a half decades later Marx writes: "It is false to say that labour in so far as it creates (*hervorbringt*) use values, that is material wealth, is the unique source of the latter ... The use value always has a natural substratum. Labour is the natural condition of the human, the condition of material exchange between human and nature, independent of all social forms" (1958: 30). This whole idea would appear in almost identical terms in *Capital I*.^[1] Speaking of labour in the labour process where products do not take commodity form, Marx observes that "this is the purposeful (*zweckmässig*) activity for the creation of use-values, the appropriation of the objects of nature for human needs, the global condition of material exchange between the human and nature, an everlasting natural condition of human existence and thus independent of all forms of this existence, rather equally common to all its social forms" (1962a: 198; 1965: 735. In the French version the expression "natural condition" was changed for "physical necessity" and the term "everlasting" was dropped). In the same way, in his manuscript for *Capital III* Marx writes about labour as "human productive activity in general through which the human mediates material exchanges with nature, divested not only of all determinate social forms and characters but even in its simple natural existence, independent of society and removed from all societies, and, as an expression and affirmation of life, common to the human not yet social and to the one who is in any way determined socially" (1992: 843-44. Engels's edited version is very slightly different. See Marx 1964: 823-24).

The second point about labour and its role in production — nature's contribution being abstracted here — that Marx makes in the *Gothakritik* concerns labour's relation to society in this regard. Correcting the somewhat defective formulation of the "Program," Marx observes that only labour producing in society — "social labour" — creates "material wealth;" isolated labour can create use value only. About a decade earlier Marx had told the workers that "a man who produces an article for his own immediate use, consumes it himself, creates a product but not a commodity," and that "to produce a commodity" it is "not only *Labour* but *social Labour*" that is relevant (1968: 201; emphasis and capitalization are in text). It is also well known that according to Marx it is not labour as such but "socially necessary labour (time)" that produces commodities. Some critics of Marx, particularly among the feminists, have inferred from these statements that according to Marx the only labour that is social is commodity producing labour (see the discussion in Custers 1997). However, this inference is invalid. From the premise that only social labour produces commodities it does not follow that only the commodity producing labour is social labour. Apart from this *non sequitur*, such a position would signify that all use value producing labour is non-social labour, that all labour engaged in material production in non-commodity societies is non-social labour —

which of course would be absurd from Marx's point of view.

First of all, in what sense commodity producing labour is "social labour"? Marx's position is very clear on this question. This type of labour is social labour because it is subordinated to the *social* division of labour, is *socially* determined average labour (time), and destined to satisfy certain *social* want. Secondly, the producers here enter into *social* contact through exchange of products taking commodity form. Marx, at the same time stresses the very *specific* character of the sociality of this labour. "The conditions of labour positing exchange value are *social determinants* of labour or determinants of *social labour*, but social not in a general (*schlechthin*), but in a particular (*besondere*) way. This is a specific kind of sociality." It is a situation in which "each one labours for oneself and the particular labour has to appear as its opposite, abstract general labour," and "in this form social labour." It has this "specific social character only within the limits of exchange" (1958: 24; 1959: 525; 1962a: 87; emphasis in text).

The third point about labour in Marx's critique of the "Program" is how Marx envisages labour in the new society after capital has disappeared from the scene. At its initial phase the new society cannot yet completely get rid of the legacy of the mode of labour of the old society — including the division of labour, particularly the division between physical and mental labour. Now, in one of his early texts Marx speaks of the "abolition of the division of labour" as the task of the "communist revolution," even of "abolition of labour" *tout court* (1973a: 70, 364). However, in the *Gothakritik* Marx's stand does not appear to be quite the same on this question. Referring to "a higher phase" of the Association which will have completely transgressed "the narrow bourgeois horizon," Marx does not say that either labour or division of labour would be "abolished." He stresses that labour in that society would not simply be a means of life but would itself become life's "first need." Similarly not all division of labour would be abolished, but only the division of labour which puts the individuals under its "enslaving subordination" (*knechtende Unterordnung*). Let us examine to which extent there is a "break" ("*coupure*") between the early Marx and the late Marx in this regard. In his Parisian excerpt notebooks of 1844 Marx distinguishes between two types of labour. The first is labour in the absence of private property in the means of production where "we produce as human beings." Here labour is a "free manifestation of life and therefore enjoyment of life," where the "particularity of my life is affirmed." Here labour is "true, active property." Contrariwise, the second type of labour, that is labour exercised under private property, is the "alienation of life." Here "my individuality is to such an extent alienated that this activity is hated by me and is a torment. It is only an appearance of activity imposed only by an external, contingent necessity, and not enjoined by an inner necessary need" (1932: 546, 547). One year later, in another manuscript, Marx observes that the labourer's activity is not "a free manifestation of his human life," it is rather a "bartering away (*Verschachern*), an alienation of his powers to capital." Marx calls this activity "*labour*" and writes that "'labour' by nature (*Wesen*) is unfree, inhuman, unsocial activity conditioned by and creating private property," and then adds that "the abolition of private property only becomes a reality if it is conceived as the abolition of '*labour*'" (1972a:

435-36; emphasis in text).

Now, labour as a pure process of material exchange between human beings and nature is a “simple and abstract” category and as such does not take account of the social conditions in which it operates. However, all production, considered as “appropriation of nature from the side of the individual,” takes place “within and is mediated by definite social forms” (Marx 1958: 241, 280). When labour’s social dimension is brought in, labour takes on a new meaning. The question becomes relevant as to whether the labour process operates “under the brutal lash of the slave supervision or the anxious eye of the capitalist” (1962a: 198-99). In fact these two broad forms of labour epitomize, by and large, at least the dominant type of labour that has operated in all class-societies. Traditionally, labour has been a non-free activity of the labouring individual — either as directly forced labour under “personal dependence” as in pre-capitalism or as alienated labour under “material dependence” or “servitude of the object” (*Knechtshaft des Gegenstandes*) in commodity-capitalist society (Marx 1953: 75; 1966a: 76). Such labour has reduced the labourer into a “labouring animal” (Marx 1962b: 256). Consequently, the division of labour practised so far has been absolutely involuntary where the “human being’s own activity dominates the human being as an alien, opposite power” (Marx 1973a: 33). It goes without saying that such labour is totally incompatible with the human being’s “free individuality” under the Association. This labour in the sense of the “traditional mode of activity” (*bisherige Art der Tätigkeit*) ceases to exist in the Association, it is “abolished” (Marx 1973a: 70). Referring to Adam Smith’s idea of labour being “sacrifice of freedom,” Marx notes that labour, as it has appeared “in its historical forms of slavery, serfdom and wage labour,” always appears “repulsive, forced from outside;” labour has not yet created the “subjective and objective conditions in which labour would be attractive and self-realising for the individual.” However, labour could also be seen as an “activity of freedom,” as self-realizing and indeed as “real freedom” when labour is exercised toward removing the obstacles for reaching an end (not imposed from outside) (1953: 505). Thus when Marx speaks of “abolition” of division of labour and labour itself in his writings anterior to the *Gothakritik*, it is precisely with reference to the different forms of hitherto existing modes of labour which far from being a self-realizing activity of the individual, unimposed from the exterior, a free manifestation of human life, has been their negation. This is the labour which has to be abolished along with the associated division of labour. Thereby labour, transformed into a “self (affirming) activity” (*Selbsttätigkeit*), becomes, as the *Gothakritik* says not only a means of life but also life’s “prime need” in a higher phase of the Association.^[2] Again, it is about this hitherto existing type of labour that Marx observes in the *Gothakritik* that the “law of the whole hitherto existing history “has been that “in proportion as labour is socially developed and thereby becomes a source of wealth and culture, there develops poverty and demoralization on the side of the labourers, wealth and culture on the side of the non-labourers.”

Significance of Wage Labour

Marx portrays, in a few bold strokes, the essence of the capitalist mode of production through his attack on the Lassallean idea of wage which Lassalle had taken over from the bourgeois economists. Here Marx makes two points. The first concerns the Lassallean “iron law of wages,” where wages are supposed to be at a level corresponding to the minimum of subsistence just sufficient for the workers to live and the perpetuate their class. It should be pointed out that this formulation of wage determination by the workers’ minimum subsistence is not very different from the formulation that we find in Marx’s writings in the 1840s (see Marx 1965: 27, 152; 1966b: 65; 1973: 406). In his polemic with Proudhon on the question of wage labour, Marx’s reference point was Ricardo’s “natural price of labour which is necessary to enable the labourers to subsist and to perpetuate their race” (see Ricardo 1951: 93). In fact Engels himself pointed out in a note in the first German edition (1885) of Marx’s Proudhon-critique (1847) that the formulation was first advanced by him (Engels) in 1844 and 1845. “Marx had adopted it and Lassalle had borrowed it from us.”^[3] Later Marx abandoned this position. Instead Marx emphasized in *Capital* the relativity of natural needs of the labourer — food, clothing, heating, housing — dictated by climate and physical conditions of a country as well as “a moral and historical element.” Particularly during the process of “extensive” accumulation of capital, the labourers receiving in the form of payment a bigger portion of the net product — created by themselves — have the possibility of “increasing the circle of their enjoyment, of being better fed, clothed and furnished and making a small reserve fund” (1962a: 185, 646; 1965: 720, 1127). Similarly in unpublished ‘sixth chapter’ of *Capital* Marx wrote: “The minimum wage of the slave appears as a constant magnitude, independent of his labour. For the free labourer this *value of his labour power* and the corresponding *average wage* are not predestined by the limits determined by his sheer physical needs, independently of his own labour. It is here like the value of all commodities, a more or less *constant average* for the *class*; but it does not exist in this immediate reality for the individual labourer whose wage may stay above or below this minimum” (1988: 102; emphasis in text). In the *Gothakritik* Marx cites Lange’s work showing the Malthusian population theory as the basis of Lassalle’s iron law of wages.^[4] In this connection it must be stressed that while Marx has no minimum subsistence theory of wages he does speak of “absolute impoverishment” of the labourers under capitalism, which has an unusual and deep significance. In fact *wage labour* itself — irrespective of the level of wages received by the labourer — signifies “absolute poverty” of the labourer. In two manuscripts Marx tersely identifies, almost in the same words, “labour (labour power) as the absolute poverty not as penury but as total exclusion from the objective wealth” [1953: 203; 1976b: 148. “Labour” (*Arbeit*) in the first manuscript was changed into “labour power (*Arbeitsvermögen*) in the second].^[5]

The second point that Marx makes on wage labour is of the highest importance clearly showing his fundamental difference with the entire bourgeois political economy (“classical” as well as “vulgar”) in this regard.

Marx underlines that wage is not what it appears to be, that is value or price of labour. It is, on the contrary, a masked form of the value or price of labour power. “Thereby,” writes

Marx, “the whole hitherto existing bourgeois conception of wage as well as the criticism directed against it (hitherto) was once and for all thrown overboard and it was clearly shown that the wage labourer is permitted to work for his living, that is *to live* in so far as he works gratis a certain time for the capitalist; that the whole capitalist system of production revolves around the prolongation of this unpaid labour (*Gratisarbeit*) through the extension of the working day or through the development of productivity, intensity of labour etc. and that the system of wage labour is a system of slavery and, indeed, a slavery which becomes more severe to the same extent as the social productive powers develop, whether the labourer receives a higher or a lower wage” (emphasis in text).^[6] As to the conception of wage itself Marx is here restating in an extremely condensed form what he had written in *Capital* I (Chapter 16, Chapter 19 in the French version) (“On the transformation of value, respectively price of labour power in wages”). There he had shown that as regards the “value and price of labour” or wage as the “phenomenal form” in contrast to the “essential relation” which is manifested therein, that is value and price of labour power, the same distinction holds as that between all phenomenal forms and their hidden substratum. He added that it had taken a long time for the world history to decipher the secret of wage, which was in fact Marx’s own achievement.^[7]

Distribution in the New Society

Coming to the question of distribution in the “cooperative society,” Marx restates his two well-known fundamental materialist propositions. First, the juridical relations arise from the “economic,” that is production relations and not inversely, and, secondly, the distribution of the means of consumption is a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production, which in its turn is a character of the mode of production itself. Thus Marx faults the “programme” for limiting its scope exclusively to the distribution of the means of consumption among the members of the new society. “Vulgar socialism,” following the bourgeois economists, treats distribution — basically of the means of consumption — independently of the mode of production and presents socialism as turning exclusively on distribution.^[8]

As the ‘Programme’ spoke of the distribution of society’s labour-product, Marx’s approach to distribution in his critique was correspondingly directed against the Lassallean approach in terms of distribution of society’s total product, and not explicitly in terms of the broader question, that of allocation of society’s labour time. However, already earlier, in his 1857-58 manuscripts, Marx had emphasized that “all economy is finally reduced to the economy of time” and spoken of the two aspects of the employment of society’s available labour time. First, society’s labour time must be economised — less time society requires to produce the daily requirements, more time it gains for other material and spiritual production. Secondly, society must distribute its labour time among different branches appropriately in order to obtain production corresponding to its needs. However, on the basis of collective production the economy of time as well as planned distribution of labour time among different branches

of production remains the first economic law. This becomes even a law of much higher degree.” Marx immediately adds that this is essentially different from measuring exchange values (labour or labour products) by labour time” (1953: 89).^[9] In *Capital* I (Chapter one) Marx offers an outline of the mode of distribution of the total social product within the “union of free individuals” without yet distinguishing between the different phases through which the new society is supposed to pass. However, in the light of the *Gothakritik* where (in fact the only place where) Marx distinguishes between two phases of communism, the mode of distribution of the social product under communism as he proposes in *Capital* I as well as in the manuscript for *Capital* II (Chapter 18 in Engels’s edition) could only refer to the “first phase” of the new society. What we find particularly in *Capital* I would only be elaborated in the *Gothakritik*. According to the earlier text, a part of the total social product is not distributed among the individual members but is kept aside for serving again as means of production. The rest serves as means of consumption distributed according to the magnitude of labour time that each producer contributes to the total social labour time. Here the labour time that each individual offers towards the creation of the social product corresponding to different needs of society, serves as the measure of the share of the labouring individual in the common labour as well as the portion of the total consumption which comes back to the labouring individual.^[10] An important purpose of Marx’s elaboration of this scheme in the *Gothakritik* was the refutation of the Lassallean notion of distribution allowing each individual labourer the “undiminished fruit” of her or his labour (taken over by Lassalle from the earlier socialists including Proudhon). Following the lead of *Capital* I Marx discusses in the *Gothakritik* two basic aspects of the distribution of the social product mainly with reference to the society’s “first phase” — namely, the division of the product between society’s production needs and consumption needs, and secondly, the allotment of the means of consumption among society’s members.

As to the first problem, one part of the social product serves as common funds that include replacement and extension of the means of production as well as society’s insurance and reserve funds against uncertainty. The rest serves as means of collective consumption and personal consumption.

As to the mode of distribution of the means of consumption, as producers are united with the conditions of production in the new society, they are, to start with, no longer sellers of their labour power, and the wage form of return to their labour ceases right from the “first phase.” Here the labourers receive from their own (free) Association not wage but some kind of a token indicating the labour time contributed by them to the total social labour time — after deduction for common funds. These tokens allow the labourers to draw from the social stock of means of consumption the amount costing the same amount of labour.

At no stage, however, of the allocation-distribution process does the product of labour take the value form. Right from the start the new society — as it has “just come out of the capitalist society” — based on the common appropriation of the conditions of production excludes, by definition, all exchange in value form of the objectified labour against

objectified labour as well as of the objectified labour against living labour. As the *Gothakritik* says, “Within the cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products, just as little does labour applied to the products appear *as value* of these products” (emphasis in text).^[11] Indeed, in the de-alienated Association there is no need for, in fact no possibility of, products of individual labour to be mediated by exchange in value form in order to be what they really are, that is *social*. Earlier Marx had written that in the communitarian society where “community is posited before production,” the “individual’s participation in the collective products is not mediated by independent labour or products of labour. It is mediated by the social conditions of production within which the individual’s activity is inserted” (1953: 89; 1958: 27). Naturally, in the absence of commodity production the tokens, that the producers receive from their association, indicating the labour time contributed by them to the total social product, are not money.

In the “first phase” of the new society the right of the individual producers to receive consumption goods proportional to the labour contributed by them (after necessary deductions) is an “equal right” in the sense that the measurement involved is done with an “equal standard,” labour, though the equal right is, at the same time, “unequal,” given the unequal contribution of the individual producers. In so far as a given amount of labour in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labour in another form, the *principle* here involved is the same as that which prevails under commodity production, even though commodity production has ceased to exist.^[12] Since the new society has just come out of the capitalist society and has not yet been able to “develop on its own foundations,” the new mode of distribution cannot be completely free from the old mode. The determining principle of distribution among individuals continues to be each one’s labour contribution, and not (yet) human *needs*, this equal-unequal right being thus still within the bourgeois horizon, it is a “bourgeois right.” The latter is fully overcome only in a “higher phase” of the Association with the overcoming of the enslaving division of labour, with labour becoming a “first need” of life and with the “spring of cooperative wealth” flowing more abundantly.

A Manifesto of Emancipation

While elaborating on the hitherto existing human labour as enslaving Marx, in the *Gothakritik*, also suggests that the situation has now arisen where conditions of negating this labour with the corresponding division of labour have been created. “Finally,” adds Marx, “in the modern capitalist society the material etc. conditions are created which enable and compel the labourers to break this malediction.”^[13] The *Gothakritik* gave Marx the occasion — though not for prescribing “receipts for the cook shops of the future” (1962a: 25) for at least offering some broad indicators regarding how he conceived the new society to be after the demise of the old. Let it be emphasized at the outset that for Marx the socialist (equivalently communist) society is nothing short of a “union of free individuals” because for him the (self) emancipation of the “wage slaves” automatically implies human emancipation

in general inasmuch as in capitalism — the last antagonistic social formation in human evolution here is no class below the proletariat.^[14] The “associated mode of production” on which the new society is based and the corresponding collective (social) appropriation of the conditions of production stand opposed to all earlier modes of production and appropriation appearing in what Marx famously calls the “pre-history of human society” (1958: 14). Marx calls the new society the “union of free individuals” (1962a: 92) because the individuals here are *free* in the sense that in the social relations of production, the ensemble of which constitutes the basis of a society, there is no longer any “personal dependence” — the first social form of unfreedom — as in pre-capitalism nor any “material dependence” — the second social form of unfreedom — as in the commodity (capitalist) production. In fact long before the arrival of the new society, capital tends to destroy all bonds of personal dependence such as are found in patriarchy, in the relations of the feudal lord and vassal, in those of the landlord and serf, in the system of casts and class etc. However, while capital destroys personal dependence, it establishes in its turn material dependence. “Under capital personal independence is based on material dependence.” This is shown in (generalized) commodity production (including wage labour). This “(personal) freedom is an illusion and is more correctly considered as indifference.” While the determining factor in the pre-capitalist case appears to be the “personal limitation” of one individual by another, the determining factor in the (generalized) commodity production (capitalism) is built-up into a “material limitation” of the individual by circumstances that are independent of the individual and over which the individual has no control. “The social production is not subordinated to the individuals. The individuals remain subordinated to the social production which exists outside of them as a fatality” (Marx 1953: 76, 81).^[15] Naturally, in the *Gothakritik*, focusing particularly on the post bourgeois society, Marx leaves aside the question of the first social form of unfreedom and refers only to the second social form of unfreedom embodied in commodity production and wage labour, neither of which has any place in socialism (communism) conceived as a society of free and associated producers.^[16] After the disappearance of the two social forms of unfreedom, the humanity arrives, in socialism, at “free individuality based on the universal development of the individual and the subordination of their common social productivity as their (own) social power” (Marx 1953: 75).

Commodity production and wage labour — besides the earlier forms of personal dependence — are not the only enemies of human freedom. There is also the institution of the state which was always considered by Marx as antipathetic to human freedom. “The existence of the state and the existence of slavery are inseparable,” he already announced in an early polemic (1976a: 401-402). A little later Marx wrote that “the working class in course of its development will substitute the old civil society by an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will no more be (any) political power properly speaking” (1965: 136), and one year later in the *Manifesto* he (and Engels) added that with “production concentrated in the hands of the associated individuals, public power will lose its political character” (1966b: 77). Much later, only four years before he composed the *Gothakritik*, he praised the Parisian communards for their “Revolution not against this or that state power ... but against the *state* itself” (in Marx and Engels 1971: 152, emphasis in

text). So, it should be clear that for Marx, after the demise of the proletarian political power along with the proletariat at the end of the revolutionary transformation period” and the consequent disappearance of classes, the state, like commodity production and wage labour — embodying human unfreedom — can have no place in socialism. However, unlike what he does with commodity production and wage labour, Marx does not, in the *Gothakritik*, directly treat the question of the state in relation to the Association. He simply wonders about which *social* functions would remain in the communist society *analogous* to the present day state functions. That this is no way implies the continued existence of the state in the new society is clear in Marx’s denunciation, in the same document, of the “Lassalleian sect’s servile faith in the state,” which he considers as “remote from socialism.”^[17]

Let us conclude by noting that Marx’s *Gothakritik* did not have much luck with his followers at any period. Its emancipatory message was too strong for the immediate followers to take. The text was suppressed for a long period before being published by Marx’s followers (at the insistence of Engels) more than fifteen years after its composition. Even after it was published, its reception by the ‘Marxists’ was far from complete. We shall refer here to the best of the cases — to Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, perhaps the most libertarian work within ‘orthodox Marxism.’ This work apparently follows the *Gothakritik* so closely that Lenin is said to have “built his whole *State and Revolution* on it” (Dunayevskaya 1991: 154). On a careful reading of the book (undoubtedly incomplete), however, one finds that Lenin’s emancipatory idea falls far short of that of Marx (and Engels). Lenin conceives socialism — equated with the first phase of communism (contrary to Marx) — not in terms of new (*real*) *social relations* of production, as a free association of producers based on the “associated mode of production,” but in terms of specific ownership (that is *juridical*) form, in terms of “social ownership” of the means of production, which is reduced to the ownership of the means of production by the “working class state.” While Lenin apparently excludes commodity production from socialism, he envisages “equality of labour and wage” for all citizens, now transformed into the “hired employees of the state” — in other words, the existence of wage labour and its employment by the (socialist) state. On the other hand, reading his own ideas into Marx’s text, Lenin envisages the existence of “bourgeois state” to enforce what Marx calls the (remaining) “bourgeois right” in distribution in the first phase of communism. This seems to be a strange logic — absolutely unwarranted by Marx’s text — which stands Marx on his head. In Marx the first phase of the new society is inaugurated *after* the disappearance of the proletarian rule (along with the proletariat) — that is, all class rule. If Lenin is correct, the workers themselves — no longer proletarians — would have to *recreate* a *bourgeois state* to enforce “bourgeois right.” On the other hand, according to Marx, the existence of state itself — bourgeois or proletarian — ends along with the classes at the end of the “revolutionary transformation period” and the beginning of the new society. Whatever “bourgeois right” remains in the sphere of distribution, it does not require a particular *political* apparatus — a *state* (least of all a bourgeois state) — to enforce it. Quite logically Marx envisages *society* itself distributing not only the labour tokens among its members, but also the total (social) labour time among the different branches of production. Indeed, Lenin’s socialism — particularly if we take his other writings into

consideration as well — turns out to be much closer to Lassalle-Kautsky state owned-and-planned economy than to Marx’s emancipatory project of the “union of free individuals.” Let us add that Lenin’s inability to break altogether with the heritage of the Second International on the state appears also in his (mis)reading of Marx’s discourse on the commune (1871). About a month before the Bolshevik seizure of power (1917), Lenin wrote: “Marx taught ... that the proletariat must smash the ready-made state machine and substitute a new one for it ... This new machine was created by the Paris Commune.” We earlier saw how Marx spoke admiringly about the Parisian Revolution aiming to destroy the *state as such*, not simply a particular kind of state. In fact, ‘substituting the existing state machine by a new state machine (as Lenin would have it) was precisely considered by Marx to be the hallmark of all *earlier* revolutions, not of the proletarian revolution whose aim *a contrario* is to “throw off this deadening “incubus” altogether in course of the revolution. In Marx’s view, the Paris Commune, far from ‘creating a new state machine,’ aimed to destroy the machine itself.

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Endnotes

1. “As the creator of use values, as useful labor, labor is the condition of existence of the human, independent of all social forms, an everlasting natural necessity, for mediating the material exchange between the human and nature The human can only proceed in production as nature itself, that is, can only change the forms of matter. Still more. In this labor of simple transformation, the human is again constantly supported by forces of nature. Labour is thus not the unique source of the produced use values, the material wealth” (1962a: 57-58; 1965: 570-71, the term “*Formung*” (formation) in the German version was changed into “transformation” in the French version).
2. Quite in the spirit of the *Gothakritik* Marx writes in an earlier text: “As if the division of labor would not be just as much possible if the conditions of labor belonged to the associated laborers and they act in relation to them as these are in nature, their own products and the material elements of their own activity” (1962b: 271).
3. “The proposition that the ‘natural,’ that is normal price of labour power coincides with the minimum wage, that is exchange value of the subsistence absolutely necessary for the life and reproduction of the labourer — this proposition I established for the first time in the *Outline* (1844) and *The Condition* (1845). It was later adopted by Marx. Lassalle borrowed it from us ... In *Capital* Marx corrected this proposition while analysing the conditions that allow the capitalists to lower more and more the price of labour power below its value” (Engels in Marx 1972b: 83).
4. For a thorough discussion of the roots of the Lassallean iron law of wages in Ricardo and Malthus as well as of Marx’s fundamental difference with the Ricardo-Malthus-Lassalle approach see the unjustly neglected work of K. Diehl (1905: 5-7; 62-65; 70-860).
5. Marx elaborates this: “since the *real* (*wirkliche*) labour of appropriating the natural

elements for satisfying human needs is the activity through which the material exchange between the human and nature is mediated, the labour power which is denuded of the means of production, the objective conditions of appropriating the natural elements through labour, is also denuded of the *means of subsistence*. Therefore the labour power denuded of the means of production and of the means of subsistence is the absolute poverty as such and the labourer is its personification” (1976b: 35; emphasis in text).

6. Almost two decades earlier, in a letter to Engels (January 14, 1958), Marx had rejected the bourgeois theory of profit in almost the same terms, saying that “I have thrown overboard (*über den Haufen geworfen*) the whole doctrine of profit as it had existed hitherto” (helped by his rereading of Hegel’s *Logic* “by mere accident”). With the whole bourgeois conception of wage and doctrine of profit gone, one wonders what remains of the claim that Marx was a Ricardian — albeit a critical one — after all.

7. To note in this connection is Marx’s use of the well-known Hegelian distinction between “essence” and “being” and the discussion around it as we find in the opening lines of the second book of *Logic*. (See Hegel 1963: 1). Marx repeats this almost verbatim in the *Gothakritik* by emphasizing that Lassalle had taken “appearance for essence” in his (mis)understanding of wage. By the way this also disproves Althusser’s contention that the *Gothakritik* is “totally free from any trace of the influence of Hegel” (1969: 21).

8. Marx credits Ricardo for having “instinctively conceived distribution as the most definite expression” of the relations of the “agents of production in a given society” (1953: 8; 1992: 895; 1964: 885). This way of conceiving distribution, even “instinctively” (that is, not consciously and explicitly), seems to have disappeared in the post-Ricardian bourgeois political economy. Marx particularly mentions John Stuart Mill for having conceived distribution independently of the mode of production, for considering the “bourgeois forms of production as absolute, but the bourgeois forms of distribution as relative, historical” (1962b: 80; 1992: 895; 1964: 885). The tendency of treating distribution in abstraction from the mode of production has continued in bourgeois political economy. This is clearly seen in Sen (1997).

9. In this regard see also Marx’s letters to Engels, January 8, 1868 and to Kugelman, July 11, 1968.

10. In the “union of free individuals,” Marx observes, “the labour time would play a double role. Its socially planned distribution regulates the correct proportion of the different functions of labour in relation to different needs. On the other hand, the labour time serves simultaneously as the measure of the individual share of the producers in the common labour and thereby also in the individual share of consumption in the common produce” (1962a: 93; 1965: 613. In the French version the term “planned” (*plannässige*) before the term “distribution” was left out.

11. In fact this had always been Marx’s position. The texts in this regard are too numerous to be cited here. There exists no text which contradicts this position. The contrary position — that according to Marx commodity production continues in socialism — taken by a number of authors, Marxist and non-Marxist, including some adherents of the so-called market socialism or socialist market, is based on a complete misreading of Marx’s texts (See, among others, Dobb 1940: 299-300; Lange 1945: 128; J. Robinson 1963: 23; Lukács 1971: 688; Schweickert 1996: 339-40).

12. In *Capital* I Marx had invoked the principle of commodity exchange in this connection “just to draw a parallel” with commodity production without implying in any way that the communist society (even in its “first phase”) is a commodity society (1962a: 93; 1965: 613).

13. In an earlier text Marx observes: “The development of the faculties of the human species, though at first effected at the cost of the majority of the human individuals and even of the whole classes of human beings, ends up by breaking through this antagonism and coincides with the development of the singular individuals. Thus a higher development of individuality is brought only through a historic process in which the individuals are sacrificed” (1959: 107).

14. “The proletariat,” wrote the young Marx, “cannot abolish its own conditions of existence without abolishing the inhuman conditions of the present society which are summed up in its own situation (1972a: 38) Again, in his last programmatic writing for the working class he penned: “The emancipation of the working class is the emancipation of all human beings irrespective of sex or race” (1965: 1538).

15. Earlier he had written that in the exchange process “the individual’s own power over the object appears as power of the object over the individual; master of his production, the individual appears as the slave of his production” (1932: 526).

16. The second social form of human unfreedom inherent in commodity production, including wage labour, seems not to have been recognized by the eminent humanist and libertarian economist A.K. Sen. While he rightly stresses the liberating aspect of commodity production (“market”) for the individuals in a largely pre-capitalist environment and correctly refers to Marx in this connection, he fails to notice the enslaving side of commodity production itself in relation to the participating individuals (even in ‘perfect’ market situation) precisely emphasized by Marx. Sen, of course, does not question the wage system either, denounced by Marx as “wage slavery.” See Sen 1999.

17. The “present day state” is brought in by Marx as simply an *analogy* in the same way as Marx, while discussing the mode of distribution of the means of consumption in socialism, brings in commodity production “just to give a parallel” (1962a: 93). In no way follows that either the state or commodity production would continue to prevail in the Association. Let us add that in his (probably) last theoretical writing Marx sarcastically mentions the “Social State” ascribed to him by somebody “generously” (1962c: 360-371).

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